

REPRESENTATION OF HOLOCAUST AND PARTITION: A STUDY OF SELECT TEXTS

**Thesis Submitted to
Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat
For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in English
Faculty of Arts**

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October 2016

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
VEER NARMAD SOUTH GUJARAT UNIVERSITY
SURAT**

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that this doctoral thesis entitled **REPRESENTATION OF HOLOCAUST AND PARTITION: A STUDY OF SELECT TEXTS** is submitted by **Mr. Imran A.K. Surti** for the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**, in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat. No part of this thesis has been previously submitted to any other University for any degree or diploma.

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SURAT**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this doctoral thesis entitled **REPRESENTATION OF HOLOCAUST AND PARTITION: A STUDY OF SELECT TEXTS**, submitted for the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.)**, in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat, is my original work and no part of this thesis has been previously submitted to any other university for any other degree or diploma. Further, I shall be solely responsible for plagiarism or any other kind of irregularity, if found, in this doctoral dissertation.

**Surat
October 2016**

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Place: Surat

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Select Bibliography		

HOLOCAUST (1941-1945)



Adolf Hitler – The Chancellor of Germany and the Nazi Dictator (1933-1945)
<https://blog.kareldonk.com/adolf-hitler-the-greatest-story-never-told/>



Yellow David Star – Jewish Badge
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/489555421973830143/>



**The Main Entrance to Auschwitz II (Birkenau)
(A Concentration - cum - Extermination Camp)**

<http://auschwitzworkcamptodeathcamp.weebly.com/photos.html>



**While a lot of victims at the concentration camps were killed by gas chambers,
some were placed into a big oven and burned to death.**

<http://auschwitzworkcamptodeathcamp.weebly.com/photos.html>

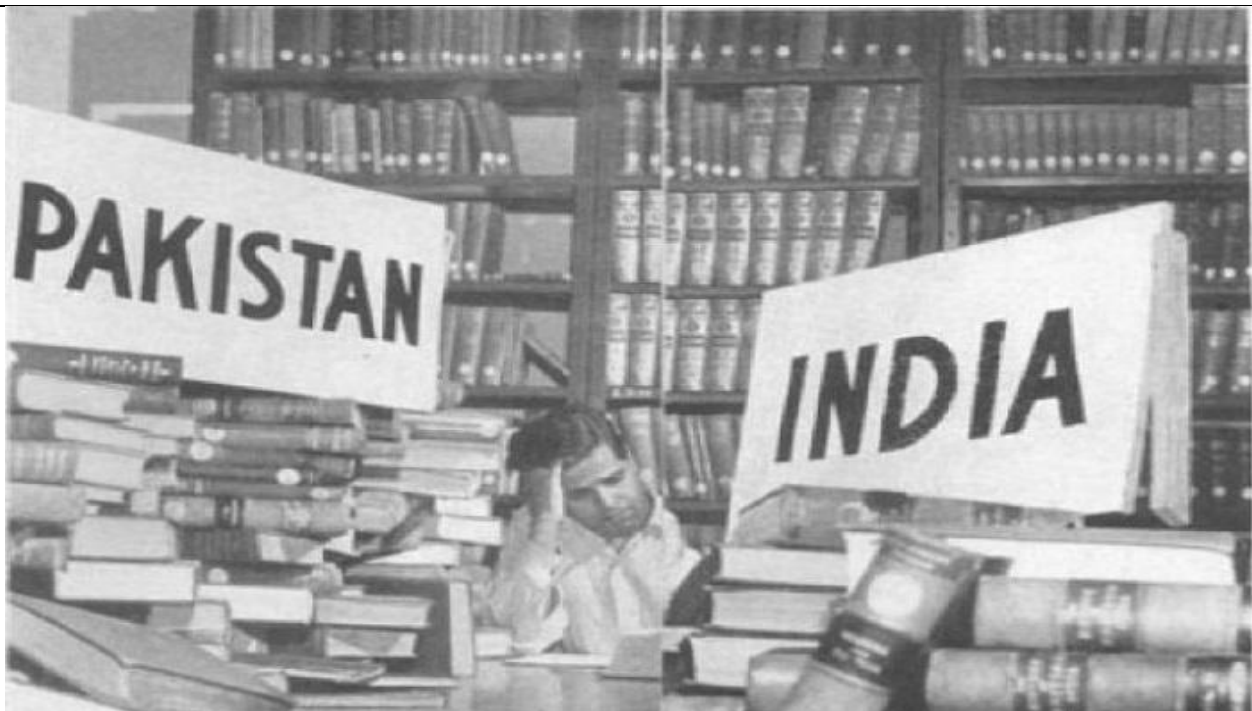
PARTITION (1947)





**Vultures feeding on the corpses of the deceased during
'Calcutta Mass Killings'**

www.pakistanaffairs.pk/threads/63351-Remarkable-pictures-from-the-past



**Not just people, books and many non-living objects were also distributed
amongst the two nations.**

<http://coffeewithsundar.com/guruprasad-g-rare-photographs-collector/>

Timeline of Holocaust	
Holocaust Years	Holocaust – Events
1933	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adolf Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany by President Hindenburg.
1935	Implementation of Nuremberg Race Laws that deprived Jewish people of their civil rights.
1938	<i>Kristallnacht</i> , meaning "Night of Broken Glass" took place when Jewish businesses, synagogues and homes were violently destroyed throughout Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Many Jewish men were killed or sent to concentration camps.
1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany invades Poland leading to World War II in Europe. Germans establish a ghetto in Poland.
1940	Jews were forced to live in 'ghettos', where they were forbidden to earn a wage and many thousands of men, women and children starved to death.
1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothes for the purpose of immediate identification. Squads composed of German SS and police called <i>Einsatzgruppen</i> (meaning mobile killing units) began the systematic massacres of Jews in several of the forts around Kovno, Lithuania; at Babi Yar, outside Kiev in the Ukraine. Japan bombs Pearl Harbor without warning and the United States enters World War II.
1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Wannsee Conference is held near Berlin, Germany where the decision is taken by the Nazis regarding the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Problem' – to exterminate all the Jews in Europe.
1943	Warsaw ghetto uprising begins as Jewish underground organizations created an armed unit known as the Jewish Combat Organization (<i>Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa</i> ; ZOB) and members of the ghetto began to construct underground bunkers and shelters. The Germans killed 7000 Jews and captured over 50,000 Jews who were then deported to concentration camps to meet their certain deaths.
1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germans begin the mass deportation of 440,000 Jews from Hungary. Winter Death March (Long March) of nearly 60,000 prisoners from the Auschwitz camp system in southern Poland. As the Russians advanced, the SS guards marched the Jewish people to concentration camps in the West such as Belsen in Germany. Soviet troops liberate the Auschwitz Concentration and Extermination Camp in Poland. It is estimated that 1,600,000 people died at Auschwitz, about 1,300,000 were Jews and the remaining victims were gypsies, Poles and Soviet prisoners of war. American forces liberate the Dachau concentration camp in Germany. Adolf Hitler commits suicide. World War II ended on September 2, 1945 with the unconditional surrender of all the Axis powers

(<http://www.american-historama.org/1929-1945-depression-ww2-era/holocaust-timeline.htm>)

Timeline of Partition of India	
Partition Years	Partition – Events
1857	Mutiny against the British
1885	Indian National Congress is founded by A.O. Hume.
1905	The Partition of Bengal
1906	All-India Muslim League was founded at Decca on 31 st December.
1909	Minto-Morley Reforms of Indian Councils Act - 21 st May.
1915	Mahatma Gandhi arrived in India on 9 th January.
1919	The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy took place on 13 th April in Amritsar.
1920-22	The Indian National Congress (INC) adopts the Non-Co-operation Resolution in December. Later, Mahatma Gandhi suspends Non-Co-operation Movement on February 12 after the violent incidents at Chauri Chaura.
1927-28	The British Prime Minister appoints Simon Commission to suggest future constitutional reforms in India. Simon Commission arrives in Bombay on February 3. An all-India hartal is called. Lala Lajpat Rai assaulted by police at Lahore. Later, he succumbs to head injuries and dies.
1929	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Parties Muslim Conference formulates the 'Fourteen Points' under the leadership of Jinnah on 9th March. • The Lahore session of the INC adopts the goal of complete independence (Purna Swaraj) for India; Jawaharlal Nehru hoists the tri-colour on the banks of the Ravi at Lahore on 31st December.
1930	Mahatma Gandhi launches the Civil Disobedience Movement with his epic <i>Dandi March</i> (March 12 to April 6).
1932	British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald announced the infamous "Communal Award" on 16 th August.
1935	The Government of India Act 1935 was passed on 4 th August.
1937	Elections held in India under the Act of 1935 (February 1937). The INC contests election and forms ministries in several provinces (July 1937).
1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second World War (September 1). Great Britain declares war on Germany on 3rd September; the Viceroy declares that India too is at war. • Between 27th October to 5th November, the Congress ministries in the provinces resign in protest against the war policy of the British government. • The Muslim League observes the resignation of the Congress ministries as 'Deliverance Day' on 22nd December.
1940	Lahore session of the Muslim League passes the Pakistan Resolution in March.
1942	Quit India Movement
1946	Cabinet Mission Plan
1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India gained independence. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of Independent India. Mountbatten sworn in as Governor-General of India • The Dominion of Pakistan was created. Muhammad Ali Jinnah sworn in as the Governor-General of Pakistan.

<http://upscguide.com/content/timeline-indian-freedom-struggle>

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Literature and History – Interdisciplinarity

For a long time the relation of history to literature was not notably problematic. History was a branch of literature. It was until the meaning of the word *literature*, or the institution of literature itself, began to change, toward the end of the eighteenth century, that history came to appear as something different from literature.

Quintilian treats history as a form of epic. Of all prose forms, it is the closest to poetry – a kind of prose poem. Cicero also distinguishes between the mere chronicling of events such as was practiced by the earliest Roman annalists, and the literary productions of the Greek historians. Cicero's own tentative formulation of the basic principles of a future rhetoric of history – the historian may say nothing false, he must dare to say all that is true, he must avoid partiality – seems to shift the question of history from the province of rhetoric to that of epistemology. It is repeated, moreover, by other classical writers who concerned themselves with history – Tacitus, Polybius, Plutarch, Lucian. "The ancients' theory of history," it has been said, "was limited largely to questions of technique and presentation."

(Unger, *Enlightenment Historiography*, 63)

Renaissance reflection on historiography conformed, as one would expect, to the precepts of the ancients. History writing was viewed as an art of presentation and argument rather than a scientific inquiry, and its problems belonged therefore to rhetoric rather than to epistemology. Though seventeenth and eighteenth century theories of poetry usually left room for a neo-Platonic notion of divine inspiration inherited from the Renaissance, literature had, for the most part, the sense of a practice, a technique. History thus had its place in manuals of rhetoric throughout the eighteenth century. It was always distinguishable from

“mere” scholarship and antiquarianism, and the ground of the distinction was in large measure that the historian was a writer, whereas the scholar and the antiquarian were not. Gibbon expressed a common view when he wrote that histories become of less and less interest to readers as the events of which they tell become more remote. Rudolf Unger’s characterization of historiography in the classical period – “historiography was accounted to be, in the first instance, a *literary genre*” (Unger, *Problem of Historical Objectivity*, 73) – remains valid for the practice of history until nearly the end of the eighteenth century.

In the final phase of neoclassicism, however, the long association of rhetoric and literature began to break down. The term *literature* gradually became more closely associated with poetry, or at least with poetic and figurative writing, and, especially among the Romantics and their successors, took on the meaning of a corpus of privileged or sacred texts, a treasury in which value, truth, and beauty had been piously stored, and which could be opposed to the empirical world of historical reality and even, to some extent, to historiography as the faithful record of that reality. Indeed, it was at this point that historians began to look in the history of historiography itself for the origins of a divorce – which they felt their own time was about to consummate – between historical writing and poetic writing. The focus of the literary artist’s activity, in short, has shifted from rhetoric to poetics. The writer is now not so much a revealer of truths, a speaker of divine language, as a maker of meanings and a restorer of human languages.

At the same time that literature began to detach itself from rhetoric, history was also altering the focus of its concern. For the first time, the epistemological basis of its ideal of impartially copying or representing the real was put in question. As early as 1752 the German theologian Johann Martin Chladenius, elaborating a position outlined by Leibniz and Bayle, made the concept of point of view fundamental to all historical narrative. Though Chladenius himself resolved the difficulty too neatly, suggesting that a combination of points of view

would allow the object to be located and perceived “objectively”, subsequent reflection on historiography, particularly in Germany, was overwhelmingly preoccupied with discovering a more comprehensive theory of historical objectivity than naive realism, one that include and subsume subjectivity. Despite their differences, Humboldt, Savigny, Ranke, Creuzer, Schleiermacher, Gervinus, and Hegel were all concerned with this problem. Reflection on historiography was more and more concerned with the problems of historical knowledge, and very rarely, or only incidentally, with the problems of historical writing. The separation of literature and historiography was institutionalized, moreover, by the breakup of what had once been the republic of letters – a society in which the historians, both of the Enlightenment and of the early Romantic period, especially in France, England, and Scotland, had mingled freely and shared common experiences and aspiration with novelists, poets, philosophers, political thinkers, economists, scientists and statesmen. In the course of the nineteenth century historians withdrew more and more to the university, to be followed by historians of literature and by literary critics; and thus history, like literary scholarship, passed from the hands of the poet and man of letters into those of the professor. Finally, in our own times, the very idea that the historian’s activity consists in discovering and reconstituting, by whatever means, a past reality conceived of as something objectively fixed has begun to be questioned. The old common ground of history and literature – the idea of mimesis, and the central importance of rhetoric – has thus been gradually vacated by both. The practicing historian is now rarely a practicing literary artist, and the long road travelled by Herodotus, Sallust, Livy, Plutarch, Voltaire, Gibbon, Macaulay, and Michelet appears finally to have been abandoned by all but a handful of stragglers.

The traditional outline of the relation was traced by Aristotle in two famous passages of the *Poetics*:

... From what has been said it is also clear that the poet's job is not to report what has happened but what is likely to happen: that is, what is capable of happening according to the rule of probability or necessity. Thus the difference between the historian and the poet is not in their utterances being in verse or prose (it would be quite possible for Herodotus' work to be translated into verse, and it would not be any the less a history with verse than it is without it); the difference lies in the fact that the historian speaks of what has happened, the poet of the kind of thing that *can* happen. Hence also poetry is a more philosophical and serious business than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars. "Universal" in this case is what kind of person is likely to do or say certain kind of things, according to probability or necessity; that is what poetry aims at, although it gives its persons particular names afterward: while the "particular" is what Alcibiades did or what happened to him. (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 32-33)

Aristotle thus defines history and poetry, in typically, classical manner, antithetically: poetry is unified, intelligible, based on proper subordination of the part to the ends of the whole, whereas history knows only the paratactic organization of contiguity or succession.

When Voltaire wrote to Hénault about the design of the *Siècle de Louis XIV* he probably still had Aristotle's observations on history and epic in mind:

My aim has been to make a great picture of events that are worthy of being painted, and to keep the reader's eyes trained on the leading characters. History, like tragedy, requires an exposition, a central action, and a denouement. Otherwise, the historian is no more than a Reboulet, or a Limiers, or a La Hode. There is room, moreover, in this vast canvas for

interesting anecdotes. I hate petty facts; plenty of others have laden their enormous compilations with them.... My secret is to force the reader to wonder: will Philip V ascend the throne? Will he be chased out of Spain? Will Holland be destroyed? Will Louis XIV go under? In short, I have tried to move my reader, even in history.

(Besterman, *Voltaire's Correspondence*, 1956-1965)

As is well known, Gibbon considered a number of topics before finally selecting the decline and fall of the Roman Empire as the subject of his great history. His principal concern was the appropriateness of the subject matter to the kind of literary treatment he had in mind. In his *Lettre sur les occupations de l'Académie* (1716) Fénelon had already urged a reform of the manner of writing history that would have given to history the status and the form of epic. "A dry and dreary compiler of annals knows no other order than that of chronology.... But the historian of genius selects among twenty possible places in his narrative the one where a fact ought to be placed to throw light on all the others." (Fénelon, *Oeuvres*, 230) Aristotle notwithstanding, in other words, the historian ought to be concerned with "actions" and ought to organize his material accordingly. Instead of a pure succession, a genealogy, he should recount an action that has an exposition, a central intrigue, and a denouement, and that illustrates some important principle.

Later in the century, Hugh Blair's teaching in his rhetoric classes at the University of Edinburgh was similar. "Historical composition is understood to comprehend under it, Annals, Memoirs, Lives," Blair allowed. "But these," he added, "are its inferior subordinate species. In the conduct and management of his subject, the first attention requisite in an Historian is to give as much unity as possible; that is, his History should not consist of separate unconnected parts merely, but should be bound together by some connecting principle, which shall make the impression on the mind of something that is one, whole and

entire.” The reader is most pleased and instructed “when the mind has always before it the progress of some one great plan or system of actions; when there is some point or centre, to which we can refer the various facts related by the Historian.” (Blair, *Lectures*, 261)

Blair argues that in history “we should be able to trace all the secret links of the chain, which binds together remote, and seemingly connected events,” and Fénelon declared that “the main point is to place the reader at the heart of things and to reveal to him the links among them.” (Montesquieu, *Oeuvres Completes*, 62)

The aesthetic character of the proposed reform of historiography is made particularly clear in the preface written by Jean-Jacques Garnier (1729-1805), Inspector of the Collège de France, for his revised edition and continuation (1770-1778) of the popular *Histoire de France* of the ex-Jesuit abbé Paul-Francois Velly (1709-1759). Garnier’s proposal, which he himself did not carry out effectively, involved above all reshaping that history aesthetically, giving it the form of a literary narrative rather than of a folktale.

The essence of Garnier’s proposals was aesthetic. There is a clear echo of Aristotle in the statement that “a fact is any kind of event whatsoever; one may be completely ignorant of its causes and relations... An action, on the other hand, has necessarily a beginning, a middle, and an end.” Garnier criticized the earliest historians of France for having simply gathered isolated facts and arranged them in chronological order, without any concern for possible internal relations among them. Those who came after them, he went on, simply followed the path that had been traced out for them and were satisfied if they could enrich the existing story with some new anecdote, or correct a date. “Everyone has tried to add to the discoveries already made, to substitute a pure and sometimes decorative style for the gross and semi-barbarous language of our old chroniclers, but nobody has thought of altering a fundamentally vicious plan.” Garnier’s own suggestion involved the same kind of reordering that Voltaire and Fénelon had demanded: the historian “should find a luminous point of view

from which the reader could easily allow his gaze to embrace the entire sequence of facts, a pregnant principle of which each particular fact would be only a development or consequence.” Isolated facts that cannot be related to the principal action should be treated in digressions if they are important in themselves, and simply abandoned if they are not. In this way, “a reader can traverse a long succession of centuries without weariness or boredom; he sees the facts follow one another in their natural order; in a way he knows them in advance, since with the help of the principles with which he has been provided and which are constantly in his mind, he can already divine what will be the outcome of such and such a combination of events. He puts himself in the place of the principal actors, and experiences, in part, the passions that agitated them.” (Garnier, *Histoire de France*, XXII-XXV)

The ideal reader of the eighteenth century is the detached, philosophical observer, the bourgeois spectator, who masters history by reducing it to order or theory, not the actor on the stage or those too close to the action to be able to view it as a self-contained entity, complete in itself, an object removed from the continuity of reality. In neo-classical historiography the part is thus subordinated to the whole, the particular to the general, the syntagmatic to the paradigmatic. What the reader of history observes is the unfolding of a distinct, autonomous action, which is already inscribed, from the beginning, in the elements that constitute it. “From his position at the origin of things,” Fontenelle wrote of an ideal history, “the reader would entertain himself by contemplating the consequences that he had already foreseen; for once the general principles have been grasped, everything that can possibly come of them can be embraced in a universal view, and the details are only an entertaining diversion, which may even, on occasion, be dispensed with, being excessively facile and of no great utility.” (Fontenelle, *Histoire de Oracles*, 160) History here is turned into destiny, and time made into the medium in which a timeless order unfolds.

In his inaugural lecture at Jena in May 1789, “What is Universal History and Why Do We Study It?” Schiller distinguishes carefully between the course of the world (“der Gang der Welt”) and the course of world history (“der Gang der Weltgeschichte”), between events and their history. Only some of the waves on the immense river of the past are visible to the historian, says Schiller, and, in addition, the historian’s perception is determined by his own situation, so that events are often torn out of the dense and complex web of their contemporary relations in order to be set in a pattern constructed retrospectively by the historian. The order of history is not given; it is constructed by us as a kind of wager on the rationality and intelligibility of historical existence, and because – especially if we are eighteenth century Deists – we can scarcely think of the universe except in terms of orderly design. “One after another phenomena begin to withdraw from the sphere of blind chance, or lawless liberty, and to find their places as concordant parts of a coherent whole (which to be sure, is present only as an idea in the historian’s mind).... The historian thus draws that harmony forth from himself, and transplants it, outside himself, in the order of external things, that is to say, he brings a rational end to the course of the world, and a teleological principle to world history.”

Fictional writing is constantly questioning existing fictional conventions, and for centuries it did so by appealing to history. But historical writing operates in the same way: every attempt to devise an order an order different from that of pure chronicle involved an appeal to the order of art – of fictional narrative or of drama.

The characteristic feature of eighteenth century fiction is the ironic distance most eighteenth century novels establish between the narrator and the narrative, and the complicity they set up between the reader and the narrator over against the narrative – that is to say, the clear distinction they make between *discours* and *histoire*, and the privilege they accord to the former. This is also what characterizes Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon as historians. The

Enlightenment historian tells his tale under the same conditions as the eighteenth century novelist, and, like him, engages the reader with him as ironic spectator of the historical scene or tableau. The ultimate unifying centre of eighteenth century historical writing, it has been said, is the narrator himself rather than the narrative of events: (Braudy, *Narrative Form in History and Fiction*) the latter exists largely as a pretext for “philosophical” commentary, and for the sake of the community of *philosophes* that this commentary was expected to establish between narrator and reader, and among readers. History, in this important respect, was not essentially different from fiction, and d’Alembert’s remark that the writings of Tacitus “would not lose much if we were to consider them only as the first and truest of philosophical novels” (D’Alembert, *Réflexions sur l’histoire*, 195) probably did not seem as odd or shocking to the eighteenth century reader as it does to us, or at least as it must have done to the serious nineteenth century reader.

What was important was not the truth of the narrative so much as the activity of reflecting about the narrative, including that of reflecting about its truth. History, in the eighteenth century, raised questions and created conditions in which the individual subject, the critical reason, could exercise and assert its freedom. It did not present itself as an objectively true and therefore compelling discovery of reality itself. On the contrary, its truth and validity were always problematic, provoking the reader’s reflection and thus renewing his freedom. In an important sense, therefore, historical narrative and fictional narrative were constructed in fundamentally similar ways in the eighteenth century.

It would not be too difficult to show that nineteenth century historical narrative also shares important structural features with nineteenth century fictional narrative, notably the explicit rejection of the clear Enlightenment separation of object and subject, past and present, narrative and commentary or discourse, and the attempt to make them continuous with each other. The dominant feature of both fictional and historical narrative in the

nineteenth century is the replacement of the overt eighteenth century persona of the narrator by a covert narrator, and the corresponding presentation of the narrative as unproblematic, absolutely binding. The nineteenth century narrator appears as a privileged reporter recounting what happened. The historical text is not presented as a model to be discussed, criticized, accepted, or repudiated by the free and inquiring intellect, but as the inmost form of the real, binding, and inescapable.

In a wise and entertaining book published after his death, Siegfried Kracauer took malicious pleasure in showing how even an eminent historian like Henri Pirenne used time-worn rhetorical tricks to bring together relatively discontinuous persons and events in a single, continuous, and unified narrative. (Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last*) The relations between different historical series (political actions, institutions, economics, nutrition, climate, population, regions, towns, language, literature, philosophy, and so on now appear problematic at least, since time is no longer assumed to be a uniform medium in which historical events occur or historical phenomena have their existence, and which in itself establishes a continuity among these diverse phenomena, but seems rather to be multiform, constituted differently by the phenomena placed in series. The same is true of space. (Febvre, *La Terre et l'évolution humaine*) Braudel's three-level distinction of *histoire événementielle*, *histoire conjoncturale*, and *histoire de longue durée* is now familiar to a wider public. Earlier, Lucien Febvre had called for a historiography which, instead of being located in a supposedly even and objective time-flow (and thereby in fact positing such a time-flow), would select moments of crisis, collision, and breakdown. Discontinuity, in short, rather than continuity was to be placed at the heart of history as it had been placed already at the heart of fiction. (Kracauer, *General History and the Aesthetic Approach*, 122)

Nineteenth century philosophers challenged the naive realism of the classical historians and emphasized the place of subjectivity in historical knowledge. For many who

reflected on the problems of historical knowledge, the fact that the knower is himself involved in the historical process as a maker of history and is thus unable to achieve the “objective” view aspired to by the natural scientist was the very condition of historical knowledge, as opposed to knowledge of the natural world. There was no question, however, that the historian’s aim was to know and to reveal the reality of the past. Only that reality was now thought of as at once given and concealed, so that the historian’s job, as Humboldt had said at the beginning of the century in his essay *Die Aufgabe des Geschichtschreibers*, was to divine (*ahnden*) it. The historian was to reach through to past reality by a process of divination or symbolic interpretation of the evidence. Recent reflection on history, like recent reflection on literature, in contrast, has tended increasingly to question the mimetic ideal itself. In a similar vein, it has sometimes been argued by philosophers that the historian’s objects are not unproblematically situated on the other side of the evidence, as it were, but are constructs, whose function is to account for the present evidence. According to Murray G. Murphey:

Historical facts are not established from pure data – they are postulated to explain characteristics of the data. Thus the sharp division between fact and interpretation upon which the classical view insisted and which the revisionists have accepted, does not exist.

(Murphey, *Our Knowledge of the Historical Past*, 16, 63-64)

The historian appears here as someone who attempts coolly to resolve problems that are absolutely external to him. But many writers have emphasized the important role played by the historian’s imagination, his concerns as an individual and as a social being, and even by his unconscious, both in the determination of the problem to be studied and in the shaping of the historical narrative. Hayden White quotes H.I. Marrou, the historian, who, as “Henry

Davenson”, author of a valuable *Introduction à la chanson française* (1941), knows a great deal about poetry: “If the historian is a man and if he actually reaches the level of history (if he is not a mere academician, busy selecting materials for an eventful history), he will not pass his time in splitting hairs over questions which do not keep anyone from sleeping... He will pursue, in his dialogue with the past, the elaboration of *the* question which *does* keep *him* from sleeping, the central problem of his existence, the solution of which involves his life and entire person.” (*From the Logic of History to an Ethic for the Historian*, 35-54) In the end, what historical study produces, Besançon insists, is not unified or total knowledge of the past or of some fragment of it, but a *book*, a text. The unity of history lies in the books written by the great historians.

One of the most effective and radical criticisms of historical realism has been made by highlighting the linguistic existence of historical narratives, by emphasizing that history constructs its objects, and that its objects are objects of language, rather than entities of which words are in some way copies. In historical writing, the signs of language become signifiers in a secondary system elaborated by the historian. What already has meaning at the level of language becomes an empty form again until, being brought into relation with a historically definable *signifié*, or concept, it constitutes a new sign at a different level of meaning. Historical discourse thus has the character of a language constructed out of material that is itself already language. Roland Barthes has been especially critical of every failure to acknowledge the linguistic character of the historical text, and of a persistent tendency to see the text as the mere copy of another existence situated in an extra-structural field, namely “the real.” “Like every discourse that claims to be ‘realist,’” Barthes writes, “historical discourse believes it knows a semantic system constituted by only two terms – the signifier and the referent.” (Barthes, *Le Discours de l’histoire*, 74) It thus dispenses with a term that is essential to language and fundamental to every imaginary structure – the *signifié*. Far from

the world of things founding and supporting the world of signs, as classical historical discourse appears to suppose – Barthes objects – it seems rather that the world of signs constitutes and calls into existence the world of things. Reality, in sum, is human; it is always that which we make signify, never a mere given.

Those historians who have been most willing to recognize the role of imagination in the writing of history or the proximity of history and fiction have also, understandably, been most concerned to distinguish between the two, and to establish the specificity of history. Though there appears to be a certain longing to found the difference in the historical narrative's continued dependency on the real world, the specificity of history can probably be more easily defined in terms of its own rules, its own system, than in terms of a direct relation of dependency upon the real world. R.G. Collingwood, for instance, proposes three rules or conditions for history – that the historian, unlike the novelist, must localize his story in time and place; that all history must be consistent with itself, since there is only one historical world, whereas fictional universes, being autonomous, need not agree, and cannot clash; and that the historical imagination is not completely free but is bound to work from “evidence.”

(Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 246)

After the French Revolution, the dominant ambition of historians was to make history – rather than fiction – the successor of epic as the repository of society's values and of its understanding of the world. “Our age”, Barante declared, “seeks in the past the reasons for confidence in the future, and intends that the historian shall assume the high mission of the prophet.” (Barante, *De l'histoire*, 50) History, consequently, had to be cleared of the stigma attaching to the “merely” successive event, the isolated, individual episode. Historical discourse had to order individual events into episodes, individual episodes into stories, and individual stories into the single unifying and signifying history of humanity, of civilization, and of the modern bourgeois nation-states. Barante, who was himself most attracted by the

singular, picturesque episode, the historical *fait divers*, as it were, explained that “the writer must show us the facts moving steadily toward a goal, he must make us understand every step along the way. Reason is as exacting as imagination, it demands unity, and desires that its drama and its epic, the hero of which is an idea, be also portrayed.” (Barante, *De l’histoire*, 37) With the Romantic attempt to create the illusion that the relation between the individual event or episode reported by the historian and the concept or *signifié* with which he associates it is natural – in other words, that signification in historical writing is unmotivated, unproblematic, somehow rooted in the nature of things themselves – history comes perilously close to what Barthes describes as myth. And at the same time, in a corresponding and inverse movement, literature comes to repudiate the mythos with which Aristotle had associated it, and to strive toward the unelaborated, the “pre-semiological” (Barthes), the “unstructured” (Mukařovský, *The Esthetics of Language*, 31-69). Since about the middle of the nineteenth century, in Barthes’s view, literature has been engaged in a tireless struggle to halt the appropriation of language by myth and to break down the parasitic secondary systems of meaning which threatens creative culture with strangulation. Thus the wheel has turned full circle and the relative positions of history and poetry, as Aristotle perceived them, have been reversed.

In Voltaire’s or Gibbon’s time, as in that of Thierry or Macaulay, the work of the literary artist and that of the historian were intimately connected, even indistinguishable. Voltaire was at one and the same time a writer and a historian, and Gibbon and Hume both considered themselves men of letters. Literature, by Hume’s own account, was “the ruling passion of my life and the great source of my enjoyment.” Thierry and his friends were closely attentive to the work of contemporary novelists, and the latter returned the compliment. It is not fortuitous that Scott was a key figure for both Thierry and Balzac, or that Thierry and Manzoni followed each other’s work carefully. Modern history and modern

literature have both rejected the ideal of representation that dominated them for so long. Both now conceive their work as exploration, testing, creation of new meanings, rather than as disclosure or revelation of meanings already in some sense “there”, but not immediately perceptible. In the course of this change of orientation, however, literature has come to be increasingly preoccupied with language as the instrument of meaning, whereas history may well dream of escaping from ordinary or natural language to the highly formal languages of the sciences. As a result, it is not easy for us today to see who is, as a *writer*, the Joyce or the Kafka of modern historiography in the way that Gibbon could be viewed as its Fielding, Thierry as its Balzac, Michelet as its Hugo.

Moreover, many historians cling to a notion of writing or of literary style that is remote from the modern writer’s conception of his art. Stressing the value of clarity and elegance, a distinguished historian recently reaffirmed the ornamental and rhetorical function of literary style in the writing of history. The function of style, he says, is to capture and hold the reader’s attention, to convey ideas as effectively as possible, and, in the end, to confirm the pact that unites writer and reader in a common universe of meanings. “Unless the substance is good, the appearance painted even an inch thick, will not please.” Since the aim of literary style is to ensure “readability” and the historian’s primary concern as a writer is to secure his audience, “books should differ with the people to whom they are addressed.” The historian writes for an audience that already accepts his terms and that shares his basic values and assumptions. “Regard your audience as intelligent though possibly uninstructed... No problem of historical study that I have comes across, has seemed to me incapable of being explained with full clarity to any person of reasonable intelligence, and no person of insufficient intelligence will anyhow be in the way of reading or hearing historical analysis and description.” (Elton, *The Practice of History*, 109, 115, 116) For the historian, in sum, rhetorical rather than poetic considerations remain paramount, and literature is still a craft or

skill by which the *dulce* can be joined to the *utile* and the friendly reader delighted even as he is instructed. Literary artists and historians are apparently much farther apart both in their conception and in their practice of literature than they have been in the past. Indeed, the historian who conceives of literature in this way – as “style” or as a means of adorning otherwise simple propositions – may bring history close to Literature (in Barthes’s designation); but he will be further than ever from the concerns of the contemporary literary artist. (See References 1-22, Gossman, *Between History and Literature*, 227-256)

History and literature may be seen as posing questions to one another, the answers to which are not foregone conclusions. One crucial question is precisely how literary texts inscribe or process historical contexts, both in symptomatic, perhaps unconscious ways and through formal procedures that may be quite explicit and well crafted.

A literary text is a mirror image or at least a symptom of some socio-historical or perhaps trans-historical process or structure such as capitalism, colonialism, the rise of the individual, the emergence of a distinctive if not unique form of experience or subjectivity, even castration anxiety or the “real.” The text thus becomes a document of the times or perhaps of trans-historical forces.

Literature becomes a document with referential functions, perhaps a symptom of history’s hidden or secret dimensions. Historians, sociologists, Marxists, and, in a somewhat different sense, Freudians and Lacanians have often taken this approach to literature and art in general. (White, *Metahistory*) For example, from a socio-historical point of view, one reads Stendhal’s *The Red and the Black* for what it discloses about the play of factions in early nineteenth-century France or perhaps about the suicidal fate of the alienated individual whose subjective values can find no home in existing society. Or one reads Balzac for his insight into the development of capitalistic forces, themselves the deregulated but systematic generators of excess and madness. And one reads Flaubert for his enactment of the

autonomization of art as a differentiated sphere of activity that parallels the development of other autonomy-seeking professions. Two especially important theorists, separated by a generation, who propose variants of this approach are Georg Lukács and Pierre Bourdieu.

In his 2005 impressive yet controversial analysis and critique of colonial violence, which he sees as the origin of later genocides including the Holocaust, Oliver Le Cour Grandmaison is on one level close to Lukács when he reads Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as an instance of critical realism in its analysis and indictment of colonial practices. (Grandmaison, *Coloniser, Exterminer*) Unlike more simplistic advocates of contextual reading, Grandmaison does not present Conrad himself as an exponent of colonialism, racism, and imperialism. (Said, *Orientalism*) Rather following the lead of Sven Lindqvist in "*Exterminate All the Brutes*," (Lindqvist, *Exterminate All the Brutes*) he understands *Heart of Darkness* as drawing from documentary sources and Conrad's own experience to render a literary account of colonial activity typical not only of the Congo but of colonialism in Africa more generally, especially with respect to peoples, such as the "Arabs," who (at times analogized to American Indians) were seen as untameable, wild or savage beasts such as jackals – prey whose tracking was "certified" by taking a head as a trophy. More docile sub-Saharan blacks (at times analogized to American slaves) were perceived as *bêtes de somme* (beasts of burden), who could be a reliable labour force and even used for domestic service, although they too might go bad and become unmanageable like Arabs, as was the case with the Herero in 1904. For Grandmaison, Conrad's novel is a more reliable history of these empirical processes than were actual histories of the time and even subsequently, histories that were misleading vehicles of ideologies of progress, imperial glory, and the "civilizing mission." He concludes that "the literature of Conrad, at least that which has held our attention, is a literature of radical and brutal disenchantment. That's why it was rebellious at its time; it remains so today, for it allows one to take the just measure of what was the

conquest and colonization of Africa for the populations that were subjected to it.”
(Grandmaison, *Coloniser, Exterminer*)

Contextualizing theorists have the virtue of attempting to see and interpret literature and art in larger socio-historical and cultural contexts, at times with an eye to political practice. It is, for example, informative to see Flaubert in the context of the emerging literary field of his time and to trace his relations, including his resistances, to figures and processes typifying that field, prominently including the commodification of literature.

The literary “field,” viewed from this perspective, makes Bourdieu’s concept of field seem too much like a well-tended victory garden. Literature may even be constructed as post-secular as well as post-apocalyptic, oriented toward some form of transcendence or perhaps a disastrous yet sublime vortex like black hole – an all-consuming “heart of darkness” that threatens to turn us all into the living dead. And the post-apocalyptic sense of surviving in the wake of a catastrophe or extreme event may either leave that event unnamed or name it in ways that are more or less explicitly seen as problematic. Especially in certain theorists, perhaps more so than in the literary texts they treat, history may also be transfigured into a literary trope or liberated signifier construed in purely literary or theoretical terms, for example, as excess, trauma, violence, or the sublime. (Eisenstein, *Traumatic Encounters*)

Not only the novel but the literary in general has been seen as a special site for accessing experience, especially affect or feeling. Historians themselves will often be close to this view when they assign a literary work because it gives a “feel” for experience or life at a given time – what the French term *le vécu*. The interesting point or perhaps paradox is that literature or art in general conveys feeling in a fashion that does not detract from the role or importance of art’s formal properties. We are moved not through content alone, which without formal constraints might even appear sentimental or rather, maudlin, but by the way content is articulated, formed, and deformed. Or rather, even if we object to any opposition

between form and content but see the two as inextricably intertwined, we may still find the capacity of literature or art to affect us emotionally as somehow requiring effective formal processes. (See References 23-27, La Capra, *The Mutual Interrogation of History and Literature*, 12-29)

History as legacy and as ‘significant past’ is an inescapable omnipresence in social cognition. Aesthetic cognition, as a form of social cognition is, therefore, in part historical self-discovery as well. As man cognizes himself above all as an ancestral being with all the specific manifestations of his nature, not only registering the objective phenomenon but also accumulating the cognitive corpus of past knowledge, the complexity of social life forever supplements the complexity of the process of cognition itself.

As a creative index of history as lived experience of the past, aesthetic cognition possesses significant linkage with the present. History thus depicted may, however, be less scientific, less sequential, less objective, yet more interpretative.

From the large mass of material available in historical knowledge, an artist has a big range of choice extending from studying a single colossal personality to an entire epoch. The historical value of a creative work is proportionate to the depth with which it captures the spirit of the times in terms of the underlying historical forces. At another level, through crystallization of the ‘particular’ and then its extension to the ‘general’, creative works also unfold the historical links existing between the two, often through myths, symbols, images and icons.

The ‘historical’, as any other aspect of social reality, does not get documented or factually reproduced in literature. Creative practice operates through ‘selection’ in order to be meaningful. Aesthetic cognition as an ‘ideo-artistic’ conception of history is a response to the concerns and ideals, hopes and despair, aspirations and problems of real human beings—thinking, feeling, and suffering in concrete life situations. Aesthetic cognition, when alive to

human predicament also becomes a powerful vehicle of socio-political concerns through reflecting, representing and reconstructing the given context, through creative imagination. (Ramakant and Rajan Mahan, *India's Partition: Preludes and Legacies*, 120-123)

Post-Colonialism, New Historicism and Subaltern Studies have a great distrust for the apparatus of traditional historiography. They find it as an incompetent medium of capturing and representing the bruised memories of human beings, tried and perplexed in real life situations. They attempt to render a more authentic, consistent and interpretative version of history, which is contradictory to the mainstream discourses or official documentation of history. Theirs is a perspective determined by foregrounding the inaudible, marginalized voices in the narrative. Historians have generally been more interested in making an epistemological break with the past to create the protocol of objectivity, than in producing the “touch of the real”. Counter-histories, in the forms of autobiographies, biographies, interviews, oral history, archives, survivors’ accounts and most importantly literary narratives oppose not only the dominant narratives on history, but also the prevailing modes of historical thought, methods and research.

Ever since their emergence as academic disciplines, literary studies and history have had a close but problematic relationship. The two subjects were sometimes taught together in early degrees at dissenting colleges in the nineteenth century, and they developed as full-fledged academic subjects at around the same time. Each of these disciplines contains elements of the other: literary studies often draw on historical material, while everything, including literature, could be said to have a history. The obvious connections between the subjects, however, have not always encouraged co-operation; they have often led to greater territoriality, as each subject has sought to consolidate its own separateness and uniqueness. Where literary studies have a clearly defined and relatively narrow field of study (literary texts), history is markedly broad (it studies everything in the past). Where the criterion for

inclusion in one is the practice of a particular kind of activity / evidence (literature, or, anyway, writing), the criterion for inclusion in the other is simply pastness in general. History seems interested mainly in facts, as literary study focuses on fiction. One could add that historians are interested in many things which are not facts in any simple sense, including beliefs, motivations, ideologies, national myths and so on, and that literature does not exclude some factual narratives, such as travel-writing, documentaries, and autobiographies. Nevertheless, the distinction between stories and actuality does seem to retain its force. This inclusiveness / selectivity contrast characterizes not only 'What' and 'How', but also 'Purpose'. History aims to study more than just one activity. However, where literature claims to study culture and language, this, clearly, does approach closer to the ambitions of history's aims.

Thus, though modern history does, indeed, study 'the past in all its manifestations', history has traditionally been (and still is) dominated by evidence gathered from written sources. Indeed, pre-history is usually defined as 'the past before writing' and the term 'proto-history' is used to indicate the period when writing had only just been invented, and where there are relatively few surviving records for historians to work on. Traditionally, the historian picked up where the archaeologist picked off—implying that material remains were the prime concern of one discipline, written texts the main concern of the other. And even if the historian's field is the whole of past actuality, it could be said that their main contact with that reality is nevertheless through writing, through texts or representations read in an analogous way. This then would suggest a closer kinship between literary and historical studies.

Aristotle distinguished between history and poetry [literature in other words] in the *Poetics* as the distinction between what can possibly happen and what actually did happen, between what can be known because it happened and what can only be imagined, and what,

therefore, the historian can legitimately assert as a truth of experience and what the poet might wish to entertain as a truth of thought or conceptualization. The difficulty with the notion of a truth of past experience is that it can no longer be experienced, and this throws a specifically historical knowledge open to the charge that it is a construction as much of imagination as of thought and that its authority is no greater than the power of historian to persuade his readers that his account is true. This puts historical discourse on the same level as any rhetorical performance and consigns it to the status of a textualization neither more nor less authoritative than literature itself can lay claim to.

“It is impossible to imagine what a novelist takes himself to be unless he regards himself as an historian and his novel as history. It is only as an historian that he has the smallest locus standi. As a narrator of fictitious events he is nowhere; to insert into his attempts a back-bone of logic, he must relate events that are assumed to be real”. - Henry James, “Anthony Trollope”

(Reed, *Novel and History*, 262)

However, history and literature, though regarded as having kinship, are equally often seen as distinct, and, in some respects, opposed spheres in modern Western cultures. In the sixteenth century, Sir Philip Sidney famously suggests some of the distinctions and resemblances between the two in his essay *Defense of Poesie* which argues for the supreme value of literature (=poesie) above all other verbal arts.

Sidney’s basic opposition here is between History as being based on ‘fact’ (‘veryty’, ‘things doone’) and Poesie as springing from imagination and invention (‘newe formes such as never were’). He does, however, suggest a similarity between History and Poesie, when he argues that History is not entirely factual, but uses a range of poetic (or literary devices) in order to enhance its narratives of ‘what men have done’. Sidney is specifically referring to

early history writing here—arguing his view that history was only accepted as a relatively popular form because it borrowed interesting devices from literature (the description of emotion, the specific details given in narratives, the use of dramatic speeches).

The distinction between fact and fiction is still though the most obvious way of distinguishing the two areas. Yet there remains a close association between literary study and historical study—usually in the opposite direction to that suggested by Sir Philip Sidney.

The term history is ambiguous in its modern usage, as Hegel reminds us: “history combines in our language the objective as well as the subjective side. It means both the historian *rerum gestarum* and the *res gestas* themselves, both the events and the narration of the events.” Yet for most practicing historians the ambiguity is logically resolved by distinguishing between events and the narration of events on the basis of the intervening evidence. History writing, or the rhetoric of history, as J.H. Hexter calls it, is based on an “over-riding commitment of historians to fidelity to the surviving records of the past.” The written history has no immediate access to the *res gestas*, but must reconstruct them from the available documentation of the past. The historian interprets the written record [though it may be supplemented with other types of artifactual evidence] and attempts to translate from this primary documentation to actions and events. The actions and events—political, military, artistic, economic—are themselves subject to further interpretation. They are not the final meaning of the written account but are themselves construed as signs of underlying intentions or forces or even laws. The historian constructs a narrative in such a way that his own text refers through intermediary documents to the events that they record, and through the events to the forces, ideational and material, of which these events are the most probable expression.

The novel resembles the historical narrative in many respects, not the least of which is its traditional commitment to narrative explanation. As Louis O. Mink has argued, both history and literary story-telling appeal to a “configurational” mode of understanding, where

phenomena are accounted for, neither by the application of theoretical laws nor by the arrangement into systems of classification but by the construction of persuasive sequences, stories of happenings with beginnings, middles and ends. Some historians and literary critics have gone further and argued that works of formal history can be best understood as operating according to literary and rhetorical models. One of the most forceful of these scholars, Hayden White, goes as far as to claim that “historical discourse shares more than it divides with novelistic discourse.”

One might paraphrase Sidney [who was paraphrasing Aristotle] and say that, while the novel is more historical than literature, it is also more literary than history. The novel locates itself between literature and history as cultural institutions. Thus the novel evades the classifications and undermines the norms of poetics, but it also evades and undermines the referential imperatives of history. Novels play “literature” and “history” off against one another as codified forms of written discourse. They reopen poetic closures by appealing to the more random plots of supposed historical phenomena. But they also foreclose historical reference. They betray the surviving records of the past to the logics of literary coherence—the logics of plot, of character, of point of view, and of their more particular protocols of narration.

The opposition between the novel and history writing may be described more precisely in terms of the referential or representational function of the text. Novels are pseudo-historical, in the sense that they raise the question of documentation. They do this openly and ironically, as in the case of Don Quixote and the manuscript of the historian Cide Hamete Benengeli which unexpectedly becomes the basis of the text. But where history infers from the record to extratextual phenomena, agents, and events, novel-writing turns this referentiality back upon itself. In the novel, the world offers itself up as a series of textual records—fragmentary or complete, reliable or duplicitous, literal or figurative. The reader is

referred to an extratextual “reality” or “truth” only to be referred back to the compendious textuality of human experience, which the book he is holding seeks to elucidate and control. (Reed, *Novel and History*, 266-268)

History is a narrative discourse with different rules than those that govern fiction. The producer of a historical text affirms that the events entextualized did indeed occur before entextualization. Thus it is quite proper to bring extra-textual information to bear on those events when interpreting and evaluating a historical narrative.... It is certainly otherwise with fiction, for in fiction the events may be said to be created by and with the text. They have no prior temporal existence. Another way of expressing this opposition is to say that referential narratives are verifiable and incomplete, whereas non-referential narratives are unverifiable and complete. (Cohn, *Focus on Fiction*, 15-16)

History is more often concerned with humanity in the plural than in the singular, with events and changes affecting entire societies, than those affecting the lives of individual beings. For this reason biography is often regarded as a minor historical genre, and by some even as “a simple form of historiography.” Indeed one of the distinctions of fictional as compared to historical narrative is that the former is able to make an entire life come to life as a unified whole in a short span of story time, as short as a single day in novels like *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. However, historical and novelistic narratives that centre on a life plot is the generic region where factual and fictional narratives come into closest proximity, the territory that presents the greatest potential for overlap. (Cohn, *Fictional Versus Historical Lives*, 18) Michel Zeraffa writes, “with the novel, society enters history and history enters into society”. (Zeraffa, *Fictions*, 11)

When Hayden White calls history “a true novel” he is not only signalling the two genre’s shared conventions like selection, organization, dieresis and employment but also challenging the implied assumptions of historical representation. Even E.L. Doctrow’s notion

that “history is a kind of fiction in which we live and hope to survive and fiction is a kind of speculative history” points towards the same direction. The metafictionality of novels acknowledging their own construction, selection and order, but shown to be historically determined acts is what is called “historiographic metafiction”. Historiographic metafiction refutes the commonsense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refutes the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from their identity. (Dr. Tak, *Mark Twain and Post-Modernism*, 41)

Historiographic metafiction may be defined as an inverted yet improved model of the conventional historical novel. It problematizes history, by portraying historical events and personalities only to subvert them. They attempt to re-write/re-present the past in fiction so that the past can be opened up to the present; by this they prevent the past from being conclusive and teleological; such metafictional works posit no single “truth”, but truths in the plural, never one Truth. It is just your version of truth against someone else’s truth, so there is no falseness per se. Also, such truths are relative to the specific place and culture.

Historiographic metafiction differs from the historical novel in many ways. According to Georg Lukács, the historical novel deals with history by presenting a microcosm which generalizes and concentrates through a protagonist, a type who synthesizes the general and the particular. It usually relegates historical personalities to secondary roles, for the historical novel is primarily concerned with fiction, rather than history. The postmodern historiographic metafiction differs from its predecessor in all these respects. The protagonists of postmodern works are “anything but proper types; they are the ex-centrics, the marginalized, and the peripheral figures of fictional history”.

Further, postmodern metafiction problematize the entire notion of subjectivity: the events in these novels are narrated either from multiple points of view or by an overtly controlling narrator. There is a desire in these novels to close the gap between the past and the present and also a wish to rewrite the past in a new context.

A very significant aspect of postmodernist metafiction is its constant act of parodying, which is done not to destroy the past, but both to enshrine the past and to question it. In it lies the clue to understand the postmodern paradox. Along with paradox, self-reflexivity or self-consciousness is another vital characteristic of postmodernist metafiction. One may add to these elements other postmodernist features such as intertextuality, open-endedness, subjectivity, provisionality, indeterminacy, discontinuity and irony. (Balaswamy, *The Presence of the Past*, 228-229)

The post-structuralists in their very attitude towards history dislodged it from the high pedestal of superiority to literature. Michel Foucault, Hayden White and Louis Mink expostulated that history is fictitious. To them history is “a verbal structure in the form of narrative prose discourse”. A historian like a novelist includes and excludes, suppresses and stresses historical materials depending upon his prejudices, predilections and even prescriptions. S/He in this manner shares ‘emplotting strategies’ with the novelist. History, thus, is a construct ‘made up’ by a historian. And like every other construct, it is necessarily a political act.

As a consequence, it was realized that history which was considered a mirror reflecting factually and exactly what an individual, country and continent was, reflects exactly and everything depends on the mirror. A thing—as it is—appears differently in different mirrors in the mirror house. Similarly, history does not reflect reality. It is possible to influence or distort history as in the case of a mirror. However, of all forms of literature,

the novel is the most nurtured by history. Conversely, it can be said that history is also equally nurtured by the novel.

The fictional engagement with history by its nature contests history. This may lead to two attitudes. The subscribers to the traditional notion of history may be saddened and nostalgic at this disruption of history, while others with joyous affirmation may celebrate this disruption caused by contextual versions of history. There may still be a third attitude—of the anxiety over this unprecedented engagement with history, as Shashi Deshpande finds many works of our contemporary Indian English novelists overburdened with history—so full of details from history that they end up sagging under its weight. These novelists have historical not histrionic sense with which they analyze those historical events and personages that have affected the lives of individuals, communities, the country and even the subcontinent. They do not use history as a lump but with their “sixth sense” they appropriate, revise and re-interpret history—what happened to them as they saw and experienced and what they were told about it. Like excavators these novelists employed their historical sense or consciousness as their chisel, spade, scoop and brush to uncover what lay buried underneath the authorized/official version of History. They have tried to recover the repressed events and interpreted their versions in as diverse ways as they or their works themselves. In the process they have attempted the Re-Discovery of India.

The narratives of emancipation and enlightenment are narratives of integration, inclusion of stories of people who have been away from the mainstream. Writers in the postcolonial age reflect retrospectively on colonialism and the present neo-colonial times. The present is interdependent on its past and the neo-colonial times are an after-effect of the pre-colonial times. The present colonized culture, including minds is a result of past imperialism, both politically and culturally.

The history of modern world has been ravaged by two of the most devastating and massive historical events, namely, Holocaust that shook almost the entire Europe and the Partition of *Akhand Bharat* that destabilized South Asia in general and India in Particular. They are a blot on the human sense of decency and dignity.

1.1 Major Themes of Holocaust and Partition Literatures

The kind of crisis that the Second World War – with its moral horror, its barbarism, and its death camps – has been to the West, the Partition has been to South Asia. The novels selected here for the purpose of research from both Holocaust and the Partition literatures function as ‘counter-histories’ or provide ‘alternate point of view’ against the officially documented versions of history. The subject positions range from an individual to a community, from being the perpetrators of violence to being the victims, from being people of substance and worth to being insignificant subalterns in these literary narratives. Such literary narratives embody ‘distinctive, authentic, marginalized, subaltern voices’ that claim prominence, or at least equivalence against the mainstream historical narratives. Such literary narratives question the ‘top-down approach’ of reading the world history, and replace it with the study of the culture of the people. There is a commitment to represent people’s history in these texts. These texts reject meta-narratives. They attempt to re-write history from the grounds of ambivalence and contradictions and the subaltern (victim) remains the vantage point of their critiques. They deal with possible major themes like dislocation or large-scale migration, mass-killing or massacre and genocide, fragmented identity, void, alienation, suffering, violence and its resultant psychological trauma, disintegration of families, marginalization, extermination, changing power equations, using aesthetically integrative metaphors, issues like hybridity, nationality, belongingness or citizenship, culture, language forced slavery or labour, forced exile, complex web of relationships etc. They look at history not as a period of progress and development, but as a point of crisis and stasis. Though they

neither negate nor substitute the dominant mainstream historical discourses, they necessarily contradict and undermine their canonical significance. They ultimately re-visit and re-claim that part of history which was either deliberately subdued or evaded or lay buried under the official versions of history. Such a re-writing of history is a liberating act of mind.

1.2 Review of Related Literature

The uniqueness of the Holocaust makes special claims upon all who write about it, whether the writer is historian, author, or literary critic. Some would suggest that the nature of this uniqueness demands silence: others insist on speaking from the distance; and still others would require that words mean something only if they are written by survivors. Although the story of the Holocaust cannot be told adequately by any literary or scholarly means, the event is the stimulus for a startling variety of articles, plays, novels, and critical references. Two of the most significant works on the theme of Holocaust are: *Confronting the Holocaust: The Impact of Elie Wiesel* edited by Alvin Rosenfeld and Irvin Greenberg (1978), and Alvin Rosenfeld's *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (1980). Other seminal texts on Holocaust are Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (2001), Henry Friendlander's *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (1997), Simone Gigliotti and Berel Lang's *The Holocaust: A Reader* (2005), Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (2003) and Berel Lang's *The Future of the Holocaust: Between History and Memory* (1999). *Voices from the Holocaust* edited by Sylvia Rothchild (1981) is a compilation of firsthand Holocaust stories told by Jews currently living in the United States. The survivors reveal their attitudes toward the Holocaust as they reflect upon their experiences and tell of their lives before, during, and after the era of the Third Reich. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (2006) written by Michael Berenbaum, a leading Holocaust scholar and the project director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, this comprehensive book

presents a historical survey of the Third Reich. Deftly weaving together historical research and survivors' testimonies, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War* (1987) is Martin Gilbert's acclaimed and definitive history of the European Jews, from Hitler's rise to power to Germany's surrender to the liberation of the prisoners of the concentration camps. The book, *Introducing the Holocaust: A Graphic Guide* written by Haim Bresheeth, Litza Jansz and Stuart Hood is a classic illustrated guide to the horrors of the Holocaust. The mass murder of European Jews by the Nazis stands out as one of the most horrific events of the twentieth century. An attempt would be made to contribute in a humble way to this on-going trend in research on Holocaust by analyzing literary narratives.

Some of the most scholarly and landmark works done on the theme of Partition are: Alok Bhalla's *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home* (2006), Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (2000), Mushirul Hasan's *Legacy of Divided Nation and The Partition Omnibus* (1997), Jasbir Jain's (ed.) *Narrative of the Village: Centre of the Periphery* (2006), Suvir Kaul's (ed.) *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India* (2002), Sucheta Mahajan's *Independence and Partition* (2000), Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan's *The Communal Triangle in India* (1942), Ritu Menon's (ed.) *No Woman's Land: Women from Pakistan, India & Bangladesh Write on the Partition of India* (2004), Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin's *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (2004), Gyanendra Pandey's *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (2001), Kamla Patel's *Torn From the Roots: A Partition Memoir* (2006), Kavita Punjabi's *Old Maps and New Legacies of the Partition: A Pakistan Diary* (2005), Ramakant and Rajan Mahan's (eds.) *India's Partition: Preludes and Legacies* (1998), Ravikant and Tarun K Saint's (eds.) *Translating Partition* (2001), Satish Sabarwal's *Spirals of Contention: Why India Was Partitioned* (2008), Anita Inder's *The Partition of*

India (2007) etc. The present research is an attempt at studying the devastating historical event named Partition from the ground of ambivalence, hopelessness and suffering of the masses and thereby to contribute in a humble way to the on-going trend of interdisciplinary research and reading history from below. However, an attempt would also be made during this research to study the Partition of India in a mode of comparative analysis to another equally destructive historical event named Holocaust, which may ultimately give the researcher new insights and which may open new avenues of conducting research.

1.3 Research Methodology

I intend to look for a thematic as well as comparative analysis of the said literatures, that is to say, literature pertaining to Holocaust and Partition, based on the insights that I will derive during my thorough and a comprehensive reading of the selected texts. I wish to examine the said texts against the background of reading history from below or re-writing of history from the point of view of ‘inaudible and marginalized voices’. I will also attempt to explore similar thematic concerns in my closer readings of the selected texts. At the same time, I would certainly focus my attention on the cultural trauma suffered by the masses due to larger historical events. I would also look critically at the factors that led to such devastating historical events and simultaneously will try to have a broader perspective of indigenous human responses and strategies of survival adopted by varied individuals and ethnic groups to perennial issues of life in times of colossal historical upheaval. Thus, the research would humbly address the canonical significance and hegemony enjoyed by history over literature as a discipline.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- a) The essential objective of this study is to salvage the forgotten history of people like my mother and her family, who have been the victims of atrocities of war and viciousness of dictatorial regime.
- b) This research is a modest attempt at making a worthy contribution to the on-going interdisciplinary research and deliberation between history and literary studies.
- c) It aims at accentuating the distinction of methodology employed by both literature and history in representing holocaust-like tragedies and their implications.
- d) It aims at underlining the need of comprehending history and contemporary times, not just as gathered actualities or documentation, but also as stories—both individual and collective, both oral and written. It is crucial to take the assistance of literary narratives keeping in mind the end goal to comprehend the accessible corpus of historical material.
- e) This research aims to find out whether history and novel share a consistent, reciprocal relationship as major narratives or not.
- f) This research aims at filling the countless gaps in the official versions of historical writings of India and Europe and to free history from being weighted, hegemonic, and conclusive. It foregrounds those voices that have either been marginalized, subdued or evaded. It calls for re-writing of history which takes a look at history from below [victim's view] and de-centres the view from above [victimizer's view].
- g) It also aims at finding grounds of comparison or commonalities between both the literatures, that is to say, Holocaust and Partition, particularly at thematic level.

1.5 Delimitations

This research project will confine itself to the following areas:

- a)** The research project will attempt the re-writing of history in the selected six texts only.
- b)** As it is a thematic and a comparative study, the research project will look for the social, cultural, political, economic, and above all psychological implications of the holocaust-like tragedies that ravaged the sub-continent and the European continent in 1940s and 1950s.

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CHAPTER 2

From Subjugation to Liberation: Elie Wiesel's *Night*

2.1 A Historical Overview of the Second World War

The Second World War was the child of the first; in fact, the connection between the two is so intimate that many observers see the two wars as one, creating what historian Eric Hobsbawm calls “the thirty-one year war that began in 1914 and ended in 1945.” (Quinn, *History in Literature*, 357) Certainly the social, political, and economic upheavals following the 1918 armistice and the Treaty of Versailles provided the seeds of despair, disintegration, and, in Germany at least, humiliation and the desire for vengeance. All of these conditions played into the hands of the nascent Nazi Party and its charismatic leader Adolf Hitler, who added to this brew a hierarchical racist theory that posited the Aryans as the master race and the Jews as the degraded, virtually subhuman race whose very existence constituted a dangerous threat to Aryan purity. Coming to power in 1933, Hitler transformed Germany from a crippled, dissension-riddled republic into a powerful, menacing fascist state, willing and able to wreak vengeance on its old enemies.

Beginning in 1936 with the occupation of the Rhineland, a demilitarized zone between France and Germany, then moving to the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland in 1938, Hitler not only extended his power but also tested the resolve of the Western Allies. With each uncontested step, he became more firmly convinced of the Allies' fundamental weakness, underscored finally by the Munich Pact of 1939, in which the French and the British prime ministers, Edouard Daladier and Neville Chamberlain, caved into his demands in exchange for his empty promise to help ensure “peace in our time,” as Chamberlain was to proclaim on his return from Munich. Within six months, Germany had browbeaten the Czechoslovakian government into requesting status as a “protectorate” of Germany. As Hitler paraded in triumph through Prague, the Allies declared that any further act of aggression on

Germany's part would result in war. Hitler's response was to sign a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, giving the Soviets control over the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and a substantial slice of Poland in exchange for their support for a German attack on Poland.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Great Britain and France immediately declared war, a declaration that did little to deter the German army, which swept over the ill-equipped Poles in less than a month. During the "phony war," the period from September 1939 to April 1940, the Allies hastily rearmed, and the Axis nations (Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Romania) prepared for a spring offensive. It began with the German invasion of Denmark and Norway in April 1940. A month later the Germans initiated their *Blitzkrieg* – "lightning war" – bypassing the Maginot Line, the concrete bunkers placed across the French-German border, and invading the neutral countries of Belgium and the Netherlands, finally crashing into France through the Ardennes forest.

On June 22, 1940, France surrendered. In the interim, more than 300,000 British and French troops had been trapped near the port city of Dunkirk. A hastily arranged evacuation prevented the capture of most of these troops, preserving them for the next phase of the war, the battle of Britain. The battle of Britain was an air war, intended by the Germans as a prelude to an invasion. Despite the relentless bombardment of British military targets and major cities, the Germans were unable to overcome the skill of the Royal Air Force pilots, the superiority of the spitfire fighter planes, and the new technological innovation, radar.

By 1941, the war had spread to the Balkans and North Africa. Italy had invaded Greece but was beaten back by fierce Greece resistance, forcing the Germans to come to the aid of their Italian allies. Benito Mussolini's army proved equally ineffective in North Africa, needing to be rescued again, this time by the German African Korps, led by the brilliant strategist Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

In June 1941, Hitler made a catastrophic decision to open up a new front by invading the Soviet Union. At first, the unprepared Soviet army, seriously weakened by Joseph Stalin's purge of the general command, retreated in the face of a three-pronged German onslaught. Only a heroic defence on the outskirts of Moscow prevented the collapse of the Soviet government. When, after a winter stalemate, the fighting resumed in the spring of 1942, the Germans redirected their main efforts to capturing the city of Stalingrad, in a seven-month battle that resulted in the loss of an entire German army and marked the beginning of the turning of the tide.

Another momentous and mistaken decision was made in December of 1941 when Japan, Germany's Asian ally, unleashed a surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, dramatically expanding the conflict into a true "world war." Japanese dive bombers and torpedo boats succeeded in sinking 19 American naval vessels, killing more than 2,400 American service people and civilians. America declared war on December 8, and three days later Germany declared war against the United States. The Japanese followed up the attack with invasions of Malaya (now Malaysia), Burma (now Myanmar), and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), all of which, including the island fortress of Singapore, rapidly fell to the invaders. Similar success attended the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, in which the last American outposts, the Bataan peninsula and the small island of Corregidor, fell in April and May 1942.

By June of 1942, the Japanese had experienced astonishing success on land and at sea, Victory seemed to be within their grasp. But overconfidence led them to carelessness in their handling of cooled plans for an attack on the American fleet off the Midway Islands. The battle that ensued proved to be the turning point of the Pacific war. The Japanese lost four aircraft carriers and from that point on were forced to fight a defensive war. On the strength

of this victory, American troops began a series of attacks on Japanese-held islands, some of which became the scenes of particularly fierce battles, eventually won by the Americans.

In 1944, General Douglas MacArthur, the commanding general of the United States forces, fulfilling a vow to “return,” launched an attack on Leyte Island in the Philippines. At the same time, the naval battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest battle in the history of naval warfare, took place, with the Americans securing a narrow but decisive victory.

In 1943, following the British victory the previous year over Rommel’s forces at Alamein and with joint British and American forces in Tunisia, the Allies now opened up a new front by invading Sicily in July and mainland Italy in September. The Italian Campaign proved to be long, arduous, and relatively ineffective. What was required was a wholesale assault on Western Europe, designed ultimately to catch the German armies in a pincer movement between the Russians in the East and the British and American forces in the West. Such an assault occurred on June 6, 1944, with the D day Normandy Invasion in northern France. Despite fierce resistance, the ensuing campaign, combined with the relentless and overwhelming Soviet army’s offensive in the East, eventually brought Germany to its knees. The Nazi defeat was finally signalled by the suicide of Hitler in April 1945 and the formal end of the war in Europe on May 8, 1945.

Four months later the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, followed three days later by a second nuclear bomb in Nagasaki. The devastation caused the Japanese government, previously committed to fight to the bitter end, to sue for peace. (Quinn, *History in Literature*, 357-360)

The worldwide conflagration that ended in 1945 soon led to two other massive conflicts, the Cold War, which pitted the two remaining superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, against each other, and the battles against Colonialism, which Asian and African colonies raged in their desire for independence. But preceding these events was the

wrenching spectacle of 20 million people roaming through Europe in the summer of 1945. Ten million of these were ethnic Germans expelled from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Added to these were the so-called displaced persons, the millions from all over Europe, once forced to do slave labour in German factories, now homeless, either because there was no home to go to, or because they feared to go home, as was the case with many Russians who knew they would either be killed or sent to the Gulag. Also among the displaced were many Jews who had survived the death camps and now sought a new home in Palestine. (Quinn, *History in Literature*, 363) The Second World War was the costliest in history involving a military expenditure of over 1,100 million American dollars. It destroyed property worth 250 million dollars, shattering the economies of several countries. European and Asian countries ravaged by the war, faced the acute problems of economic recovery. The social cost of the war was also colossal. It was the most destructive war in history. It took 22 million lives of soldiers and civilians, and left over 34 millions wounded. Several million persons were uprooted from their native soil and were made into refugees.

2.2 Holocaust and its Consequences

The German destruction of the European Jews was a tour de force; the Jewish collapse under the German assault was a manifestation of failure. Both of these phenomena were the final product of an earlier age.

Anti-Jewish policies and actions did not have their beginning in 1933. For many centuries, and in many countries, the Jews had been victims of destructive action. What was the object of these activities? What were the aims of those who persisted in anti-Jewish deeds? Throughout Western history, three consecutive policies have been applied against Jewry in its dispersion.

The first anti-Jewish policy started in the fourth century after Christ in Rome. Early in the fourth century, during the reign of Constantine, the Christian Church gained power in

Rome, and Christianity became the state religion. From this period, the state carried out Church policy. For the next twelve centuries, the Catholic Church prescribed the measures that were to be taken with respect to the Jews. Unlike the pre-Christian Romans, who claimed no monopoly on religion and faith, the Christian Church insisted on acceptance of Christian doctrine.

For an understanding of Christian policy toward Jewry, it is essential to realize that the Church pursued conversion not so much for the sake of aggrandizing its power (the Jews have always been few in number), but because of the conviction that it was the duty of true believers to save unbelievers from the doom of eternal hellfire. Zealousness in the pursuit of conversion was an indication of the depth of faith. The Christian religion was not one of many religions, but the true religion, the only one. Those who were not in its fold were either ignorant or in error. The Jews could not accept Christianity.

In the very early stages of the Christian faith, many Jews regarded Christians as members of a Jewish sect. The first Christians, after all, still observed the Jewish law. They had merely added a few non-essential practices, such as baptism, to their religious life. But their view was changed abruptly when Christ was elevated to Godhood. The Jews have only one God. This God is indivisible. He is a jealous God and admits of no other gods. He is not Christ, and Christ is not He. Christianity and Judaism have since been irreconcilable. An acceptance of Christianity has since signified an abandonment of Judaism.

In antiquity and in the Middle Ages, Jews did not abandon Judaism lightly. With patience and persistence the Church attempted to convert obstinate Jewry, and for twelve hundred years the theological argument was fought without interruption. The Jews were not convinced. Gradually the Church began to back its words with force. The Papacy did not permit pressure to be put on individual Jews; Rome prohibited forceful conversions. However, the clergy did use pressure on the whole. Step by step, but with ever widening

effect, the Church adopted “defensive” measures against its passive victims. Christians were “protected” from the “harmful” consequences of intercourse with Jews by rigid laws against inter-marriage, by prohibitions of discussions about religious issues, by laws against domicile in common abodes. The Church “protected” its Christians from the “harmful” Jewish teachings by burning the *Talmud* and by barring Jews from public office.

These measures were precedent-making destructive activities. How little success the Church had in accomplishing its aim is revealed by the treatment of the few Jews who succumbed to the Christian religion. The clergy was not sure of its success—hence the widespread practice, in the Middle Ages, of identifying proselytes as former Jews; hence the inquisition of new Christians suspected of heresy; hence the issuance in Spain of certificates of “purity,” signifying purely Christian ancestry, and the specification of “half-new Christians,” “quarter-new Christians,” “one-eighth-new Christians,” and so on.

The failure of conversion had far-reaching consequences. The unsuccessful Church began to look on the Jews as a special group of people, different from Christians, deaf to Christianity, and dangerous to the Christian faith. In 1542 Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, wrote the following lines:

“And if there were a spark of common sense and understanding in them, they would truly have to think like this: O my God, it does not stand and go well with us; our misery is too great, too long, too hard; God has forgotten us, etc. I am no Jew, but I do not like to think in earnest about such brutal wrath of God against this people, for I am terrified at the thought that cuts through my body and soul: What is going to happen with the eternal wrath in hell against all false Christians and unbelievers?”

(Bartov, *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, 24)

In short, if he were a Jew, he would have accepted Christianity long ago. A people cannot suffer for fifteen hundred years and still think of itself as the chosen people. But this people were blind. It had been stricken by the wrath of God. He had struck them “with frenzy, blindness, and raging heart, with the eternal fire, of which the Prophets say: The wrath of God will hurl itself outward like a fire that no one can smother.” (Bartov, *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, 24)

The Lutheran manuscript was published at a time of increasing hatred for the Jews. Too much had been invested in twelve hundred years of conversion policy. Too little had been gained. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, the Jews of England, France, Germany, Spain, Bohemia, and Italy were presented with ultimatums that gave them no choice but one: conversion or expulsion.

Expulsion is the second anti-Jewish policy in history. In its origin, this policy presented itself only as an alternative—moreover, as an alternative that was left to the Jews. But long after the separation of church and state, long after the state had ceased to carry out church policy, expulsion and exclusion remained the goal of anti-Jewish activity.

The anti-Semites of the nineteenth century, who divorced themselves from religious aims, espoused the emigration of the Jews. The anti-Semites hated the Jews with a feeling of righteousness and reason, as though they had acquired the antagonism of the church like speculators buying the rights of a bankrupt corporation. With this hatred, the post-ecclesiastic enemies of Jewry also took the idea that the Jews could not be changed, that they could not be converted, that they could not be assimilated, that they were a finished product, inflexible in their ways, set in their notions, fixed in their beliefs.

The expulsion and exclusion policy was adopted by the Nazis and remained the goal of all anti-Jewish activity until 1941. That year marks a turning point in anti-Jewish history. In 1941, the Nazis found themselves in the midst of a total war. Several million Jews were

incarcerated in ghettos. Emigration was impossible. A last-minute project to ship the Jews to the African island of Madagascar had fallen through. The “Jewish problem” had to be “solved” in some other way. At this crucial time, the idea of a “territorial solution” emerged in Nazi minds. The “territorial solution” or “the final solution of the Jewish question in Europe,” as it became known, envisaged the death of European Jewry. The European Jews were to be killed. This was the third anti-Jewish policy in history.

To summarize: Since the fourth century after Christ there have been three anti-Jewish policies: conversion, expulsion, and annihilation. The second appeared as an alternative to the first, and the third emerged as an alternative to the second. (Bartov, *The Holocaust*, 23-25)

Although the history of the world is replete with examples of various forms of genocide and mass slaughter, the Nazis’ extermination of the Jews marks the first carefully planned, systematic, scientifically assisted attempt to annihilate an entire people. And for these reasons, the Holocaust is historically unique and profoundly troubling in the questions it raises about human nature and Western civilization. Its immediate origins were the inscrutable mind and will of Adolf Hitler, who, in a 1939 speech, “prophesied” that “if the Jewish international financiers succeed in involving the nations in another war, the result will not be world bolshevism and therefore a victory for Judaism, it will be the annihilation of the Jews in Europe.” The logical contradiction in this quotation betrays the mind of the speaker: Jewish capitalists are conspiring to create a worldwide communist revolution. However, the rhetorical strategy is clear: When setting up a scapegoat, make it responsible for as much evil as possible.

The more remote cause of the Holocaust was the long-standing tradition of anti-Semitism in the West that ranged from exclusion and segregation to forced conversions to active participation in pogroms to its polite form, a willingness to look the other way when faced with examples of anti-Semitic activity. In the Nazi era, relatively few were heroic

enough to aid the Jews in occupied Europe or open-hearted enough in Britain and America, whose governments not only resisted receiving many refugees but tended to cover up the information they did have about the genocide. Nevertheless, the Holocaust represents a quantum leap from traditional anti-Semitism.

The Nazis prepared the way for extermination by a systematic process of trying to dehumanize the Jews, beginning with depriving them of their civil rights, excluding them from many professions, forbidding intermarriage, encouraging Aryans to mistreat them, spreading anti-Semitic literature, forcing them to wear yellow stars, and other acts of humiliation. The goal was to create, in the minds of the German public, images of Jews as less than human, or if human, enemies of the Third Reich, thereby soothing the consciences of those who might raise objections, while providing a rationalization for those looking for one.

When the actual plan to murder all the Jews was put into effect is a matter of some dispute, but it is generally agreed that at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, the details of the “final solution” were worked out. Instead of mass shootings by mobile killing units (the Einsatzgruppen), such as took place at BABI YAR in the Ukraine, the new plans called for the shipment of millions to death camps, such as AUSCHWITZ and TREBLINKA, where they were efficiently herded into “showers” and gassed to death. The corpses were then cremated or buried in mass graves.

Prodigious efforts of scholarly research and the testimony of survivors have answered many questions concerning the Holocaust. As the historian Yehuda Bauer points out, scholarship, archival sources, and interviews with survivors have explained its how, when, and where, but the unanswered question is why. Bauer rejects the “mystifying” notion that the Holocaust is inexplicable, that it stands apart from history as something “diabolical” or “inhuman”. As Bauer reminds us, “Heinrich Himmler ... was human, and so are we.” The

effort to explain these events, to discover the reasons why, is a vital one, because if the Holocaust is human, it is repeatable, a truth that subsequent events in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia have made all too evident. (Quinn, *History in Literature*, 166-167)

The term ‘holocaust’ is derived from the Greek word ‘*holókauston*’, an animal sacrifice offered to a god in which the whole (‘*holos*’) animal is completely burnt (‘*kaustos*’). For hundreds of years, the word ‘holocaust’ was used in English to denote great massacres, but since the 1960s, the term has come to be used by scholars and popular writers to refer exclusively to the genocide of Jews. The biblical word ‘Shoah’ meaning ‘calamity’ became the standard Hebrew term for the Holocaust as early as the 1940s, especially in Europe and Israel. The Nazis used a euphemistic phrase, the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish Question’ and the phrase ‘Final Solution’ has been widely used as a term for the genocide of the Jews subsequently. Nazis also used the euphemism, ‘*Leben unwertes Leben*’ or ‘Life unworthy of life’ in an attempt to justify the killings philosophically.

The Holocaust is what we call the Nazi attempt to destroy European Jewry. It was part of a vast operation in genocide which, between 1939 and 1945, caused the following deaths:

Jews	Between 5 and 6 Million
Soviet Prisoners of War	Over 3 Million
Soviet Civilians	2 Million
Polish Civilians	Over 1 Million
Yugoslav Civilians	Over 1 Million
Men, Women and Children with Mental and Physical Deficiencies	70,000
Gypsies	Over 2,000,00
Political Prisoners	Unknown
Resistance Fighters	Unknown
Deportees	Unknown
Homosexuals	Unknown

The Holocaust is an example of Genocide, which literally means the annihilation of a race. It was first used in 1944. The United Nations Convention of 1948 defines the crime of genocide as “acts committed to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such.”

Shoah – The Holocaust – was a case of genocide. It was intended by the Nazis to be “the final solution” of what they saw as “the Jewish problem”. The Nazis’ stated aim was to make the territories under their control *Judenrein* – cleansed of Jews. It was therefore an extreme case of “racial cleansing”. Its ideological basis was “anti-Semitism”.

The word “anti-Semitism was invented in 1879 by a German racist called Wilhelm Marr (1818-1904). But anti-Semitism as a phenomenon was many centuries older. It has its roots in religion. In the Middle Ages it was an unquestioned part of Christian doctrine that the Jews were guilty of the death of Christ. They were therefore liable to be massacred at times of Christian fervour. In 1096 the armies of the First Crusade set out from Western Europe to rescue the holy places of Christianity from their Arab conquerors. As they passed they slaughtered the Jews in the cities of France and Germany.

The Protestant Church inherited the anti-Semitism of the Catholics. Martin Luther, the great reformer, denounced the Jews as “the devil’s people”, as “liars and bloodhounds” and “a bloody and revengeful people”. He declared:

“We are at fault in not slapping them. Set fire to their synagogues and schools and bury or cover with dirt whatever will not burn... This is to be done in honour of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God may see that we are Christians.” (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 8)

In Christian medieval Europe difference was forced upon the Jews. They were required to live in ghetto segregation. They were said to have a special smell – *foetor Judaicus* – just as

other immigrants today are accused of having a “bad smell”. Throughout the centuries in Europe, the Jew has been “the Other” – different – set apart – by culture, by religion, by rituals, by dress (in some cases they were compelled to wear badges or specific robes), and by language. Many Jews have – as is their right – held very tenaciously to their differences.

In the 18th century, the intellectual movement known as the “Enlightenment” produced the body of thought that led to the French Revolution. It believed in equality irrespective of race. It was against superstition. All religions, including Christianity and Judaism, were viewed with equal scepticism. The important thing was human understanding and tolerance. As Napoleon’s armies moved to conquer Europe the Jews were everywhere emancipated.

As a result of the Enlightenment, the 19th century was a period of assimilation when Jews were received into Gentile society. They gave their best to art, music, literature and science. They became prominent in the professions and active in industry and commerce.

But the success of the Jews in these various fields led to envy and criticism. Jewish entrepreneurs were seen as “new men” who exploited Jewish family and social networks (which extended across frontiers) to further their businesses in underhand and unfair ways. At the same time, Jews became increasingly associated with liberalism, radicalism, socialism and communism. The idea took root in anti-Semitic circles that to do away with the Jews would at one fell swoop do away with capitalism and socialism.

In 1835, Joseph-Arthur Gobineau (1816-1882), a French diplomat, published an influential essay on ‘The Inequality of Human Races’. He said:

“I believe that the Aryan race – white Europeans of the blond Nordic type – are a superior race.”

The Jews were Semites and not Aryans. They therefore constituted a foreign “Oriental” element in European “Aryan” society. They were seen as being unproductive – that is to say not labourers or peasants and yet successful, particularly in commerce and banking, and powerful through their manipulation in the press, the stage and entertainment. Aryans, by contrast, were rooted in nationhood.

Jews were believed particularly dangerous, because when they did assimilate, even to the point of abandoning their religion and intermarrying with Christians, they were often difficult to identify – a potential and secret threat to the “race” with which they interbred.

Eugenics was invented by the British scientist Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911). It was derived from Darwin’s theory of the “survival of the fittest”, and argued that society should discourage breeding by those of its members who were “unfit” either physically, mentally or socially. In 1910, Winston Churchill, as Home Secretary, drafted a proposal to sterilize, or put in labour camps, 1,000,00 “degenerate British citizens”.

In Germany, in 1904, the theory of Eugenics was carried to its logical conclusion. Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), German scientist and philosopher stated that:

“Mercy Death” is a hygienic way to eliminate the unfit, who thus cease to be a burden on society.”

In 1920, a book was published entitled *The Release and Destruction of Lives Devoid of Value*. Its authors – a lawyer and a psychiatrist proposed euthanasia, enforced by the state, for defective, worthless human beings and those who “represent a foreign body in human society.” This is precisely how anti-Semitism defines the Jews.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they set up a special unit, euphemistically called the *General Foundation for Welfare and Institutional Care* or T-4. It was made up of doctors and psychiatrists who carried out “mercy killings” of 70,000 men, women and

children in institutions before the programme was officially stopped as a result of protests from clergymen.

Towards the end of the 19th century, anti-Semitism began to take on specifically political forms. In Germany and Austria, the 1870s had been a period of severe economic depression. The lower middle classes – caught between powerful economic interests and the rising working-class movement were particularly affected. A number of small rightwing groups in Germany and Austria attacked the Jews, who at one and the same time contrived to represent to them capitalism and radical socialism.

In France, anti-Semitism was, if anything, stronger than in Germany or Austria. French anti-Semitism was traditionally voiced by the Monarchists and the Catholic clergy, both of whom rejected the legacy of the Revolution of 1789 with its motto of *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity*.

In the 1890s, the trial and imprisonment of a Jewish officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, falsely accused of spying for Germany, revealed the depth of anti-Semitic feeling. The radicals and the Left rose in his defence. The country was split down the middle. After the Dreyfus affair Charles Maurras (1868-1952) a rightwing intellectual, Monarchist and anti-Semite, set up *Action Française* – a seedbed of fascism.

Political parties with anti-Semitic policies, like those in pre-1914 Germany and Austria, were small and relatively unimportant elements in the political spectrum. But they were the forerunners of the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazis) which Hitler formed in the 1920s. This too started as a small party.

In *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), which Hitler wrote in the early 1920s he explained the importance of “racial purity” as follows:

“No boy or girl must leave school without having a clear insight into the meaning of racial purity and the importance of maintaining the racial blood unadulterated.”

The same racist doctrine was spelt out in the programme of the Nazi party. Only nationals, it said, can be citizens of the state. Only persons of German blood can be nationals. Jews do not have German blood. Therefore no Jew can become a German national. It was a logic which could easily lead to genocide.

So the question is did Hitler, did the Nazis, plan the Holocaust from the moment they took power? The answer to this question is two-fold:

1. On the one side are those who believe that it was the Nazis’ constant and unwavering intention to destroy European Jewry physically. They are called *Intentionalists*.
2. On the other are those who argue that the Holocaust was reached by what has been called a “twisted road”, and many forces within the German state as well as outside it helped to bring it about. They are called *Functionalists*.

The eminent historian of the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg in his seminal book *The Destruction of the European Jews*, summed up in 3 steps the centuries it took to build the railway to genocide. Given below are the 3 steps:

1. You have no right to live among us as Jews – the process begins with Christianity’s **ghettoization** of the Jews after failing to convert them.
2. You have no right to live among us – the process continues in secular Europe when the Jews emerge from the ghetto and are perceived as an **economic threat**, for which reason liberal assimilation fails.

3. You have no right to live – the Final Solution arrives with the “**scientific**” theory of the Jews as not only racially inferior, but as menace to the purity of “Aryan” blood.

“The German Nazis, then, did not discard the past, they built on it. They did not begin a development; they completed it. In the deep recesses of anti-Jewish history we shall find many of the administrative and psychological tools with which the Nazis implemented their destruction process. In the hollows of the past we shall also discover the roots of the characteristic Jewish response to an outside attack.”

The Nazis came to power in 1933, with the blessing and support of the German Right, the German industrialists and the German army. The German parliament immediately passed an Act granting Hitler dictatorial powers. The rightwing and centre parties voted for the Act. Only the socialists and communists dared to vote against the measures.

Concentration camps had been invented by the British in the Boer War for the internment of Boer men, women and children. Concentrated – that is to say, forcibly collected and interned in these camps. They died in great numbers from neglect and disease.

Hitler then began a reign of terror against his political opponents. Communists, socialists, radicals, trade unionists – there were plenty of Jews among them! They were imprisoned without trial in concentration camps – *Konzentrationslager (KZ)*.

The first German concentration camp was set up at Dachau in March 1933 – less than two months after Hitler came to power. From the start the German KZs adopted brutal penal methods – hard labour, floggings, and executions. Camps at Dachau, Sachsen Hausen and Buchenwald held some 50,000 prisoners between them, half of them being “asocial” elements to be used for forced labour.

On coming to power, the Nazis at once set about introducing a series of laws which aimed to exclude “non-Aryans”, i.e. Jews, from public life. “Non-Aryans” were defined as persons with a Jewish parent or grandparent. Having begun with the Civil Service, the Nazis

went on to banish Jews from teaching in schools and universities and set a quota on Jewish students. Jews were barred from practising as doctors, dentists and judges. They might not sit as jurors. They were declared ineligible for military service. “Aryanization” of cultural institutions meant that Jews were excluded from cultural life. They were forbidden to be publishers or editors. Jews who had been naturalized after 1918 – they were mostly from Eastern Europe – lost their citizenship. As a result they became in effect stateless. Humiliating legislation forbade Jews from owning dogs or using public parks, swimming pools or spas. Those measures were widely accepted by the majority of the German public, despite the intense criticism voice abroad.

The original definition of a ‘non-Aryan’ did not satisfy the racial purists in the Nazi party. There were also problems about the classification of ‘non-Aryans’ for administrative and bureaucratic purposes. During the famous Nuremberg Rally of 1935, Hitler gave orders that a Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour should be drawn up in the space of two days. “Experts” from the Ministry of the Interior produced the legislation with almost ludicrous haste. The resulting decrees came to be known as the Nuremberg Laws. The Nuremberg Laws began by asserting that only a person of German “or related” blood could be a German citizen. Jews were therefore deprived of German citizenship.

According to Nuremberg Laws, a Jew was a person defined partly by race and partly by religion. Thus a person was considered a Jew if he or she was descended from at least three grandparents who were Jewish by race, or from two grandparents who belonged to the Jewish religion or had married a Jewish person.

The experts also invented another category. These were the so-called *Mischlinge* (persons of mixed descent) who has one or two grandparents who were Jewish by race but did not subscribe to the Jewish religion. *Mischlinge* were subject to discrimination and were also at risk of worse, but less so than full Jews.

There was thus a three-tiered system with the “Aryans” at the top, the *Mischlinge* in the middle, and the Jews at the bottom of the pile. The laws also forbade marriage and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. These offences were to be punished by imprisonment. Jews were not to employ in their home females of German or related blood under the age of 45.

Immediately on coming to power in 1933, Hitler sanctioned a one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses to appease the radicals in the Nazi party. In spite of the difficulties placed in their way, many Jewish firms remained in business. But in 1937, a series of decrees “Aryanized” Jewish concerns. Jews were required to sell or liquidate their businesses at ridiculous prices. “Aryan” capitalists cashed in.

There were half-a-million Jews in the **Third Reich** at the Nazi coming to power in 1933. The result of Nazi oppression and the anti-Jewish legislation was a series of waves of emigration. The first main wave was between 1933 and 1936. The second wave came after the **Anschluss** – the Nazi takeover of Austria – in March 1938. This brought another 180,000 Jews under Nazi rule – and a mass flight of Jews from Austria. To control it, an Office of Emigration was set up in Vienna. It was run by a low-ranking SS officer called Adolf Eichmann (1906-executed 1962). The third wave followed the **Kristallnacht** – the night of broken glass.

In October 1938, 15,000 Polish Jews were expelled from Germany and dumped at the Polish border. The rightwing anti-Semitic Polish government, which was talking about its own “Jewish problem”, refused them entry. In revenge, a young Polish Jew, whose parents had been expelled, shot an official at the German Embassy in Paris. The Nazi Party said it was part of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy, and on 9/10 November, responded with a night of brutality, arson, murder. Some 300 synagogues were burned. At least 7,000 shops were destroyed and looted. Jewish cemeteries were desecrated. 91 Jews were killed. Jews were

arrested in large numbers and taken to the concentration camps. Most of them were released by the end of the year, but, 1,000 had been killed. A “Jewish Atonement Fine” was imposed for the damage caused. It had the effect of stripping the remaining Jews of most of their assets. The Jews were by now effectively excluded from German economic life.

The Kristallnacht – the Night of Broken Glass – was the work of the brownshirted SA: the uniformed Nazis, the radicals of the party. It did not please Hitler because it was not carried out under the central control of the regime. Hitler believed in a methodically planned approach to the Jewish question within a bureaucratic framework.

The SS played a crucial part in formulating and implementing Hitler’s policy. The SS began as Hitler’s bodyguard (Schutzstaffel). They were a racial elite who had to provide evidence of Aryan ancestry. They swore absolute loyalty to Hitler. SS troops not only ran and guarded the concentration camps, but also put infantry and armoured divisions into the field. The head of the SS was Heinrich Himmler (1900 – committed suicide May 1945), one of the most powerful men in Nazi Germany. He had under him the **Reich Security Main Office (RHSA)**, run by Rudolf Heydrich (born 1904-assassinated 1942). The Gestapo (secret police) and the security services were also under Himmler’s command. Heydrich applied the ideology of anti-Semitism with cold logic that led eventually to the Final Solution.

In order to make the Reich **Judenrein**, the Nazis were genuinely anxious to expel as many Jews as possible. When the Jews left they were stripped of their belongings and property. The wealth confiscated went to fund the preparations for war. The Nazis revived a “flight tax” to despoil the emigrants. Jews lost between 30% and 50% of their capital on leaving. After 1938, Jews were forbidden to export merchandise, furniture, the tools of their trade, furs or jewellery. In all, about one-half of the 500,000 German and the 200,000 Austrian Jews contrived to emigrate wherever they could. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 3-39)

The United Kingdom had no quota system, but the government declared that it was not “a country of immigration”. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 41) In Britain, enlightened opinion and organizations – both Jewish and non-Jewish – were active in helping refugees from Nazism. To ease access, the Anglo-Jewish community made a promise. Jewish refugees would not become a financial burden to the state. By the outbreak of war in September 1939, 80,000 refugees had been admitted. They included some 10,000 children who arrived after the Kristallnacht; 70% of them were Jewish. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 41-42)

Although openly anti-Semitic, the Colonial Office allowed Jews to emigrate to Palestine in almost unrestricted numbers until 1936. At the peak of pre-war Nazi persecution, a royal commission recommended that Jewish immigration be limited to a maximum of 12,000 per annum for 5 years. In May 1939, the British government revised this to a total of 75,000 – thereafter there would be no admittance without Arab consent in Palestine. This led to large scale illegal immigration, whereby between 1938 and 1941 over 18,000 Jews entered Palestine. The British reaction was fierce and often brutal.

In July 1938, 33 governments attended a conference in the pleasant French spa of Evian to discuss the refugee situation. The Third Reich was represented by five SS officers. One country after another found reasons for refusing entry to Jewish immigrants. Holland and Denmark were the only European countries to offer to increase their quotas slightly. One of the few countries that offered to take in several thousand Jews was the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean, which hoped thereby to “improve” the racial mix of the population with white settlers. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 45-47)

In January 1939, speaking to the German parliament, Hitler prophesied that:

“If the international Jewish Financers in and outside Europe should exceed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will be not the bolshevization of the earth and thus the victory of Jewry but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.”

The question is: To what extent was this a statement of policy or mere rhetoric, in an attempt to blackmail world opinion?

By the summer of 1940, German-occupied territory in Europe stretched from the Bay of Biscay to Central Poland. As an interim solution, the Jews of the conquered territories in Europe were shipped to German-controlled territory in Poland. Even before the Jews from occupied Europe arrived in Poland, 10% of the population was Jewish. The Polish Jewish community had settled in the 14th century, at the invitation of the Polish kings. With the German occupation of Poland in September 1939, the old pattern of pogrom and anti-Semitic abuse was encouraged by the Nazis.

New decrees were published almost daily, limiting the freedom and activities of the Jewish population. Jews could not use a tram without a delousing certificate, renewable weekly. All Jews had to salute all Nazi personnel. They had to wear the yellow star at all times.

A series of “games” were invented by the Nazi, who took special delight in humiliating the spiritual leadership. For example, a rabbi snatched from a restaurant and forced to clear snow was then forced to shit in his pants. Groups of Jewish workers were made to fight each other at gunpoint. Jews were thrown out of tramcars, and forced to clean toilets with bare hands. Cases of madness among Jews multiplied, partly as a result of the large number of beatings and head injuries. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 50-54)

In September 1939, Heydrich, as head of the Reich Security Main Office, issued a directive on “the Jewish question in the occupied territory of Poland”. Jews are to be taken from the countryside and placed in larger cities at railway junctions or on railway lines. In each Jewish community a council of Jewish elders is to be set up and made fully responsible for the implementation of all directives from the Nazis.

The next step was the setting up of ghettos. In the Middle Ages, most European Jews were forced to live in ghettos separate from the Christian population. It was only during the 18th century that full emancipation was granted to Jews, although the old mechanisms of racial control did not disappear. Reversion to the ghetto meant the loss of all advantages of liberal democracy, won after long, hard struggle.

Ghettoization under the Nazis was a gradual process. The first main ghetto was set up in Lodz in April 1940. The Warsaw ghetto was not created until October of that year. Those in Krakov and Lublin were established in 1941. At first, the ghettos gave a false sense of security. But the ghettos also marked the Jews as people who were different, living in squalid conditions, wrecked by disease. The result was to dehumanize them in the eyes of society outside the ghetto. The business of setting up the ghettos and appointing the Councils (**Judenräte**) was entrusted to special security units – the **Einsatzgruppen**.

The ghettos have been described as “captive city-states totally subject to the German authorities”. Each ghetto had its own administrative body – the Judenrat (Jewish Council). Sometimes, the Nazis ordered prominent persons to select a Council. Other times, they were selected pretty much arbitrarily. To refuse to serve meant death. Many brave men died in this way. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 56-60)

The Warsaw ghetto was the largest of all. Amongst half a million people, over a third of the population of Warsaw, were crammed into a mere 1.3 square miles. The rest of the population inhabited 53.3 square miles. The average room held over 7 people. Only one

percent of the apartments had running water. Only a tenth of the population was allowed to cross into the “Aryan” side to work. All aspects of life in the ghetto were controlled by the Nazis through the Judenrat, which grew enormously from a liaison bureau to a body governing 500,000 people living in the most inhuman conditions.

Since the Jews were completely cut off, the Warsaw Council – like other councils – had to take over the task of providing social services: health care; education; rationing; food distribution; soup kitchens; the organization of the Jewish ghetto police and the administration of justice; hospitals and sanitation; burials; culture. It also organized the industry in the ghetto in which half the population toiled. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 62)

Because of starvation and disease, the death rate in the ghetto was terrifying. Typhoid and dysentery killed large numbers every week. Those who survived were so weak that they were unable to work, and thus became an economic burden. By July 1942, over 100,000 Jews had already perished because of conditions inside the ghetto, leaving 380,000 survivors.

When the Nazis demanded that the Judenrat should supply 10,000 non-productive Jews a day for “resettlement”, Adam Czerniakow (1888-1942), the leader of the Warsaw Judenrat, inquired how long the deportations would continue. The Nazi reply was: “Seven days a week, until the end.” When Czerniakow saw that they intended to exterminate everyone in the ghetto, he committed suicide.

The remaining members of the Judenrat believed that a substantial number would be allowed to go on producing. They therefore vetoed any organized resistance to the deportations, which continued at the pace of 10,000 a day. By September, there were only 70,000 Jews left in the ghetto. They would be destroyed in 1943 during and after the Warsaw Ghetto rising.

In Lodz, the Judenrat leader, Mordecai Rumkowski (1877-1942), was known to the Jews as “the king”. He organized the ghetto – population about 180,000 – with efficiency and tyrannical rigour. When the deportations began in mid-1942, he adopted the deliberate policy of “sacrificing the few to save the many”. In other words, he decided who was to die and who was to live. When the Soviet troops took Lodz in August 1944, there were only 870 survivors. Rumkowski, along with most of its inhabitants, had been despatched to the gas chambers.

In Vilna, the head of the Judenrat was Jacob Gens, an ex-officer in the Lithuanian army. He believed that salvation lay in labour, law and order. His policy was clear. Although he basically opposed armed resistance, Gens was shot by the Gestapo, a few days before the ghetto was liquidated, for having contacts with the partisans. The **Judenräte** were, if unwillingly and unwittingly, an enabling device in the great extermination machine, smoothing its complex operations.

The decision to move towards the “Final Solution to the Jewish question” was taken after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. This was an ideological war directed not only against the “subhuman” Slavs, but also the “subhuman” Jews. In July 1941 – a month after the invasion of the Soviet Union – Hermann Goering (1893-1946) – Hitler’s second-in-command and presumably acting in line with the intentions of the Fuehrer signed an order, drafted by Heydrich.

At the beginning of July, Heydrich gave special orders for the conquered territories of the Soviet Union:

“Not only all communist officials are to be executed, but all Jews in party and state employment, along with saboteurs, snipers, propagandists, assassins, inciters etc. – that is, partisans.”

This was the task of **Einsatzgruppen** – murder squads – who moved into captured towns and localities with the forward troops. It soon became clear that they took Heydrich to mean that all Jews – including women and children – should be killed.

The massacres carried out by the Einsatzgruppen might be called the “primitive phase” of the Final Solution. These units were not made up of criminals, sadists and maniacs, but were drawn from the elite of the German professional middle class. One was a Protestant minister. There were more Ph.D. graduates among them proportionally than in any other unit of the German army. They were hand-picked for strong ideological motivation and reliability. There were only four Einsatzgruppen battalions for the whole of the huge Russian front, from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Reinforced by Security Police units, and helped by German army units, they moved into conquered territory and set to work massacring whole Jewish communities. The local population frequently joined in as auxiliary police, especially in the Baltic States and the Ukraine, assisting the roundups with their local knowledge. They were rewarded with the pick of the property of the dead Jews. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 66-76)

The first massacres of Jews took place as the German armies entered the Baltic States and the Ukraine. In **Kovno**: Lithuanian ‘partisans’ killed some 8,000 Jews. In **Lvov**: Ukrainian nationalists killed 7,000. But the Einsatzgruppen were responsible for the bulk of the killings. In **Kiev**, two day, 33,000 were killed in a ravine called Babi Yar. German’s ally Romania was also zealous. In **Odessa**, the city with the largest Jewish population in the Soviet Union, the Romanian army shot or burned some 40,000 Jews as a reprisal for a partisan attack. The civilian and Christian population was at best passive during these and other atrocities. In October 1941, one Einsatzgruppen reported that it had killed 125,000 Jews.

It became clear that the methods of the Einsatzgruppen were inappropriate for dealing with the huge numbers involved. The methods also placed a strain on those doing the killing. Himmler later referred to the “psychological problem” in a secret speech to Police Generals in Poland. Himmler referred to a new technique of mass extermination of Jews which would take away the unpleasantness connected with execution by shooting, that is to say, the use of Mobile Gas Vans which was already in use at the Chelmno extermination camp. It is believed that between December 1941 and Spring 1943, over 200,000 Polish Jews and tens of thousands of Soviet prisoners and gypsies were murdered in this way. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 78-81)

Another important innovation was made at Treblinka. Here, instead of being taken to their deaths in gas vans, the Jews were brought en masse to a purpose-built sealed chamber. The commandant then pumped carbon monoxide from an engine into the chamber, killing the 200 Jews huddled inside within 20-30 minutes. For the first time, Jews were being killed in great numbers *without anyone in particular doing the killing*.

The messy job of pulling the bodies out of the vans and the Treblinka gas chamber was carried out by **Sonderkommandos** – Special Squads – of Jewish inmates, temporally reprieved for the purpose. The method of corpse disposal remained the same. The bodies were buried in layers in large trenches dug out by mechanical excavators. Gassing was indeed more efficient than shooting each victim individually, but a neater, cheaper solution had to be found based on the principles of mass-production.

In August 1941, SS Chief Himmler gave orders for the preparation of the Auschwitz death camp. In September 1941, Christian Wirth, SS Head of the T-4 organization and an expert on “mercy killings”, was appointed to Chelmno where he proceeded to gas inmates. In December 1941, Hans Frank (1900-46) Nazi Governor-General of Occupied Poland, announced a big conference for January 1942 in Berlin which was held in a villa at Wannasee

on the outskirts of Berlin. The aim of the Conference was to co-ordinate the work of the various agencies that would be involved in the operation of the “Final Solution”. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 83-85)

The new industrial killing techniques were developed in the concentration camps run by the Economic Central Office of the SS. There were 3 types of camp:

- 1. Concentration Camps (KZ):** Such as Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen and others were not equipped to kill large numbers of people.
- 2. Work Camps:** They ranged from very small camps supplying slave labour for local industries to the huge IG Farben camp at Auschwitz III which employed over 15,000 Jews on average at any time.
- 3. Extermination Camps:** Such as Sobibor, Chelmno, Birkenau and Treblinka were specialist units – industrial killing centres, processing death on a massive scale. Over 3 million people died in them.

The KZ, the gas chamber and the crematorium – all tried and tested – were combined in the killing centres of extermination camps. The death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Majdanek and Belzec – all in remote parts of Poland – were historically unique. Their sole purpose was the speedy and cost effective production of mass death, including the processing of the by-products, and the total elimination of all evidence of the extermination process. Here Jews were to be “processed” within less than six hours, and sometimes in under an hour, from their arrival by train. The camps were built as production-line units to run without delays or hitches. Most of the main extermination camps operated from 1941 to the end of 1944. While Chelmno continued to use the outdated gas vans, all the rest used specially built gas chambers, mostly operating with carbon monoxide. Auschwitz

alone, the most modern and largest complex, was equipped with a superior method of killing; the deadly crystals known commercially as Zyklon B-hydrogen cyanide, or prussic acid.

Although sites of the extermination camps were remote, they had been chosen because they were easily accessible by rail. Transport was provided by the passenger department of the German State Railway – the *Reichsbahn*. The victims were packed into “special trains”. Each victim was allotted a one-way third-class ticket. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 88-92)

In the summer of 1941, Rudolf Hoess (1900-47), a committed Nazi, was told by Himmler of Hitler’s decision to destroy the Jewish people. He was commissioned to plan, build and operate a camp at Auschwitz in Southern Poland. Auschwitz was made up of 3 camps: Auschwitz I, II and III. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 100-101)

The Holocaust was the first modern genocide, totally dependent on modern technology and science, on the state bureaucracy and its immense ability to solve administrative and logistical problems, and on modern business and industrial techniques. The whole process of mass production – from the early identification and isolation of the Jews to their final extermination – was perfected with the full co-operation and collusion of German industry. Leading firms benefitted enormously from the Final Solution at various stages – from the forced purchase of Jewish businesses to the labour of Jewish slaves in their advanced industrial plants, built in and around the death and concentration camps.

In September 1942, an agreement was reached between the RHSA and the Ministry of Justice. Under this agreement, “asocial elements” – broadly defined as Jews, Ukrainians, Russians, gypsies and Poles, but also Czech and German criminals – would no longer be the responsibility of the justice system, but would be handed to Himmler’s RHSA organization for “Extermination through work”. It is no accident, then, that the Auschwitz gate carried the

slogan “Work makes one free (**Arbeit Macht Frei**). (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 110)

The killing centres were organized to use every bit of the Jewish inmates – from the clothes they came in, their shoes, the gold teeth which had to be extracted by ‘specialist commandos’, down to their hair which was packed and sent back to the Reich to serve mainly the insulation of submarine hulls. Thousands of Jewish slaves were employed in the collection, sorting out and despatch of the various items. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 112)

The most prolonged armed resistance was put up by the inmates of the Warsaw Ghetto where the resistance organization, the Jewish Military Union, declared, “BROTHERS DON’T DIE IN SILENCE. LET’S FIGHT.” (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, 120) The Jewish Ghetto Rising was put down, but it inspired the equally tragic Polish Warsaw Rising of 1944. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 124)

In the summer of 1943, the Red Army was advancing towards Treblinka, in eastern Poland. The SS started to open the mass graves in which hundreds of thousands of murdered Jews were buried and, with a huge mechanical digger, piled the bodies on great pyres which burned day and night. The Jewish Sonderkommandos, who numbered about 700 prisoners, understood that this was an attempt to destroy the evidence before the Red Army arrived. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 126)

Between May and September 1944, the death-machine of Auschwitz-Birkenau destroyed almost a million Jews, the largest group being the Jews of Hungary. The last few months of operation saw the daily rate of destruction climb to over 10,000.

With the Red Army close at hand, the order was given to destroy the gas chambers and crematoria and remove all evidence. The inmates were aware that the camp was about to be wound up and knew that, as witnesses, their days were numbered. The camp underground

ordered a rebellion on 7 October 1944. At the last moment the uprising was called off. But the most vulnerable group, the Jewish Sonderkommandos, did not accept the decision. Using explosives smuggled in by four Jewish women factory-workers, they blew up the crematoria and killed a number of SS personnel with the long hooks used for pulling bodies out of the gas chambers. The few hundred members of the Kommando were hunted down and shot. The four women were hanged. The SS themselves completed the destruction of the installation, blowing up the crematoria, removing all evidence of the real function of the camp. (Bresheeth, Hood, Jansz, *Introducing the Holocaust*, 130-133)

At all times, the Judenrat knew what was happening to the deported Jews. Eichmann spelt it out to them. The leaders decided to keep this knowledge to themselves. They went so far as to fabricate postcards from a nonexistent work camp with optimistic reports about food and conditions, in order to entice those left behind to join them. The co-operation of the Hungarian police, the Judenrat, the civil service and the population generally helped to make the Hungarian deportations almost peaceful. The Jews trusted their leadership, preferring in many instances to volunteer for earlier deportation so as to be together with friends or family.

At times Auschwitz-Birkenau could not cope with the transports. Because of the limited capacity of the furnaces, corpses had to be burned in open trenches. Speed was essential because the Red Army was moving towards the camp. In little over two months, the bulk of the Jews of Hungary had been killed at a death rate of some 12,000 a day.

An international effort was started by a number of individuals and European states to halt the deportations. Tens of thousands of Jews were saved by the Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg, who supplied them with false documents, communal passports and safe houses in Budapest which he declared to be extra-territorial.

Seeing that the end of the Third Reich was inevitable, some SS operatives calculated that, if they saved some Jewish lives, this might stand them in good stead later. There were

two such initiatives. In one, the SS – partly to reward the Hungarian Judenrat – agreed to free 1,600 Jews, the so-called “**Prominenten**”, who were mainly council members and their kin, and send them to safety in Switzerland. This was only to take place after the completion of the deportations. The “Prominenten” thus became the hostages for this process. They were indeed released and sent to Switzerland towards the end of the war.

The other initiative, which had Himmler’s approval, was proposed by Eichmann himself to Joel Brand, a prominent Budapest Jew. The offer was to spare a million Jews. Their lives were to be paid for in kind – with military trucks to be used only on the Russian front. The price was one truck for every 100 Jews. Brand had three weeks to fix the deal. Brand travelled to Turkey and the Middle East hoping to contact a member of the Jewish Agency, the representative of Zionism in Palestine, who would in turn approach the British. But Brand was arrested by British agents and kept a prisoner. Meanwhile, the Jews died at the rate of 10,000 a day. The Jewish Agency and the British authorities were at one in their refusal to consider Eichmann’s offer. The Jewish Agency did not see its priority to be saving Jews in Europe, but rather that of populating Palestine with highly motivated Zionist settlers. Nor were the British eager to receive the refugees from Hungary.

One of the persons involved in both initiatives was Rudolf Kazstner, associate president of the Zionist Organization in Hungary. He was protected by the Nazis until the end of the war, travelling with a high-ranking officer of the SS, in his attempt to negotiate in Switzerland. Kazstner later gave evidence that saved this officer from the Nuremberg War Crime Trials.

After the war, Kazstner was himself tried in *absentia* by a people’s court of Budapest Jews. He was found guilty of collaboration with the Nazis and of furthering their policy of destroying the Hungarian Jews. He was sentenced to death. Having emigrated to Israel he

held a junior ministerial post for a number of years, before being assassinated by two young survivors from Hungary who considered themselves to be meting out the justice of history.

It has been argued that the Allies had no reliable information about the Final Solution until the war was over. They could not therefore be blamed for not intervening to stop the process – by bombing the death camps, for instance. But numerous reports were received by the Allies from December 1941 on. These included maps showing the organization of the killing centres. The most important was delivered in 1942 by two Czech Jews who managed to escape from Auschwitz, bringing with them extremely accurate information about the camps and the numbers killed since 1941. Both had worked as registrars in the camp bureaucracy, and so had had access to the most secret of all Nazi documents. Their report led to demands by prominent Jews, especially in the USA, for the bombing of the camps and their communication links in order to disable or destroy the death machine. The Allies' scepticism about the truth of these reports reflected basic anti-Semitism. The BBC did not mention the crucial report of Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's report to the Commons in December 1942. A curious logic led the BBC management to argue that mention of the plight of the Jews might inflame anti-Jewish feelings in Britain. The BBC was to limit itself to reporting "the facts ... of Jewish persecution", but there was to be no "propaganda".

In 1944, an under-secretary at the Foreign Office dismissed stories of the gas chambers as "atrocities stories for which we have no evidence". Another official dismissed the reports because they came from "Jewish sources".

In spite of the demands from prominent Jews, and the knowledge on which they were based, there were long delays in getting aerial photographs, and long discussions about whether or not to bomb the camps. The operation, it was argued, would divert considerable air support essential for the success of Allied operations. So Auschwitz was not bombed until August 1944 by Allied planes from Italy. By then, the Allies had full aerial photographs of

the camps, but curiously analysis did not identify the chimneys of the crematoria, which were clearly visible on an aerial photograph taken that month. The death camp was not the target, but rather the industrial synthetic rubber plant in Auschwitz III.

Renewed requests for bombing the gas chambers met with further procrastination. In the end, the decision was taken at the highest levels not to carry out the bombings. The operation would endanger the lives of too many aircrews.

In 1945, an International Military Tribunal was set up to persecute Nazi war criminals. It was to deal with Crimes against Peace, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity. The Holocaust came under the last heading.

2.3 Representation of Holocaust in Elie Wiesel's *Night*

The question of the Holocaust as a literary subject has been controversial. Some have argued that such literature should be limited to diaries, memoirs, and other firsthand accounts. They maintain that rendering the experience in fictional, poetic, and dramatic forms necessarily transforms the monstrous into a form of aesthetic pleasure, thereby diluting and distorting its reality. They also contend that even when a nonfictional source, such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, is adapted to the stage and screen, it ends up presenting a universalized portrait (in this case, of adolescence) rather than a specific experience (of a young Jewish girl in the Holocaust). Others maintain that not to inscribe the Holocaust in the history of literature is to turn our backs, to foster ignorance and lack of interest, in effect, to collaborate with the Nazis. The Holocaust can be – and has been – cheapened and exploited by literary hacks, but in the hands of serious writers, its significance can be deepened, not palliated.

The fiction of the Holocaust may be divided into those novels and stories that deal directly with the ghetto experience, such as John Hersey's (1914-93) and Leon Uris's fictional accounts of the Warsaw Ghetto, or those focusing especially on the extermination camps, such as the unspeakable brutality captured by Tadeusz Borowski (1922-51) in his

collection of short stories, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* (1948) or the nonfictional memoirs of Elie Wiesel (b. 1928), (*Night*, 1958) and Primo Levi (1919-87) (*Survival in Auschwitz*, 1947), and those, undoubtedly influenced by Kafka, that approach the subject indirectly or metaphorically, as in Aharon Appelfeld's *Badenheim*, 1939 (1980), in which affluent, assimilated Austrian Jews at a summer resort live in denial until the moment when the resort is turned into a concentration camp.

The most impressive, both in scope and emotional power, of direct renderings is the French novelist André Schwartz-Bart's (b. 1928) *The Last of the Just* (1959; trans., 1960). Placing the Nazis' annihilation of Jews in the historical context of European anti-Semitism, the novel outlines the history of the Jewish myth of the "thirty-six just men," who, often unwittingly, take upon themselves undeserved suffering, which, without their sacrifice, would lead to the end of the human race. Among the indirect renderings is Jerzy Kosinski's (1933-91) *The Painted Bird* (1965), a novel that its author originally claimed was a nonfictional account of his childhood in World War II. Later he backed away from his claim, responding to the objection that as nonfiction, the story lacked credibility; as a novel, however, it creates a surrealistic world of violence and brutality; and it constitutes an important metaphor of the human capacity for sadistic cruelty that issued in the Holocaust. The most recent and, in the view of many critics, the most successful attempt to represent what might be called the aftershock of the Holocaust – the collateral damage it has wrought in shaping the inner life of millions – is W.G. Sebald's (1944-2003) *Austerlitz* (2001). (Quinn, *History in Literature*, 167-170)

Elie Wiesel, by any estimation the most influential Holocaust survivor in America if not the world, has been the leading proponent of the dominant popular approach on Holocaust which is more mystical. Understood thus, the Holocaust is not knowable; it is a unique event that cannot be meaningfully compared to any other historical phenomenon; it

can be understood only by those who personally experienced it and is not transmissible to anyone else; and, most significantly for our concerns, it “could well be inaccessible to all attempts at a significant representation and interpretation,” as Saul Friedlander has written. It is, quite literally, unspeakable. This approach fundamentally denies the possibility of creating a valid art and literature about the Holocaust.

“Let us repeat it once again,” he wrote in an article in the *Times* headlined “Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory”, which appeared in 1989 and offered a particularly blunt statement of his argument, but not exceptional one. “Auschwitz is something else, always something else.... Then, it defeated culture; later, it defeated art, because just as no one could imagine Auschwitz before Auschwitz.... Only those who lived it in their flesh and in their minds can possibly transform their experience into knowledge.” Wiesel exhorted his readers to shun imaginative representations of the Holocaust and instead read testimonies and watch documentaries. He concluded, bitterly, “Stop insulting the dead.” (Franklin, *A Thousand Darknenses*, 4-5)

Eliezer Wiesel was born to Shlomo and Sarah Feig Wiesel on 30 September 1928 on Sighet, Romania, a town situated in the Carpathian Mountains in northern Transylvania. The third of four children, Eliezer was the only male child. Two sisters, Hilda and Bea, had been born before him; his younger sister, Tzipora, was born when Wiesel was seven.

Wiesel’s parents represented somewhat dissimilar poles in the boy’s life. His father was a shopkeeper and, despite adherence to traditional Judaism, Shlomo Wiesel’s education had drawn him nearer to rational positions advocated by enlightened Jews. He urged his son to learn modern Hebrew and to become acquainted with the emerging canon of secular Hebrew literature. Wiesel’s father was respected by the Christian community, who viewed him as a link to the town’s Jewish leadership. Sarah Wiesel came from a Hasidic family belonging to the Wishnitzer sect. Deeply religious, Wiesel’s mother introduced her son to the

Hasidic art of telling stories, but she had received a broader education. Though secular literature had been forbidden in her home, she developed a keen appreciation for the German classics and could quote lengthy sections from the writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich von Schiller.

Wiesel's formal education began when he was three years old in traditional *kheder* (elementary religious school). Following his father's guidance, Wiesel studied secular subjects and also took violin lessons. At the age of twelve, he asked his father to find him a scholar who could initiate him into study of the cabala [or kabbalah], but he eventually found his own master in Moshe, the caretaker at a local synagogue, with whom he spent long hours in the evenings reading and discussing the *Zohar* (*The Book of Splendor*).

In spring 1944 Wiesel and his family were deported from Sighet to Auschwitz-Birkenau [concentration camp]. Wiesel's descriptions of the traumatic end of Sighet's Jewish community capture not only his personal tragedy but the total destruction of Central and Eastern European Jewish life. In Auschwitz-Birkenau Wiesel was separated from his mother and sisters. His mother and youngest sister were gassed on arrival, but the two elder girls survived the Holocaust and were reunited with their brother after liberation in France. Wiesel remained close to his father throughout their incarceration in Auschwitz, on the death march into Germany, and in Buchenwald [concentration camp], where his father died several days before the liberation of the camp on 11 April 1945.

Wiesel was evacuated with other child survivors from Germany by the American military, but their train was diverted to France on orders from Charles de Gaulle. Wiesel was sent to Ecouis in Normandy, where the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (Society for Assistance to Children) had established a home for Jewish child survivors. Then, in Paris, he found his eldest sister, Hilda.

Later Wiesel went to Taverny, Embloy, and Versailles, where he continued his studies and learned French. Introduced to François Wahl, then a graduate student in philosophy at the Sorbonne, Wiesel found a tutor in French literature and in philosophy. Moving to Paris, Wiesel was enrolled at the Sorbonne from 1947 to 1950, studying psychology, literature, and philosophy. He engaged in research for a thesis in comparative asceticism and travelled to India to gather material on the significance of suffering within the Hindu tradition. However, he never submitted the thesis.

While a student, Wiesel worked as a private tutor of Yiddish, Hebrew, and the Bible in order to support himself. Beginning in 1947, he also undertook work as a journalist, initially writing for *Zion in Kamf*, a Zionist newspaper in Yiddish. In 1948 he became an occasional correspondent for the French Jewish journal *L'Arche* and for the Israeli newspaper *Yedi'ot Akharonot*. In 1949, he travelled to Israel to cover the War of Independence, and in 1952 he reported on meetings between West German and Israeli representatives concerning war reparations. His experience as a journalist provided Wiesel with the rigorous discipline he employed in his subsequent writing.

In the 1960s Wiesel became increasingly recognized as one of the most significant witnesses to the Holocaust, his international prominence assured by prestigious prizes and awards. In France he won the Prix Rivarol (1963) for his novel *La Ville de la chance* and the Prix Médicis in 1968 for *Le Mendiant de Jérusalem*, while in the United States in 1965 he was awarded the National Jewish Book Council Literary Award, and in 1966 B'nai B'rith presented him its first annual Jewish Heritage Award for Excellence in Literature. In 1967, he was granted an honorary doctorate by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the first of many such honours. In 1972 Wiesel was awarded the Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Award and the American Jewish Committee's American Liberties Medallion.

In recognition of Wiesel's contribution as a witness to the Holocaust and his unceasing efforts on behalf of assorted ethnic groups facing terror or murder, President Jimmy Carter invited Wiesel to become chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust in November 1978. That commission was succeeded in 1980 by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, which became the inspiring force behind the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Under Wiesel's guidance, the commission also promoted the establishment of annual "Days of Remembrance" to recall and to honour the millions who lost their lives in the Holocaust. The first Day of Remembrance was observed in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda on 24 April 1979. Wiesel remained chairman of the council until he resigned in 1986.

Wiesel's unceasing humanitarian activities in tandem with his vocation as witness to the Holocaust continued to win him national and international recognition. France honoured him in 1983 by electing him a Commandeur de l'Ordre de la Légion d'honneur, and in 2001 he was awarded the Grande Croix de la Legion d'honneur, that nation's highest accolade. In 1985 President Ronald Reagan awarded Wiesel the United States Congressional Gold Medal, followed in 1986 with his receiving the Medal of Liberty for his significant contributions to American life. In 1986 the Nobel Committee conferred on him the Nobel Peace Prize.

In spring 1969 Wiesel married Marion Rose in Jerusalem. Born in Vienna, she was also a Holocaust survivor, and she served as the principal translator of Wiesel's French texts. In 1972 their only child, Shlomo Elisha, was born (Marion Wiesel had one child, Jennifer, from a previous marriage). As Alan Berger notes in *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction* (1985), fatherhood also brought Wiesel to explore the world of child survivors and the children of survivors in his novels.

Since the 1960s, Elie Wiesel has sounded a clarion call to remember the traumatic events he witnessed during the Holocaust. In his 1986 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he

said: “How are we to reconcile our supreme duty toward memory with the need to forget that is essential to life? No generation has had to confront this paradox with such urgency.” Variouslly labelled the poet of the Holocaust, the voice of contemporary Jewry, and an eloquent spokesman for humanity, Wiesel has been called a modern prophet, who urges people to probe deeply into the individual and communal consciousness in an effort to redefine the human condition and to seek ways of making the human experience more godly. Wiesel’s work has enriched the genre of the Holocaust novel by interjecting a mixture of narrative techniques – most notably approaches employed by French *nouveaux romanciers* (New Novelists) – that resonate with the Hasidic sensibility of storytelling. Philosophical and psychological issues pervade each tale, hauntingly echoing from text to text. Wiesel’s novels highlight the profound moral responsibility survivors sense to preserve and transmit memory and suggest the burden of memory and the pain that can be passed to the next generation. They also work toward re-establishing dialogue between human beings, and between humanity and the Creator. Wiesel’s perspective as a survivor has intensified his view of humankind as never having fully emerged from the shadow of the Holocaust, and his huge literary output emphasizes that if the horrors of the past are not remembered, humanity’s common future is forfeit. (Hawker, *Social Issues in Literature*, 21-29)

Elie Wiesel’s life, asserts Mark Chmiel, can be divided into three primary phases: mysticism, trauma, and testimony. Wiesel’s early years were spent immersed in the traditional Judaic traditions. As a young man, he experienced the horrors and deprivation of the Nazi death camps and post-Holocaust adjustments as a survivor and refocused religious scholar. These first two phases informed his third and current phase of witnessing and testifying against human suffering and violence around the world. (Hawker, *Social Issues in Literature*, 30) The text *Night* that I wish to examine here is a memoir on the harrowing Holocaust experiences of Elie Wiesel. Simultaneously, it also outlines his conflicted

relationship with God, as the horrors at Auschwitz called into question the loving Creator he had worshipped during his deeply religious childhood.

Elie Wiesel's *Night* and *Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl* are amongst the earliest texts that introduced its readers with what is called Holocaust literature. *Night*, with its translation into 30 languages as well as six million sold copies in the United States alone has achieved almost a special status of a touchstone in terms of Holocaust literature. Even though Elie Wiesel has since written 50 more books, *Night* is still the one he considers his most significant – and the rest of the world seems to agree. Elie Wiesel gets about 100 letters a month from children who have read *Night*. A University Professor, in-demand speaker, and political activist who now makes his home in New York city, Elie Wiesel has advised U.S. Presidents from Jimmy Carter to Barack Obama. He is an advocate for peace who counts the Dalai Lama among his friends. As a haunted survivor, he wants to forget his terrible wartime experiences – but refuses to let anyone forget. (Dakers, *Elie Wiesel*, 12-13)

In 1954, Elie Wiesel wanted to interview the French Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès-France, for an article he was writing. When his request for a meeting was declined, he refused to be put off. He came up with another plan to reach the French leader. He set up an interview with the Prime Minister's teacher and friend, François Mauriac, a Nobel Prize winner who was also a famous French Catholic writer. Elie's goal was to convince Mauriac to introduce him to Mendès-France, so he could conduct his interview.

Mauriac agreed to meet with the young journalist. But when they met, Mauriac only wanted to talk about Jesus and his suffering. "He was in love with Jesus," said Elie. "He spoke only of Jesus. Whatever I would ask, [the answer was] Jesus."

In his frustration Elie tried to bring the subject back to the Prime Minister. "When he said 'Jesus' again, I couldn't take it," said Elie. "I said, 'Mr. Mauriac, 10 years or so ago I

saw children, hundreds of Jewish children, who suffered more than Jesus did on his cross, and we do not speak about it.’ ”

Embarrassed by his outburst, and emotional over the subject he had just raised, Elie picked up his things and ran out of the room, sobbing. Mauriac caught up with him, brought him back into the privacy of the interview room, and sat with the young man as he wept. “And then,” remembered Elie, “without saying anything [else], he simply said, ‘You know, maybe you should talk about it.’”

After his liberation from Buchenwald, while he was still in the hospital in Germany, Elie had considered writing down his experiences in the concentration camps. Instead, he had made a promise to himself at that time that he would not tell his story for at least ten years. Later in life, he said:

“I knew I was going to write to bear witness. I had to, because not to bear witness to an event that one lived is a betrayal of that event. But I didn’t know how. I was afraid of not finding the words. And I came from a mystical background [through Kabbalah] where one can purify language through silence, and that’s why I was waiting for 10 years.” (Dakers, *Elie Wiesel*, 66)

When Elie met Mauriac, the ten years he had vowed to wait before writing about his experiences had almost passed, and Mauriac persuaded the young man to get started. Elie spent the next year writing a 900-page manuscript in Yiddish. A publisher in Buenos Aires, Argentina, edited the work down to 245 pages and published it in 1956 as *Un Di Velt Hot Geshvign* (*And the World Kept Silent*). Elie dedicated the book to his parents and younger sister Tzipora, who had not survived the war.

He condensed *And the World Kept Silent* and translated it into French, but it was two years before a publisher agreed to print it. “Mauriac was the most famous author in Europe,

and brought the book personally from publisher to publisher,” said Elie. “They didn’t want it. It was too morbid, they said.” Mauriac eventually found a publisher willing to take a risk, and *La Nuit* was published in 1958. Mauriac wrote the foreword to the first French edition of Elie’s memoir *La Nuit* published in 1958.

When it came time to find a publisher for the English version, called *Night*, the author and his friend Mauriac met similar resistance. “It went from publisher to publisher,” said Elie. “All of them refused it. They gave the same reasons, until a small publisher picked it up.” In 1960, after more than 15 other publishers had rejected the manuscript, Hill & Wang, a tiny, independent publishing house that had just started a few years earlier, agreed to publish Elie Wiesel’s *Night*. (Dakers, *Elie Wiesel*, 64-71)

Night as a memoir probably appears unbearably painful and devastating because of its discernible simplicity. It doesn’t make use of literary devices like epiphany or irony. It has neither extraneous detail nor profound analysis or speculation, either philosophical or metaphysical about life. It simply narrates a story, that is to say, Eliezer’s account of what happened in the concentration camp, delivered in his unequivocal voice.

Night appears more devastating to read because of its plainness, that is to say, its language and style are not loaded with linguistic embellishments, rather every sentence is properly weighted and deliberate, every episode carefully chosen and vividly delineated. Moreover, it is disarmingly brief, in other words, it reads like a memoir wherein the readers witness the merciless, brutal, nightmarish experiences of Elie Wiesel’s life in concentration camp in an equally distilled, chiselled but merciless language. *Night* takes us back to the horrors of Holocaust, but seen and narrated by the innocent young Eliezer, who like all the European Jews, had no idea absolutely about the fate that awaited them.

Night has variously been described as an “autobiographical novel”, “novel”, “novel/autobiography”, “non-fictional novel”, “semi-fictional memoir”, “fictional-

autobiographical memoir”, “fictionalized autobiographical memoir”, and “memoir-novel”. However, he himself asserted that since *Night* is a memoir, his “experiences in the book – A to Z – must be true.... I object angrily if someone mentions it as a novel.” (Franklin, 72) But a more comprehensive answer about the form of *Night* comes from Naomi Seidman who writes in her well-known essay “Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage,” which examines Wiesel’s revisions to *Un di velt*, “There are two survivors... a Yiddish and a French.” The first wrote a testimonial intended largely for the historical record; the second had grander ambitions. (Franklin, *A Thousand Darknesses*, 73)

Elie Wiesel, however, doesn’t succeed wholly in maintaining a fine balance between fidelity to the events it portrays and their aesthetic representation. But that doesn’t undermine the validity of *Night* as a memoir or a Holocaust testimonial. It is at once a testimonial to the evils of the camps and a chronicle of its protagonist’s loss of faith.

Lawrence Langer, in his landmark study *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*, notes that *Night* “continues to be classified and critically acclaimed as a novel, and not without reason.” The book “yields the effect of an authentic *Bildungsroman*,” though it reverses the formula: Wiesel’s “youthful protagonist becomes an initiate into death rather than in life.” Langer writes. (Franklin, *A Thousand Darknesses*, 71-72)

The very title implies a reversal of *Bildungsroman* (coming-of-age story) which usually opens out into day, and symbolizes illumination, awareness, life. On the contrary, *Night* leads us into darkness and death. Usually, the life of the protagonist in a *Bildungsroman* expands, develops, ripens and is enriched from within. However, the life of young Eliezer in *Night* contracts, withers and becomes lifeless, left neither with physical energy nor with spiritual faith to continue believing in God. Instead of finding a unified self and experiencing a sense of fulfilling quest, Eliezer begins his secured life in a coherent, organized Jew community in the town of Sighet, and ends up when Buchenwald

(concentration camp) is liberated where he is left isolated, alone, numb and lifeless. The pious young boy Eliezer of Sighet is reduced to ashes in the burning crematoria of the death camp and what is finally left is a corpse which has lost all zest of life, vital innocence of childhood, and most importantly the mysticism and spirituality that was a part of his upbringing.

2.3.1 Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald Camps through the Lens of History

Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest Nazi extermination and concentration camp, located in the Polish town of Oswiecim, 37 miles west of Krakow. One sixth of all Jews murdered by the Nazis were gassed at Auschwitz.

In April 1940 SS chief Heinrich Himmler ordered the establishment of a new concentration camp in Oswiecim, a town located within the portion of Poland that was annexed to Germany at the beginning of World War II. The first Polish political prisoners arrived in Auschwitz in June 1940, and by March 1941 there were 10,900 prisoners, the majority of whom were Polish. Auschwitz soon became known as the most brutal of the Nazi concentration camps.

In March 1941 Himmler ordered a second, much larger section of the camp to be built 1.9 miles from the original camp. This site was to be used as an extermination camp and was named Birkenau, or Auschwitz II. Eventually, Birkenau held the majority of prisoners in the Auschwitz complex, including Jews, Poles, Germans, and Gypsies. Furthermore, it maintained the most degrading and inhumane conditions — inclusive of the complex's gas chambers and crematoria.

A third section, Auschwitz III, was constructed in nearby Monowitz, and consisted of a forced labor camp called Buna-Monowitz. This complex incorporated 45 forced labor sub-camps. The name Buna was based on the Buna synthetic rubber factory on site, owned by I.G. Farben, Germany's largest chemical company. Most workers at this and other German-

owned factories were Jewish inmates. The labor would push inmates to the point of total exhaustion, at which time new labourers replaced them.

Auschwitz was first run by camp commandant Rudolf Hoess, and was guarded by a cruel regiment of the SS' Death Head Units. The staff was assisted by several privileged prisoners who were given better food, conditions, and opportunity to survive, if they agreed to enforce the brutal order of the camp.

Auschwitz I and II were surrounded by electrically charged four-meter high barbed wire fences, guarded by SS men armed with machine guns and rifles. The two camps were further closed in by a series of guard posts located two thirds of a mile beyond the fences. In March 1942, trains carrying Jews commenced arriving daily. In many instances, several trains would arrive on the same day, each carrying one thousand or more victims coming from the ghettos of Eastern Europe, as well as from Western and Southern European countries. Throughout 1942, transports arrived from Poland, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Yugoslavia, and Theresienstadt. Jews, as well as Gypsies, continued to arrive throughout 1943. Hungarian Jews were brought to Auschwitz in 1944, alongside Jews from the remaining Polish ghettos, yet to be liquidated.

By August 1944 there were 105,168 prisoners in Auschwitz whilst another 50,000 Jewish prisoners lived in Auschwitz's satellite camps. The camp's population grew constantly, despite the high mortality rate caused by exterminations, starvation, hard labor and contagious diseases.

Upon arrival at the platform in Birkenau, Jews were thrown out of their train cars without their belongings and forced to form two lines, men and women separately. SS officers, including the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele, would conduct selections among these lines, sending most victims to one side and thus condemning them to death in the gas chambers. A minority was sent to the other side, destined for forced labor. Those who were

sent to their deaths were killed that same day and their corpses were burnt in the crematoria. Those not sent to the gas chambers were taken to "quarantine," where their hair was shaved, striped prison uniforms distributed, and registration took place. Prisoners' individual registration numbers were tattooed onto their left arm. Most prisoners were then sent to perform forced labor in Auschwitz I, III, sub-camps, or other concentration camps, where their life expectancy was usually only a few months. Prisoners who stayed in quarantine had a life expectancy of a few weeks.

The prisoners' camp routine consisted of many duties to perform. The daily schedule included waking at dawn, straightening one's sleep area, morning roll call, the trip to work, long hours of hard labor standing in line for a pitiful meal, the return to camp, block inspection, and evening roll call. During roll call, prisoners were made to stand completely motionless and quiet for hours, in extremely thin clothing, irrespective of the weather. Whoever fell or even stumbled was killed. Prisoners had to focus all their energy merely on surviving the day's tortures.

The gas chambers in the Auschwitz complex constituted the largest and most efficient extermination method employed by the Nazis. Four chambers were in use at Birkenau, each with the potential to kill 6,000 people daily. They were built to look like shower rooms in order to confuse the victims. New arrivals at Birkenau were told that they were being sent to work, but first needed to shower and be disinfected. They would be led into the shower-like chambers, where they were quickly gassed to death with the highly poisonous Zyklon B gas.

Some prisoners at Auschwitz, including twins and dwarfs, were used as the subjects of torturous medical experiments. They were tested for endurance under terrible conditions such as extreme heat and cold, or were sterilized.

Despite the horrible conditions, prisoners in Auschwitz managed to resist the Nazis, including some instances of escape and armed resistance. In October 1944, members of the

Sonderkommando, who worked in the crematoria, succeeded in killing several SS men and destroying one gas chamber. All of the rebels died, leaving behind diaries that provided authentic documentation of the atrocities committed at Auschwitz.

By January 1945 Soviet troops were advancing towards Auschwitz. In desperation to withdraw, the Nazis sent most of the 58,000 remaining prisoners on a death march to Germany, and most prisoners were killed *en route*. The Soviet army liberated Auschwitz on January 27; soldiers found only 7,650 barely living prisoners throughout the entire camp complex. In all, approximately one million Jews had been murdered there.

Another infamous and one of the largest concentration camps in Germany located five miles north of the city of Weimar was the Buchenwald concentration-cum-extermination camp. It was established on July 16, 1937 and liberated on April 11, 1945. During its existence, 238,980 prisoners from 30 countries passed through Buchenwald. Of those, 43,045 were killed, including Soviet prisoners of war.

Buchenwald was divided into three sections: the "large camp" which housed prisoners of higher standing, the "small camp" where prisoners were kept under restriction and the "tent camp," set up in 1939 for Polish prisoners. In addition were an administrative area, SS barracks, camp factories, and 130 satellite camps. Two different commandants ran the camp: SS-tandartenfuehrer Karl Koch from 1937-1941, and SS-Oberfuehrer Hermann Pister from 1942--1945.

The first group of 149 prisoners arrived at Buchenwald in July 1937. They were mostly political prisoners and criminals. Large groups of prisoners quickly followed. By the end of 1937, there were 2,561 prisoners, mostly political. In the spring of 1938 prisoners who were considered "asocial" were brought to the site. The first transports of German Jews also came at that time. By July, there were 7,723 prisoners in Buchenwald. On September 23,

1938, 2,200 Jews arrived from Austria. Following Kristallnacht (November 9-10) an additional 10,000 Jews were imprisoned.

The Jews were treated very cruelly; they were forced to work 14--15 hours a day, and lived under terrible conditions. At this stage, the Nazis' goal was to pressure the Jews to leave Germany. At the end of 1938 they released 9,370 Jews from Buchenwald. This was due to pressure from the victim's family in conjunction with Jewish and International organizations, which had arranged for them to leave the country. During the short time such prisoners were kept at Buchenwald, 600 victims perished.

After the war broke out, thousands of political enemies were arrested and brought to Buchenwald. The number of Jewish prisoners increased, when Jews from Germany and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were deported to Buchenwald. By September 1939 the camp held 2,700 Jews. Subsequently, thousands of Poles were brought in and held in the "tent camp."

On October 17, 1942, the Nazis ordered all Jewish prisoners in the Reich be transferred to Auschwitz except for 204 workers. However, in 1944 Hungarian Jews were transported in the opposite direction, from Auschwitz to Buchenwald. They stayed a short time in the main camp, and were then moved to the satellite camps. Jews were treated far worse than the other prisoners and were subjected to medical experiments.

In 1943 the Germans completed building weapons factories on the site. This swelled the population. At the end of 1944 there were 63,048 prisoners, and by February 1945, 86,232 occupied the camp.

On January 18, 1945 the Germans began to evacuate Auschwitz and other camps in Eastern Europe. This brought thousands of Jewish prisoners to Buchenwald, including hundreds of children. A special barracks, called "Children's Block 66," was set up for them in the tent camp, and most survived.

An underground movement inclusive of Jews was formed in 1943, called the International Underground Committee. The movement succeeded in undermining some of the work done in the weapons factory and smuggling weapons and ammunition into the camp.

The Germans began evacuating Jewish prisoners on April 6, 1945. The following day, thousands of other prisoners were also evacuated. Some 25,500 prisoners died during the camp's evacuation. During Buchenwald's last days, resistance members were able to slow down the evacuation. By April 11 most of the SS had fled. The underground members took control of the camp and trapped the remaining SS. On that day 21,000 prisoners were liberated in Buchenwald, including 4,000 Jews and 1,000 children.

In 1947, 31 members of the camp staff were brought to trial, as part of the Nuremberg Trials. Two were sentenced to death, and four to life in prison. (www.yadvashem.org)

2.3.2 From Faith to Faithlessness

The opening chapter introduces us to a pious and spiritual adolescent Eliezer (“Elie”), born on September 30, 1928 and who lived in the peaceful town of Sighet, away from the brutality and barbarism of Nazist, and who knew more about what happened 5000 years ago than what was happening in Hungary in 1942. In 1941, Eliezer, the narrator, was a twelve-year-old boy living in the Transylvanian town of Sighet (then recently annexed to Hungary, now part of Romania). He was the only son in an Orthodox Jewish family that strictly adheres to Jewish tradition and law. His parents were shopkeepers, and his father was highly respected within Sighet’s Jewish community. Eliezer had two elder sisters, Hilda and Béa, and a younger sister named Tzipora.

Eliezer studied the Talmud, the Jewish oral law. He also studied the Jewish mystical texts of the Cabbala (often spelled Kabbalah), a somewhat unusual occupation for a teenager, and one that was against his father’s wishes. Eliezer found a sensitive and challenging teacher in Moishe the Beadle, a local pauper. Moishe turned out to be his friend, guide, philosopher,

mentor, a Socrates-like teacher who asked challenging and paradoxical questions that had no readymade answers. On one occasion Moishe told Eliezer that the answers to all our ultimate questions lie within, in the deep recesses of the self. Suddenly Moishe disappeared and was probably transported to a work camp with other foreign Jews. However, equally unexpected was his arrival back in Sighet a few months later. As per his version of the story, he escaped from the watchful eyes of Gestapo, the secret police, and had witnessed the most gruesome reality. In other words, Moishe was now no more a sage-like figure knowing ancient sacred texts nor he was functioning as an agent of Eliezer's self-transformation. He rather functioned as a witness and a prophet of the cataclysmic reality of the Holocaust, of which the town of Sighet was unaware, and also refused to believe as reality.

'Madness' or 'Abnormal' behaviour then has its roots in some deep fear or anguish and in the world of Nazi Germany only the insane could imagine the 'truth'. This is reinforced through the character of Madame Schächter who was a fellow traveller on the train to Auschwitz (concentration camp). Her hysterical shrieks envisioning burning furnaces and consuming flames were categorically rejected by the fellow on-board Jew travellers as an obvious consequence of madness. Her behaviour was dubbed as the conduct of a woman gone mad because of the trauma suffered by her resulting from her separation from her family. Ultimately, she was beaten into silence. Periodically, she would shriek and scream, "Jews, look! Look through the window! Flames! Look!" It was only after arriving at Auschwitz that Elie and other Jews realized that Madame Schächter's cries all along have been premonitions, and not psychotic hallucinations. So after Moishe the Beadle, this so-called mad woman became an indirect mentor of Eliezer who provided him with a deeper insight into the brutality of contemporary truth. This event also emphasized the fact that in the face of events as horrific as those experienced during the Holocaust, it is least possible for

humans to establish “usual” standards of sanity and insanity, reason and lunacy, or even good and evil.

Historically, it raises a question as to why the people of Sighet didn’t leave the town of Sighet before the German occupation of Romania? Perhaps it was because Sighet was so geographically cut off that they thought they would be left alone. Perhaps it was because, in 1940, Sighet became part of Hungary, and Hungarian Jews were at first protected from Nazi persecution. Perhaps, Elie, writes in *Night*, it was because “London radio, which we listened to every evening, announced encouraging news” that a German defeat was close at hand. Whatever may be the reason but the people of Sighet believed that they were safe from the Nazi destruction. They even ignored the warnings of one of their townspeople, an awkward member of the Jewish community Moishe the Beadle, the poor man who had helped Elie study the teachings of the Kabbalah. (Dakers, *Elie Wiesel*, 19)

After being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and separated from his mother and sisters, Elie realized that this is now his fate. Out of desperation, he told his father that he would rather kill himself by running into the electrified barbed wire. His father wept, and Elie stayed by his side. Another man said the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. While some of the men prayed to God, Elie raged against the Creator he had always loved and worshipped:

For the first time, I felt anger rising within me. Why should I sanctify His name? The Almighty, the eternal and terrible Master of the Universe, chose to be silent. What was there to thank Him for? (Wiesel, *Night*, 33)

For the first time in his life, Elie began to question the God he had loved and trusted throughout his childhood, marking the start of an internal philosophical life-long struggle:

NEVER SHALL I FORGET that night, the first night in camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed.

Never shall I forget that smoke.

Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky.

Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes.

Never shall I forget those things, even were I condemned to live as long as God himself.

Never.

(Wiesel, *Night*, 34)

Elie questioned his faith in God because of incidents such as the young boy who was brutally hanged. In the autumn, during Rosh Hashanah, the start of the New Year on the Jewish calendar, while others praised God, Elie cursed Him:

Why, but why would I bless Him? Every fibre in me rebelled. Because He caused thousands of children to burn in His mass graves? Because He kept six crematoria working day and night, including Sabbath and the Holy Days? Because in His great might, He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many other factories of death? How could I say to Him: Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end

up in the furnaces? Praised be Thy Holy Name, for having chosen us to be slaughtered on Thine altar? (Wiesel, *Night*, 67)

A 16 year old Elie Wiesel struggled to understand his Creator, whereas his father Shlomo kept his faith strong. He also didn't observe Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement on which a Jew is supposed to keep fast. In his rebellion against God, he did not fast. Elie and his father were separated for the first time – separated in their beliefs, and separated into different work units. Elie, still young and strong, had been transferred to the construction Kommando, where he hauled slabs of concrete 12 hours a day; Shlomo stayed at the warehouse.

Night is also a story of loss of faith in the midst of Genocide as suffered by Eliezer and the whole of Jewish community. Eliezer's profound faith in God and religion is peeled away layer by layer through his experiences in the concentration camp of Auschwitz. Eliezer lost his faith in God and religion largely because of his sudden encounter with the absolute evil on earth, that is to say, Nazism, the mechanism of death for Jews. The horrors of camp punctured Elie's deep faith in the religious teachings of Moishe. He even questioned God directly on the reality of small children being consumed by flames and Jews being mercilessly put to death. For Eliezer, God was dead in the hell-like concentration camp. It's a total breakdown of religious faith. After Auschwitz, Eliezer could no longer speak of God's goodness or his ultimate purposes.

Eliezer believed himself to be a "hollow man" or "a lost soul" condemned to wander aimlessly in life and haunted by the darkness and evilness of concentration camp. The fires of Auschwitz consumed the light, the religious faith of Eliezer and left him a "damned soul". Eliezer also lost his faith in humanity and the goodness of human beings as was taught to him by his father and teachers. He firmly believed that in times of crisis people would certainly lend a helping hand to each other as human relationships are marked by sacrifice, selflessness, and utmost fidelity. But the experience of Auschwitz changed this belief too.

Here he found everyone extremely selfish and trying to save their skin. Survival became the rule of the day and for which people were ready to go to any extreme – beating and trampling others etc. It's not only the doings of other inmates at Auschwitz that caused his loss of faith in goodness of humanity; partly it's his own conduct with reference to his relationship with his father that caused loss of faith. Eliezer, though for the time being, considered his father as an encumbrance, an albatross hanging round the neck, who jeopardized his own chance of survival. Of course, Eliezer later felt deeply ashamed for such thoughts of treachery and infidelity, but such a thought did overpower him for some moments. Eliezer suffered extreme mental conflict, that is to say, on one hand he wished to protect and save his father but on the other he also wished to be separated from him. This was evident when he stood paralyzed on his father being badly beaten by a Kapo for the last time before his impending death. Finally, when his father was taken off to crematoria, Eliezer could not even weep. Grief and relief became one. He stood a disillusioned boy with no sense of faith either in religion or God or humanity or the tradition that stressed loyalty and devotion to one's parents. His father's death left him in a zombie-like state, completely paralyzed and numb. Yet, there is one more illusion to be shed towards the end. He believed that after liberation from Buchenwald, people will first think of taking revenge. However, to his greatest dismay, disgust and anger, they only thought of food and sex. Eliezer was ultimately left as a survivor with an excruciating sense of guilt and hopelessness. *Night* is both a tale of fratricide and patricide and of filial love and devotion.

Night, as a memoir, is a powerful record of how the Holocaust poisoned and nearly destroyed all primary relationships in Eliezer's life, that is to say, his relationship to himself, to his father Shlomo, to fellow Jews and most importantly to God. Suffering at Auschwitz and Buchenwald transformed Eliezer and other Jews from humans to sub-humans and finally being inhuman. After liberation, when Elie Wiesel finally looked at himself in the mirror of

the hospital, he was probably not only amazed at his physical distortion but also at his spiritual and moral debility. He found himself unrecognizable at both levels. Holocaust transformed Eliezer's suffering and victimization into infidelity, monstrosity and struggle for bare survival.

The traditional Jewish view of life's meaning is derived from the *Torah*, which is a manifestation of God. The Jews' covenant with God is one of equal protection, that is to say, God assumes responsibility for the Jews, and they protect the *Torah* in return. However, the reality of Auschwitz concentration camp and the Holocaust called this very alliance into question. Acknowledging that the covenant with God is no longer valid would shake the very foundation of Judaism. Faced with an absurd religious and moral dilemma, Elie Wiesel and other victims were forced to protest against God and demand that He fulfilled his responsibilities under the covenant. To Elie Wiesel, God's failure to prevent Holocaust and its resulting Genocide presented an absurd universe where he, like other Jews, found himself alienated and orphaned.

2.3.3 Disintegration of Family, Dislocation, Exile

In April 1944, Hungarian police strung barbed wire around specific parts of the town, forming two ghettos and driving all Jews to live inside of these jail-like walled-in areas. Luckily, for the Wiesels, their home was situated inside of the bigger of these ghettos, so they didn't need to move – however they took in relatives who had been driven from their homes. However shocking it may appear to us today, but with almost incredible adaptability, the Jews of Sighet adjusted themselves to this gruesome reality of living in ghettos behind the barbed wire:

Little by little life returned to “normal”. The barbed wire that encircled us like a wall did not fill us with real fear. In fact, we felt this was not a bad thing; we

were entirely among ourselves. A small Jewish republic ... A Jewish Council was appointed, as well as a Jewish Police force, a welfare agency, a labour committee, a health agency – a whole governmental apparatus.

People thought this was a good thing. We would no longer have to look at all those hostile faces, endure those hate-filled stares. No more fear. No more anguish. We would live among Jews, among brothers...

Of course, there still were unpleasant moments. Every day, the Germans came looking for men to load coal into the military trains. Volunteers for this kind of work were few. But apart from that, the atmosphere was oddly peaceful and reassuring.

Most people thought that we would remain in the ghetto until the end of the war, until the arrival of the Red Army. Afterward everything would be as before. The ghetto was ruled by neither German nor Jew; it was ruled by delusion. (Wiesel, *Night*, 11-12)

Then the Gestapo – the brutal German Secret Police – arrived in town. Elie and his family ultimately realized the full significance of Gestapo's threatening presence. Within days, the deportations, or forced exile, began. Elie's family was in the last batch of Jews to leave the town of Sighet. As the Wiesels awaited their deportation orders, they watched procession after procession of friends and neighbours leaving their homes, each person carrying nothing but a small bundle of personal treasures. Men, women, and children, the sick and the elderly, trudged together to the railroad station, where they boarded waiting trains.

It was when the Wiesels thought that now it's their turn for deportation, they were given brief hope and relief. At the point when the soldiers gathered them together, they weren't ordered to the train station. Rather, they were directed to a home in the smaller ghetto, where they were to live while they anticipated extradition. The guards constrained

everybody – even Elie's small sister Tzipora – to race to their new home. In the case of they being exhausted, making it impossible to run, they were beaten. Elie witnessed his father crying for the first time in his life. When father, son and family arrived at their new dwelling, the first thing they did was to pray.

The Wiesels settled into their new home, using everything – the furniture, dishes, and even food left by previous owners who'd had no time to prepare for their forced departure. At the same time, the Nazis and police were helping themselves to whatever was left behind in the homes in the larger, just-evacuated ghetto. Despite all this upheaval, and despite the reality facing the Wiesels and the few other Jewish families still in Sighet, the people remained optimistic. They knew the tide was turning and the Germans were losing the war. They believed help would come before it was too late for those left in the ghetto.

Maria, the housekeeper came up with a proposal of help for the Wiesels. The Wiesels could have easily escaped as this small ghetto was loosely guarded. Maria managed to enter this smaller ghetto and offered the Wiesels her cabin in the mountains as a hiding place. However, Maria's proposal was declined by Elie's parents on the ground that they would prefer to face a collective fate with the whole Jewish community rather than be selfish and try to escape. Four days later, in late May 1944, the family's time at the ghetto ran out. Early that morning, 15 years old Elie, his father Shlomo, mother Sarah, elder sisters Hilda and Bea, and seven year old Tzipora were herded aboard a train bound to Auschwitz.

The heat in the rail car was stifling as 80 people were crammed in this narrow space. It had neither proper ventilation, nor enough space for sitting down and even bathroom. The prisoners onboard hardly had a few slices of bread and a few pails to share during the whole journey – a journey whose duration and destination were completely unknown to the boarders.

They were forcibly locked in the cart, and in such a sickening and morbid condition, their nerves got frayed out of hunger, thirst and stink. However, the worst moment for the captives came, when they realized that their train had crossed the border from Hungary into Czechoslovakia rather than heading for a work camp somewhere within the Hungarian borders which they believed would be the case. It resulted in great terror amongst the captive Jews:

We realized then that we were not staying in Hungary. Our eyes opened. Too late. The door of the car slid aside. A German officer stepped in accompanied by a Hungarian lieutenant, acting as his interpreter.

“From this moment on, you are under the authority of the German army. Anyone who still owns gold, silver, or watches must hand them over now. Anyone who will be found to have kept any of these will be shot on the spot. Secondly, anyone who is ill should report to the hospital car. That’s all.”...

“There are eighty of you in the car,” the German officer added. “If anyone goes missing, you will all be shot, like dogs.” (Wiesel, *Night*, 23-24)

After travelling for four days onboard, the train finally arrived at Auschwitz – probably the most iniquitous, the largest and the most destructive concentration camp built by the Nazis. It is a massive complex in the south of modern-day Poland, where Jews were either forced into slave labour or brutally murdered. When the prisoner Jews look through the train car’s windows, they saw rows of stark buildings, barbed wire, and flames shooting from a tall black chimney. It was the most chilling “greeting” at an entrance to what was perhaps World War II’s most infamous concentration camp, Auschwitz. The slogan *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work Makes One Free) inscribed on what can rightly be called as the “Gates of Hell” served

the dual purpose of masking the deadly intentions of the Nazis and thinly disguise one of the camp's chief purposes during the war – to serve as a factory of death.

Men with clubs pushed Elie and his family forcibly out of the cattle cars, denying them even the pleasure of bringing with them their few cherished possessions. Soldiers pointed machine guns at them. German shepherds barked at them. Elie describes his departing moments with his mother and sisters:

“Men to the left! Women to the right!”

Eight words spoken quietly, indifferently, without emotion. Eight simple, short words. Yet that was the moment when I left my mother. There was no time to think, and I already felt my father's hand press against mine: we were alone. In a fraction of a second I could see my mother, my sisters, move to the right. Tzipora was holding Mother's hand. I saw them walking farther and farther away; Mother was stroking my sister's blond hair, as if to protect her. And I walked on with my father, with the men. I didn't know that this was the moment in time and the place where I was leaving my mother and Tzipora forever. (Wiesel, *Night*, 29)

Elie could not even bid a proper farewell to his mother and sisters. That was the last time Elie saw his mother and these moments brought an abrupt and a traumatic end to Elie Wiesel's erstwhile innocent, sheltered childhood.

2.3.4 Dehumanization and Victimization of ‘the other’

In 1944, two years after Moishe's capture and his dramatic escape, when uniformed German moved into Sighet, the Jews of the town had nothing to suspect about the impending horror and their doom:

German soldiers – with their steel helmets and their death’s-head emblem. Still, our first impressions of the Germans were rather reassuring. The officers were billeted in private homes, even in Jewish homes. Their attitude toward their hosts was distant but polite. They never demanded the impossible, they made no offensive remarks, and sometimes even smiled at the lady of the house. (Wiesel, *Night*, 9-10)

In March 1944, everything changed dramatically for the Jews of Sighet. The Hungarian police officers, who had once been friends of the Jews and other citizens, collaborated with the Nazis in carrying out the “Final Solution”. Jewish leaders were arrested. Nazi soldiers and Hungarian police suddenly enforced curfews, closed Jewish shops, and stripped all Jews of their gold, jewellery, and everything else of value. The Jews of Sighet were no longer allowed to attend synagogue services. They were forced to wear yellow stars on their clothing.

After entering Auschwitz and being inside the barracks, the men were immediately forced to strip. Later, the SS officers inspected all the naked forms, and assigned the most unpleasant task of shovelling bodies into fires to the strongest of them all. Fortunately, Elie and Shlomo were not chosen for that task, but they had their heads shaved, were dunked in disinfectant, and were forced to run outside, naked in the cold, to a storeroom where SS men threw ill-fitting pants and shirts at them:

The night had passed completely. The morning star shone in the sky. I too had become a different person. The student of Talmud, the child I was, had been consumed by the flames. All that was left was a shape that resembled me. My soul had been invaded – and devoured – by a black flame. (Wiesel, *Night*, 37)

Elie Wiesel still had one last disgrace to endure on that first day at Auschwitz. A man with a needle tattooed a serial number on the teenager's left forearm. Elie Wiesel lost his sense of identity that very moment. He was no longer Elie Wiesel and his years of identity and human form is now merely reduced to the number A-7713.

For the next three weeks, Elie and Shlomo settled into a dull routine due to the considerate behaviour of a kind guard-in-charge. Their day started with having coffee and bread in the mornings, having soup at midday, and with a roll call at 6:00 in evening. They had nothing much else to do. Hardly 100 prisoners were left in their barrack as most men with special skills and craftsmanship had already been sent off and put to work. But the boring routine ended soon enough. One day, Elie and his father were forced to work for four hours with the other inmates. They ended up at Buna, the largest of Auschwitz's work camps. There, the inmates were assigned to various Kommandos, or work groups. Elie and Shlomo, fortunately, found themselves together again. This time, they were to work with a group of orchestra musicians, who played a fine tune while the prisoners followed the routine of marching off every day to their workplace.

The Wiesels had nothing to do with music nor they played any musical instruments, but after the daily musical march, they joined the orchestra Kommando as warehouse labourers. One of the musicians, a Polish violinist named Julie, explained to Elie:

We work in a warehouse of electrical materials, not far from here. The work is neither difficult nor dangerous. Only Idek, the Kapo, occasionally has fits of madness, and then you'd better stay out of his way. (Wiesel, *Night*, 49-50)

The deportation and transportation experience of the Jews in general and Jews of Sighet town in particular represents a total collapse of social, moral and political orders. The degrading and humiliating conditions and the cruel treatment meted out to people like Eliezer and

Shlomo, who are the representatives of the whole community of Jews and their suffering, served to strip the deportees of their dignity by overwhelming their senses both physically and psychologically. The Nazis' choice of cattle cars for most transport reflects their view of the victims as subhuman. All sense of time and certainty was replaced by lack of privacy, terror, and abandonment. Consequently, the victims' own social conventions and proprieties were eroded.

2.3.5 Violence, Trauma, Death

It was too traumatic and painful for a 15 years old Elie Wiesel to see his mother disappear, hand-in-hand with his little sister, while he clung to his father's hand. Moreover, an elderly man, standing behind him was shot dead. In front of him were guards with clubs. All around him were noise and chaos. Elie's sense of peace, harmony, innocence and bliss was snatched away from him in a moment. In the midst of this madness, Elie realized that the most important thing from this moment on, no matter what else happened, was that he and his father, Shlomo, stay together. With the passage of time and increasing realization of the horror of Auschwitz, Elie thought that neither he nor his dad could face Auschwitz alone.

Later, Elie and Shlomo found themselves lined up with other older men in front of notorious Dr. Josef Mengele, who was also known as the Angel of Death. He was the God of Auschwitz – the man upon whose nod rested the fate of Jews, including that of Elie Wiesel, Shlomo, that is to say, whether they would live or die. A more experienced prisoner told father and son to lie about their ages. Elie should say he was 18, rather than risk being considered a child too young to pull his weight. Similarly, Shlomo was to give his age as 40, rather than risk being considered too old to work at 50, his true age. Elie Wiesel describes his first encounter with Dr. Mengele:

... Standing in the middle of it was, though I didn't know it then, Dr.

Mengele, the notorious Dr. Mengele. He looked like the typical SS officer: a

cruel, though not unintelligent, face, complete with monocle. He was holding a conductor's baton and was surrounded by officers. The baton was moving constantly, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left.

In no time, I stood before him.

"Your age?" he asked, perhaps trying to sound paternal.

"I'm eighteen." My voice was trembling.

"In good health?"

"Yes."

"Your profession?"

Tell him that I was a student?

"Farmer," I heard myself saying.

This conversation lasted no more than a few seconds. It seemed like an eternity. (Wiesel, *Night*, 31-32)

The decision of life and death was simply indicated by pointed the baton either to the left or to the right respectively. Instead of admitting he was a student, Elie told Mengele he was a healthy farmer, and with that, the baton pointed to the left – to life. Shlomo was also directed to the left. Father and son were still together. But that was the only positive thing and the only point of relief about their new reality.

While marching towards their barracks that were to be their new home, the Wiesels saw flames rising from a ditch. They saw officers throwing babies into the fire. Then they saw another fiery pit, which was for adult bodies. Now, they finally and fully understood the horrifying truth of Auschwitz as the death camp:

I pinched myself: Was I still alive? Was I awake? How was it possible that men, women, and children were being burned and that the world kept silent?

No. All this could not be real. A nightmare perhaps... (Wiesel, *Night*, 32)

But what Elie witnessed was real. He watched the naked dance of death in the midst of struggle for survival. Prisoners were being gassed, shot, or beaten to death. They were stripped off their clothing, and their remains were shovelled into pits of fire or into crematories, which were ovens where the bodies were finally burnt to ash.

Gradually, Elie realized that Juliek was right on both counts. The work in Buna was simple and quiet. It involved petty jobs like counting bolts, bulbs, and small electrical items, or loading parts into trucks. Juliek had also been right about Idek. One fine day, when Idek was particularly in a bad temper, he poured out all his anger on Elie and attacked him “like a wild beast.” He punched, beat, and crushed Elie’s head and chest until the teenager was covered with blood. It was only Elie’s bloody sight that forced him to stop. On a different occasion, Idek whipped Elie 25 lashes after he accidentally caught the Kapo in an inappropriate situation with a girl. Another time, Idek thought Shlomo, Elie’s father wasn’t working hard enough, and he beat the old man with an iron bar.

Later in life, Elie felt depressed and sorrowful at the thought that he didn’t try to rescue his father from such a cruel beating. He recognized how dehumanized he had already become at Auschwitz:

I had watched it all happening without moving. I kept silent. In fact, I thought of stealing away in order not to suffer the blows. What’s more, if I felt anger at that moment, it was not directed at the Kapo but at my father. Why couldn’t he have avoided Idek’s wrath? That was what life in a concentration camp had made of me.... (Wiesel, *Night*, 54)

Franek, the warehouse foreman, who was basically a Polish musician befriended Elie and his father. Soon, however, he discovered that Elie had a valuable gold crown on his tooth, and he desperately wanted it. Elie refused to have his tooth pulled, so Franek launched a vicious campaign against Shlomo – slapping, tormenting, and beating him – until Elie relented. Mercilessly and shamelessly, a friend of Franek pulled the gold crown with a rusty spoon giving enormous pain to Elie.

The early summer of 1944 brought a hope with the Allies closing in on German-held territories. One morning, at Buna, a siren started screeching loud. The SS ordered all the prisoners to be inside their respective barracks. U.S. planes were scheduled to attack the camp of Buna. During the chaos of such attacks, it was relatively easier for prisoners to escape,. Therefore, the High Command instructed the guards to kill the defaulters, trespassers without any mercy. During this particular alert, the cooks had left two pots of hot soup outside when they ran for cover. For starving inmates, the sight of unattended soup was almost too much to bear. Most managed to fight the impulse to run and fill their stomachs, however, because “fear was greater than hunger,” except for one man. As hundreds of prisoners watched with a mixture of envy and dread, the man crawled on his belly to the soup cauldrons. He slowly hoisted himself up over the edge and dove in for a mouthful of soup. A shot rang out. The man died just as the U.S. bombers began an hour-long assault on the Buna work factory. Everybody survived this long assault on Buna camp except for the man who dared to satisfy his hunger. Later that day, prisoners were forced to dispose of an unexploded bomb and to clean up the rubble of buildings that had been demolished on the raid. A week later, the SS hanged a man accused of stealing during the air raid. All the prisoners were then forced to witness the hanging dead body which was paraded outside the camp.

Elie also witnessed many hangings during his forced exile at Buna. One of them proved too horrific to bear even for Elie. A youth, who was accused of some offense, was to

be hanged by the side of two older men. It took almost no time for the older men to be hanged till death, but unfortunately, because the boy was light in weight, his body kept hanging with the rope for almost half an hour before he got suffocated to death. All the prisoners were forced to witness such a painful death:

Behind me, I heard the same man asking:

“For God’s sake, where is God?”

And from within me, I heard a voice answer:

“Where He is? This is where – hanging here from this gallows...”

That night, the soup tasted of corpses. (Wiesel, *Night*, 65)

Another selection process among the inmates of Buna camp was carried out as soon as the winter set in. Once again, Dr. Mengele allowed a breathing respite to Elie and his father, but Shlomo’s health did show clear signs of deterioration and breakdown. His strength and energy were failing. Through the winter, the prisoners worked hard as their bodies suffered through the brutally cold weather. In January 1945, due to both an infection and the cold, Elie’s foot began to swell. The camp doctor operated without anaesthesia. Two days after Elie’s surgery, the Allies neared Buna. The SS packed up the prisoners and marched them deeper into German territory. Elie learned that as being the patient of infirmary, he was to be left behind. He strongly believed that the SS would sooner kill the patients than allow them to be liberated by the coming Allies. Moreover, he did not want to be separated from his father, so Elie joined the evacuation march – bleeding foot and all. As soon as the war ended, Elie came to know that the prisoners left behind in the infirmary were rescued within 48 hours of the ending of war.

In the long march (Death March) of 37 miles (60 km) to their new concentration camp, Gleiwitz, prisoners were forced to run, with armed SS guards by their sides. The SS

shot and killed anyone arbitrarily, especially, those who could not keep up the pace. The world of Elie at present was filled with men dying out of cold, hunger, fatigue and gunshot wounds:

As for me, I was thinking not about death but about not wanting to be separated from my father. We had already suffered so much, endured so much together. This was not the moment to separate. (Wiesel, *Night*, 82)

Momentarily, he thought of giving up and letting himself die at the side of the road:

The idea of dying, of ceasing to be, began to fascinate me. To no longer exist. To no longer feel the excruciating pain of my foot. To no longer feel anything, neither fatigue nor cold, nothing. To break rank, to let myself slide to the side of the road...

My father's presence was the only thing that stopped me. He was running next to me, out of breath, out of strength, desperate. I had no right to let myself die.

What would he do without me? I was his sole support. (Wiesel, *Night*, 86-87)

To his utmost surprise at Gleiwitz, Elie was reunited with his musician friend, Juliek, who had managed to smuggle his violin with him on the march. The first night, as the men slept, Juliek played his violin. By morning, Juliek was dead. After three days at Gleiwitz, and with the Allies close behind, the SS did another selection before moving the prisoners again. In this round, Shlomo was pointed to the right side, that is to say, to the side of death. However, Elie created such a fuss that, in the confusion, his father managed to slip, unnoticed, into the group selected to live.

It was an unending march, in which prisoners tried to maintain bare survival by eating nothing but snow. When a train finally came, the SS stuffed 100 men into each open-topped

cattle car. Every so often, during the train's journey deeper into German territory, it would stop, so the prisoners and guards could toss out the dead bodies of men who had starved or frozen to death. At one stop, a German worker walking by the train threw a piece of bread into a boxcar. It resulted in a stampede. Before long, other passersby started throwing bread, too, just to watch the spectacle of skeleton-like figures attacking each other. When the train arrived at Buchenwald, a camp in the centre of modern-day Germany, which is the final destination as well, 12 prisoners out of 100 in Elie's railcar had died. They have managed to travel about 435 miles (700 km) from Auschwitz – and Shlomo was almost on the verge of death.

While entering Buchenwald, Elie held the hands of his ailing father Shlomo just as he did the day they arrived at Auschwitz. He would not like his father to die an ignominious death suffered out of hunger or punishment. However, Shlomo was not in a position to carry on. The old man wanted to lie down and rest which Elie refused to let go. Almost immediately after their arrival, an air raid siren sent prisoners and guards into a frenzy, and Elie lost sight of his father. The next morning, after hours of searching, he found Shlomo, weak and burning with fever. Shlomo's time is already done at Buchenwald.

In the following week, Shlomo was found hallucinating, shivering, and suffering from dysentery, and a painful intestinal ailment. He was too weak even to go the washroom. Whenever Elie left his side, to get bread or take a shower, Shlomo's fellow inmates beat him and stole his food to hurry the older man's death. It was the inhuman sight that both Elie and Shlomo experienced. Holocaust reduced the most sophisticated gentry called Jews into ruthless beasts, ready to pounce on one another for food and for survival.

Finally, when Elie realized that there was no hope left for his father, he considered, for "a fraction of a second," taking Shlomo's ration of food and water for himself. The

thought went in and out of his head so quickly but it finally left him with a terrible sense of guilt and shame.

At the dead of night on January 28, 1945, as Shlomo called out to his son, crying in pain, hunger, and thirst, an SS officer clubbed him to death. By morning, Shlomo's dead body was already gone, and another man was in his bed. Elie could never ever forgive himself for ignoring his father's cries that night:

No prayers were said over his tomb. No candle lit in his memory. His last word had been my name. He had called out to me and I had not answered.

I did not weep, and it pained me that I could not weep. But I was out of tears.

And deep inside me, if I could have searched the recesses of my feeble conscience, I might have found something like: Free at last! ...

(Wiesel, *Night*, 112)

After the death of Elie's father Shlomo in Buchenwald, the 16-year old found himself alone and an orphan in the world, without family for the first time in his life. After eight long months of struggle to survive the oddities of life, side-by-side with his father, Elie had no will to continue the fight alone. He was transferred to a children's section of the camp, where 600 orphaned kids lived together – and, two months later, were rescued together.

On April 6, 1945, with the Allies fast approaching, SS guards announced they would start "evacuating" prisoners, and they would no longer provide any food. For the next five days, the SS killed 10,000 Buchenwald prisoners a day – until the population was down to 20,000.

At that point, the guards decided to shoot the rest of the inmates at once and demolish the camp before the Allies arrived. But due to an air-raid alert, however, they were forced to take cover. Their plan to slaughter the rest of the prisoners – including the children – was put

on hold for a day. Elie Wiesel survived the worst crime ever committed by humanity in its long history of civilization.

Eliezer comes across a few mentors – direct or indirect – in the early years of his life. Apart from Moishe in Sighet and Madame Schächter on train to the concentration camp, there are other three elderly characters to advise the maturing Eliezer. The first is the prisoner-in-charge of Eliezer's block upon arrival, who delivers a speech to the new arrivals re-affirming everyone's faith in humanity and resembling the rhetoric of innumerable, traditional moral sages. According to Elie, he spoke the first human words:

Comrades, you are now in the concentration camp Auschwitz. Ahead of you lies a long road paved with suffering. Don't lose hope. You have already eluded the worst danger: the selection. Therefore, muster your strength and keep your faith. We shall all see the day of liberation. Have faith in life, a thousand times faith. By driving out despair, you will move away from death. Hell does not last forever ... And now, here is a prayer, or rather a piece of advice: let there be camaraderie among you. We are all brothers and share the same fate. The same smoke hovers over all our heads. Help each other. That is the only way to survive. (Wiesel, *Night*, 41)

These words urging for humanity, faith, interdependence, community bonding appear very comforting to all the inmates. However, just after two years at the time of death march evacuation of Buna, Eliezer listens to a contradictory piece of advice from another block leader, while his father Shlomo is on the verge of death:

Listen to me, kid. Don't forget that you are in a concentration camp. In this place, it is every man for himself, and you cannot think of others. Not even your father. In this place, there is no such thing as father, brother, friend. Each

of us lives and dies alone. Let me give you good advice: stop giving your ration of bread and soup to your old father. You cannot help him anymore. And you are hurting yourself. In fact, you should be getting his rations...

(Wiesel, *Night*, 110-111)

The first piece of advice is moralistic and idealistic, whereas the second one is borne out of practical wisdom. The former makes life appear worthy and liveable, whereas the latter makes life appear a living hell with no sense of hope and escape from suffering.

However, the most powerful dramatization of an inverted mentor-protégé relationship in *Night* is presented through the relationship of Shlomo and Eliezer, father and son. When we first meet Shlomo, he comes before us as a man who is held in great esteem by the entire Jewish community of Sighet and who is also admired by his son Eliezer. He symbolizes the typical patriarchal Jewish father. Usually, in a normal social world, a father becomes the agent of child's transformation from initiation to maturation, from a dependent adolescent to an independent adult. However, in the world of concentration camps, the roles are reversed, that is to say, the child becomes the parent and vice versa. Eliezer gains in strength and courage as time passes in Auschwitz, whereas his father Shlomo gradually becomes timid, weak and vulnerable as a small child. Now, it's the son Eliezer who is in the charge of their fate, that is to say, he is the one who takes decisions, and even getting angry on his father for not knowing how to avoid Kapo's wrath and ultimately getting badly beaten. Although Eliezer doesn't abandon his father as is done by Rabbi Eliahu's son, but he too had his own traumatic moments of filial disloyalty and betrayal. Eliezer's journey from the town of Sighet to the concentration camp is not from initiation to maturation, from life to fulfilment of dreams, on the contrary, it's from life to death, from self-respect to humiliation, betrayal, torture, trauma and suffering, from being a man of substance to being a decomposing human flesh or a skeleton. He symbolizes the same tragic fate of tens of thousands of Jews across

Germany occupied territories who were simply reduced to smoke and ashes in no time. The story of Eliezer, his father Shlomo and other Jews is one of losses – loss of name, identity, self-respect, home, faith, friends, family members, culture, and ultimately life itself.

2.3.6 Freedom, Hope, Life – A New Beginning

On the morning of April 11, 1945 as the prisoners were assembled together to be killed, a resistance movement rose up from within the camp and attacked the SS. By noon, the SS had fled, the resistance had taken charge of the camp, and at 6:00 p.m., the first U.S. tanks rolled through the gates of Buchenwald. The liberators brought food, and the first thing Elie and the other prisoners did was eat:

OUR FIRST ACT AS FREE MEN was to throw ourselves onto the provisions. That's all we thought about. No thought of revenge, or of parents. Only of bread. And even when we were no longer hungry, not one of us thought of revenge. The next day, a few of the young men ran into Weimar to bring back some potatoes and clothes – and to sleep with girls. But still no trace of revenge. (Wiesel, *Night*, 115)

Less than two weeks later, on May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allied Forces. World War II ended in Europe. After liberation, and after eating too much of a food not fit for a person who had been on the verge of starving to death, Elie became seriously ill as he suffered from food poisoning:

One day when I was able to get up, I decided to look at myself in the mirror on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto. From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me. The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me. (Wiesel, *Night*, 115)

He wasn't the only one who fell ill at that time – 5,000 of the 20,000 Buchenwald survivors died of intestinal ailments within weeks of their release from the camp. Elie recovered just in 10 days, but to his utter dismay he found himself an orphan, alienated, lonely and with a truncated memory and a fragmented identity.

2.3.7 Reading History from Below

Night also presents the conflict between human desire to discard such atrocious, violent, nightmarish experiences and the basic human urge to remember and express them in words. To render historical horror is to render that which exceeds rendering. It projects pain for which there is no solace, no large consolation, and no redemptive possibility. It is to express the inexpressible and to imagine the unimaginable. *Night* is about shattering of a moral, political order under the ruthless regime of Adolf Hitler. It describes an experience that is unique and not universal, that which is strange and not familiar, and that which is absolutely absurd and beyond comprehension. We, the readers, like the narrator Eliezer are mere mute witness to this barbarism which takes a heavy toll on illusions of faith and universal brotherhood and present a terrible, stark reality.

Elie Wiesel's narration of the predictions, selections, deportation and extermination in the form of a victim's story of terror is at par with historians' account or to be more precise presents a more interpretative and comprehensive picture of Holocaust and its psychological implications. After all, physical scars get healed with the passage of time, but it takes ages to overcome trauma and a scathed psyche. A testimony, like that of Elie Wiesel's *Night*, give voice and identity not only to those victims who survived but also to those whose voices are drowned or obscured in the anonymity of the magnitude of six million deaths. A historian can explain the scale of devastation in terms of Nazi perpetration of violence, physical properties

being destroyed and number of human beings annihilated. However, it cannot fathom deep into the psyche of individuals, wherein lies the reality of victimized and not the victimizer.

In writing *Night*, Elie Wiesel provides testament to the act of recovering the value and meaning of life as well as re-claiming the history of the dead and those who survived. It is also Wiesel's testimony against the indifference of humanity. By demonstrating care and concern for others and by giving voice to the nearly-forgotten voices of the dead Jews, Wiesel is negating the Nazis' campaign to destroy noble human values. Elie Wiesel gives us a first-hand account of what exactly happened during the Holocaust and in particular to the Jews of Sighet. The autobiographical narrative of *Night* neither negates nor undermines the canonical significance of the historical text on Holocaust, it however, supplements the corpus of Holocaust literature and adds a new dimension to the same – a dimension that of a survivor and a true champion of humanity. The world created by Elie Wiesel in *Night* is a world of provisional facts, a world of counterfactuals, which foregrounds individual, subaltern, marginalized voices. The autobiographical mode of narration in *Night* lends authenticity and credibility. Memory, on one hand, is integral to recollecting such cataclysmic event like Holocaust, and in that case, it can prove to be a source of trauma and agony, but on the other hand, memory also provides enough courage to confront the past, though however tragic and disturbing. 'History from below' approach gives us insights into how common people, victims cope up with the adverse situations of life and what strategies they devise to face the onslaughts and oddities of life, dominance and authoritarianism of political dictators like Hitler, and thereby fight for survival and sustain their existence. Scholars from humanities are particularly interested in memory because it helps them to recreate the collective history of a particular culture or race or group or community. A humanist perspective is particularly valuable because memory is a way of processing and conveying the human experience, and memory reaches beyond printed records and dated documents. In addition, humanities

scholars are interested in the significance of how and what people remember, even when memory is sometimes unconsciously flawed, or in cases where people have different or conflicting memories of the same event. What seems to matter most is how events and their consequences have impacted personal individual or collective lives.

When a catastrophe like Holocaust occurs, there is a 'before' and an 'after'. Looking at the before could certainly help people think about how to look at the after, or how to manage the after. This 'after' includes diverse elements: reconstruction from a purely material point of view, but also psychological and emotional reconstruction, possibly through individual verbalization or construction of personal or collective narratives. Recollecting and giving form to experience by organizing its different components can help alleviate the trauma. In addition, those narratives are valuable records that will last. If history repeats itself, one can draw lessons from the past. The private memory of Elie Wiesel helps in reconstructing the public memory regarding the Holocaust. Thus, Elie Wiesel's *Night* embodies a human experience and it can serve as a constant reminder that can help people to learn worthy lessons from the past.

Mainstream history overlooks individual voices and captures generalizations. It does not talk about a group of human beings, a community, a few individuals and their ways to grapple with dehumanization and inhuman predicament. New Historicism and Subaltern Studies, in that respect, have a strong distrust for official versions of history, and try to represent people's history, wherein subaltern is the vantage point.

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Website

www.yadvashem.org

Yad Vashem is the world centre/memorial for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust established in the year 1953. Historical information on Auschwitz and Buchenwald is taken from:

- www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/about/05/auschwitz_birkenau.asp
- www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206088.pdf

CHAPTER 3

From Pain to Happiness, From Victimizer to Saviour:

Imre Kertész's *Fateless* and Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's List*

3.1 Representation of Holocaust in Imre Kertész's *Fateless*

Imre Kertész was born in Budapest on November 9, 1929. Of Jewish descent, in 1944 he was deported to Auschwitz and from there to Buchenwald, where he was liberated in 1945. On his return to Hungary, he worked for a Budapest newspaper, *Világosság*, but was dismissed in 1951 when it adopted the Communist party line. After two years of military service, he began supporting himself as an independent writer and translator of German-language authors such as Nietzsche, Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Freud, Roth, Wittgenstein, and Canetti, who have all had a significant influence on his own writing.

Kertész's first novel, *Sorstalanság* (English Translation *Fateless*, 2006), a work based on his experiences in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, was first published in 1975. *Sorstalanság* (*Fateless*) is not autobiographical in any simple sense: Kertész himself says that he has used the form of the autobiographical novel but that it is not autobiography. *Sorstalanság* was initially rejected for publication. When published eventually in 1975, it was received with compact silence.

Imre Kertész was awarded the *Brandenburger Literaturpreis* in 1995, the *Leipziger Buchpreis zur Europäischen Verständigung* in 1997, the *Herder-Preis* and the *WELT-Literaturpreis* in 2000, the *Ehrenpreis der Robert-Bosch-Stiftung* in 2001, and the *Hans Sahl-Preis* in 2002. His works have been translated into numerous languages, including German, Spanish, French, English, Czech, Russian, Swedish, and Hebrew.

3.1.1 Holocaust in Hungary

In April 1944, Hungarian authorities ordered Hungarian Jews living outside Budapest (roughly 500,000) to concentrate in certain cities, usually regional government seats. Hungarian gendarmes were sent into the rural regions to round up the Jews and dispatch them to the cities. The urban areas in which the Jews were forced to concentrate were enclosed and referred to as ghettos. Sometimes the ghettos encompassed the area of a former Jewish neighbourhood. In other cases, the ghetto was merely a single building, such as a factory.

In some Hungarian cities, Jews were compelled to live outdoors, without shelter or sanitary facilities. Food and water supplies were dangerously inadequate. Medical care was virtually non-existent. Hungarian authorities forbade the Jews from leaving the ghettos. Police guarded the perimeters of the enclosures. Individual gendarmes often tortured Jews and extorted personal valuables from them. None of these ghettos existed for more than a few weeks and many were liquidated within days.

In mid-May 1944, the Hungarian authorities, in coordination with the German Security Police, began to systematically deport the Hungarian Jews. SS Colonel Adolf Eichmann was chief of the team of "deportation experts" that worked with the Hungarian authorities. The Hungarian police carried out the roundups and forced the Jews onto the deportation trains. In less than two months, nearly 440,000 Jews were deported from Hungary in more than 145 trains. Most were deported to Auschwitz. Thousands were also sent to the border with Austria to be to be used for digging fortification trenches. By the end of July 1944, the only Jewish community left in Hungary was that of Budapest, the capital.

During the regime of Szalasi, the leader of the Fascist and the anti-Semitic Arrow Cross Party, the Arrow Cross gangs perpetrated a reign of arbitrary terror against the Jews of Budapest. Hundreds of Jews, both men and women, were violently murdered. Many others died from the brutal conditions of forced labor to which the Arrow Cross subjected them. In

November 1944, the Arrow Cross regime ordered the remaining Jews of Budapest into a ghetto which, covering an area of 0.1 square miles, held nearly 70,000 people. Several thousand Budapest Jews were also marched on foot under Hungarian guard to the Austrian border during November and December 1944. Many who were too weak to continue marching in the bitter cold were shot along the way.

In January 1945, with Soviet forces already in the Pest section of Budapest, Hungary signed an armistice. Soviet forces liberated the Buda section of the city on February 13, 1945. Soviet troops drove the last German units and their Arrow Cross collaborators out of western Hungary in early April 1945. Of approximately 825,000 Jews living in Hungary in 1941, about 63,000 died or were killed prior to the German occupation of March 1944. Under German occupation, just over 500,000 died from maltreatment or were murdered. Some 255,000 Jews, less than one-third of those who had lived within enlarged Hungary in March 1944, survived the Holocaust. (www.ushmm.org)

3.1.2 Disintegration of Family, Dislocation, Exile

Fateless is set in Hungary in the midst of the Holocaust and the Second World War. When the novel begins, Georg Köves (Gyuri) explains to his teacher that his father has asked him to stay home from school. The teacher sends him home. Gyuri's father is about to be sent away for "labor service," and this is Gyuri's last chance to spend time with him. However, his father spends the day at his shop, which Gyuri soon begins to find a bit boring. Eventually he grows so bored that he passes the time by going outside to relieve himself and then washing his hands. Gyuri's father gives over control of the shop to his assistant, Mr. Sütő, because the latter is "completely above board regarding his race" and will be allowed to run the business. Mr. Sütő offers to write a receipt, but Gyuri's father insists that there is no need for such things between the two of them.

The novel begins with the point of view of the protagonist named Gyuri, a fourteen year old Hungarian Jew. The beginning of the novel shows the influence of the intimidating and intruding brutal reality of Holocaust on the life of an individual. The disintegration of the Köves family marks the beginning of the end for the whole Jew community. The beginning of the novel also refers to the stark reality, but an unacceptable one, in terms of discrimination made between a Jew and a non-Jew. The yellow David star is a symbol of 'identification', 'recognition' and not of identity. Ironically the very symbol of identification make all Jews non-entities, a non-existent community, a community unwanted, discriminated, massacred if required and can be wiped out from the face of the earth.

To Gyuri, time appears as burdensome. He is bored to death while waiting for his father and stepmother to talk to him after they have completed discussing the affairs of property and workplace. Time has come to a standstill for Gyuri. He appears to be emotionless and speechless at the fact that his father will leave for the labour camp tomorrow probably never to return.

Gyuri's stepmother has a list of the things his father will need in the labour camp. She has procured most of the items at this point, and is tracking down the things that are still missing. Gyuri notes that he feels odd walking around in a group of three, all wearing the yellow stars, but they nevertheless go about buying the necessary items. Most of the shops are quite busy, but there is a lot of room in the shop where they buy the knapsack. Gyuri notices that the shopkeeper is quite nice, but that he tries to avoid having to use the word labour service and instead refers to items that will be useful "where he is going."

Uncle Lajos instructs Gyuri to pray for his departing father and that for the first time brings out the real son in him, that is to say, his son-like feelings for his father. The occasion of father's departure brings out the thinking, logical yet the emotional self in Gyuri, Prayer evades Gyuri's consciousness. He neither understands nor is able to concentrate while the

prayer in Hebrew language is on. But at the end of it, he feels greatly unburdened as if he has got rid of some nagging sensation. The farewell scene between Gyuri and his father is picturesque in details:

The next thing was that, all at once, I found myself enfolded between his arms, his hug catching me off guard and somehow unprepared after all he had said. I don't know if my tears stemmed from that or simply from exhaustion, or maybe even because, ever since the first exhortation that I had received that morning from my stepmother, I had somehow been preparing all along to shed them unfailingly; whatever the reason, it was nevertheless good that this was indeed what happened, and I sensed that it also gratified Father to see them. After that he sent me off to bed. By then I was dead tired anyway. All the same, I thought, at least we were able to send him off to the labor camp, poor man, with memories of a nice day. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 26)

The next day, Gyuri's father leaves, and he tells Gyuri to stay by his stepmother's side now that he has left. Gyuri's emotional response to his father's untimely, unceremonious and sudden departure is marked by bewilderment. He is a bemused soul who is at the crossroads of relationships. The disintegration of Köves family, as observed and experienced by the young adolescent narrator, seals the fate of the whole Jewish community. It is the microcosm of the macro fate that awaited the hapless Jew.

3.1.3 Holocaust and Ghettoization

Back at home, Gyuri runs into Annamarie, a girl who lives in the same building. Annamarie, Gyuri notes, is like him, "fourteen years old, or thereabouts." She invites him to play rummy after supper with her and her sisters, but Gyuri declines the invitation when he remembers that his father is soon to leave. Instead, he returns home, where his stepmother has

made supper. Gyuri's father refuses to eat more than his share of food, claiming that he is not hungry, and Gyuri follows his example. Afterward, they are visited by their extended family and who have come to see Gyuri's father off. Uncle Willie, who used to be a journalist, claims that he has heard from a confidential source that there is going to be an improvement in their position because of secret negotiations between the Germans and the Allied Powers. It is his belief that the Germans have begun to realize the usefulness of the Jews living in Budapest, Hungary. Another relative named Uncle Lajos, the stepmother's oldest brother is the one who unpretentiously puts forward his thoughts on the present condition of Jews and the unprecedented yet imminent fate that awaits all the Jews:

"You too," he said, "are now a part of the shared Jewish fate," and he went on to elaborate on that, remarking that this fate was one of "unbroken persecution that has lasted for millennia," which the Jews "have to accept with fortitude and self-sacrificing forbearance," since God has meted it out to them for their past sins, so for that very reason from Him alone could mercy be expected, but until then He in turn expects of us that, in this grave situation, we all stand our ground on the place He has marked out for us "in accordance with our strengths and abilities." (Kertész, *Fateless*, 20)

Uncle Lajos's portrayal of Jews' condition is a part of fate pre-destined by God. Neither he directly hints at the malicious, barbaric, ruthless policies and strategies of Nazis meant for the total annihilation of the Jews, nor he presents it as a distant possibility, which was going to be the fate of many amongst Jews. Gyuri neither understands what Uncle Lajos said about God and fate, nor does he understand the logic of talking so.

Two months have passed since Gyuri's father was sent to the labor camp. Summer has arrived, as have new laws limiting the freedom of the Jews in Hungary. Gyuri has been

assigned to work at the 'Shell Petroleum Refinery Works' in Csepel. Gyuri sees the assignment as a sort of privilege, since anyone wearing the yellow star that identifies Jews is not allowed to leave city limits. This work assignment will actually allow Gyuri more freedom than many members of his family, and his stepmother is happy that the work papers will allow him to justify to the guards his existence because he is contributing to the war effort. It is manual labor, but Gyuri does not mind passing the time with his friends. His specific work is to repair damage to the oil works, which are a frequent target of the air raids.

Gyuri is still in contact with his family. His father sends letters from the labor camp. He has maintained his good health and is being treated decently. The family is reassured by the letters, and Gyuri's uncle, Willie, argues that they must now wait for the Allied Powers to finish the war against the Germans. Life is not easy for the Jewish family, but Mr. Sütő stays true to the promise he made to Gyuri's father. He brings them money and rations that he acquires through the black market. Gyuri's biological mother is less pleased with the situation, and she tries to convince Gyuri that he should spend more time with her and that he should demonstrate his love for her with actions rather than words. However, in Gyuri's view, it remains correct to live with his stepmother because his father told him to. Gyuri wants to remain loyal to his father's wishes, but he admits that he feels uncomfortable when he leaves his biological mother.

The community members continue to board their windows each evening so as to hide from the air raids. It is while he is hiding during one air raid that Gyuri kisses Annamarie for the first time. At first, they claim their kiss is due to the bomb, but their relationship nevertheless continues. They have their first quarrel when they argue about the nature of "Jewishness." Actually, his argument is with Annamarie's older sister, who is bothered by the hate people feel for her when they see the yellow star she wears. She is all worked up,

annoyed and exasperated. Their undeserved hatred is mind-boggling to Annamarie and her sister:

It was her view, in fact, that “we Jews are different from other people,” and that difference was the crux of it, that’s why people hate Jews. She also remarked how peculiar it was to live “being aware of that differentness,” and that sometimes she felt a sort of pride but at other times more a shame of sorts because of it. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 35-36)

Gyuri replies by saying that it is simply the yellow star and that if she were to switch places with someone who was not Jewish, she would still be the same person and she would likely hate the other person for wearing the yellow star. Annamarie’s older sister bursts into tears at this because it means that everything they are suffering is nonsensical. Being different brings isolation which Gyuri tries to explain by giving the analogy of a prince and a beggar and swapping off two babies in their infancy. Gyuri tried to console the inconsolable Annamarie’s sister who hates being transformed into a spiteful monster, the other by the Germans. For the first time, Gyuri felt ashamed of himself. Afterward, Annamarie does not bring Gyuri to see her family, but when she later asks why he no longer comes to visit her family, he explains that it would seem odd to do so without her. The explanation satisfies Annamarie.

Gyuri is on his way to work the next morning when his bus is stopped by a policeman, who asks all of the Jews to present themselves. Confident in his work identification, Gyuri exits the bus with all of the other Jews. However, when they reach the road, the policeman directs the bus to continue along its route. Gyuri is still confused when a group of young men comes out from hiding. They are Jews that Gyuri works with, and they find it funny that Gyuri fell for the same trick they did. Even the policeman is amused when he sends the boys back into hiding before the next bus arrives.

Gyuri introduces the boys around him by their nicknames. “Leatherware” is named for his trade; he is one of the few boys who do not attend school. “Smoker” can always be found with a cigarette. “Fancyman” is handsome and talks easily to women. Rosenfeld is nicknamed “Rosie,” and the boys often defer to his judgment. It is Rosie who finally approaches the policeman to ask whether they will get in trouble for arriving late to work and when the boys will be free to leave. After all, the boys have decided, this inconvenience must be some kind of mistake. However, the policeman admits that he is not sure what will be done with the boys, and for now he must wait for further orders.

The policeman eventually asks the boys to come with him to a “Customs House,” where he locks the boys away. It is hot, but the boys pass the time playing games and singing. The policeman allows the boys to remove their shirts in the heat, which is technically prohibited since the boys are left without their yellow stars identifying them as Jews. The policeman remains polite throughout the day, but Gyuri can sense the frustration that the policeman feels over not having yet received his next orders. Gyuri eventually sees him talk to another police officer, and he senses resignation in their body language.

3.1.4 Violence, Victimization, Dehumanization

The orders finally arrive in the late afternoon, and the boys are marched to a new location where they can present their papers to a “higher authority.” The boys are marched publicly through the streets, and Gyuri notes the “hesitant, almost furtive curiosity” in the people watching them. The boys eventually reach a collection of gray buildings. The police officers who have up to now been escorting the column of boys are now replaced by new guards wearing tight uniforms, high riding boots, and slashes of leather. Their commander carries a riding crop, and he declares that the Jewish boys can stay in the stables, which is where he feels they belong. Gyuri finds that he wants to laugh at the oddness of the situation. The moment is interrupted when he finds himself wondering how long his stepmother will

wait before she realizes he is not coming home for supper. However, the commanding officer ordered the *gendarmes* to deal with the intimidated Jews in the following dehumanized manner:

What I did grasp, however, was that he did not intend to conduct the “investigation” – that was the term he used – into our cases until the next day, upon which he turned toward the gendarmes, ordering them, in a bellow that filled the entire square, to take “the whole Jewish rabble” off to the place that, in his view, they actually belonged – the stables, that is to say – and lock them in for the night. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 57)

Gyuri finds himself on a train, thirsty. The others tell him that the initial thirst will go away and will be forgotten. Unfortunately, it will eventually be replaced by another thirst that will not go away. They inform him that people can last six or seven days without water if they can avoid sweating, eating meat, and such. The question on everyone’s mind is how long they will be aboard the train.

The earliest reflections and convictions about the Germans are of a benign race:

A great diversity of views about the Germans also came to my attention right away. Many people, particularly the older ones with experience to look back on, professed that whatever ideas they might hold about Jews, the Germans were fundamentally, as everybody knew, tidy, honest, industrious people with a fondness for order and punctuality who appreciated the same traits in others, which did indeed, by and large, roughly correspond with what I myself know about them, and it occurred to me that no doubt I might also derive some benefit from having acquired some fluency in their language at grammar school. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 63-64)

This clearly states the fact that Jews didn't have any apprehension whatsoever about the terrible plans of Nazi regarding the total annihilation of Jews from Europe. They couldn't conceive of it as a reality, and it is so because even Nazis had not yet reached the idea of "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem". It was only in the Wannasee Conference of 1941 that the persecution of Jews was agreed upon. Till then, it was a playful game of cat and mouse between Nazis and Jews respectively often punctuated with acts of kindness, tenderness, sympathy etc. But not all Jews believed in the facade of a bright future and life created by the Nazis for the Jews. A few of them at least could foresee what fate had in store for them and often criticized the inscrutable will of God for having inflicted such a destiny on them.

The boys have little idea of where the train is going. They were asked if they wanted to work and said they did. They were also told that people who volunteer to work early will be given preferable treatment. For example, they will be put in train cars holding just sixty people rather than eighty. Among the prisoners, there is already a lot of discussion about what to do, but Gyuri feels the choice is obvious: volunteer to work. There is also discussion about the nature of the Germans, and Gyuri overhears some saying that the Germans appreciate hard work and organization, so it is best to demonstrate those traits.

While crossing the Hungarian border for the last time, the train halted. A Hungarian gendarme came up to their boxcar announcing to give away whatever valuables they possess. They agreed to give away all provided they get some water in return. Though against laws, the gendarme agreed but he demanded the valuables first, followed by the water. However, an agreement could not be reached at this point. Consequently, the train whistled and began to move. The gendarme shouted at them loathingly:

"Stinking Jews! You make a business out of the holiest of matters!" In a voice nearly choking with indignation and loathing, he threw this wish at us: "Die of thirst, then." (Kertész, *Fateless*, 74)

This marked the beginning of a new order of reality that was to bring torment, pain, death, disease, suffering and exploitation in its wake.

3.1.5 Auschwitz and Buchenwald – The Gates to Hell

When the train finally does reach its destination, Gyuri learns by reading a sign that he has arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the most dreaded concentration-cum-death camps. However, he still does not realize the nature of the location. A prisoner asks Gyuri his age, and when Gyuri responds, the prisoner says that he and his friends must present themselves as sixteen-year-olds when they are inspected. The boys enter a line and see two groups forming at its end. One group radiates a sense of success and fitness, and Gyuri hopes to join it. The boys present themselves for inspection, thrusting out their chests before the doctor, and claim to be sixteen. They feel proud when they are placed in the "fit" group.

Next, they are taken away to be cleaned. They are told to give up all objects of value; those who do not will be punished. They remove their clothing and are told to give up their shoes. All of the hair on their bodies is shaved off, and Gyuri is bothered when his pubic hair is removed. Still, the boys look at Fancyman and tease him that he will no longer have his hair to impress girls. They are sent to showers in groups of three with a single bar of soap. Finally, they are given ill-fitting clothing and new shoes. Gyuri notes that the clothes are worn out, that they have blue and white stripes, and that no matter how he looks at them, he cannot deny that they are the clothes of a convict.

Outside, Gyuri has finally arrived at his destination. The boys look at each other feeling dumbstruck by what has happened to them. They look around and see barbed wire and fences everywhere. Gyuri witnessed the unfortunate and heart-rending separation of families for the first time. Women, infants, children and old people gassed immediately at their arrival and rest of the men are put to excruciatingly painful labour. A pleasant facade was put up before the victimized Jews to avert any chaos. Consequently, the Jews willingly

submitted to their tormentors. To the young mind of Gyuri, everything seems fine amidst the death camp where chimneys kept burning day and night.

Gyuri begins to learn about life at Auschwitz. The prisoners are served a bowl of soup, which Gyuri and many of his friends dump onto the ground, claiming that it is inedible. However, they do not realize that the soup is their only source of water and that it, a bit of bread, and the “coffee” they are given each morning are the only nourishment they will receive. On the second day, Gyuri eats the soup, and by his third day, he finds himself looking forward to it. He is also struck by the smell in the air, and he learns that it is produced by a crematorium. He slowly realizes what happens to the people who are not considered “fit.” Gyuri is assigned to a “block master,” and he meets prisoners who have been in Auschwitz for four years. He learns that there are different kinds of concentration camps (*Konzentrationslager*). Auschwitz is a *Vernichtungslager*, or extermination camp, as opposed to an *Arbeitslager*, or work camp.

This new knowledge and education of Gyuri at Auschwitz stands in sharp opposition to his school education. Gyuri learns about the temporality and transience of life at Auschwitz. Day and night, he observes the mechanism of Auschwitz. Everything is monotonous, even life and death, in this camp. Amidst the naked dance of death and despair, it is his Hungarian friend who gives him constant courage and hope of returning to their respective towns and families some day. Gyuri hardly spends three days at Auschwitz and finds himself again on the train to Buchenwald.

Gyuri is separated from his friends and placed once again on the train. This time, he is sent to Buchenwald. The train car contains eighty people, no luggage, and no women. There is one slop bucket in which people may relieve themselves. The prisoners are given food but not enough for the three-day journey. By the time the prisoners arrive, they are hungry and thirsty. At Buchenwald, their reception is neither cordial nor without friction. He is surprised

to witness the expeditiousness and the methodical precision with which they vacated the freight train, asked the prisoners to form a line and to march to their barracks. Gyuri is assigned a number, 64921, and he is informed that he must learn to speak it clearly in German whenever he is asked by a guard to identify himself. The number is printed on a piece of cloth rather than tattooed on his skin, as in Auschwitz. Gyuri is also given a star with a big 'U' in its centre, which identifies him as Hungarian. There is a crematorium in Buchenwald, but the prisoners explain that it only disposes of the dead rather than exterminates the living, as in Auschwitz. The camp nevertheless kills inmates, and one prisoner whom Gyuri meets says that working as a stonemason will lead to a quicker death than other forms of work. However, compared to Auschwitz, Gyuri likes Buchenwald for two reasons – it is only a labor camp and the weather is pleasant.

However, Gyuri is moved once again. This time he is moved to a camp outside of Zeitz. The journey is shorter, a night's ride on the train followed by a march. The prisoners are told that since their names come before 'M' in the alphabet that this will be their last transfer. The others would go to Magdeburg. Gyuri is now parted from the other boys. Zeitz is a flat land, and the camp is organized in a square surrounded by barbed wire. Gyuri meets another man from Hungary, who inquires about their country. However, they are interrupted by a guard, who clouts Gyuri in the face to silence him. The guard wears a low number and a green triangle with the letter 'Z' in the middle. Another prisoner, who introduces himself as Bandi Citrom, informs Gyuri that the guard is a Gypsy and a homosexual. Bandi is from Ukraine.

Gyuri begins to figure out how to survive in the concentration camp. He spends much of his time with Bandi Citrom, whom Gyuri observes in order to figure out what to do and what not. He takes care to bathe every day. He learns to save his bread so that he can eat pieces of it each morning and at lunch. He learns to turn the handle of his spoon into a

makeshift knife. It is important to stay in the middle of the lines during roll call, and it is better to situate oneself at the back of the soup line so as to get the thicker broth at the bottom of the vat. There is a stubbornness that helps people to survive, but it takes more than that to keep away death. Regardless of the fact that he faces death every day, he also learns that captivity is essentially mundane. Gyuri is pleasantly surprised to witness the zest, liveliness, dynamism of Bandi Citrom. He is neither lifeless nor hopeless. In his company, Gyuri has learnt the essential knowledge and skills of survival in captivity. Exhaustion and fatigue due to physical labor put an end to all sense of pain, suffering and foul memories. Deep slumber overshadows everything.

Gyuri considers methods of escape from the concentration camp. It is no easy task to escape, not the least because when people are missing from roll call in the morning, a search party is formed. It is disheartening to see the party return with a dead body. Gyuri spends more of his time escaping into his imagination, where he sees his father and stepmother. Sometimes, they are arguing with his biological mother. Gyuri's mind is burdened with a sudden yet painful realization about the losses which time has brought in its wake – loss of home, loss of parents, friends, relatives, loss of community or society, loss of adolescence, loss of identity, loss of culture and language, gradual loss of prison inmates, loss of life itself. Amidst all of these, what is not lost is his life-instinct and ever-active, dynamic consciousness enhanced by his creative imagination. But even his imagination has limits.

Gyuri also realizes that hunger is the strongest and the most important sensation of all on this earth – neither stubbornness nor prayers have power. Gyuri also introspects about the effect of time in a concentration camp. He compares the time spent in real life – back at home and the time spent as a poor victim or a prisoner in a concentration camp:

I would have never believed, for instance, that I could become a decrepit old man so quickly. Back home that takes time, fifty or sixty years at least; here

three months was enough for my body to leave me washed up. I can safely say there is nothing more painful, nothing more disheartening than to track day after day, to record day after day, yet again how much of one has wasted away. Back home, while paying no great attention to it, I was generally in harmony with my body; I was fond of this bit of machinery, so to say. I recollect reading some exciting novel in our shaded parlor one summer afternoon, the palm of my hand meanwhile caressing with pleasing absentmindedness the golden-downed, pliantly smooth skin of my tautly muscular sunburned thigh. Now that same skin was drooping in loose folds, jaundiced and desiccated, covered in all kinds of boils, brown rings, cracks, fissures, pocks, and scales that itched uncomfortably, especially between my fingers. “Scabies,” Bandi Citrom diagnosed with a knowing nod of the head when I showed him. I could only wonder at the speed, the rampant pace, with which, day by day, the enveloping material, the elasticity, the flesh around my bones dwindled, atrophied, dissolved, and vanished somewhere. Every day there was something new to surprise me, some new blemish, some new unsightliness on this ever stranger, ever more foreign object that had once been my good friend: my body, I could no longer bear looking at it without a sense of being at war with myself, a species of abhorrence; for that reason alone, after a while, I no longer cared to strip off to have a wash, to say nothing of my antipathy to such superfluous exertions, to the cold, and then too, of course, to my footwear. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 165)

There is a wide diversity of people in the camp. Gyuri spends much of his time with Bandi Citrom, a Ukrainian. He mentions the first time he sees a Muslim in the camp. He also meets people whom he calls the “Finns.” The Finns do not consider Gyuri Jewish because he does

not speak Yiddish. When he attempts to trade his rations for potato peels that a Finn is selling, he suggests that the Finn should lower the price since they are both Jewish. However, the Finn maintains that Gyuri is a “gentile.” When he mentions the Finns to Bandi, the latter suggests that Gyuri should not worry over them. After all, they manage to survive even though they refrain from eating sausage.

Although Gyuri learns a great deal about surviving in the camp, he nevertheless realizes that no matter what he does, he is wasting away every day. He compares the work he is able to do now to what he used to do before and realizes that he has become an old man, a process that would take decades outside of the camp. When he carries a bag of concrete, which used to be so easy, Gyuri now spends every step thinking that he cannot go another step. However, when he drops the bag of cement and is beaten, he manages to continue on. Still, he feels that something inside of himself has been broken down to the point that every morning he wakes, he feels that it will be the last. Somehow, he continues. Gyuri, with all his physical limitations and diseased body, manages to survive against all odds. This doesn’t require an indomitable will, forbearance, certitude or fortitude but simply an instinct to survive and to live.

Gyuri finds that everything around him has lost significance. He is resigned to his fate, except he is now more irritable than he was before when people touch him. During the roll call, he will let himself lie down regardless of whether the ground beneath him is dry. The people around him in line lift him up, but he does not care. Bandi is irritated by Gyuri’s defeat, and he takes the latter to wash. However, Gyuri tells Bandi repeatedly that he would like to be left alone. Finally, Bandi gives up on him and begins to avoid Gyuri. Now, when Gyuri eats, he does so absent-mindedly. Gyuri describes the painlessness and insensitivity that he felt after being in the camp for a longer duration:

Cold, damp, wind, or rain were no longer able to bother me; they did not get through to me, I did not even sense them. Even my hunger passed; I continued to carry to my mouth anything edible I was able to lay my hands on, but more out of absentmindedness, mechanically, out of habit, so to say, as for work, I no longer even strove to give the appearance of it. If people did not like that, at most they would beat me, and even then they could not truly do much harm, since for me it just won some time: at the first blow I would promptly stretch out on the ground and would feel nothing after that, since I would meanwhile drop off to sleep. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 171-172)

He eventually notices a red swelling around his knee but cannot muster the will to go to the hospital. It is far away and it would require him to miss supper. However, when Bandi discovers Gyuri's new wound, he and several others take Gyuri to the hospital. The doctors have nothing to offer Gyuri for the pain, but they cut the wound and drain the pus that is collecting inside. They then wrap the knee in a bandage and put Gyuri on a bed to recover. Inside, Gyuri observes other patients suffering from fever and other illnesses. He learns that winter has begun, and he sees patients who are losing their toes to the cold. He sees men whose toes have been amputated due to winter. There are lice and fleas in the hospital, and they are swarming on Gyuri. He soon accepts that he cannot defeat them, but he is discouraged when they begin to feed upon his open wound. He is even more discouraged when he discovers a second red swelling on his hip. It, too, is drained and bandaged before Gyuri is sent back to his bed and its worn straw mattress.

It becomes clear that Gyuri will likely not return to work, and so he is loaded onto a train that will take him back to Buchenwald. This time, he must ask the others to pass the slop bucket to him during the journey. However, for the most part, he finds that he no longer associates his identity with his body. It is as though he has been freed from his body's

irritations. He arrives in Buchenwald and realizes that he had never inquired about “how they did it here: was it gas?” or was it with medicine, a bullet, or some other way? Gyuri finds himself hoping that death will not be painful. However, when he looks at the Lager and its signs of movement, he is surprised by the irrational thought that he would like to live a little while longer in “this beautiful concentration camp.”

Gyuri has returned to Buchenwald. When asked whether he has diarrhoea, he says that he does not. He considers that it must have been pride that kept him from admitting it. He is picked up and carried, over the shoulder, to recover in a clinic. At first, he has no idea where he is or what is to be done with him. However, he slowly begins to heal. He meets other patients: Czech, Polish, French, and even a Russian. He also encounters prisoners who have the lowest numbers that he has ever seen. Their bands mark them as having “pure German” ancestry. These prisoners wear the striped pajamas when it suits them and sometimes still even have their hair. He sees another prisoner from Auschwitz whose number, tattooed on the skin, is astonishingly high.

As Gyuri spends more time in recovery, he seems to gather a stronger will to live. Two of the doctor’s assistants sometimes joke and even arm wrestle before the patients, and Gyuri admits that he finds their displays entertaining. When he tells the others about the way he was captured, they are shocked. They particularly seem to sympathize with Gyuri because he was taken from his parents without their having any idea what happened to him. Gyuri is surprised by their sympathy.

Gyuri’s wounds continue to require attention, but he is horrified when he realizes that they have begun to heal. The visits to the doctor are now less frequent, not to mention briefer. The doctors now look satisfied when they see his wounds healing.

3.1.6 Freedom, Home, Life

The war slowly reaches the concentration camp, and the sounds of war can now be heard in the distance. There are measures that inmates and workers are to take at night that will keep them from becoming a target of air raids. There are now orders on the loudspeaker for all prisoners to assemble, though Gyuri cannot depart from the camp. On a late April evening, the last news arrives. The senior inmate announces on the loudspeaker that the prisoners are now free, and he makes a brief speech afterward. Inmates representing other countries make the same announcement in other languages. They then ask the kitchen staff to continue cooking, and it is only when the cooks declare that they are going to make a strong goulash soup that Gyuri slumps into his pillow and allows himself to seriously consider freedom. At this juncture, Gyuri equates freedom with only one thing, that is to say, quenching hunger for hygienic and healthy food. He looks upon food as a vital, inevitable supplement which guarantees survival. Freedom, apart from its philosophical and rhetorical conception, is conceived by Gyuri in its basic form, that is to say, freedom to survive, freedom to live.

Gyuri decides to return to Hungary after spending years in the concentration camps. Along the way, he continuously meets people who ask about the atrocities that he endured. When one man asks about the gas, he explains that he did hear about the gas in the camps. However, he did not see it himself or else he would not be alive now. The man seems unimpressed by this explanation and walks away. He stops to find Bandi Citrom, but his family answers the door, claiming that he is not home. They have had no word of Bandi, but Gyuri cannot answer whether he still lives, as he was moved to a different camp.

He also meets a journalist, who proceeds to ask Gyuri questions about his experiences in the camp. The journalist feels that people must face the truth of the camps, no matter how painful it might be. When asked whether he was beaten, Gyuri responds, "Naturally." The

journalist thinks that this is unnatural, but Gyuri explains that it is perfectly natural to be beaten while in a concentration camp. When their conversation ends, Gyuri explains that he is going home to see his family. The journalist asks whether he might come with Gyuri to photograph his family reunion, but he ultimately settles for leaving Gyuri with his contact information. The brief discussion between Gyuri and the stranger points out an important fact that having been in concentration camps for so long, Gyuri has been transformed into a speechless object; a boy turned into an adult due to the horrors of life; having seen the most unnatural things happening to him and his fellow Jew brethren very naturally, for example, horrendous death for just being a Jew, corporal punishment for committing a minor mistake or no mistake. Gyuri's former self with a sense of order and unison in life at present suffers from disintegration, fragmentation, a self divided. He appears to be an alien, an outsider in his erstwhile hometown. However, the stranger, who is a journalist, a representative of media and probably the world of elite leaders and historians, gives his popular opinion about what should be done immediately after the mess of Second World War:

First and foremost, however, "public opinion has to be mobilized" and "apathy, indifference, even doubts" dissipated. Platitudes were of no use at all here; what was needed, according to him, was an uncovering of the causes, the truth, however "painful the ordeal" of facing up to it. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 251)

When Gyuri does return to his home, a woman answers the door. He does not know her. The woman, trying to close the door, says that this is where she lives. When Gyuri looks up to see the address, she manages to close and lock the door. Gyuri does end up finding his Uncle and Aunt Fleischmann as well as his Uncle Steiner. They explain that his mother is still alive and his stepmother married Mr. Sütő. She managed to hide away the family's fortune. They

explain to Gyuri how things “came about” while he was away. They encourage Gyuri to put aside his past experiences so that he can begin living again. Gyuri begins talking and finds himself discussing steps and fate. Inside the camps, everyone was in a line and taking steps. He considers fate and he decides that if there is fate, there is no freedom. Therefore, people are their own fate. When Gyuri’s father had been taken away, the family had taken its own steps, as when discussing whether Gyuri should travel by bus or by train. His relatives balk at this, but Gyuri tries to explain that they did not commit a crime. Before he leaves them, he tries to explain that he “could not swallow that idiot bitterness, that I should merely be innocent”:

I would only be able to start a new life, I ventured, if I were to be reborn or if some affliction, disease, or something of the sort were to affect my mind, which they surely didn’t wish on me, I hoped. (Kertész, *Fateless*, 256)

Gyuri begins to walk to his mother’s place. He looks at the sky and thinks:

It was that peculiar hour, I recognized even now, even here – my favourite hour in the camp, and I was seized by a sharp, painful, futile longing for it: nostalgia, homesickness. Suddenly, it sprang to life, it was all here and bubbling inside me, all its strange moods surprised me, its fragmentary memories set me trembling. Yes, in a certain sense, life there had been clearer and simpler. Everything came back to mind, and I considered everyone in turn, both those who were of no interest as well as those whose only recognition would come in this reckoning, the fact that I was here: Bandi Citrom, Pyetchka, Bohoosh, the doctor, and all the rest. Now, for the very first time, I thought about them with a touch of reproach, a kind of affectionate rancour.

But one shouldn't exaggerate, as this is precisely the crux of it: I am here, and I am well aware that I shall accept any rationale as the price for being able to live. Yes, as I looked around this placid, twilight square, this street, weather-beaten yet full of a thousand promises, I was already feeling a growing and accumulating readiness to continue my uncontinuable life. My mother was waiting, and would no doubt greatly rejoice over me. I recollect that she has once conceived a plan that I should be an engineer, a doctor, or something like that, no doubt that is how it will be, just as she wished; there is nothing impossible that we do not live through naturally, and keeping a watch on me on my journey, like some inescapable trap, I already know there will be happiness. For even there, next to the chimneys, in the intervals between the torments, there was something that resembled happiness. Everyone asks only about the hardships and the "atrocities," whereas for me perhaps it is that experience which will remain the most memorable. Yes, the next time I am asked, I ought to speak about that, the happiness of the concentration camps.

If indeed I am asked. And provided I myself don't forget.

(Kertész, *Fateless*, 261-262)

3.1.7 Role of Memory and Imagination

Kertész has used "memory" and "imagination" as important devices in the creation of the image of Holocaust through the partially autobiographic report of the experiences of Gyuri. The first example of the use of imagination is Gyuri's attempt at "conveying the idea of being a Jew" to a girl of his age. Gyuri's upbringing as a Jewish boy in Budapest has been normal till it came under the regime of Nazis. As a usual boy of Budapest, living in his apartment building, he neither speak Yiddish nor does he understand the prayers his Uncle

Lajos tries to recite with him before his father's departure. Given a situation in which he thinks he has to explain what is different about Jews, what makes them appear as despicable as they seem to most inhabitants of the city, he starts in his very individual manner, using the example of the baker who always cuts thinner pieces of bread for Jews than for non-Jews. The girl does not understand this argument, and thus Gyuri tries to illustrate "the idea of being Jewish" with the simpler symbol of the yellow star. Again, the girl objects, saying that there have to be internal and not only external differences, and although Gyuri does not agree, he still tries to explain. His imagination furnishes him the last resort, that is to say, the story of the prince and the pauper: two children, interchanged shortly after birth, and just as the pauper, who should be the prince, has to live a pauper's life, the girl has to live her life as a Jew. And this seems to be the convincing explanation – the girl does not ask any further questions and seems to have understood. This pattern displays the "poetological" core of Kertész's depiction of the Holocaust – once Gyuri finds himself at a loss of words to explain a situation rationally, he starts telling a story, using his imagination to answer the girl's question. The hatred of Jews which cannot be explained or understood rationally, is made explicit with the help of imagination, and what is even more astonishing is the finishing sentence of Gyuri's narration, describing his feelings after the girl's understanding has made her burst out in tears: "But still, somehow, I felt uncomfortable. Who knows why, but now for the first time I felt something like shame" (Kertész, *Fateless*, 29). This is one of the rare moments in the novel where feelings are involved. This thinking about the outside and the inside, the visible and the invisible, is central to the understanding of this novel. Had Gyuri relied on rationality, he might not have survived the concentration camp. The language of rationality would not have covered much of what he has gone through. Gyuri's strategy is a deeply human one.

3.1.8 Reading History from Below

Though Imre Kertész doesn't regard *Fateless* as autobiographical, it bears a resemblance to the story of his deportation in 1944 and his return to Budapest at the end of the war. *Fateless* holds a distinctive place in the literature of the Holocaust primarily for the reason that the protagonist of this novel Gyuri doesn't respond to the horrors of concentration camps with a sense of shock. He doesn't consider the SS German officers as monsters or savage brutes but, rather, as human beings who simply followed orders or instructions and acted out of very comprehensible motives. Gyuri's response to the indifference and callousness of German officers doesn't acquire tragic proportion. No sense of outrage and disgust is expressed by Gyuri when he hears about how innocent prisoners are insensitively led to their deaths. According to him, these are instances of extraordinary execution of a well-thought plan. The whole apparatus of extermination reminds him of a kind of joke or a kind of student prank. Nothing in the camps seem unimaginable, unnatural and unacceptable to Gyuri. The torture and inhuman violence meted out to prisoners was just a monotonous routine.

Fateless was first rejected by Magvető because it didn't fit in the expected criteria of opposition between National Socialism and Soviet Communism. Kertész was expected to write a narrative that fits in the regime's story of occupation, persecution and liberation. The accusations levelled against *Fateless* by the readers at Magvető represent the expectations of the regime regarding Holocaust narratives. The repetitive use of the word 'natural' by Gyuri prevents the horrors and violence of concentration camps from being inexplicable, irreducible and unimaginable.

The novel doesn't represent German officers as embodiment of eternal evil rather as human beings responding to the demands and constraints of everyday life in the camps. Kertész seems to suggest that probably both perpetrator and victim act out of similar motives,

that is to say, the German guards follow the commands of their superiors on one hand and on the other, the Jewish prisoners also accepted the horrible conditions of the camps as a matter of everyday life in order to survive. What matters the most to both German guards and the Jewish prisoners is self-preservation. The novel doesn't yield any grand moral vision behind the inhuman sufferings of the Jews.

Kertész's protagonist, he notes, 'has to languish, poor boy, in the dreary trap of linearity, and cannot shake off the painful details. Instead of a spectacular series of great and tragic moments, he has to live through everything, which is oppressive and offers little variety, like life itself. This method, linearity, yielded an understanding of the processes of adjustment that, according to Kertész, ultimately, allowed the Holocaust to happen. Kertész's protagonist has no grasp of what awaits him, and he cannot access the events to which he bears witness from the privileged perspective of the future. When he characterizes the experience of being rounded up with other boys of his age for deportation as 'slightly odd', he is not adopting a deliberately ironic pose informed by foreknowledge of the camps. Rather, he is exhibiting precisely the ability to accept and adapt to changing circumstances that, in Kertész's view, made Auschwitz possible. (Cooper, *The Holocaust as Culture*, 18-19)

Kertész, in this novel, is more concerned with the depiction of events as they happen, rather than with ideas, either philosophical or metaphysical. Though it seems impossible to write about the Holocaust, Kertész probably feels a deep inner urge to express the inexpressible through *Fateless*. Throughout the novel, Gyuri uses 'sense of normalcy' as a strategic policy essential for survival and self-preservation. He never reacts and responds to the horrors of Holocaust either in philosophical, metaphysical or critical terms. The novel deals with the continuous recounting of events, routine realities but in the language which is commonplace and from the perspective of a young boy. This amounts for a detached observation and maintaining aesthetic distance from the narrative. The narrative is composed

of everyday experiences of the camp and doesn't deal with the grand narrative of the Holocaust. It threw a kind of existential glance on the events. *Fateless* doesn't provide any stable system of values or totalitarian systems which provide meaning to the otherwise meaningless lives of Jew prisoners like Gyuri living in concentration camps under Nazi regime.

This novel is a curious blending of historical authenticity and fictionality. Historical authenticity in this novel includes mentioning of the stricter laws governing Hungarian Jews, the landing of the Allied forces, and ultimately the aggressive rounding up and forceful deportation of Jews after German forces occupied Hungary in 1944, all of which enable the reader to fix the novel's plot to the last year of the war. Toward the end of the novel, when a physician informs Gyuri that he has been interned for twelve years, the reader may conclude that the year is now 1945. Though Kertész contextualizes *Fateless* historically, he at no place mentions specific date and year except for the month of April, which is mentioned once. By contrast, one of the landmark texts of Holocaust narrative, Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, prominently displays calendar time in correlation with Anne and her family's life in hiding.

The linear mode of narration is very crucial to both Holocaust literature and historical fiction. Almost all Holocaust narratives are based on this premise. In his Nobel lecture, Kertész explicitly commented on the construction of chronology in *Fateless*: "The hero of my novel does not live his own time in the concentration camps, for neither his time nor his language, not even his own person, is really his. He doesn't remember he exists. So he must languish, poor boy, in the dreary trap of linearity, unable to shake off the painful details." (Vasvári and Zepetnek, *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, 91) However, the talk of linear mode of narration is only partially true as we see Gyuri recalling the fond memories of home in the novel. He becomes nostalgic and falls back upon time to remember his beloved

home. Remembering merely the mundane details of life in concentration camp and Gyuri's inability to either transcend his life or bring out a larger moral design of life after liberation shows both his strength as a survivor and his powerlessness as a victim. Kertész places Gyuri in this world but leaves him to merely wonder at his own life story.

Despite of the fact that both the author Kertész and the narrator of *Fateless* Gyuri experienced concentration camps in the last years of the war, there is nothing which can strictly be called autobiographical in this novel. Kertész is successful in maintaining aesthetic distance, that is to say, he successfully remains in an outsider-insider position, and distances himself from one of the most compelling assertions of authenticity possible: that the story told here is *his* story. This very denial that the author and the narrator are one helps Kertész to refuse to align his work with historical narrative. So ultimately what remains for the most part is fictional narrative seamlessly blended with historical authenticity. Kertész establishes historical authenticity not through the conventional equation of author and narrator, but through the relationship between the narrator and his subject matter.

Although Kertész distances himself from his narrator and thus reinforces the fictionality of Gyuri's narrative presence, the narrator's voice nevertheless emulates the style of autobiography. The first two chapters open with sentences such as "Today I skipped school", and "It has been two months now since we said good-bye to my father" which resemble the autobiographical mode of narration. Gyuri's reporting style suggests that the narrator is only sharing what he has been able to reconstruct reliably. This strategy reinforces Gyuri's authority – be it historical or fictional – over the text. Instead of burdening Gyuri's consciousness and character with the claim to autobiographical and historical authenticity, Kertész makes his narrator Gyuri assert that given the condition that human being is a limited creature, with limited reason, memory and reason, there is precious little that can be asserted with absolute certainty of truth and honesty. His judgments are embarrassing, his emotions

impenetrable, and his reconstruction of landscapes and people fragmentary, and yet the implication is that his literary and fictional narration is more authentic than one claiming autobiographical and historical foundations.

It is also worth noting that the plot begins with leaving home and ends with arriving home. Kertész has deliberately employed a detached, matter-of-fact narrative technique in order to make it a more interpretative version of Holocaust history rather than creating a grand narrative based on the voice of some master speaker, one which is philosophical, moral and visionary. This detachedness allows the narrator Gyuri to pose himself as an outsider, a mere spectator. The technique of ‘*Verfremdungseffekt*’ (distancing or estrangement) is used dexterously and which resembles official or scientific documentary style of language. However, it is highly unusual that Kertész has chosen the perspective of a naïve onlooker and a teenager to portray the greatest trauma of mankind since the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

3.2 Representation of Holocaust in Thomas Keneally’s *Schindler’s List*

Schindler’s List first appeared in Britain as *Schindler’s Ark* (1982). The word "ark" in the original title is in reference to the ark built by the biblical Noah, on God's instruction, to rescue people and animals from the Great Flood. Thus Schindler, simply from the original title of the work, is cast as a rescuer of men.

Schindler’s List is made up of a series of stories about different people, which take place over a period of time. Keneally provides the details of the lives of many of the main characters. Events from their pasts, their experiences in the ghetto or labour camps, and their reactions to the history they witnessed, are told in snatches over the course of the novel. But in the midst of these snippets there emerges the main story—of Oskar Schindler and his outrageous rescue of his Jewish workers. Keneally interrupts his storytelling periodically to offer historical commentary or to mention what happened to a character after the war was

over. Thus the action of the novel does not proceed chronologically but moves back and forth in time.

Keneally prefaces *Schindler's List* with a note describing the nature of his non-fictional novel and acknowledging his sources. He explains how he came to hear about Schindler's story from Holocaust survivor Leopold Pfefferberg when the author was browsing Pfefferberg's luggage store in Beverly Hills.

3.2.1 Oskar Schindler: A Brief Biography

Oskar Schindler (1908--1974), a Czech businessman who protected Jews during the Holocaust was designated as "Righteous among the Nations" by Yad Vashem. He was born in Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia. After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Schindler went to Cracow to take over two enamelware factories which had previously been owned by Jews. Both were successful ventures, and he operated one as an agent for the German occupiers. Schindler later opened a third factory outside Cracow, in which he employed mainly Jews, saving them from deportation.

The Cracow Ghetto was liquidated in early 1943 - many of its Jews were sent to the Plaszow labor camp nearby. Schindler, greatly affected by the Jews' plight, used his good connections with important German officials in the Armaments Administration to establish a branch of the Plaszow camp inside his factory compound. 900 Jewish workers, some unfit for hard labor, were employed in the factory. They were thus rescued from the conditions at Plaszow.

By October 1944, Schindler's factory was no longer in use, and the Russian army was advancing towards Poland. Schindler acquired permission to move his factory to Sudetenland and re-establish it as an armaments production company. Once again, Schindler used his contacts to arrange to take his Jewish workers with him. He successfully transferred 700--800

men from the concentration camp at Gross-Rosen and about 300 women from Auschwitz. The names of these workers were recorded on a list, earning the name "Schindler's List."

Schindler's Jews were treated in the most humane way possible. He and his wife, Emilie, provided them with food and medical care. Those Jews who died were buried in proper Jewish funerals. Schindler consistently used his charming personality and good connections to befriend and extract favors from important SS officials in Poland (they even got him out of jail several times when the Gestapo accused him of corruption). In all, Schindler saved some 1,100 Jews from almost certain death. He is buried in a Christian cemetery in Jerusalem. (www.yadvashem.org)

3.2.2 Oskar Schindler: Being a Nazi to Becoming a Saviour

The prologue takes the reader to the heart of the story (it is Autumn 1943), setting the stage and providing a glimpse of some of the major characters. The scene takes place one evening in Goeth's quarters, as Oskar rubs shoulders with SS officers even while he is secretly undermining the Nazi system. He eats, drinks, and socializes with them but also offers kindness to Helen Hirsch, Goeth's mistreated maid. The author observes that, at this stage, Schindler is "in deep" in his "practical engagement in the salvation of human lives" but that he has no idea of what his rescue efforts will ultimately cost him.

The novel opens with the conquest of Poland by the German troops. Schindler moves to Kraków to seek his fortune. Keneally provides a character sketch of the charming, flamboyant Schindler and outlines his background: his Czechoslovakian Catholic upbringing, his parents' troubled marriage, his wild streak as a youth, his difficulties with his fresh-faced country wife, Emilie, and his desire for success within the new regime.

Schindler meets Itzhak Stern, whose advice he seeks about taking over a bankrupt business, Rekord that produced enamelware. Stern advises Schindler to lease the estate:

Deutsche Emailwaren Fabrik (German Enamelware Factory) was the name of Herr Schindler's booming business. Germans called it DEF for short, but the poles and the Jews had a different sort of shorthand, calling it Emalia. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 20-21)

DEF or Emalia soon became a haven for the troubled Jews. It became synonymous with survival and life. Schindler, in a voice as profound as of an ascetic, consoles the aching mind and heart of Helen Hirsch:

“He won't kill you, because he enjoys you too much, my dear Helen. He enjoys you so much he won't even let you wear the Star. He doesn't want anyone to know it's a Jew he's enjoying. He shot the woman from the steps because she meant nothing to him, she was one of a series, she neither offended nor pleased him. You understand that. But *you* ... it's not decent, Helen. But it's life.” (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 28)

This instance offers a sharp contrast as far as the enigmatic personality of Schindler is concerned. He, on one hand, talks pragmatically about business to the Nazi officials, but the words of the same man provides a therapeutic effect to a mistreated Jews like Helen Hirsch. If Hitler was an enigma for the whole of Europe, Schindler was another both for the oppressors and the oppressed.

Schindler and Stern engage in conversation about the viability of Hitler's success and religion. Schindler says that it must be difficult for priests during this time to explain the biblical verse about God caring about the death of even a single sparrow. Stern agreed but suggested, in the spirit of the discussion:

... the Biblical reference Herr Schindler had made could be summed up by a Talmudic verse which said that he who saves the life of one man saves the entire world.

“Of course, of course,” said Oskar Schindler.

Itzhak, rightly or wrongly, always believed that it was at that moment that he had dropped the right seed in the furrow. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 48)

Schindler takes over an apartment in Straszewskiego Street, once owned by a Jewish family, the Nussbaums. It was common practice for Jews to be removed from their homes without compensation, and Schindler is allocated this apartment by the Reich housing authorities. He goes to see Mrs. Mina Pfefferberg, who was recommended by the Nussbaums as a good decorator. At Mrs. Pfefferberg's house, Schindler meets Poldek (Leopold) Pfefferberg, who is ready to kill the German if he poses a threat to his mother. Pfefferberg and Schindler become friends and "business acquaintances," as Pfefferberg procures black market goods for Schindler. According to Leopold Pfefferberg and many of Oskar's friends:

... generosity was a disease in Oskar, a frantic thing, one of his passions.

(Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 52)

On December 3, the day he signs the papers to lease his enamelware factory (Deutsche Email Fabrik, or D.E.F.; also known as Emalia), Schindler warns Stern of a pogrom that is to take place the next day. Kazimierz, the Jewish section of Kraków, is invaded. Some Jews flee in time, but others are killed in the terror that follows. Schindler feels a fundamental disgust at what happens, but not enough to do something to stop it.

Schindler begins his affair with his Polish secretary, Victoria Klonowska. Around Christmas 1939, he meets and has drinks with a number of German police and other officials. They talk about the current "situation" and speculate about what is to be done to the Jews.

Abraham Bankier, the former manager of Rekord and soon to be Schindler's office manager, helps Schindler to find Jewish investors for his enamelware factory. Emilie Schindler comes from Zwittau in Czechoslovakia to visit her husband. Schindler sets up his factory and employs 150 Jews; it is considered a haven in German-occupied Kraków, where Jews are routinely being thrown out of their homes:

Oskar became an advocate of the principle that a factory owner should have unimpeded access to his own workers, that these workers should have access to the plant, that they should not be detained or tyrannized on their way to and from the factory. It was, in Oskar's eyes, a moral axiom as much as an industrial one. In the end, he would apply it to its limit at Deutsche Email Fabrik. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 74)

Stern tells Schindler the story of Marek Biberstein, the president of the Judenrat, the Jewish council set up by the Germans to administer Jewish affairs. Biberstein had offered a bribe to a German official to try to allow ten thousand Jews to remain at home, and he is now serving a jail sentence.

Schindler makes plans to open his own factory camp outside Płaszów, and he obtains permission from Oberführer Julius Scherner and Goeth to do so, but he must foot the entire bill for the operation. The construction of the "subcamp" is approved.

The Emalia camp is seen as a haven, and there is competition to get into it. Although the SS have some control over it, there are no beatings and the inmates are relatively well fed:

Though the SS may have set the limits to the life people led in Emalia, Oskar set its tone. The tone was one of fragile permanence. There were no dogs. There were no beatings. The soup and the bread were better and more plentiful than in Płaszów – about 2,000 calories a day, according to a doctor

who worked in Emalia as a factory hand. The shifts were long, often twelve hours, for Oskar was still a businessman with war contracts to fill and a conventional desire for profit. It must be said, though, that no shift was arduous and that many of his prisoners seem to have believed at the time that their labour was making a contribution in measurable terms to their survival. According to accounts Oskar presented after the war to the Joint Distribution Committee, he spent 1,800,000 zloty (\$360,000) on food for the Emalia camp. Cosmetic entries could be found, written off to similar expenditure, in the books of Farben and Krupp – though nowhere near as high a percentage of the profit as in Oskar’s accounts. The truth is, though, that no one collapsed and died of overwork, beatings, or hunger in Emalia. Whereas at I.G. Farben’s Buna plant alone, 25,000 prisoners out of a work force of 35,000 would perish at their labour.

Long afterward, Emalia people would call the Schindler camp a paradise.... The term must have had some currency while they were in Emalia. It was, of course, only a relative paradise, a heaven by contrast with Płaszów. What it inspired in its people was a sense of almost surreal deliverance, something preposterous which they didn’t want to look at too closely for fear it would evaporate. (Keneally, *Schindler’s List*, 202-203)

Schindler is visited by Regina Perlman, who asks that her parents be moved from the labor camp to his subcamp. Schindler does not immediately consent, in case she is a spy, but her parents are eventually moved there. Stern brings a number of workers to the camp, including the Rabbi Menasha Levartov.

Schindler visits Goeth and tempts him towards being more restrained in his behaviour towards prisoners—and to stop killing Jews at random from his balcony as he has been doing.

Goeth likes the idea, and for a while he stops his arbitrary executions. But his clemency does not last long. It is also learned that Goeth and his clique are making personal fortunes through their corrupt dealings at the Płaszów Labor Camp. At the same time, the popularity of Oskar knew no bounds among the prisoners:

That summer a host of incidents occurred which augmented the Schindler mythology, the almost religious supposition among many prisoners of Płaszów and the entire population of Emalia that Oskar was a provider of outrageous salvation... Oskar had become a minor god of deliverance, double-faced – in the Greek manner – as any small god; endowed with all the human vices; many-handed; subtly powerful; capable of bringing gratuitous but secure salvation. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 213 & 232)

Schindler continues to spend vast sums of money to bribe officials and procure supplies to run his factory camp and take care of the inmates there. Details of the harsh living conditions of the Płaszów camp are given. Amid the suffering and routine executions, Josef and Rebecca Bau have a traditional courtship and get married in a Jewish ceremony. Schindler travels to Oranienberg to get assurances from officials that his sub-camp will not be closed.

Schindler drives to Brinnlitz in Czechoslovakia to look at the site for his relocated factory camp. He spends one hundred thousand reichsmarks to grease the transfer to Brinnlitz. He draws up a list of names of prisoners. Marcel Goldberg, a personnel clerk, is in charge of the list and takes bribes to include names on it:

For one of the commonest sentiments of Schindler Jews is still “I don’t know why he did it.” It can be said to begin with that Oskar was a gambler, was a sentimentalist who loved the transparency, the simplicity of doing good; that Oskar was by temperament an anarchist who loved to ridicule the system; and

that beneath the hearty sensuality lay a capacity to be outraged by human savagery, to react to it and not to be overwhelmed. But none of this, jotted down, added up, explains the doggedness with which, in the autumn of 1944, he prepared a final haven for the graduates of Emalia.... This list is an absolute good. The list is life. All around its cramped margins lies the gulf. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 281 & 290)

The men on the Schindler list are transported by train to Brinnlitz. It is a three-day journey in freezing conditions. The Jewish male workers arrive in Brinnlitz. The women are transported from Płaszów and find themselves in the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Some are killed in the first days. The wretched conditions and the gasings in the camp evidence its horror:

... how many people could be gassed there on a day when the system worked well. The number was – according to Höss – nine thousand.... The secret of the extermination centres had not been kept, for the Russians had excavated the Lublin camp and found the furnaces containing human bones and more than five hundred drums of Zyklon B. News of this was published throughout the world, and Himmler, who wanted to be treated seriously as obvious post-war successor to the *Führer*, was willing to make promises to the Allies that the gassing of Jews would stop. He did not, however, issue an order on the matter until some time in October – the date is not certain. One copy went to General Pohl in Oranienburg; the other, to Kaltenbrunner, Chief of Reich Security. Both of them ignored the directive, and so did Adolf Eichmann, Jews from Płaszów, Theresienstadt, and Italy continued to be gassed up to the

middle of November. The last selection for the gas chambers is believed, however, to have been made on October 30. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 307)

After more than ten days, Schindler manages to secure the women's return. Meanwhile, the Brinnlitz factory camp is set up. It ostensibly produces artillery casings, but this is simply a front; there is no production at the factory at all. The SS officers in charge of the camp are not allowed into the factory and may not hurt the prisoners without justification or a trial. Emilie Schindler works at the camp clinic. Mila Pfefferberg, just like other women survivors, feels gratitude for Oskar Schindler:

“He was our father, he was our mother, he was our only faith. He never let us down.” (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 330)

One of the camp workers, Janek Dresner, is accused of sabotage of the camp machinery by a German engineer supervisor. The officer in charge of the camp, *Untersturmführer* Liepold, wants to make an example of him. Schindler handles the problem by cursing and hitting the boy in front of the engineer, dismissing him as too ignorant to miscalibrate a machine, as he had been accused of doing. This is an example of the "stunts" pulled by Schindler to save the lives of his workers.

Schindler manages to evade other inspections at his factory and hide the fact that it is producing nothing. He pays bribes to officials to maintain their silence. There are complaints from the townspeople about the prisoners and the state of the factory. During this time Schindler acquires an arsenal of weapons, and he trains some of the prisoners to use the firearms. Schindler pays the authorities for the prisoners from the Golezow quarry, who arrive at his camp near death, to work for him. Goeth, released from prison, visits Schindler's new camp. On Schindler's thirty-seventh birthday, his workers present him with a small box crafted by one of the metalworkers:

“It’s the best birthday present I could have got. Because I know now that no poor bastard has been killed by my product. (Keneally, *Schindler’s List*, 342)

He makes a speech, saying that the tyranny will soon be over and that he will stay at Brinnlitz until they are free. He also arranges for the dismissal of Liepold from the camp. The war ends with the German surrender, and Schindler is happy but frightened by the news of the execution of German civilians. Schindler knows he must flee, and before he does, his workers present him with a ring on which is inscribed, "He who saves a single life saves the world entire." Schindler makes another long speech, urging the SS to leave quietly and for the workers to exercise restraint against their aggressors. The prisoners also present Schindler with a letter of introduction, written in Hebrew, explaining his extraordinary circumstances. The car is prepared for Schindler's departure; sacks of diamonds are inserted into the upholstery. But before he ends his speech and leaves, he requests:

“In the end, I request you all to keep a three-minute silence, in memory of the countless victims among you who have died in these cruel years.” (Keneally, *Schindler’s List*, 372)

The SS garrison leaves the factory camp, and Schindler, his wife, and eight prisoners leave Brinnlitz. They travel through Czechoslovakia, and in Prague the car is stripped of the diamonds. In Czechoslovakia they also encounter American troops, who treat them well. When they cross the Swiss border, they are arrested by the French police on suspicion of having been concentration camp guards. The Hebrew letter of introduction has been left with the Americans, and the group is afraid of what the Allies might do to Schindler if they find out he was the director of a camp. Schindler, his wife, and the prisoners are all interrogated and eventually decide to tell the truth. When the French hear their story, they weep and embrace them. In the meantime, the Soviets liberate the camp at Brinnlitz.

After the war, Schindler and his wife move to Munich, where they share lodgings with some of his former workers. Schindler takes on a Jewish mistress, and he clings to the company of "his Jews" who had come to Germany. He hears that Goeth had been condemned to death and hanged in Kraków in 1946. In 1949, Schindler receives \$15,000 and a reference from an international Jewish relief organization to whom he had made reports during the war. He, Emilie, and other *Schindlerjuden* move to Argentina, where Schindler becomes a farmer. His business fails, and in 1957 he leaves Argentina, and Emilie, to return to Germany. He buys a cement factory, but that too fails, and by 1961 he is bankrupt again. In 1961, several *Schindlerjuden* invite him to Israel. He is honoured by the municipality of Tel Aviv and in Jerusalem is declared a Righteous Person and invited to plant a carob tree in the Avenue of the Righteous leading to the *Yad Vashem* Museum. He spends some months of every year in Israel, living the rest of the time in cramped quarters in Frankfurt in a state of loneliness and depression and with almost no money. He continues to help with the effort to identify war criminals. In 1966, he is honoured by the German government for his wartime efforts. In his sixties, Schindler begins working for the German Friends of Hebrew University raising funds in West Germany. In 1972, three *Schindlerjuden* dedicate a floor of the Truman Research Center at Hebrew University to Schindler. Schindler dies in 1974 in Frankfurt and is buried in Jerusalem. The correspondent of the London *Daily Mail* wrote for keeping in mind Oskar:

“We do not forget the sorrows of Egypt, we do not forget Haman, we do not forget Hitler. Thus, among the unjust, we do not forget the just. Remember Oskar Schindler.... He was mourned on every continent.” (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 393 & 397)

The conundrum inherent in the character of Oskar Schindler is that on one hand he is a person who believes in ‘eat, drink and be merry’ philosophy. On the other, there is his almost

stupefying attempt to rescue approximately 1200 Jews from the regime that is oppressive, tortuous and deadly. This mystery of Schindler's character is closely linked with the intricate sense of making a choice, which can very well be explained through the poem 'The Road not Taken' by Robert Frost.

The novel *Schindler's List* investigates the critical and troublesome decisions one man made more than 50 years back. Oskar Schindler, similar to the storyteller in Robert Frost's sonnet, picked the less-voyaged path. It was not a simple decision. Yet it had "all the effect" not just in Schindler's life additionally in the lives of several other people who later came to be known as Schindler's Jews.

The journey of writing *Schindler's List* began in a Beverly Hills luggage shop in 1980. As Thomas Keneally puts down in his memoir *Searching for Schindler* that while returning to Australia from a book tour in the United States, his briefcase broke. He went to buy a new one, where he happened to meet its owner named Leopold Pfefferberg, not only a Jewish immigrant from Kraków but also a former Holocaust survivor and most importantly a Schindler Jew. When Keneally introduced himself as a writer, Pfefferberg took him into the back room and told, "I know a wonderful story. It's not a story for Jews for everyone. A story of humanity man to man.... It's a story for you, Thomas. Pfefferberg died in 2001 but he belonged to the list of Schindler's Jews who were unbelievably rescued by the Austrian businessman and a former Nazi, Oskar Schindler. Pfefferberg claimed that in Schindler's factory-camp food was generous, the beatings were rare, and the work consisted mainly of waiting for the war to end. Pfefferberg told Keneally, "I was saved, and my wife was saved, by a Nazi. So although he's a Nazi, to me he's Jesus Christ. To Keneally's greatest surprise, Pfefferberg, over a period of time, has amassed two filing cabinets' worth of documentation: newspaper clippings, speeches, and testimonials from other Schindler Jews.

Keneally stood mystified in front of Pfefferberg after seeing the documentation. First of all, there was this ambiguous hero at the centre of the story, a “young, hulking, genial but not quite respectable ethnic German” who came to Kraków at the start of the war in order to be a business tycoon. As Pfefferberg described him, Schindler was “all-drinking, all black-marketeering, all-screwing.” Most of the scholars are bemused by the inherent contradictions found in the character of Schindler, but for Keneally, that’s the whole point and it’s the epicentre from which were triggered his famous rescue efforts. In fact, this contradiction of character makes Schindler look more human, humane and to a greater extent, even acceptable. “Paradox is beloved of novelists,” Keneally writes in his memoir. If Oskar Schindler had simply been a saint, his story would have been only of human interest, but not a psychological one. In any case, the unashamedly wanton, womanizing, liberal Schindler was an improbable contender for courage, and the strain that quickens Keneally’s book originates from the inquiry that the novelist decides to leave unanswered a very important question as to what made him do it?

3.2.3 Holocaust, Ghettoization of Jews and Oskar Schindler

In March 1940, a Jewish ghetto is set up. All Jews must live within its confines:

A ghetto implied certain squalors, a crowding in tenements, a sharing of bathroom facilities, disputes over drying space on clotheslines. Yet it also consecrated the Jews to their own specialness, to a richness of shared scholarship, to songs and Zionist talk, elbow to elbow, in coffeehouses rich in ideas if not in cream. Evil rumours emanated from the ghettos of Łódź and Warsaw, but the Podgórze ghetto as planned was more generous with space, for if you superimposed it on a map of the Centrum, you found that the ghetto was in area about half the size of the Old City – by no means enough space,

but not quite strangulation ... For the ghetto was by its nature, almost by definition, habitable, even if subject to intermittent attack. The ghetto represented *stasis* instead of flux. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 86-87)

Schindler's workers no longer receive wages but must live on their rations. Their payment goes to SS headquarters in Kraków. The Jews hear of Schindler's factory as a place where they will be well treated, and Schindler tells his workers that they will be safe with him and that if they work with him, they will survive the war:

The promise had dazed them all. It was a godlike promise. How could a mere man make a promise like that? (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 91)

Schindler returns to his hometown of Zwittau and meets his estranged father. Conditions worsen in the Jewish ghetto, and there is great resentment towards the members of the Judenrat. Germany invades Russia, and the war intensifies. In the streets of Kazimierz, Pfefferberg witnesses:

On the city walls, above fellow passengers' heads in the trolleys, he would read the posters of the day: the razor-blade advertisements, the latest Wawel edicts on the harbouring of Polish bandits, the slogan – "JEWS – LICE – TYPHUS," the billboard depicting a virginal Polish girl handing food to a hook-nosed Jew whose shadow was the shadow of the Devil. "WHOEVER HELPS A JEW HELPS SATAN." Outside groceries hung pictures of Jews mincing rats into pies, watering milk, pouring lice into pastry, kneading dough with filthy feet. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 97)

At the end of 1941, Schindler is arrested; he suspects one of his Polish workers has informed on him. He is questioned about his factory and released after his secretary contacts his police

and SS friends, who intervene on his behalf. On April 28, 1942, his birthday, Schindler kisses a Jewish girl at the factory. He is arrested again. Obersturmbannführer Rolf Czurda, whom Schindler has met at cocktail parties, releases Schindler but warns Pfefferberg, who had been working as a tutor, finds he cannot get a Blauschein, an identity sticker for Jews that provides some measure of security against arbitrary deportation. He receives one after declaring himself to be a metal polisher. Rolf Czurda also proclaimed Schindler on a serious note that:

You'd be a fool if you got a real taste for some little Jewish skirt. They don't *have* a future, Oskar. That's not just old-fashioned Jew-hate talking, I assure you. It's policy. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 115)

Abraham Bankier and other workers are loaded into cattle cars and are about to be transported to labour camps. Schindler has them removed from the trains after threatening the officials in charge. Schindler learns about ghetto life just by looking at the face of his workers:

From the faces of his own workers, Oskar could read something of the ghetto's torment. For a person had no time to catch his breath there, no room to dig in, assert one's habits or set up family rituals. Many took refuge and a sort of comfort in suspicion of everyone – of the people in the same room as much as of the OD man in the street. But then, even the sanest were not sure whom to trust. "Each tenant," a young artist named Josef Bau wrote of a ghetto house, "has his own world of secrets and mysteries." Children suddenly stopped talking at a creaking in the stairwell. Adults woke from dreams of exile and dispossession to find themselves exiled and dispossessed in a crowded room in Podgórze – the events of their dreams, the very taste of fear in dreams, finding continuity in the fears of the day. Fierce rumours beset

them in their room, on the street, on the factory floor. Spira had another list and it was either twice or three times as long as the last. All children would go to Tarnow to be shot, to Stutthof to be drowned, to Breslau to be indoctrinated, deracinated, operated upon. Do you have any elderly parent? They are taking everyone over fifty to the Wieliczka salt mines. To work? No. To seal them up in disused chambers. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 126-127)

In the pivotal scene of the novel, Schindler and his German girlfriend, Ingrid, are riding their horses on a hilly parkland, in full view of the Jewish ghetto. They witness the liquidation of the ghetto and the murder of countless men, women, and children. Schindler is particularly moved by the sight of a little girl in red:

Oskar had seen in Krakusa Street a statement of his government's policy which could not be written off as a temporary aberration. The SS men were, Oskar believed, fulfilling there the orders of the leader, for otherwise their colleague at the rear of the column would not have let a child watch.

Later in the day, after he had absorbed a ration of brandy, Oskar understood the proposition in its clearest terms. They permitted witnesses, such witnesses as the red toddler, because they believed the witnesses all would perish too.

(Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 130)

Later, the author says, Schindler would lay special weight on this day:

"Beyond this day ... no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system."

(Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 133)

More details of the razing of the ghetto are revealed, as well as stories of escapes and resistance. Schindler has the reputation among Jews as a man who will assist them, and he helps the Jewish underground movement. Schindler travels to Hungary with Dr. Sedlacek, as Austrian dentist, to report the atrocities in Poland:

The ghettos were being wound down. It was true equally of Warsaw as of Łódź and of Cracow. The population of the Warsaw ghetto had been reduced by four-fifths. Łódź by two-thirds, Cracow by half. Where were the people who had been transferred? Some were in work camps; but the gentlemen here this afternoon had to accept that at least three-fifths of them had disappeared into camps that used the new scientific methods. Such camps were not exceptional. They had an official SS name – *Vernichtungslager*: Extermination Camp.... The *Vernichtungslagers* also used people as labor for a time, but their ultimate industry was death and its by-products – the recycling of the clothes, of remaining jewellery or spectacles, of toys, and even of the skin and hair of the dead.... The forced-labor camps would be run by men, appointed for their severity and efficiency in clearing the ghettos. There would be sporadic murders and beatings, and there would certainly be corruption involving food and therefore short rations for the prisoners. But that was preferable to the assured death of the *Vernichtungslagers*. People in the labor camps could get access to extra comforts, and individuals could be taken out and smuggled to Hungary. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 154-156)

3.2.4 Terror, Violence, Death

Amon Goeth is installed as the commandant of the forced labor camp at Płaszów. Examples of Goeth's brutality are described, including his execution of the Jewish engineer

who is supervising the building of the barracks on the camp. Goeth and Schindler meet, and Schindler explains why his factory cannot be moved to Płaszow, as had been directed: for purely industrial reasons. Schindler is depressed after he sees the conditions at Płaszow. It is the last day of the existence of the ghetto, and the chapter ends with a description of Dr. H's nurses administering cyanide to the dying patients in the ghetto hospital to spare them being slaughtered by the German military:

Oskar abominated Goeth as a man who went to the work of murder as calmly as a clerk goes to his office. Oskar could speak to Amon the administrator, Amon the speculator, but knew at the same time that nine-tenths of the Commandant's being lay beyond the normal rational processes of humans.... Just the same, the reflection can hardly be avoided that Amon was Oskar's dark brother, was the berserk and fanatic executioner Oskar might, by some unhappy reversal of his appetites, have become. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 171)

More than four thousand people who resisted deportation from the ghetto are found and executed in the streets. They are taken to Płaszow and buried in mass graves, and Pfefferberg narrowly escapes death:

Everyone wanted to be here today, for today was history. There had been for more than seven centuries a Jewish Cracow, and by this evening – or at least by tomorrow – those seven centuries would have become a rumour, and Cracow would be *judenrein* (clean of Jews). And every petty SS official wanted to be able to say that he had seen it happen.... SS training documents, written to combat these futile casualties, pointed out the simple-mindedness of

believing that because the Jew bore no visible weapons he was bereft of social, economic, or political arms. He was, in fact, armed to the teeth. Steel yourself, said the documents, for the Jewish child is a cultural time bomb, the Jewish woman a biology of treasons, the Jewish male a more incontrovertible enemy than any Russian could hope to be. (Keneally, *Schindler's List*, 174)

On one occasion, while paying a sudden visit to the factory, Goeth finds that Levartov is not making hinges quickly enough and takes him out to shoot him. His pistol does not fire. He takes out another revolver to do the job, and it does not fire either.

Goeth is ordered to burn the dead bodies around the Płaszów camp. Schindler tells Stern that he is going to get all his Jewish workers out of their situation—or at least, he says, he will get Stern out. Goeth sends 1,400 adults and 268 children to Auschwitz as part of the "Health Action." Goeth tells Schindler that they must be aware of a Polish partisan attack from outside the camp. Later than evening Schindler is encouraged by news that Hitler has been assassinated, but it turns out not to be true. He becomes increasingly depressed. He gets a word that the camps around Kraków will be disbanded. Schindler learns that Emalia must be disbanded and his workers sent to Płaszów for "relocation," which certainly means they will be sent to the death camps. Schindler approaches Goeth and says he wants to move his factory to Czechoslovakia. He would be "grateful" for any support—which means he will pay Goeth a bribe for allowing him to do so. Goeth agrees and says he will allow a list of people to be drawn up. Schindler "wins" Helen Hirsch from Goeth in a game of blackjack, and she is added to the list of skilled workers he will take to his factory. Goeth is arrested by the SS for his embezzlements, black-market dealings, and other illegal activities.

3.2.5 Reading History from Below

Holocaust, in historical terms, refers to and put greater emphasis on the ideologies, policies, and circumstances that led to this carnage. Historians and history tend to infuse our mind with the causes and effects pertaining to Holocaust with its corresponding generalizations about this cataclysmic event. Usually, a historian does not require a “lens” for capturing the scope of the Holocaust as a whole, whereas as a writer writing a book on Holocaust – fiction or nonfiction – needs a “lens” – a single character whose experience runs through a cross-section of a larger scenario. As a matter of fact, there can’t be a better way of writing a novel, or a novelistic work, about the Holocaust, as is done by Thomas Keneally in *Schindler’s List*. The writer has to recognize the fact that he is telling “a” story and not “the” story about the Holocaust. The bewildering amount of documentation presented by Pfefferberg to Keneally lends an authenticity to the literary version as well, and is so often an indispensable element to all Holocaust narrative. Often Keneally felt that as a non-Jewish writer, he is not fit to write a book on Holocaust, about which he learned first of all as a child while watching newsreel footage at the movies in May 1945. He was never personally acquainted with many Jews, and Pfefferberg was, in fact, the first Holocaust survivor he ever met.

However, Keneally was immediately taken into writing *Schindler’s List* by the sheer documentation and vast archive of Pfefferberg, which then lent a greater amount of authenticity to his narrative. By the time Keneally’s plane landed in Sydney, he was greatly excited to share the story with his wife and daughters that he could not even wait to get home, and opened up his trove of papers in a coffee shop at the airport. They were fascinated by the list, Keneally wrote: “its bureaucratic form, the fact that there were names on it belonging to people I had now met and spoken to at length.”

The publisher sorts it as a novel, with the mark "Fiction/Judaica." But Keneally demands its non-fictional bona fides from the beginning. *Schindler's Ark* (the book's unique British title) is devoted "to the memory of Oskar Schindler, and to Leopold Pfefferberg, who by enthusiasm and diligence brought on this book to be composed." In a writer's note, Keneally plots his exploration: interviews with fifty "Schindler survivors"; a visit, together with Pfefferberg, to Kraków, Płaszów, and Auschwitz; "narrative and other data" from Schindler's partners amid and after the war; confirmations from the Schindler Jews stored at Yad Vashem. "To use the texture and devices of a novel to tell a true story is a course that has frequently been followed in modern writing," Keneally writes. "It is the one I chose to follow here - both because the novelist's craft is the only one I can lay claim to, and because the novel's techniques seem suited for a character of such ambiguity and magnitude as Oskar. I have attempted, however, to avoid all fiction, since fiction would debase the record, and to distinguish between reality and the myths which are likely to attach themselves to a man of Oskar's stature." He goes ahead to clarify that however he has in some cases made "sensible builds" of dialogue, most discussions, "and all occasions," are in light of the records of eyewitnesses.

Keneally's *Schindler's List* book is not styled as a work of history: it starts in *medias res*, with a sensational scene of Schindler going to a supper party at Goeth's manor, and all through it is substantial in atmospheric detail and dynamic action:

I felt that in *Schindler's List* I had written as a novelist, with a novelist's narrative pace and graphicness, though not in the sense of a fictionalizer.... I was convinced at the time that this 'documentary novel' qualified as fiction, though... at the extreme end of the [category]. He might make the same decision again, he says, but he "would certainly not defend [it] to the death."

His only regret, he says, is that deniers would later use the classification “to undermine the book’s clear faith in the Holocaust’s reality.”

Schindler's Ark, published now, would likely be called "narrative nonfiction" or "narrative journalism." As a true to life story, most commentators judged, the book was incredible. Considered as a novel, be that as it may, it was not satisfactory. D.J. Enright summed up the paradox in his *Times Literary Supplement* review: "*Schindler's Ark* deserves to have won the Booker Prize – as long as it isn't *really* a novel." (Franklin, *A Thousand Darknesses*, 151)

The main controversy about the novel is whether it is really a novel at all. Keneally has stated that all people and events in the book are real and true (“I have attempted . . . to avoid all fiction”), although specific dialogue sometimes consists of “reasonable constructs” of “detailed recollections” of those present at the time; in other words, conversations in the novel have been filled in or shaped for clarity’s sake, while remaining truthful to the memory of those present. Keneally uses a literary technique called *faction*, that is, it is mostly fact with a small amount of fiction. *Schindler's List* is historically factual, yet as in any work of historical fiction, especially about such a mammoth event as the Holocaust, it requires some literary license with minor details. Keneally uses no literary license, however, in his stark portrayal of the savage ways in which the perversion of even innocent language contributed to public Jew-hating during the Holocaust. For example, Keneally uses in the novel words such as “Aktionen” (violent roundups of Jews into ghettos or death camps), “Selection” (at a moment’s notice, Jews in death camps were sent either to the gas chamber or to filthy barracks), and both “Relocation” and “Special Treatment” (Jews were crammed into cattle cars *en route* to the death camps). All of this horror was intended to make the world *Judenrein* or “Jew free.”

Similarly, Keneally documents the posters plastered on the walls of the city, Kraków: “Jews—Lice—Typhus,” “Whoever Helps a Jew, Helps Satan,” and “Entrance Forbidden to

Jews and Dogs.” A falsely benign sign over the gas-chamber doors announces “Baths and Inhalation Rooms.” Language reaches a hideous low point when hundreds of Plaszów children are marched off to the death trains, while their parents’ hysterical screams are drowned out by loudspeakers that blare a popular song with the lyrics “Mummy, buy me a pony.”

Originally published in England as *Schindler’s Ark*, this title has the additional resonance of the Old Testament narrative of Noah who, under God’s orders, built a huge boat to save the good of the world from the imminent, all-destroying Flood. However, just as there is no language powerful enough to encapsulate the great evil of the Nazis, particularly of tyrants like Amon Goeth, so there are no words to describe the profound altruism of those, like Schindler, who protected Jews during the war. This unlikely hero was a Nazi Party member, a rabid hedonist, and a womanizer, yet he built two arks of a sort, one in Kraków and one in Brinnlitz, to save some twelve hundred Jews.

Using tremendous restraint, Keneally wisely chooses not to guess at the personal psychology that motivated and shaped Schindler’s—or Goeth’s—choices and actions. Instead, he hints at the incremental realizations that seem to lead Schindler to his destiny.

After seeing firsthand the Kraków ghetto’s liquidation, Schindler proclaims, “I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system.” He follows through on this oath when soothing his workers at Brinnlitz, “You have nothing more to worry about. You’re with me now,” and announces that his best birthday present is the knowledge that the armaments his factory produced had failed all quality-control tests and, therefore, could neither maim nor kill anyone. Keneally does not try to solve the ageless mystery of the genesis of good and evil, but rather, he lets the question continue to intrigue humanity.

Schindler’s List is terrifying in its portrayal of the chilling inhumanity of humanity, but it also is inspiring because it demonstrates, through Schindler’s altruism, that humans can

do great things for each other. The grotesque early image of Jewish jewellers forced by the Nazis to weigh and grade a suitcase full of still-bloody gold teeth yanked from death-camp corpses later morphs into an altruistic image: One of the Schindler Jews has his gold dental work removed so that the gold can be melted down and shaped into a ring for Schindler. Inscribed on the ring is an extremely powerful verse from the Talmud: "He who saves a single life saves the world entire."

Schindler's List is a "documentary novel," a novel that recreates events that actually took place in real life. The events described in the book are based on interviews with fifty Schindler survivors and enriched by extensive research as well as by the author's visits to Kraków, Plaszów, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Keneally goes to great lengths to describe characters as they were in real life and to create a sense of realism. But he uses the texture and devices of the novel—a form normally used for fictional accounts—to tell the true story of Oskar Schindler because, he says, "the novel's techniques seem suited for a character of such ambiguity and magnitude as Oskar." Keneally stresses, though, that he attempts to avoid fiction in his work because "fiction would debase the record." He says that, although he has recreated some of the conversations, all events are based on detailed recollections of witnesses to the acts described. The result is a work that moves back and forth between simply telling a story and embellishing or commenting upon that story by examining how the author came to know the facts, how the facts may be disputed, or how the witnesses feel about certain events. For example, the author sometimes intrudes into a story to mention that another witness has a different account of those events, how a particular survivor says he or she felt about Schindler, and so on. The effect of this authorial intrusion is always to return the reader to reality, to make it plain that the events described are not merely a novelistic fantasy but a true account that impacted people's lives in ways that can barely be imagined.

Schindler's List provides a historical version of Holocaust which is not a part of mainstream history or canonical history. It, however, attempts to provide an alternative, counterfactual version of history in a narrative form. It highlights the heroic efforts of an individual named Oskar Schindler who does not appear as a plausible character in the pages of history. Thomas Keneally does not focus his attention more on the historical details available around the character of Oskar Schindler; instead he focuses more on the enigma or the altruism that lie at the heart of such a character who shrewdly defeats the very system he is an integral part of. Keneally's *Schindler's List* has attempted to immortalize the character of Oskar Schindler on one hand, and on the other, he makes us feel and experience every bit of brutality and trauma faced by the Jews at the hands of the Nazis. *Schindler's List* celebrates the spirit of humanity, compassion, love, forgiveness and sacrifice that makes a person human.

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A living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. See Holocaust in Hungary

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www.yadvashem.org

As the Jewish people's living memorial to the Holocaust, Yad Vashem safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meaning for future generations. It was established in 1953 as the world center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust. See Oskar Schindler – Righteous among the Nations.

CHAPTER 4

From Homelessness to Home: Asghar Wajahat's

Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Jamyai Nai

4.1 A Historical Overview of Partition

The Partition of British India in 1947 was one of the most cataclysmic events in world history, and the debate on it is endless. It was one of several partitions that were carried out in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East since the eighteenth century. Like most of them it was attended by, and exacerbated violence between, different religious communities. It resulted in more casualties than any other partition. The numbers killed, displaced and dispossessed in the Partition of India is unknown. Anything between 200,000 and three million people may have lost their lives. Between 1946 and 1951, some nine million Hindus and Sikhs crossed over into India from Pakistan and about six million Muslims went to Pakistan from India.

The Partition of India was one of four partitions by imperial Britain. The British also partitioned Ireland, Palestine and Cyprus on the grounds that different communities could not live together. Religious and ethnic division was not the only reason for the partitions by Britain: the military interests of the United Kingdom partly determined its strategies and tactics during the negotiations that led to all four partitions.

Advocates of Partition say that separation can bring irreconcilable warring parties to the negotiating table, end conflict and save lives. Giving antagonistic communities the freedom not to live together may prevent violence. Impartial peace brokers may offer justice to both sides. The division of a country along its ethno-territorial lines makes the new political entities ethnically homogenous. Partition is therefore a way of containing conflict.

Partitions have never produced ethnically pure nation states, in the literal sense of an alignment of territory and ethnicity or religion. All partitions have left mixed communities on both sides of post-partition international borders. Partitions have resulted in long-lasting inter-state conflicts. It have only produced running sores. International officials have tended to dislike partitions because most have involved change of borders by force and created humanitarian problems of magnitude. Partitions have dismayed those who believe people are enriched by ethnic diversity and that territorial division and ethnic wars result from a combination of bigotry and authoritarian government. Ethnic hatred and violence has always been a legacy of all Partitions.

Partitions have been partly inspired by a particular ideology of the nation-state. Practitioners of partition have sought to align territory with ethnicity, culture, language or religion. Because partitions have always been demanded, and taken place, in territories in which different communities are interspersed, they have been a recipe for armed conflict.

More than ninety percent of the world's states are multiethnic. The reconciliation and accommodation of different communities requires an inclusive, pluralist concept of the nation and state in which the identities and interests of all communities are safeguarded by the state. In involves respect for, and the protection of, individual human rights, which are most likely to be achieved by a democratic state which does not identify with any one community. The ethnic, religious or cultural majority is distinct from the political majority which may represent citizens of all communities. Reasons of state and religious, ethnic or cultural division have been inextricably intertwined in creating the situations that have led to partition in different parts of the world. The combination of British interests, and political division between Indian parties, brought about the partition of British India, ostensibly on a religious basis, in August 1947. (Singh, *The Partition of India*, 1-4)

The great upheaval which shook India from one end to the other during a period of about fifteen months commencing with 16 August 1946, was an event of unprecedented magnitude and horror. History has not known a fratricidal war of such dimensions in which human hatred and bestial passions were degraded to the levels witnessed during this dark epoch when religious frenzy, taking the shape of a hideous monster, stalked through cities, towns, and countryside, taking a toll of half a million innocent lives. Decrepit old men, defenceless women, helpless young children, infants in arms, by the thousands, were brutally done to death by Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh fanatics. Destruction and looting of property, kidnapping and ravishing of women, unspeakable atrocities, and indescribable inhumanities were perpetrated in the name of religion and patriotism. To be a Hindu, Sikh, or a Muslim became a crime punishable with death. Madness swept over the entire land, in an ever-increasing crescendo, till reason and sanity left the minds of rational men and women, and sorrow, misery, hatred, and despair took possession of their souls. A Sikh or a Hindu dared not show his face in the place where he and his forefathers had lived for centuries, and a Muslim was forced to abandon his native soil, his home, and his property.

Yet for over a thousand years, the various communities had lived together in peace and amity. United India had a population of 389 million (1941) comprising 255 million Hindus (including members of Scheduled Castes), 92 million Muslims, 6.3 million Christians, 5.6 million Sikhs, and a number of smaller communities. There were Muslim majority areas (in the north-east and the north-west) and Hindu majority areas, but no part of India was exclusively inhabited by any one community. Everywhere Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs lived together as neighbours. In the urban areas the various communities could not, in the very nature of things, live in separate airtight compartments. There were, no doubt separate Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim *mohallas*, but these were situated side by side and it could not be said of any town in India that it was owned or inhabited by one community or that any

particular area of the town belonged exclusively to the Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs. In the provinces of the Punjab, Sind, and Bengal, at least, even the rural population was of a mixed character. There were Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh villages, but all three communities were to be found in greater or smaller numbers in every village. Hindu and Sikh landlords had Muslim tenants. Muslim landlords had Hindu tenants, and employed Hindus as managers and accountants. Hindu industrialists in towns and factories had Muslim workers. Religion had never interfered with social relations to any great extent. The unifying force of geographical entity and historical and cultural influences, extending over a period of ten centuries, had welded the various elements into a homogeneous whole. This was scarcely surprising for more than 90 percent of the Muslim and Sikh population consisted of converts from Hinduism and belonged to the same stock, and had the same traditions as the Hindus. The converts in many cases retained even the old religious ceremonies, they differed but little in appearance or dress and behaved as members of the same society. This was particularly true of the rural areas. There had, no doubt, been occasional clashes between the communities but these were sporadic and very short-lived. The direct cause was almost invariably an economic or political disturbance rather than the religious factor. Riots usually occurred among the lower classes and the communal tension among them was spasmodic, though, when it occurred, it took an intense form. The peasant rising around Calcutta in 1831 was hardly a communal riot. The peasants broke into the houses of Muslim and Hindu landlords with perfect impartiality. The Mymensingh disturbance of May 1907 was really nothing more than the rising of the Muslim peasantry against their Hindu landlords and creditors. They would probably have risen with the same ferocity had the landlords and creditors been Muslims. The Mopla Revolt, which is often quoted as one of the worst communal disturbances and which was exploited by the British government to their great profit, was also a rising of the oppressed and poverty-stricken peasants. The Bombay riots of 1929 were riots between the

mill-workers who went on strike and the Pathan strike-breakers. Riots in the Punjab were seldom handled with tact or imagination, and the indifference or incompetence of British officials in dealing with communal disturbances was frequently ascribed to the policy of divide and rule. Minor differences in custom and outlook never stood in the way of the various communities living together in the most amicable and friendly manner. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs used to meet each other on terms of equality. They dined at each other's houses and seldom allowed their religious persuasions to interfere with their social and friendly intercourse. In the United Provinces, the relations between the Hindus and Muslims were extremely cordial. The riots were confined mostly to the urban areas. The rural population, which comprises nearly 90 percent of the total population of India, has always remained peaceful. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 1-3)

The disruptive and separatist tendencies had their origin in a movement of national revival which took place during the nineteenth century by way of a moral defence against British domination. The impact of Western thought and civilization in the first half of the nineteenth century led to an awakening of political consciousness and a sense of frustration in the face of British imperialism. In the desire to re-capture self-esteem, the Indian mind harked back to the ancient Hindu and Muslim cultures. The Hindu mind sought solace in the memory of the Golden Age of Hindu imperialism and the Vedas. The founding of the Brahmo Samaj by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828, of the Arya Samaj by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875, the revival of Shivaji's cult in the Maharashtra, and the anti-cow killing campaign by Bal Gangadhar Tilak marked the various steps in the Hindu revivalist movement. The Hindu mind, in trying to rehabilitate its lost pride, sought an escape in glorifying its ancient achievements towards which the Muslims had made no contribution, and Hindu revivalism, therefore, took a religious and communal form. By a similar psychological process, the Muslims too their minds back to the glory of the Prophet, the Khilafat, and the Muslim

conquest of the countries around the Mediterranean. These trends found expression in the Wahabi movement, the activities of Syed Ahmad of Raebareli, and the mutiny of 1857 in which Hindus and Muslims made common cause against the foreign oppressor. It is to be observed that these revivalist tendencies were faint and hardly noticeable until the latter half of the nineteenth century when the difference between the Hindu and Muslim thought began to get more and more pronounced. Thus it was that, by a most unfortunate process of human psychology, the mental defences raised against foreign domination, and barriers, intended to restore self-esteem and moral rehabilitation, became fissiparous tendencies. As the revivalist movement gathered force, its momentum carried it beyond the limits of safety and sanity. The buffers of reason proved quite inadequate to arrest this emotional rush, and, before the end of the nineteenth century signs of mutual suspicion and antagonism had begun to appear with disturbing frequency. Hindus and Muslims began to assert themselves as separate entities by withdrawing themselves from each other's festivals, by wearing different dress, observing distinctive manners, and by each demanding a separate language and educational institutions. Hindu culture and Muslim culture were now mentioned as distinct and irreconcilable conceptions. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 3-4)

The Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, founded in Maharashtra in 1925, raised the cry of 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'. In 1933, Choudhary Rahmat Ali, a Punjabi residing in Cambridge, evolved a scheme for the partition of India. His original idea was that those portions of India in which the Muslims were in a majority, should be partitioned and made into a sovereign state, which would constitute the homeland of the Muslims and Muslim culture. Choudhary Rahmat Ali developed his idea and his imagination expanded the little dark cloud until it covered the entire sky. In the beginning, Pakistan was to consist of the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Sind, and Baluchistan only. Later, encouraged by the reception which was given to it by the Muslim League, in 1940, he

initiated the second part of his programme embracing Bangistan, which was to include Bengal and Assam, and Osmanistan, comprising Hyderabad (Deccan). He thus evolved the conception of Dinia and finally of Pakasia, which he called 'The Historic Orbit of the Pak Culture'. Choudhary Rahmat Ali says that the old name 'India' was both a misnomer and a menace. 'It was a misnomer because it literally and politically meant that India was the domain on only Caste Hindooism and Caste Hindoos; ... It was menace because it was being systematically exploited by Indians (Caste Hindoos) to "Indianize" the non-Indians and to make them nationally honourless, rightless and futureless in the lands of their birth.' The introduction of democratic institutions involving the counting of heads raised the hopes of the Hindus and shattered the dreams of Muslim domination. A feeling of frustration grew and the Muslim mind began to show signs of a fear complex and an obsession which was used to stir up hatred of everything Hindu. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 5-6)

The differences between the communities were accentuated and magnified by economic factors, commercial competition, and professional rivalry. The Muslims did not, as eagerly as the Hindus, take to Western education and Western culture. In the race for employment in government service and the liberal professions, they started late and the initial handicap persisted. After the mutiny of 1857, the British government adopted a policy of repression against the Muslim upper and middle classes on the ground that they were responsible for the mutiny. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the great Muslim reformer and statesman, saw the dangerous consequences of this line of action and realized that the salvation of Muslims could only be achieved by the spread of Western learning among them and by their unqualified loyalty to the British rule. He repelled the suggestion that the Muslims were anti-British or that the Mutiny was an attempt to restore Mughal rule in India. He exhorted the Muslims to embrace Western culture and study modern science. The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh was founded and the European principals of this college played

an important part in leading the Muslim agitation for preferential treatment in government posts and the bourgeois professions. During his last years, Sir Syed began to evince an obsession of Hindu domination. The demands for greater Muslim representation increased with the realization that official position and participation in the administrative machinery brought power and prestige.

In the business and industrial spheres, the non-Muslims had obtained an initial advantage which increased and multiplied rapidly. Commercial activity first came to India in parts where the Muslim influence was least. In Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta, the main centres of the East India Company activities, the non-Muslims were in a majority and their intellectual and financial resources enabled them to forge ahead and leave the Muslims behind. The most important businesses and industries were captured by them and the Muslims felt that they had irretrievably lost the position of supremacy once held by them. There was constant harping on the theme that they had been relegated to the status of drawers of water and hewers of wood. The Hindus were accused of exploiting and impoverishing the Muslims. This agitation was conducted solely by the Muslim middle classes, for the peasantry had no such grievances and it was only among the bourgeois elements that separatist tendencies were most noticeable. In the demand for Pakistan, the Muslim officials and the Muslim commercial interests raised the loudest voice. The Muslim writers and politicians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were for the most part drawn from the class of government servants.

These differences were observed by the British government and exploited in order to further their imperialistic aims in the country. As early as 1843, the Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough, wrote, 'I cannot close my eyes to the belief that that race (the Muslims) is fundamentally hostile to us and our true policy is to conciliate the Hindus.' Mountstuart Elphinstone advised '*Divide et Impera*' was the old Roman motto and it should be ours.' It

has been already observed that after the mutiny of 1857 a determined attempt was made to suppress the Muslims. This was soon carried to dangerous limits and a British official, W.W. Hunter, pointed out that the Muslim population was being shut out from official employ and from the recognized professions. He also drew attention to the British spoliation and extermination of the old Muslim educational system. With the establishment and progress of the Indian National Congress the pendulum of British favouritism swung in the opposite direction, and means were sought to provide a counterpoise to Congress aims. Lord Curzon brought about the partition of Bengal in order to 'shatter the unity and to disintegrate the feeling of solidarity' in the province. This fostered the growth of Mohammedan power in Eastern Bengal by way of a check to the rapidly growing strength of the Hindu community. The events which culminated in the founding of the Muslim League and the introduction of separate electorates in 1909 make instructive reading. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 6-8)

The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 introduced separate electorates and erected a formidable and impregnable barrier between the two major communities of India. Hindus and Muslims henceforth began to have distinct and antagonistic political aspirations. Each community felt little need of canvassing the support of the other community. The electorate was divided into watertight compartments and in each compartment communal ferment and communal hostility increased. A Muslim candidate's appeal was formulated only for the Muslim electorate and this had the inevitable result of putting extremist views at a premium. Sectional opinion was thus promoted, at the cost of public opinion, and the interests of the nation were sacrificed to the interests of the community. The poison introduced in 1909 increased and spread throughout the body politic as the franchise was enlarged. In 1909, the electorate numbered only about a million. It was increased in 1919 to more than seven million and by the Government of India Act of 1935 more than thirty-six million voters were created, every one of whom thought, spoke, and acted on communal lines.

Employment in government service and entry to educational and professional institutions were fixed on a communal basis. Communal-minded people, both Hindu and Muslim, were encouraged by being awarded high positions and titles, while people who worked for inter-communal harmony were in danger of imprisonment. Press censorship was worked on a preferential basis. No restrictions were placed on Muslim papers that advocated murder for apostasy. The British press repeatedly attempted to stir up communal discord in nationalistic movements, for example, by insinuating that Khudai Khidmatgars were anti-Hindu rather than anti-British. More room was given in London papers to communal questions and very little to nationalist ones. Nationalist Muslims hardly ever found mention in these papers. The split between the communities was gradually widened and, by carefully calculated and judiciously delivered blows, the wedge was driven in deeper on every possible occasion. The Muslim personnel of the Round Table Conference of 1930 and the subsequent Conferences was chosen out of the most communal Muslims. Mian Fazl-i-Husain, who was a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, advised in the choice of the Muslim delegates and the names of nationalist-minded Muslims were removed from the list of nominees. When it was found that Jinnah did not support all the communal demands at the First Round Table Conference, no invitation was issued to him for the subsequent Conferences. Later, when he changed his views, he was accepted as a leader of all Muslims in spite of the fact that he represented only a small minority of them. The case of forty-five million Momins, the Khudai Khidmatgars, the Khaksars, the Ahrar Party, the Mansooris, and a number of other Muslim bodies who opposed Jinnah, the Muslim League and Pakistan, was never considered. The Communal Award of 1932 which conceded almost all the demands of the Muslims was a cunning device to perpetuate the Hindu-Muslim differences.

The framers of the British imperialist policy at the top were ably assisted by the local administrators and officials. All possible means were adopted to maintain the strength of the

British hold on India. Riots were encouraged and, in some cases, initiated. The peaceful and non-violent nationalist movement was ruthlessly suppressed. The uprising of the Mopla tenants against their landlords was utilized to spread disaffection among the two communities. The Moplas had committed certain atrocities against Hindus but these were only incidental to the general uprising which was really the protest of the tenants against their landlords. Photographs of Muslims cutting the *choti* of the Hindus and forcing beef down their throats were exhibited by the government of the United Provinces in various places and particularly in the vicinity of temples and other sacred Hindu places. Such was the result achieved by a hundred years of a 'divide and rule' policy. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 9-12)

While the extreme Hindu and Muslim communal organizations assisted by the British administrators, embittered the once friendly and neighbourly relations of the two communities, the Indian National Congress endeavoured, by every possible means, to bring them together on a common platform, so that they could offer a united front to British imperialism. Founded in 1885, and completely secular in its composition and ideology, it met every year and soon mobilized the entire body of political consciousness in the country. Large numbers of Muslims joined the organization and at its sixth session held in Calcutta in 1890, there were 156 Muslim delegates out of a total of 702. Several of its sessions were presided over by Muslims. Many of the foremost leaders of the Muslim community have been members of this nationalist organization. They found that its programme and ideology were not only consistent with Islamic ideals but were calculated to further and promote Islamic culture. According to Professor W.C. Srnith, some Muslims joined the National Congress because they were Muslims and because their religion taught them 'freedom, equality of justice and co-operation with and respect for all mankind: Such were Hussain Ahmad Madni, an orthodox ulema and principal of the Deoband College, and Obedullah Sindhi, a fire-brand agitator. Then again there were Muslims who joined the Congress

because they disapproved of the Muslim League developing into an anti-Hindu organization, such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlew, Dr. M.A. Ansari, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. There were others who joined the Congress because they were nationalist-minded. For them being a Muslim was wholly irrelevant to the question of which party they should join. Badaruddin Taiyabji, who presided over the Third National Congress and Yusuf Meharally are instances of such nationalist Muslims. Lastly, there were Muslims who had become anti-religious, such as young Muslim intellectuals and communists. The Congress hold on the Muslim mind remained firm until only a few years ago.

The Congress was opposed to sectarian politics and the principle of separate electorates. Unfortunately, the disastrous consequences of the separatist tendencies introduced by the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 were not fully realized and, in their anxiety to win over Muslim opinion at any cost whatever, the Congress leaders entered into a pact with the Muslim League in 1916, whereby they accepted separate electorates for Muslims. This course of action may have seemed inevitable at the time but there can be no doubt that it was a most unfortunate sacrifice of nationalist ideals and a major blunder. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 12-13)

The neutral attitude adopted by the Congress towards the Communal Award in 1932 was another unfortunate mistake, and alienated the Muslims. It failed to achieve national unity and provided Jinnah with an opportunity to say some harsh things about the Congress. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 13)

The Government of India Act of 1935 was an extremely unsatisfactory measure and scarcely improved the existing position from the Indian standpoint. The powers of the provincial authorities were, no doubt, enlarged and extended, but the terms of the Act intensified the separatist tendencies inherent in the system of separate electorates, fortified the position of the bureaucracy by introducing a number of reservations which increased the

scope of its executive functions and the federal structure was intended to impede any real progress on nationalist lines. The Congress, however, on being assured that the British Governors would behave as gentlemen and not interfere in the day-to-day administration of the provinces, decided to enter the new councils and work for provincial autonomy under the Act. The Muslim League also came to a similar decision under the leadership of Jinnah and resolved to create a Central Election Board in order to organize the election campaign and undertook 'the policy and programme of mass contact: Jinnah had scant success in achieving Muslim solidarity on a communal basis. The Muslim majority provinces were not willing to accept Jinnah's leadership and the results of the elections in 1937 were bitterly disappointing to him. Only 4.4 per cent of the Muslims who went to the polls voted for the Muslim League. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 13-14)

The Congress swept the polls and found itself in a position to form ministries in eight out of eleven provinces (all except the Punjab, Bengal, and Sind). The Muslim League had not expected such a wholesale rout and felt completely left out of the political game. It now began to hope for concessions from the Congress and asked for a share in the administration of the provinces by including Muslim League ministers in the cabinets. This request was not so fantastic as the Congress High Command, obsessed with the rules of British parliamentary etiquette, seemed to think. Indeed in the United Provinces, the Congress had, in some constituencies, supported the League candidate and a tacit understanding appears to have grown up that after the elections a coalition ministry would be formed. The Congress did not expect to secure an absolute majority in the legislature and it was assumed that it would have to rely on League cooperation. The Congress success at the polls was, however, phenomenal and entirely unexpected, and, flush with victory, the nationalist party declined to include a Muslim League member in the government. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 14-15)

Nehru was somewhat impatient of the League and its insistence on separate representation and wanted the whole country to present a united front against the British rulers, but when he declared that 'the parties that mattered' in India are the Congress and the British, and others should line up with the Congress if they intended to survive; Jinnah was justifiably angry and retorted, "There is a third party, namely, the Mussalmans. We are not going to be dictated to by anybody. We are willing to co-operate with any group of a progressive and independent character provided its programme and policy correspond to our own. We are willing to work as equal parties for the welfare of India."

The unwisdom of this parliamentary orthodoxy, however, soon became manifest when its effects on communal relations began to appear. The Muslim League leaders felt frustrated and chagrined. Jinnah was angry and gave unrestrained expression to his sentiments against Gandhiji and Nehru. He called upon the Mussalmans of India to organize, consolidate, and establish solidarity and unity. In October 1937, a session of the All-India Muslim League was held at Lucknow. This session was attended by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, the premier of the Punjab, Fazlul Haq, the Premier of Bengal, and Sir Saadullah Khan, the premier of Assam, who had hitherto refused to fall into line with Jinnah. The Muslim League changed its creed from 'Full Responsible Government' to 'Full Independence'; and decided to take immediate steps to 'frame and put into effect an economic, social and educational programme'. This was intended to muster popular support for the League and woo the non-League Muslim groups, such as the Coalition Party in the Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal. The Sikandar-Jinnah Pact was concluded. An attempt was made to win the sympathies of the Indian Christians and members of the Scheduled Castes. Jinnah undertook a country-wide tour to establish contact with the masses. The Muslim League began to say that the Congress was a purely Hindu body and was perpetrating atrocities upon the Muslims in the provinces where it was in power. The allegations regarding

atrocities were somewhat vague and undefined but the main grievances may be briefly examined. The Vande Mataram was sung on official occasions. It was said that the associations of this song were anti-Muslim. The song occurs in Bankimchandra Chatterji's novel *Ananda Math*, which deals with the struggle of Bhavananda, the hero of the story, against the Muslim power in Bengal. The Congress agreed to retain only the first two stanzas of the song, but this did not satisfy the Muslim agitators. The use of the tricolour Congress flag on official buildings was another atrocity. The contention of the Congress was that the flag represented both the major communities and had been the symbol of the united fight of the Indians against British imperialism. The Wardha Scheme of Basic Education was another grievance. It is to be observed that the committee which drafted this scheme was presided over by Dr. Zakir Hussain who was assisted by Khwaja G. Sayyadain. The scheme was tried with success in Jamia Millia of Delhi, a Muslim institution, and other places. The League also took exception to the Congress's attempt to win over the Muslim masses, and it was alleged that this was intended to stifle and destroy Muslim culture. The Hindi-Urdu controversy was another item in the list of atrocities.

The Congress made one or two mistakes that were magnified and exploited by the Muslim League. The United Provinces cabinet issued a circular letter to the district officers that they should co-operate and act in consultation with district Congress committees and their office-bearers. This direction was issued on the ground that the Congress governments were in the position of national governments; but there can be no doubt that the direction was ill-advised. At about this time the Shia-Sunni trouble at Lucknow began and even this was utilized by the League leaders for their own purposes. It was alleged that the Congress had brought about this trouble by creating a split in the Muslim ranks. Jinnah remarked, 'One cannot help noting in these unfortunate developments at Lucknow that those who are responsible for leading, rather misleading, sections of both Shias and Sunnis in the fratricidal

struggle are prominent Muslim Congressites: The Hindu agitation in Hyderabad was ascribed to Congress instigation.

In April 1938, the Muslim League appointed a committee to enquire into the Congress oppression of Muslims and the report of this committee, which came to be known as the Pirpur Report, was submitted on 15 November 1938. In the meantime, Pandit Nehru had been in correspondence with Jinnah and had tried to evolve a formula on the basis of which the Congress and the Muslim League could work together. Jinnah, however, was extremely evasive. He had now appointed himself as the sole defender of Muslim rights in India and he set about achieving his ends by developing an ever-increasing proficiency in the art of saying 'no'.

The fact of the matter is that the League, at this time, was desperate. It had been knocking against a brick wall. Its allegations of ill-treatment against the Congress ministries could not be substantiated. The Pirpur Report contained, at best, a few minor incidents which could easily be matched by happenings of a much more serious nature in the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal where Muslim ministries were in power. No one but the League members could be convinced of the truth of the allegations made against the Congress ministries. The European Governors of the provinces where the Congress was in power declared in unequivocal terms that the administration of the Congress ministers had been singularly free from communal bias and that they had performed their functions with complete impartiality and justice. Babu Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Congress, offered to have the allegations regarding atrocities enquired into by the Chief Justice of India. Jinnah, however, declined this offer and said that the matter was now in the hands of the Viceroy. But the League charges were never investigated or adjudicated upon by the Viceroy and the bogey of Hindu oppression was kept alive.

It was at this juncture that the European war came as a godsend to the League. The Viceroy of India immediately announced that India was also at war. This was naturally resented by the Congress as the Viceroy's declaration was made without previous consultation with the central or provincial legislatures or the Congress ministries representing the vast body of public opinion in the country.

After careful consideration and long deliberation, the Congress Working Committee came to the conclusion that the only course open to them, consistent with their honour and dignity, was to call upon all the eight Congress ministries to resign from office. As soon as this decision was implemented, the provincial Governors suspended the legislatures and took charge of the administrative machinery under the provisions of Section 93 of the Government of India Act of 1935. The Muslim League was jubilant and offered its co-operation in the war effort. It was decided to celebrate the end of the Congress rule by observing a 'Deliverance Day' on 22 December 1939. On that day, resolutions were passed at meetings called by the Muslim League in various places. At the same time nationalist Muslims organized counter-demonstrations.

The Congress being now out of power, the League began to strain every nerve to climb into the seat of office. The League leaders realized that the Muslim ministries in the Punjab and Bengal had achieved a great deal and if they had failed to achieve more it was because they were not Muslim League ministries; and the extremist Muslim leaders now began to think of some concrete way of attaining their aims. They began to talk of the partition of the country. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan published a Zonal Scheme. This was not a part of the official Muslim League programme but, in view of the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact of 1937, it showed the direction in which the League politics were beginning to travel. Up to this moment the League had refused to entertain the idea of partition seriously; but now, partly to mobilize mass emotions and partly to use it as a lever for better bargaining, the

Muslim League passed the famous Pakistan Resolution at the Lahore Session of the Muslim League Council on 26 March 1940, the terms of which were vague and amorphous in the extreme. There was no mention of the two-nation theory, though the sole justification for partition rested on Hindus and Muslims being two distinct nations. The word 'Pakistan' was not mentioned and there was a significant reference to territorial adjustments which were left undefined.

The Muslim League's offer of co-operation and Jinnah's profession of loyalty prompted Lord Linlithgow to make another effort to resolve the political deadlock. Jinnah immediately made two demands. In the first place, he wanted an assurance that no Constitution for the future Government of India would be framed unless the Muslims, who, according to him, meant the Muslim League or himself, agreed. In the second place, he demanded that League representation in the Viceroy's Executive Council should be equal to Congress representation. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 15-19)

The Congress started individual civil disobedience in October 1940 and within a short time, about 25,000 to 30,000 men and women were either in prison or under detention. In June 1941, Germany attacked Russia and then followed a time of great anxiety for the Allied Nations. In December 1941, Japan entered the war and, in the beginning of 1942, India saw the dangers of the war rapidly approaching her boundaries. Penang and Singapore fell within a short time and the Japanese moved through Malaya towards Burma and India. The civil administrative machinery in Burma broke down completely and a large-scale exodus of Indians, Burmese, and Europeans began. The Indian National Army under Subhas Chandra Bose presented another problem. The Japanese made one or two air attacks on Calcutta and Britain felt the urgency of doing something in order to mobilize Indian resources. Indian opinion was at the time hostile. The Congress was agitating for independence and a constituent assembly. The Muslim League had asked for Pakistan even though the demand

did not appear to have been made seriously. The fortunes of the war on the Western front were shaping adversely, and American anxiety was increasing. In these circumstances, Sir Stafford Cripps, a Socialist member of the British Coalition cabinet, was sent out to India. He arrived at the Karachi airport on 22 March 1942, and the next day gave a press interview at which he stated that he was a friend and admirer of India, that he had come for a fortnight and could not stay longer. He said that within this short time the leaders must make quick decisions, and that the proposals which he brought with him were the result of the unanimous deliberations of the British War Cabinet. This take-it-or-leave-it attitude was neither conciliatory nor flattering to India's self-esteem. He announced his proposals on the radio on 30 March. These proposals, contained in a State Paper, dealt with the question of the immediate transfer of power to Indians and a long-term constitutional plan which would be taken up after the end of the war. Gandhiji described the State Paper as a 'post-dated cheque', drawn, according to a member of the princely order, on a 'crashing bank'. The Congress leaders felt depressed on reading these proposals as they contained seeds of disintegration. For the first time 'the right of any province of British India that was not prepared to accept the new constitution, to retain its present constitutional position' was recognized. The principle of non-accession, in effect, meant conceding the demand for Pakistan. This, however, was not the ground on which the Cripps Mission failed. The Congress was prepared to accept the proposals insofar as they related to the immediate transfer of power and when Sir Stafford glibly talked of a 'Cabinet' consisting of Indians and a 'Constitutional Viceroy', the Congress opened negotiations in a trustful and constructive mood. There was difference of opinion about the functions of the Defence Minister, but, when these differences showed signs of resolving, Cripps suddenly made a *volte face* and began to talk of the interests of the minorities. At no time during the discussions had the minority or communal questions been

mentioned, and the Congress president was naturally surprised when, in his last letter, Cripps referred to the dangers of having a 'permanent and autocratic majority' in the Cabinet.

The fact of the matter was that there was no intention ever to transfer real power to India and Cripps had been sent to India at the urgent request of Roosevelt who understood the implications of Indian unrest and sympathized with our aspirations. Churchill was opposed to this move from the beginning and was able to defeat the project with the help of a reactionary Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief. Sir Stafford Cripps went back to England and misrepresented the whole episode by making incorrect statements about what had happened.

The feeling of frustration in the country was intensified as the conviction was borne in upon all right-thinking men that the salvation of India could not be attained as long as the heel of British imperialism continued to crush free thought and enterprise. The Congress felt desperate and, as the monster of war approached the doors of India, the temper of the people rose. There were some who even welcomed the Japanese advance with a hope born of spite and hatred of the British rule. In this mood of the people, the All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay on 7 and 8 August 1942, and after careful deliberation passed the 'Quit India' resolution, which was nothing more than a 'reasoned argument for the immediate recognition of Indian freedom and the ending of the British rule in India: Early on the morning of 9 August, large numbers of Congress leaders were arrested all over the country.

Months of bitter struggle followed. Thousands of men and women were sent to prison or kept in detention. The government at first took no action against the Muslims but the news of these happenings agitated the Khudai Khidmatgars in the North-West Frontier Province where they held demonstrations against the government. They were beaten, fired at, arrested, and imprisoned by the thousands. (By March 1943, 35,000 Congressmen were in prison and nearly 12,000 in detention or preventive custody. Jinnah disapproved of the Congress

resolution and tried to show that the Muslims had kept aloof from these anti-British activities. He accused the Congress of 'ignoring the Muslims.')

Jinnah's one aim now was to strengthen his own position by gathering the maximum amount of Muslim support for his idea of Pakistan. With the Congress leaders behind bars he had undisputed command of the political field. 'Social cohesion', says Bertrand Russell, 'demands a creed, a code of behaviour or a prevailing sentiment: Jinnah provided his followers with all three. He gave them the creed of Muslim superiority implicit in the idea of Pakistan, a code of anti-Congress and anti-Hindu behaviour, and a prevailing sentiment that Islam stood in danger of perishing under Congress rule. (Roy, *Partition of India*, 20-22)

In January 1946, a number of mutinies broke out in the armed services, starting with that of RAF servicemen frustrated with their slow repatriation to Britain. The mutinies came to a head with mutiny of the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay in February 1946, followed by others in Calcutta, Madras, and Karachi. Although the mutinies were rapidly suppressed, they had the effect of spurring the new Labour government in Britain to action, and leading to the Cabinet Mission to India led by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick Lawrence, and including Sir Stafford Cripps, who had visited four years before. Also in early 1946, new elections were called in India. Earlier, at the end of the war in 1945, the colonial government had announced the public trial of three senior officers of Subhas Chandra Bose's defeated Indian National Army who stood accused of treason. Now as the trials began, the Congress leadership, although ambivalent towards the INA, chose to defend the accused officers. The subsequent convictions of the officers, the public outcry against the convictions, and the eventual remission of the sentences, created positive propaganda for the Congress, which only helped in the party's subsequent electoral victories in eight of the eleven provinces. The negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League, however, stumbled over the issue of the partition. (Judd, *The Lion and the Tiger*, 170-173)

Jinnah proclaimed 16 August 1946, Direct Action Day, with the stated goal of highlighting, peacefully, the demand for a Muslim homeland in British India. However, on the morning of 16th August, armed Muslim gangs gathered at the Ochterlony Monument in Calcutta to hear Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, the League's Chief Minister of Bengal, who, in the words of historian Yasmin Khan, "if he did not explicitly incite violence certainly gave the crowd the impression that they could act with impunity, that neither the police nor the military would be called out and that the ministry would turn a blind eye to any action they unleashed in the city." (Khan, *The Great Partition*, 64-65) That very evening, in Calcutta, Hindus were attacked by returning Muslim celebrants, who carried pamphlets distributed earlier showing a clear connection between violence and the demand for Pakistan, and implicating the celebration of 'Direct Action Day' directly with the outbreak of the cycle of violence that would be later called the "Great Calcutta Killing of August 1946". (Talbot & Singh, *Region and Partition*, 69) The next day, Hindus struck back and the violence continued for three days in which approximately 4,000 people died (according to official accounts), Hindus and Muslims in equal numbers. Although India had had outbreaks of religious violence between Hindus and Muslims before, the Calcutta killings was the first to display elements of "ethnic cleansing," in modern parlance. (Talbot & Singh, *Region and Partition*, 67) Violence was not confined to the public sphere, but homes were entered, destroyed, and women and children attacked. (Talbot & Singh, *Region and Partition*, 68) Although the Government of India and the Congress were both shaken by the course of events, in September, a Congress-led interim government was installed, with Jawaharlal Nehru as united India's prime minister.

The communal violence spread to Bihar (where Muslims were attacked by Hindus), to Noakhali in Bengal (where Hindus were targeted by Muslims), in Garhmukteshwar in the United Provinces (where Muslims were attacked by Hindus), and on to Rawalpindi in March

1947 in which Hindus were attacked or driven out by Muslims. (Talbot & Singh, *Region and Partition*, 67-68)

Vallabhbhai Patel was one of the first Congress leaders to accept the partition of India as a solution to the rising Muslim separatist movement led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He had been outraged by Jinnah's Direct Action campaign, which had provoked communal violence across India and by the viceroy's vetoes of his home department's plans to stop the violence on the grounds of constitutionality. Patel severely criticised the viceroy's induction of League ministers into the government, and the revalidation of the grouping scheme by the British without Congress approval. Although further outraged at the League's boycott of the assembly and non-acceptance of the plan of 16 May despite entering government, he was also aware that Jinnah did enjoy popular support amongst Muslims, and that an open conflict between him and the nationalists could degenerate into a Hindu-Muslim civil war of disastrous consequences. The continuation of a divided and weak central government would in Patel's mind, result in the wider fragmentation of India by encouraging more than 600 princely states towards independence.

Between the months of December 1946 and January 1947, Patel worked with civil servant V. P. Menon on the latter's suggestion for a separate dominion of Pakistan created out of Muslim-majority provinces. Communal violence in Bengal and Punjab in January and March 1947 further convinced Patel of the soundness of partition. Patel, a fierce critic of Jinnah's demand that the Hindu-majority areas of Punjab and Bengal be included in a Muslim state, obtained the partition of those provinces, thus blocking any possibility of their inclusion in Pakistan. Patel's decisiveness on the partition of Punjab and Bengal had won him many supporters and admirers amongst the Indian public, who was tired of the League's tactics, but he was criticised by Gandhi, Nehru, secular Muslims and socialists for a perceived eagerness to do so. When Lord Louis Mountbatten formally proposed the plan on 3 June 1947, Patel

gave his approval and lobbied Nehru and other Congress leaders to accept the proposal. Knowing Gandhi's deep anguish regarding proposals of partition, Patel engaged him in frank discussion in private meetings over the perceived practical unworkability of any Congress-League coalition, the rising violence and the threat of civil war. At the All India Congress Committee meeting called to vote on the proposal, Patel said:

I fully appreciate the fears of our brothers from [the Muslim-majority areas]. Nobody likes the division of India and my heart is heavy. But the choice is between one division and many divisions. We must face facts. We cannot give way to emotionalism and sentimentality. The Working Committee has not acted out of fear. But I am afraid of one thing, that all our toil and hard work of these many years might go waste or prove unfruitful. My nine months in office has completely disillusioned me regarding the supposed merits of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Except for a few honourable exceptions, Muslim officials from the top down to the chaprasis (peons or servants) are working for the League. The communal veto given to the League in the Mission Plan would have blocked India's progress at every stage. Whether we like it or not, *de facto* Pakistan already exists in the Punjab and Bengal. Under the circumstances I would prefer a *de jure* Pakistan, which may make the League more responsible. Freedom is coming. We have 75 to 80 percent of India, which we can make strong with our own genius. The League can develop the rest of the country. (Spate, *The Partition of the Punjab and of Bengal*, 201-218)

Following Gandhi's denial but Congress' approval of the plan, Patel represented India on the Partition Council, where he oversaw the division of public assets, and selected the Indian

council of ministers with Nehru. However, neither he nor any other Indian leader had foreseen the intense violence and population transfer that would take place with partition.

Late in 1946, the Labour government in Britain, its exchequer exhausted by the recently concluded World War II, decided to end British rule of India, and in early 1947 Britain announced its intention of transferring power no later than June 1948. However, with the British army unprepared for the potential for increased violence, the new viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, advanced the date for the transfer of power, allowing less than six months for a mutually agreed plan for independence. In June 1947, the nationalist leaders, including Nehru and Patel on behalf of the Congress, Liyaqat Ali and Suhrawardhy representing the Muslim League, and Master Tara Singh representing the Sikhs (Tara Singh joined as 5th member representing Akalis later on) agreed to a partition of the country along religious lines in stark opposition to Gandhi's views. The predominantly Hindu and Sikh areas were assigned to the new India and predominantly Muslim areas to the new nation of Pakistan; the plan included a partition of the Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal. The communal violence that accompanied the announcement of the Radcliffe Line, the line of partition, was even more horrific.

Of the violence that accompanied the Partition of India, historians Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh write:

There are numerous eyewitness accounts of the maiming and mutilation of victims. The catalogue of horrors includes the disembowelling of pregnant women, the slamming of babies' heads against brick walls, the cutting off of victims limbs and genitalia and the display of heads and corpses. While previous communal riots had been deadly, the scale and level of brutality was unprecedented. Although some scholars question the use of the term 'genocide' with respect to the Partition massacres, much of the violence

manifested as having genocidal tendencies. It was designed to cleanse an existing generation as well as prevent its future reproduction." (Talbot & Singh, *Region and Partition*, 67-68)

On 14 August 1947, the new Dominion of Pakistan came into being, with Muhammad Ali Jinnah sworn in as its first Governor General in Karachi. The following day, 15 August 1947, India, now a smaller Union of India, became an independent country with official ceremonies taking place in New Delhi, and with Jawaharlal Nehru assuming the office of the prime minister, and the viceroy, Louis Mountbatten, staying on as its first Governor General; Gandhi, however, remained in Bengal, preferring instead to work among the new refugees of the partitioned subcontinent.

The phrase the 'high politics' of Partition has become shorthand for the constitutional negotiations between the British and Indian leaders during the 1940s, and is normally contrasted with the term 'history from below' which reflects a focus on the human consequences of partition.

In contrast, the traditional Pakistani approach to the 'high politics' of Independence is to eschew the term 'partition' because it is viewed as a politically loaded concept which echoes the Hindu Right's preoccupation with the 'loss' of national unity. Moreover to say that India was partitioned is to acknowledge the fact that Pakistan was a *seceding* power from an Indian state that had inherited sovereignty from British India. Official histories therefore focus on the achievement of Pakistan in which its birth is thus generally explained in terms of the Muslim League's historic creed of the two-nation theory that maintained that the Indian Muslims' identity was defined by religion rather than language or ethnicity. Islam, these accounts always insist, had given birth to a distinctive social order that was fundamentally at odds with Hindu society. The demand for a separate state was thus a 'natural' expression of this reality. The doyen of this understanding was Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi of Karachi

University, though more sophisticated works within this genre have emerged among Pakistani scholars resident in the west. K. Bin Sayeed has perhaps provided the clearest exposition of his thesis, 'There has never taken place', according to him,

[a] confluence of the two civilizations in India – the Hindu and the Muslim.

They may have meandered words each other here and there, but on the whole the two have flowed their separate courses – sometimes parallel and sometimes contrary to one another. (Sayeed, *The Formative Phase*, 12)

What has been termed the 'new history' of Partition was pioneered by feminist writers and activists who emerged from an intellectual milieu in the early 1980s provided by the Subaltern Studies school of writing with its desire to restore agency to non-elite groups. As well as feminism and subaltern studies, the other major influences on new history were deconstructionist methodologies of postmodernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism that sought to place the subject at the centre of their research. In counter-distinction to 'high politics' and official histories, the victims of Partition, and principally women, became the new foci of research, a development reinforced by the contemporaneous revival of mass communal riots symbolized by the 1984 Delhi anti-Sikh riots following the assassination of the Indian premier Mrs. Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

Clearly the 'new history' has not only added a human face to bald statistics of deaths, abductions and refugee migrants, it has also provided victims – and to a much lesser extent aggressors – with a voice. The use of oral testimonies challenge state and community constructions of Partition with alternative sources of knowledge, as well as demonstrate that *all* communities had their own victims and aggressors, thereby undermining the stereotype of the 'other' community as the aggressor and perpetrator of violence. These testimonies have

also revealed the differential experiences of violence, migration and resettlement that were previously subsumed in uniform official publications.

Another major contribution of the ‘new history’ is to view Partition as a process rather than as an event confined to August 1947. For many years standard accounts tended to stop in 1947 without seriously considering whether continuities could be seen beyond this date, but recently historians have begun to explore these. Oral testimonies reinforce these pioneering crossings of the 1947 historical divide by suggesting that, among other things, pre-existing social and economic ties profoundly impacted on resettlement prospects, or that there was often not a single upheaval in 1947, but continuous movement to and fro with refugees in some instances engaged for years of struggle to resume their lives; many wandered from place to place before final resettlement.

Perhaps, more seriously, there are also methodological concerns surrounding the use of oral testimonies that are prone to a faulty recall and retrospective construction of memory. Individual accounts can – and do – provide a useful source for interrogating official and community histories, but they can often be heavily influenced by them. Generally silences pervade memories in discussions of violence, female abduction and the relations of authority and subservience which governed everyday life in pre-Partition times. At the same time, there is a tendency to exaggerate both attachment to *desh* and the extent of land and property abandoned in the flight across new international borders. Memories can thus be as partial and fractured as historical discourses, and as Gyanendra Pandey has powerfully demonstrated, strongly mediated by community and national consciousness. (Talbot and Singh, *The Partition of India*, 17-19)

4.2 Characteristics of Partition Literature

The best of the literature that emerged in the wake of the Partition bears the imprint of the struggle to grapple with pain and suffering on a scale that was unprecedented in South

Asia. The Partition Literature became a repository of localized truths, sought to be evaded and minimized by the dominant discourse on the Partition. These narratives offer insights into the nature of individual experience, and break the silence in the collective sphere. (Ravikant and Tarun, *Translating Partition*, Introduction, XI)

Trends in recent Partition research represent a shift away from the parleys and betrayals in the domain of High Politics, towards an emphasis on the subalterns as both victims and perpetrators of violence, the instigation behind the widespread rioting, the resulting psychological trauma, and most importantly, the feminist concern with recovering lost stories of sexually violated and abducted women during the Partition. New Archives of survivors' memories are being created to supplement the available sources such as autobiographies and biographies, poetry and fictional accounts. (Ravikant and Tarun, *Translating Partition*, Introduction, XXIII)

Novelists who have written about the Partition, especially those who lived through its days of terror, take their stand beside those who suffered, in order either to bear witness or to offer solace, to call down damnation on those who were responsible for it, to commemorate nostalgically communities in the past or speak with bitter irony about the possibilities of life in post-colonial days. The best of them, however do not repeat what the historians already know—that there was violence of such fiendishness that each reminder of it still comes as a shock to our decencies and still violates our sense of a common humanity. Indeed, they seek to make connections with the social and cultural life of a community in its entirety within a historically specific period. That is why, these fictional accounts, unlike narratives of the historians, which move with certitude towards a definite end, contain all that is locally contingent and truthfully remembered, capricious and anecdotal, contradictory and mythically given. Their endings too are various. While some manage to find their way out of the realm of madness and crime, others either mark out the emotional and ethical map of our

times with indelible lines of screams, ash, smoke and mockery, or crumble into shocked silence.

These narratives either assume the existence of a communally shared history in pre-partition India, or imaginatively set up, with the help of small remembered things, images of the sub-continent as a place of tolerant communities as structural counterpoints to the dispirited sense of exile and pain after the division. Their fictionalized life-worlds of villages and small towns invariably suggest that there was an essential feeling of relatedness between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, not merely a passive acceptance of different customs and beliefs. That is why, perhaps, hardly any of these texts seriously concern themselves with defining the religious identities of different groups, but assert that such identities only be forged in the social relationships established between human beings in the process of living together; that is in the daily interaction between people which gives to theological beliefs a significance and a value.

The second element that nearly informs all these narratives is the note of utter bewilderment. Each of these narratives finds the Partition and the massacres so completely without historical or social reason, that all they can sometimes do is to record the place they called 'home' or 'basti', and the memories of a society with collective rites and traditions, songs and legends, names of birds and trees, that were tinged forever with acrid smell of smoke and blood.

Partition fiction is concerned with the fate of those ordinary characters—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs—who do not feel, at any time prior to the country's division, that they are aliens living in unreal places which have neither the sanction nor God and amongst people who are intolerant, bigoted, and contemptuous of each other. For a majority of them their customary homes, where they try to realize their common hopes and mundane desires, are utopian enough. Only a fool, they think, can be tempted by distant political horizons, and

only a pilgrim is addicted to a travelling life, forever in search of a destination other than the one he has arrived at. Sometimes, in their minds, the pilgrim and the fool are the same. For as long as they can remember, they have lived side-by-side in settled communities. The beginnings of each of their private biographies are connate with the origins of their 'bastis'. It rarely occurs to most of them that, as members of different religions or sects, their cultural differences are so radical that their lives have followed historically different and antagonistic paths since the beginning of their encounter with each other. And so, despite the enormity of violence around them unleashed by the demand for two separate nations, Partition fiction is replete with characters who resist the pressures of theological hardliners and ideological fundamentalists, and refuse to migrate; refuse to leave their homes or their lands just because some politicians claim that different forms of worship demand different cultural, moral, and political citizenships.

There are other fictional works which speak about the pathos of the people, who refused to leave after the Partition; who refused to be coerced into believing that India could be divided into two religiously defined nations. Whether Hindu or Muslim, they remained deeply attached to their homes, their village landscapes, their ancestral graveyards, and their rights of conversation with people of all sects. These novels portray characters who chose to stay in places they have inherited and consider any change in their habitat to be a violation of their selfhood. Besides, their experiences had taught them how to live with pluralities and develop, in the process, 'a sense of responsibility in many kinds of living' so as to evade tragedy. Their villages and towns were non-communalized, agnostic spaces where people hardly felt the need to draw attention to their religious identity because it neither posed a threat to the other nor saw the other in genocidal opposition to itself. Since their sense of belongingness within a shared community is co-extensive with their sense of identity,⁵ they reject, as a myth, the essential idea of the partition—the idea that the reason for their presence

anywhere is somehow dependent on abstractions called ‘Islamic brotherhood’ or ‘Hindu Sangathan’, both of which derive their legitimization from sacred sanctuaries located beyond the horizons of their immediate and intimate boundaries, and are discontinuous with their daily and lived experiences.

There are countless characters in Partition fiction who are bewildered by the new borders India and Pakistan because for them their home was their ‘basti’ and, hence, their country. Attached to their ‘home’ were all the ideals of well-being and ‘well-doing’. It was their sanctuary; their affective and moral space; and it was sufficient. Unfortunately, however, the politics of religious identity which surrounds these ordinary characters is hasty, restless, and crass. In Partition fiction, characters never aspire to be part of some exceptional religious group. Their understanding of their selfhood is that they are ordinary people with limited means and abilities, and that they are vulnerable. They are self-conscious about the fact that they live within a network of people with different religious convictions whose right to a share in their living spaces has to be acknowledged.

Most novelists who have written about the Partition either draw upon their personal memories of those harrowing days or use stories told to them by others about their experiences. Novels about the partition, therefore, tend to be autobiographical. Fiction about the Partition in India and Pakistan has made an attempt, despite the enormity of the horror it describes, to preserve essential human values. This attempt is remarkable because in 1947 a lot of property was destroyed, thousands had to migrate, and countless people were killed. Yet, writers were convinced that it was essential to preserve a sense of humanity.

It is worth reiterating that the ‘heroes’ in the Partition stories are not the rapists, the abductors, the arsonists, the murderers and the perpetrators of violence, but the men and women – living and dead – who provide the healing touch. The silver lining is that it is they who emerge as the beacon of hope in riot-torn cities; and it is their exemplary courage,

counterpoised to the inhumanity of killers, that is celebrated precisely in the best of Partition literature. (Bhalla, *Memory, History and Fictional Representations of the Partition*, 3119-3128)

4.3 Representation of Partition in Asghar Wajahat's *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Jamyai*

Nai

One such text which attempts to render a more interpretative version of Partition history from the point of view of individuals and the common mass ('subalterns' as both 'victims' and 'perpetrators of violence') is Asghar Wajahat's play *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Jamyai Nai*. Syed Asghar Wajahat is a professor and a scholar of Hindi, a fiction writer, a novelist, a playwright, an independent documentary filmmaker and a television scriptwriter, who is most known for his work *Saat Aasmaan* and his much acclaimed play *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Jamyai Nai* (Working English Title: *Unborn is He Who has not Seen Lahore*). Commenting on his play, Asghar Wajahat said, "There is a clash between three antagonistic forces - religious fanaticism, the common man and the poet, finally asserting human values."

To narrate the story in brief, the Partition of India brought in its wake large-scale voluntary or coerced migration of the Hindus and the Muslims across the border. The family of Sikander Mirza who loves Lucknow immensely is shown in the refugee camp of Lahore when the play begins. The Shayar Nasir Kazmi has also been forced to migrate to Lahore leaving Ambala behind. Though all of them loved their native so dearly, they had to suffer dislocation. Mirza Saheb's family is allotted the palatial building of Ratan Zaveri in Lahore. But the old mother of Ratan Zaveri remains in hiding in a corner of the house. Her family members are probably dead and the haveli has been looted during the Partition riots. However, this old Hindu woman refuses to leave due to her attachment and a sense of belongingness that she feels with Lahore. Legally, the old woman cannot be bullied to leave Lahore as well as the all-ready exhausted Mirza is in no mood to leave the haveli which he

has got after a lot of difficulty. Mirza gets flustered at the defiance of the old woman to leave the haveli as well as Lahore. He even goes to Pahalwan with the purpose of getting the old woman killed. But with the passage of time the same old Hindu woman becomes Sikander Mirza's mother and Tanno's dadi due to her motherly affections. She also becomes 'Mai' of the whole Mohalla wherein no Hindu lives in the post-partition Lahore. Sikander Mirza also safeguards the old woman from the vandalism of Pahalwan. The old Hindu woman who was ready to die than to leave this haveli and Lahore, is now more than willing to leave the same just for the sake of the security of Sikander Mirza and his family. Sikander Mirza who allows this old Hindu woman to celebrate Diwali as well as the characters like Hamid, Shayar Nasir Kazmi etc. all are embodiment of common men's psyche. However, all the secular and moderate Muslims face a grave conflict when it comes to conducting the last rites of this Hindu woman. All of them are in favour of giving her a ceremonious Hindu burial. At this juncture, all of them recollect whatever they could in terms of rites and rituals and recitation of mantras while carrying the corpse to the funeral pyre. The play ends with the gory murder of the secular Maulvi who have out-rightly been rejecting various claims and arguments of Pahalwan favouring his selfish interests.

4.3.1 Lahore through the Lens of History

Only thirty-two miles separate Amritsar in India from Lahore in Pakistan, but the cities are wide apart. This was not always the case. Before the 1947 partition, when Amritsar and Lahore were both in the Indian state of Punjab, there were Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs who had links with both the cities. Some even had a home in one and business in the other.

All cities have their periods of glory and importance, and of decline. Lahore became part of the Mughal Empire in 1536, and was next only to Delhi and Agra in imperial prominence. For brief periods (during the reigns of Emperors Akbar and Shah Jahan in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries), it functioned as the Empire's capital. The still-

extant Shalimar Gardens, the Fort (built by Shah Jahan), Badshahi Mosque (Aurangzeb's creation), and the tombs of Jahangir and his queen Nur Jahan are reminders of the Mughal era. There is also an ancient Ramayana connection that links Lahore to Rama's son Lav.

A key year in the story of Amritsar is 1604, when the Adi Granth, the Sikh scripture, was installed at the site of the Harmandir Sahib, which would become Sikhism's holiest shrine. But it was during the forty years (1799-1839) that the Sikh chieftain Ranjit Singh ruled over the Punjab and territories beyond that Amritsar found pre-eminence. The Harmandir Sahib was gilded with gold during this time, and was to be known thereafter as the Swaran Mandir, or Golden Temple. The city prospered and bustled, trade expanded. Though Lahore was Ranjit Singh's capital, it declined.

Ranjit Singh's successors squabbled even as a new power, Britain, extended its control across the subcontinent. In the 1840s the Punjab's Sikh rulers lost out to the British, who proceeded to develop Lahore as their Indian Empire's chief city to the north of Delhi. In 1947, the year of independence, partition, violence, and migrations, Lahore's 240,000 Hindus and Sikhs constituted about a third of the city's population. They migrated to different parts of East Punjab, Delhi, and elsewhere in India. On the other hand, Amritsar's Muslims, who formed half of its total population of around 400,000, went chiefly to Lahore, taking skills and talents. Lahore lost all its Hindus and Sikhs, Amritsar, all its Muslims. After 1947 Lahore grew at a much faster rate. The 1991 census had Lahore's population as seven million, while Amritsar's was less than a million.

In all, between half a million and a million lost their lives in the 1947 violence. Talbot notes that "there are no wayside memorials to provide clues to the Amritsar-Lahore road's dark history in August-November 1947. Huge caravans of refugees ... traversed this route as part of the mass exodus of 4.6 million Muslims from East Punjab and reverse migrations of West Punjab Hindus and Sikhs to India" (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, xxxii). Rejecting an

explanation that many still offer for India in 1947 and for similar traumas elsewhere, Talbot argues in *Divided Cities* that "the 1947 violence in Lahore and Amritsar was not the outcome of primordial religious differences which culminated in a spontaneous outburst of irrational passion and ferocity" (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, xxv). A modern state (or states) that no longer functioned by the rule of law, and individuals and communal groups seeking to grab the power of a departing empire provided a combustible mix.

The British annexed the Punjab in the mid-nineteenth century. Urban development of the two cities followed a set pattern for colonial civilian settlements, with tree-shaded roads and large bungalows, cantonments, and a Mall Road in each, but the scales tilted in Lahore's favour as the provincial capital. Lahore saw its engineering, textile, and leather industries grow during the Second World War. Colonial architecture in Lahore sought to blend with the city's Mughal heritage, and it became an educational centre with impressive schools and colleges that competed with Delhi's. Hindus resided in distinct enclaves. Its larger student and European population gave Lahore a cosmopolitan feel that Amritsar could not match.

Amritsar's markets, factories, and mills grew rapidly, however, with trade links extending to Europe and Central Asia in cotton and woollen textiles, raw silk, cattle, and horses. The wheat market for the Punjab--the granary of India--was situated in Amritsar. Flour mills were mostly owned by Hindus from the *bania*, or trading castes. Kashmiri artisans who had fled a drought in their region in 1833, enriched Amritsar with their skills in manufacturing silk and *pashmina* shawls, switching later to employment in the growing carpet industry. Lahore's intellectual life was clearly richer, yet two of Pakistan's (and the subcontinent's) best-regarded intellectuals, Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911-1984) and Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955), spent their formative years in Amritsar.

Talbot writes of the "religious revivalism" that from the 1920s gradually "sharpened communal identities" (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 27). The climax was the March 1940 resolution

of the Muslim League, passed in Lahore, for a separate Pakistan. The author says, however, that "even the politicization of religious identity did not make partition and its associated violence inevitable" (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 19). What then necessitated the division? Talbot raises this tantalizing question but does not pursue the inquiry.

In the section on the 1947 violence, Talbot reports on the conflagrations in Lahore and Amritsar, and the attacks on refugee trains. "In riot-torn Lahore and Amritsar in 1947, identity was reduced to the physical signs of religious affiliation. A brutal death could follow from being identified as being of the 'wrong religion'" (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 24). Talbot recounts the conflicting interpretations, written and oral, harboured by the different communities--each portraying the "other" as the main instigator and culprit. He presents the trajectory of this violence: the contest for power in March 1946 in the provincial elections; the Muslim League's civil disobedience campaign early in 1947 against the Unionist-Akali-Congress government led by Khizr Hayat Tiwana; and the resignation of this coalition ministry on March 2, 1947. The Muslim League had hoped to include all of the Punjab in Pakistan, but the destruction in Lahore (March 4, 1947) and Amritsar (March 5) "made it impossible for the Muslim League to achieve Pakistan without the Punjab's partition". (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 41)

The threads of violence are traced through localities in the two cities. As word travelled to Lahore of large numbers of Muslims killed in Amritsar and surrounding villages, the cry for revenge went up. Lahore's Hindus and Sikhs, who had hoped that the Boundary Commission would award the city to India, faced not only bitter disappointment but also mobs maddened by the arrival of trainloads of corpses from East Punjab. Likewise, Muslims, convinced of Pakistan's claim on Amritsar, found themselves at the losing end in that city. Using evidence from both cities, Talbot disputes the claims that the partition violence was spontaneous, unplanned, or a result just of mass frenzy or just a "temporary madness".

(Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 53) He asks: "Would the violence of August 1947 have gone so unchecked if adequate punishment had been meted out to those apprehended in the wake of the March disturbances? How culpable is the colonial administration in this respect? (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 56)

One wishes the author had probed this question at greater length. Could a resolute state not have nipped in the bud, in Lahore and Amritsar in March 1947, the fire that in August and September would devastate the whole of the Punjab? There is resignation in Talbot's tone as he accepts the contention of the Punjab Governor, Sir Evan Jenkins, that "the troubles are due not to 'British rule' but to the fact that what remains of 'British rule' is now ending". (Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 56)

Flooded with refugees, the two post-partition cities were transformed from major economic centres into border cities, with torn social fabric and broken familial links. Other networks were formed--those of criminals and of cross-border smugglers. Insecurity, threats of war, and calls for civilians to be armed increased.

With the exodus of its Muslim population, Amritsar had lost a large pool of skilled labour. Its "border" position contributed to its marginalization and to its difficulty obtaining raw materials and markets. Inadequate transport links with the rest of the country did not help. Lahore too faced similar handicaps. It had lost 73 percent of its industrial labour force and 60 percent of its working capital. Its banks, printing presses, textile and engineering factories, and transport companies were crippled. But its role as an administrative hub enabled it to regain its prominence. Skilled Muslim artisans, weavers, and other workers arriving from Amritsar and other cities in India helped this process. The government gave support for new ventures using a refugee tax and private donations.

Partition violence had gutted 4,000 houses in Lahore and most of the 6,000 houses in the walled city were badly damaged. Amritsar was the worst affected of any city in the

Punjab with almost 10,000 buildings burnt down. City improvement trusts that had been set up during the colonial era (modelled on British town planning and not necessarily suited to local conditions and lifestyle) became responsible for post-partition reconstruction. That considerable evacuee property had become available eased the situation in both Lahore and Amritsar. Compounded with issues of refugee housing and employment was the need to overcome trauma.

Expressions of nostalgia are heard on both sides of the border, from Hindu and Sikh refugees from Lahore, and apparently to a lesser extent from those who fled Amritsar. Talbot presents voices of Hindus such as Pran Nevile, Som Anand, Sahdev Vohra, and Santosh Kumar who loved their Lahore, but suggests that in elite narratives communal tensions are glossed over, whereas the gaze of the poorer classes is not so rosy.

Talbot sees nationalist discourses in both India and Pakistan that stress the struggle for and achievement of independence--and in the case of the latter the additional gain of separate nationhood--and relegate the violence of partition to a subtext. Thus in Pakistan's standard narrative, Lahore emerges primarily as the site for the passage of the 1940 Pakistan resolution. The pre-1947 communal harmony recalled by better-off Hindu and Sikh refugees from Lahore is not part of this narrative, for it conflicts with official ideology.

Partition's migrations transformed the ethnicity, culture, and politics of Karachi, Delhi and Calcutta. From a Sindhi city, Karachi became an Urdu-speaking one. In culture, Delhi became a quasi-Punjabi city. Calcutta's leftward turn was in part a result of refugees from East Bengal. Talbot notes that changes in Lahore and Amritsar seemed less fundamental, and also that post-1947 Karachi's acute ethnic tensions were largely absent in Lahore. Although both Lahore and Amritsar lost their religious minorities, their Punjabi-ness was intact. The refugees settling in the two cities were, like the locals, Punjabi-speaking. Yet there was competition in Lahore between refugees and locals for abandoned Hindu and Sikh property,

and there were cases of sexual exploitation of vulnerable refugees in both Lahore and Amritsar.

By looking jointly and objectively at Lahore and Amritsar and at the two Punjabs, Talbot has enhanced our understanding of the India-Pakistan story. His study is instructive because it is comparative and because it is detailed, providing close-ups of Lahore and Amritsar, at times locality by locality, community by community, and trade by trade. One hopes for more studies of this kind, including perhaps a comparison of the impact of 1947 on Delhi and Karachi. (Gandhi, Review of Ian Talbot's *Divided Cities*)

4.3.2 Trauma of Partition

The play commences with a reference to the on-going disturbing movement of the Muslim League undertaken with a die-hard resolve for the establishment of Pakistan. Scene one begins with the reverberating echoes of slogan 'Le Ke Rahenge Pakistan' and ends with the tragic division of India as related through the poetic words of the Shayar Nasir Kazmi. They also denounce the Chief Minister of Punjab Khizir Hayakat Khan, who is not a Muslim league leader. Neither Ratan Zaveri of Lahore and his old mother nor Sikander Mirza of Lucknow and Nasir Kazmi of Ambala ever thought that how Lord Mountbatten's plan or the Radcliffe Award would alternate their existing reality forever, and India's 'tryst with destiny' would horribly alter the destinies of millions. Asgar Wajahat has used the 'Nazms' of the renowned Shayar Nasir Kazmi to end each and every scene of the play, and the dramatist even confessed that the 'Nazms' of Nasir Kazmi Sahib has contributed tremendously to the success of this play. They are the records of an individual's aesthetic response to the larger historical events like the Partition and its aftermaths:

“Aur natize mein Hindustan bant gaya

Ye zameen bant gayi, ye aasman bant gaya

Tarze-tahrir, tarze-bayan bant gaya

Shakh-e-gul bant gayi, aashiyān bant gaya

Humne dekha tha jo khwab hi aur tha

Ab jo dekha to Punjab hi aur tha.” (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 11)

4.3.3 Dislocation, Migration, Exile

The Second scene of the play deals with the arrival of Sikander Mirza’s family in Lahore. After being dislocated from Lucknow, they were kept for the time being in the refugee camp. Finally, they are allotted a huge haveli in compensation of the property they have lost in Lucknow. However, they find this haveli too eerie. Large-scale migrations of this kind, whether voluntary or coerced, were very common during Partition. Despite of the fact that this haveli is huge compared to their house left behind in Lucknow, Sikander Mirza, in a nostalgic mood, reminiscences the memories of the past associated with their house and life in Lucknow. Sikander Mirza, his son Javed and younger daughter Tanno seem pretty settled after coming to this haveli, except Sikander Mirza’s wife Hamida Begum. She is apprehensive of the whole idea that they are living in someone else’s house. She tries to imagine the pain and trauma of the real owners of this haveli (Ratan Zaveri and his old mother) who were forced to leave such a beautiful house. To which Sikander Mirza snaps:

“Fizul baatein na kijye begum... hamare pushteni ghar mein bhi aaj koi sharanartheni dandanata fir raha hoga... ye zamana hi kuchh aisa hai... zyada sharm, haya aur fikr hamein kahin ka na chhodega... apna aur aapka khayal nab hi karein to Javed miyan aur Tanveer begum ke liye to yahan pair jamane hi padenge... Sheher-e-Lucknow chhuta to Sheher-e-Lahore – dono mein ‘laam’ to mushtarik hai... dil ke saare vaham nikal fenkiye aur is ghar ko apna ghar samaj kar jam jaiye...” (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 14)

Sikander Mirza's compromising attitude towards their life-situation is primarily a consequence of his instinct to survive. Once rendered homeless, he wouldn't like to face the same tragedy all over again, and thereby he would also secure the future of his son and daughter. Sikander Mirza truly epitomizes the dictum 'home is where the heart is'. This clearly states the fact that common men are worried more about food, clothing and shelter than the corrupted communal politics which rendered millions homeless, massacred, raped and abducted.

The gradual discovery of Ratanlal Johri's old mother (Amma) unsettles the members of Sikander Mirza's family. They are stunned to find her presence in the same house. She makes it absolutely clear that it is her house, and till she is alive, there is no question of leaving it. Sikander Mirza and his wife try their level best to negotiate with her about the new reality that has taken shape across the borders, but the old woman does not pay heed to what they say and steadfastly cling to her decision. She is fearless both in speech and action. She has already lost her son and jewellery. She has nothing more to lose except for this haveli and her whole life, both of which are at stake. This forces Sikander Mirza to take the matter to the Custodian Office for resolution. The scene ends with Hamida Begum and Tanno being helped by the old woman in locating logs for cooking food. Both Hamida Begum and Tanno are pleasantly shocked at the humane gesture of the old woman. The scene ends with the following poetic lines of the shayar Nasir Kazmi:

“Dil mein leher si uthi hai abhi

Koi taaza hawa chali hai abhi

Shor barpa hai khana-e-din mein

Koi diwar-si giri hai abhi

Bhari dunya main ji nahin lagta

Jaane kis cheez ki kami hai abhi

Waqt achchha bhi aayega ‘Nasir’

Gum na kar zindagi padi hai abhi” (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 17-18)

4.3.4 Callousness of Custodian Officials

The custodians suggest the following to Sikander Mirza when he takes the problem of the old woman to the custodian office:

1. In the case of making a complaint to the custodian officer, Sikander Mirza runs the risk of losing ‘home’ once again.
2. He should put up with the present situation and wait patiently for the natural demise of the old woman.
3. He should approach Yakub Khan, probably a local leader or a goon, who would then take care of that old lady. If needed, he would kill her.

This scene highlights the callousness and slothfulness of custodian officers, for whom losing ‘home’ is a routine phenomenon during the days of Partition. Instead of trying to find out a peaceful resolution to Sikander Mirza’s problem, they instigate and incite him for violence. In a way, they rub salt on his wounds. The conduct of custodian officers reflects the overall inhuman behaviour and loathsome attitude of the then officers during Partition who were the in-charge of house allotment. This scene too ends with the poetic lyricism of Nasir Kazmi which emphasizes the need of stability, security in life and the wish for a silver lining on the horizon of the dark firmament:

“Shehr sumsaan hai kidhar jaayen

Khaak hokar kahin bikhar jaayen!

Raat kitni guzar gayi lekin
Itni himmat nahin ki ghar jaayen!

Un ujalon ki dhun mein firta hun
Chab dikhate hi jo guzar jaayen!

Rein andheri hai aur kinara door
Chand nikle to paar utar jayen.” (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 21-22)

4.3.5 Roots, Belongingness, Citizenship

Having come disappointed from the Custodian’s Office, Sikander Mirza, his wife Hamida Begum, Javed and Tanno once again try to negotiate with the old woman in a peaceful manner, but in vain. The old woman has no objection if Sikander Mirza and his family stays in the same haveli, but to the issue of her leaving this haveli and Lahore and migrating to India is concerned, she is in no mood to compromise. This haveli or ‘home’ is her last hope, her only consolation, in other words, a treasure house of memories. The old woman is prepared to lay down her life in order to remain rooted to Lahore and to this haveli, her ‘beloved home’. For a common man, neither history, nor politics, nor the creation of Pakistan was important. The common man, both as an individual and as collective entity, was and is invariably interested in securing the essential needs of life, and wants to remain deeply rooted to what he or she calls ‘home’ or ‘basti’. Sikander Mirza and his family fail to resolve this crisis. The situation poses mental conflict to them, which is aptly captured in the poetic lines of Nasir Kazmi:

Phool khushbu se juda hai abke
Yaaron ye kaisi hawa hai abke

Pattiyan roti hain sir pit ti hain

Katl-e-gul aam hua hai abke

Manzar zakhm-e-wafa kisko dikhayen

Shehre mein kehte wafa hai abke

Wo to fir gair the lekin yaaron

Kaam apnon se pada hai abke! (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 26)

In the next scene, the light-hearted conversation between Hamida Begum and the old woman points out to the memories each one of them has related to Lucknow and Lahore. They become nostalgic. Memory, in this case, does not simply connect past with present, but also connect Lucknow and Lahore, Hamida Begum (Muslim) and the old woman (Hindu), and most importantly two cultural traditions. This is the scene from which the play derives its present title, wherein the old woman proudly proclaims to Hamida Begum that it is quite a well-known fact that, ‘unborn is he who has not seen Lahore’.

Nasir Kazmi, Sikander Mirza, Hidayat, like Mai, feels and yearns for their homeland. There is an acute sense of loss perceptible in the words of Nasir Kazmi. Ambala for Nasir Kazmi, Lucknow for Sikander Mirza, and Lahore for Mai are not simply names of places they belonged to. Nasir Kazmi deeply acknowledges the formative influence and the constant presence of what we may call ‘basti’ when he tried to look for those things in Lahore which were available in Ambala. For Nasir Kazmi, likewise for Sikander Mirza and Mai, Ambala, Lucknow and Lahore are spaces which are the ‘be-all’ and ‘end-all’ of their existence. They are formed, defined, developed and sustained because of these places respectively. It is people like Nasir Kazmi and Sikander Mirza who function as beacons of hope, life and humanity amidst the dark clouds of communal frenzy and violence that followed Partition.

4.3.6 Conflict between Secularism and Fundamentalism

Scene six introduces us to the characters of Pahalwan, his disciple Raza, Alimuddin, the tea vendor and the shayar Nasir Kazmi. The Pahalwan enquires about the allotment of properties to the refugees, and thereby he regrets the fact that Ratan Johri's mother, the old woman is still hiding in the haveli. The Pahalwan is a local goon, who has looted properties during the Partition riots, including the haveli. However, his introduction with Nasir Kazmi is full of pungent satire:

Nasir: ... aapki taarif?

Pahalwan: (fakhr se) Kaum da khadim haan!

Nasir: Tab to aapse darna chahiye!

Pahalwan: Kyon?

Nasir: Khadimon se muje dar lagta hai!

Pahalwan: Ki matlab?

Nasir: Bhai darasal baat ye hai ki mulk aur dil hi nahin badle hain! Lafzon ke

matlab bhi badal gaye hain... Khadim ka matlab ho gaya hai hakim...

a-ur hakim... aur hakim se kaun nahin darta? (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai*

Dekhya, 28-29)

The Pahalwan tries to convince Javed that he should ask his father Sikander Mirza to give them 4000 rupees, and rest they will take care of. The anti-secular and anti-social force like Pahalwan uses violence and coercion to set people right. It hurts his ego to know that still the old mother of Ratanlal Johri wishes to stay back in Pakistan and in the same ancestral house. Nasir Kazmi is represented as a secular force counteracting the communal venom spread by people like Pahalwan. The worst has been faced by refugees and migrants like Sikander Mirza and Nasir Kazmi, whose pain, suffering, and trauma can never be comprehended by

shallow fundamentalist and hardliner like Pahalwan. The scene ends with yet another *Nazm* of Nasir Kazmi juxtaposing joy and sorrow, pain and happiness, life and death:

Shehr-dar-shehr ghar jalaye gaye

Yun bhi jashne tarab manaye gaye

Ek taraf jhum kar bahar aayi

Ek taraf aashiyan jalaye gaye

Kya kahun kis tarah sare bazaar

Asmaton ke diye bujaye gaye

Aah to khilvaton ke sarmaye

Mazm-e-aam mein lutaye gaye

Waqt ke saath hum bhi e Nasir

Khar-o-khas ki tarah bahaye gaye! (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 30-31)

Sikander Mirza and his family faces another ordeal in terms of Yakub Pahalwan and his disciples propose to murder the old woman in the name of religion. The old woman represents ‘the other’ in the Muslim-dominated Lahore. So, according to hardliners like Pahalwan, Lahore as a homogenous social space cannot neither assimilate ‘the other’ nor tolerate the presence of ‘the other’ in any form. Thus, they wish to purge Lahore of whatever is ‘Hindu’. Though terribly afraid, this time Sikander Mirza confronts the Pahalwan and his disciples and makes them absolutely clear that under no circumstances he will let such a sin to be committed in the house which is allotted to him officially. In fact, the concern of Pahalwan and his friends is not only religious but also economical. Apparently, they represent themselves as the guardians of Islam and Muslims, but in fact they are more

interested in pinching over this colossal haveli with 22 rooms. This is what they have done precisely during the communal frenzy of Partition – looting, abducting, stealing and massacring. Sikander Mirza and his family, though afraid, stand up against the crisis collectively which is highly commendable.

Nasir Kazmi, the shayar is portrayed as a character, who resists the temptations of fanaticism with his poetic logic. On one hand, his conversation with Pahalwan irritates him. He is unable to comprehend the logic of Pahalwan and his hatred for all that is “non-Muslim”. The harmless but the fearless old mother of Ratanlal Johri poses a threat to the social fabric of non-secular Pakistan that Pahalwan and his disciples wish to create. It is a feeling of ‘I am in danger’ that they wish to create in the whole of Pakistan against the unwanted presence of a Hindu wishing to live willingly in her ‘basti’ or home. On the other hand, Nasir Kazmi’s conversation with Alimuddin, the tea-vendor points at the perennial questions related to our existence:

Nasir: Yaar Alim ek baat bata?

Alim: Pucchiye Nasir sahib.

Nasir: Tum musalman ho?

Alim: Haan, hun Nasir sahib.

Nasir: Tum kyon musalman ho?

Alim: (sochte hue) Ye to kabhi nahin socha Nasir sahib.

Nasir: Are bhai to abhi soch lo.

Alim: Abhi?

Nasir: Haan haan abhi... dekho tum kya isliye musalman ho ki jab tum samajdar hue to tumhare saamne har mazhab ki kitaben rakhi gayi aur kaha gaya ki isme se jo mazhab tumhen pasand aaye, achchha lage, use chun lo?

Alim: Nahin Nasir sahib... mein to dusre mazhabon ke bare mein kuch nahin jaanta.

Nasir: Iska matlab hai, tumhara jo mazhab hai, usme tumhara koi dakhla nahin hai... tumhare maa-baap ka jo mazhab tha... wahi tumhara hai.

Alim: Haan ji baat to theek hai.

Nasir: To yaar jis baat mein tumhara koi dakhla nahin hai... uske liye khoun bahana kahan tak jaayaz hai?

Hamid: Khoun bahana to kisi tarah bhi jaayaz nahin hai, Nasir sahib.

(Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 48)

It's a discourse imbued with logical, rational critique countering dogmatism, fundamentalism, ideology of hatred propagated by non-secular forces and hardliners. It is significant to note that even in post-partition Pakistan, there were individuals who resisted the deep penetration of communalism in the social life, and who celebrate the thousand years of solidarity, the Ganga-Jamuni culture which is a part of our cultural heritage. It's a micro historical discourse existing within the framework of the mainstream macro historical discourse.

The two antagonistic forces – that of Pahalwan and his disciples and Nasir Kazmi, Sikander Mirza and his family are at loggerheads with each other. Throughout the play, Pahalwan and his disciples are in no mood to tolerate anything or anyone that is either non-Muslim or un-Islamic. Nasir Kazmi and Sikander Mirza gives importance to the fact that first of all they are human beings, and to be human is to be sensitive, loving, caring and considerate. They believe in peaceful co-existence and secularism which has been the actual history of even India as a nation. Their female counterparts Hamida Begum and Tanno also hold a similar view. Tanno proves her maturity when she says that if they can live in peace with Mai in the same house, why didn't Hindus and Muslims do the same in India? Why they allowed the Partition of India? These questions baffle the young budding mind of Tanno. It is

shocking to Tanno that Hindus and Muslims of India have terribly failed at mastering the simple principle of peaceful, tolerant co-existence.

The death of Mai brings the antagonistic forces, that is to say, secular and non-secular in direct confrontation – Sikander Mirza, Nasir Kazmi and Maulvi Saheb on one side and Pahalwan, and his fanatic disciples on the other. The seculars eulogize and admire the noble human qualities of Mai. They hail her in high esteem. They deeply acknowledge her noteworthy contribution in their lives with her little acts of kindness. And that's why they wish to give her a decent burial with proper Hindu rituals and customs. The non-seculars, however, object to this outrightly. According to them, it is anti-Islamic to bury a Hindu corpse in Pakistan, a place which is now inhabited largely by Muslims. As the custodians of religion and religious morality, the Pahalwan and his disciples threaten dire consequences if the burial of Mai takes place on the bank of the river Ravi. To Pahalwan and his disciples, it is sacrilegious to do so.

The final dramatic scene shows us the gory murder of Maulvi Saheb at the hands of Pahalwan and his disciples. Thus, the brutal murder of Maulvi Saheb by Pahalwan and his disciples acquires a symbolic significance. It is the attack of fundamentalism and fanaticism on liberalism and secularism.

The character of Pahalwan echoes the religiously fanatic policies pursued by the Muslim League towards the establishment of Pakistan. Pahalwan is a continuation of such bigoted and distorted policies followed by the Muslim League since its most important Lahore session of 1937. It's only people like Pahalwan who were more interested in dividing the united India into two nations based on clearly demarcated religious ideologies. Pahalwan appears as the so-called guardian and saviour of Islam and Muslims as was the myth projected by the Muslim League pertaining to Jinnah too, who was not even a Muslim in a true spirit as he did not say his prayers, or kept fasts and was fond of drinking. Therefore, he

was not the rightful representative of Indian Muslims. Jinnah can't be claimed as a proper Muslim in faith. In fact, he was a typical Englishman in the guise of a Muslim. His mannerisms and speech resembled an Englishman more than the common Muslims of India. The intrinsic faith of Sikander Mirza, Shayar Nasir Kazmi and Maulvi Saheb in the 'Ganga-Jamuni' culture of which they have been an integral part baffles the extremist stance of people like Pahalwan at a micro level but questions the historical claims of fundamental organizations like the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, who were bent upon establishing a state on the exclusivist ideology at a macro level.

4.3.7 Beacons of Hope, Life and Humanity

In the beginning of the play when Sikander Mirza informs his wife that they have planned to get rid of the old woman by getting her killed at the hands of goons. This comes as a blow to Hamida Begum. Her sensitivity as a woman and humanitarian attitude towards a fellow human being prohibits Sikander Mirza, her husband to commit this gruesome act. She counters him by telling him logically that it is a sin to murder someone simply because he or she doesn't belong to your religion. Moreover, the old woman has not harmed them in anyway. Hamida Begum wants her husband to swear on her children that he won't even think of getting the old woman murdered. This scene shows us the transformation of Sikander Mirza and his family, especially of Hamida Begum who refuses her husband to act out of communal animosity and personal grievance. She also shared a cultural space with the old woman when they talked about Lucknow and Lahore nostalgically. The talk centred round the cultural inheritance replaces abhorrence with tolerance, and such a 'life-enhancing', positive transformation is poetically captured in the following refrain of Nasir Kazmi:

Dil mein ik leher-si uthi hai abhi

Koi taaza hawa chali hai abhi

Shor barpa hai khan-e-dil mein

Koi diwar-si giri hai abhi

Bhari dunya mein ji nahin lagta

Jaane kis cheez ki kami hain abhi

Shehr ki bechirag galiyon mein

Zindagi tujko dhoondhti hai abhi

Waqt achchha bhi aayega ‘Nasir’

Gam na kar zindagi padi hai abhi (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 36)

The confrontation of Nasir Kazmi and Sikander Mirza with Mai at the dead of night brings up emotional issues. Mai, who earlier did not wish to leave Lahore because of the haveli and her ‘basti’, is now ready to leave Lahore keeping in mind the safety and security of Sikander Mirza and his family. Sikander Mirza and his family are constantly threatened of dire consequences by Pahalwan for keeping Mai, a non-Muslim in his house and in Lahore, and allowing her to perform Hindu rituals and celebrate Hind festivals. Emotionally charged, Nasir Kazmi tells Mai:

Nasir: Mai Lahore chhodkar mat jao ... tumhen Lahore kahin aur nahin milega ... usi tarah jaise muje ambala kahin aur nahin mila, hidayat bhai ko Lucknow kahin nahin mila ... zindo ko murda na banao ... Tum agar yahan na rahin to hum sab nange ho jayenge mai ... nanga aadmi nanga hota hai, na Hindu hota hai aur na Musalman... (Wajahat, *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya*, 66)

It is the bond of love and emotional association that earlier forced Mai to leave Lahore and go away. She didn't wish to be a burden on anyone's life, especially that of Sikander Mirza's family. However, she finally promises to Sikander Mirza and his family members that she would never attempt such a thing again. All the barriers of caste, creed, and religion get dismantled against the 'life-preserving' and 'life-enhancing' force of love.

This play deals with essential humanistic concerns that counter dogmatism, ruthlessness, authoritarianism, parochialism and fanaticism of all kinds. It upholds the ideals of human freedom and dignity. Fundamentally, humanism stresses the formative influence of human values in a person's life, which ultimately celebrates universalism and transcends boundaries.

4.3.8 Reading History from Below

This play can also be taken as a poignant statement on the issue of the construction of 'minority identity' as a category perceived in India before and after the Partition. It penetrates into the very process which constructs 'Muslim' identity in a peculiar way. It seems that several or multiple historical narratives tend to create a unilateral, conclusive view of Muslims as 'invaders', 'monstrous savages', 'victimizers', 'polluters', 'aggressors', 'outsiders', 'aliens', 'untouchables', so and so forth. Such a derogatory view of the ancient and medieval periods, have largely defined the 'Muslim' identity during the colonial era. Further, the Machiavellian policies of the British and of the Muslim and Hindu hardliners worsen the matter. Asghar Wajahat clearly states that the moderate Muslims of this play and the whole of India had neither to do with the Muslim League nor with the establishment of Pakistan. Yet they suffered the demonic consequences of the communal frenzy that followed the Partition. This play functions as a 'counter-history' or provides 'an alternative point of view' against the officially documented versions of history. It embodies 'distinctive, authentic, marginalized, subaltern voices' that claim prominence, or at least equivalence

against the mainstream historical narratives. It questions ‘the top-down approach’ of reading the South Asian history, and replace it with the study of the culture of the people. There is a commitment to represent people’s history in this text. It attempts to re-write history from the grounds of ambivalence and contradictions and the subaltern remains the vantage point of its critique. It also shows how individuals and collective groups in South Asia resisted the penetration of colonialism and fundamentalism into their cultural ethos to a greater extent.

This play deals with major themes like dislocation, fragmented identity, void, alienation, nationality, culture, language, migration, marginalization, subalternity, changing power equations etc. It looks at history not as a period of progress and development, but as a point of crisis and stasis. Though it neither negates nor substitutes the dominant mainstream historical discourses, it necessarily contradicts and undermines their canonical significance. It ultimately re-visits and re-claims that part of history which was either deliberately subdued or evaded or lay buried under the burden of official versions of history

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CHAPTER 5

Partition as Trauma: Intizar Husain's *Basti* and

Abdullah Hussein's *The Weary Generations*

5.1 Representation of Partition in Intizar Husain's *Basti*

Intizar Husain was a literary stalwart as far as Pakistani literature is concerned. He wrote novels, short stories, and poetry in Urdu. He was also a columnist and wrote literary columns for the *Dawn* and *Daily Express* newspapers. Some of his best writings are *The Seventh Door*, *Leaves* and *Basti* and they have been translated into English. His other important writings include *Hindustan Se Aakhri Khat*, *Aagay Samundar Hai*, *Shehr-e-Afsos*, *Jataka Tales*, and *Wo Jo Kho Gaye*. Intizar Husain has received some of the most prestigious literary and civil awards like *Sitara-e-Imtiaz* by the President of Pakistan in 2007 and Lifetime Achievement Award at the Lahore Literary Festival. He was also shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize in 2013 after Frances Pritchett translated his *Basti* into English which was received with wide acclaim. *Newsweek Pakistan* called him as "Pakistan's most accomplished living author" in 2014. Faiz Ahmad Faiz, when interviewed by Asif Farrukhi, opined the following about *Basti*:

'Intizar Hussain's *Basti* is a good novel ... He has not only been nostalgic about the past, but he has also narrated the condition of the present. Both of these are combined in this novel. I liked this novel very much. (Farrukhi)

Set in the city of Pakistan, presumably Lahore, Intizar Husain's novel *Basti*. It deals with the last few months of 1971 preceding and culminating into the traumatic fall of Dhaka. Zakir, a Shi'ite by faith, is the protagonist of the novel and he works as a professor of history. The Partition of 1947 forced Zakir and his family to migrate from the idyllic town of Uttar Pradesh to Pakistan, leaving behind not only his ideal childhood but also his childhood love

Sabirah, his cousin. Sabirah and her family do not migrate even when Muslim existence was threatened in India despite of the fact that most of his relatives have already migrated to what was then East Pakistan. Both Zakir and Sabirah never marry. Deeply in love with Sabirah, Zakir had neither the courage nor the will to call or fetch her from India. Though the novel seems to cover only a few months of Zakir's life, it actually covers one and a half millennium of Muslim history. Being a professor of history, Zakir is aware about the Muslim history in the subcontinent, and being a Sh'ite he is equally conscious of his religious and cultural history. It is a history which has been punctuated by the feuds among Muslims for political dominance. It dates back to 661 C.E. when one sees the rise of contriving Umayyads on Islam's political horizon, which resulted in an endless cycle of strife, conflict and hatred. The novel also refers to the Muslim South Asian history: the 1857 mutiny for India's independence from the British Raj; the Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan; and finally the political division of Pakistan in 1971 leading to the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation. The novel ends with this last tragic event.

5.1.1 The Fall of Dhaka

The Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 was for independence from Pakistan. India and Pakistan got independence from the British rule in 1947. Pakistan was formed for the Muslims and India had a majority of Hindus. Pakistan had two parts, East and West, which were separated by about 1,000 miles. East Pakistan was mainly the eastern part of the province of Bengal. The capital of Pakistan was Karachi in West Pakistan and was moved to Islamabad in 1958. However, due to discrimination in economy and ruling powers against them, the East Pakistanis vigorously protested and declared independence on March 26, 1971, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. But during the year prior to that, to suppress the unrest in East Pakistan, the Pakistani government sent troops to East Pakistan and unleashed a massacre. And thus, the war for liberation commenced.

Both East and West Pakistan remained united because of their religion, Islam. West Pakistan had 97% Muslims and East Pakistanis had 85% Muslims. However, there were several significant reasons that caused the East Pakistani people to fight for their independence.

West Pakistan had four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and the North-West Frontier. The fifth province was East Pakistan. Having control over the provinces, the West used up more resources than the East. Between 1948 and 1960, East Pakistan made 70% of all of Pakistan's exports, while it only received 25% of imported money. In 1948, East Pakistan had 11 fabric mills while the West had nine. In 1971, the number of fabric mills in the West grew to 150 while the number in the East went down to 26. About 2.6 billion dollars of resources were also shifted over time from East Pakistan to West Pakistan.

Although East Pakistan had the largest population among all the provinces, it had much less political power than West Pakistan. This eventually made the people of East Pakistan rebel. Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Awami League in East Pakistan, explicitly demanded more economic and political powers. The struggle finally culminated into the war of independence.

There was also the language issue that kept East Pakistan and West Pakistan in an uneasy status. In 1948, Mohammad Ali Jinnah stated in Dhaka that Urdu was the official language for Pakistan. There was a big argument about this because only the Muhajir in the West and the Biharis in the East spoke Urdu. Most of the West Pakistanis spoke Punjabi and Sindhi, while East Pakistanis spoke Bangla. East Pakistan therefore disagreed; seven students were killed in a fierce protest on February 21, 1952. This day has been remembered since then and is observed each year to emphasize the importance of the Bengali language. February 21st is now recognized as the International Mother Language Day by the United Nations.

A devastating cyclone hit East Pakistan in 1970. It was called the Bhola Cyclone. It killed about 500,000 people and made many more homeless. It brought great shock and deep depression among the East Pakistani people. But, the government did not provide enough relief to alleviate the extremely miserable conditions wrought by the cyclone. This caused enormous misery in East Pakistan.

The Awami League, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in the national elections in 1971 and demanded autonomy for East Pakistan. The party won a 160 seats and a majority in the national assembly. This victory also gave it the right to form a government, but Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party refused to let the Sheikh become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. This initiated the war. The Sheikh gave a speech on March 7, 1971 when he urged the people to turn all their homes into a fort of fight. He demanded transfer of power to the elected representative before the assembly meeting on March 25.

Tikka Khan, a West Pakistani general, flew to Dhaka to become the Governor of East Bengal. But, the East Pakistani judges denied him entry. Thereafter, on the night of March 25, the Pakistani army tried to violently crush the Bengali's opposition. Residence halls of the Dhaka University were viciously attacked. On March 26, the Pakistani forces arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On the same day, he signed an official declaration for the independence of Bangladesh. M. A. Hannan, an Awami league leader, is said to have been the first person to read and announce the Declaration of Independence over the radio.

Political events approached a climax. The war between the Pakistan Army and the Bengali freedom fighters, the Mukti Bahini, began. The head of the Mukti Bahini was General Muhammad Osmani. The Mukti Bahinis were trained like guerillas. India gave shelter to the refugees and trained the Mukti Bahini. India also helped with ammunition and its own soldiers. They attacked the Pakistani army. During the training period of the Mukti

Bahini, the Pakistani Army encouraged Razakars, the Bengalis who did not want Bangladesh to become an independent country, to suppress the rebellion. The Pakistani Army faced problems as the monsoon came. This helped Mukti Bahini because they could counter the moves of the Pakistanis.

India assumed an active role. Indira Gandhi ordered air and ground attacks. India, having superior equipment and forces, mounted a three-pronged movement on Dhaka from the Indian province West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura. The Indian soldiers, Air Force, and Navy defeated the Pakistani army, while the Bangladeshi Navy helped India. On the ground, three groups of Mukti Bahini and Indian forces fought the Pakistanis. The Pakistanis tried to fight back, but failed to resist them.

On December 16th, 1971, Dhaka fell to the Mukti Bahini, the elite forces of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian army. An “Instrument of Surrender” was signed by the defeated Pakistani General Niazi and by the Indian commander General Aurora at 16:31 Indian Standard Time. This is how Bangladesh became liberated and independent. December 16th is recognized as the Victory Day in Bangladesh, while March 26 is recognized as the Independence Day.

During the war there were widespread killings and other atrocities – including the displacement of civilians in Bangladesh (East Pakistan at the time) and widespread violations of human rights – carried out by the Pakistan Army with support from political and religious militias, beginning with the start of Operation Searchlight on 25 March 1971. Bangladeshi authorities claimed that three million people were killed, while the Hamoodur Rahman Commission, an official Pakistan Government investigation, put the figure at 26,000 civilian casualties. The international media and reference books in English by authors and genocide scholars such as Samuel Totten have also published figures of up to 3,000,000 for

Bangladesh as a whole, although independent researchers put the toll at 300,000 to 500,000. A further eight to ten million people fled the country to seek safety in India.

A large section of the intellectual community of Bangladesh were murdered, mostly by the Al-Shams and Al-Badr forces, at the instruction of the Pakistani Army. Just two days before the surrender, on 14 December 1971, Pakistan Army and Razakar militia (local collaborators) picked up at least 100 physicians, professors, writers and engineers in Dhaka, and murdered them, leaving the dead bodies in a mass grave. There are many mass graves in Bangladesh, with an increasing number discovered throughout the proceeding years. Numerous women were tortured, raped and killed during the war; the exact numbers are not known and are a subject of debate. Bangladeshi sources cite a figure of 200,000 women raped, giving birth to thousands of war babies. The Pakistan Army also kept numerous Bengali women as sex-slaves inside the Dhaka Cantonment. Most of the girls were captured from Dhaka University and private homes. There was significant sectarian violence not only perpetrated and encouraged by the Pakistani army, but also by Bengali nationalists against non-Bengali minorities, especially Biharis.

5.1.2 Memory, Imagination, Quest for Roots

The novel begins with the inquisitiveness of Zakir, the protagonist of the novel. It is significant to note here that the name Zakir means one who remembers. His curiosity and desire to know the past (history – mythological, folk, religious) justifies his name. Born in the town of Rupnagar to Maulana Abba Jan and Ammi Jan, and living under the tutelage of Bi Amma, the paternal grandmother, Zakir loves to listen to the Hindu mythologies narrated by Bhagat-ji, the Quranic verses and their explanation from his father, and the Biblical story of Abel and Cain and the first murder from Bi Amma. Maulana is a deeply religious man though of a Shi'ite sect of Islam. Maulana's admiration as a scholar of Islam is acknowledged by one and all in Rupnagar. Khalah Jan, the sister of Ammi Jan has two daughters named Tahirah

and Sabirah, in other words, the cousin of Zakir, and all of them have come to Rupnagar from Gwalior. Zakir has Afzal, Surender, Ajaml, Irfan and Salamat as his close friends. Rupnagar, like Gangauli of Rahi Masoom Reza's *A Village Divided*, is a town that can boast of peace and communal harmony. Rupnagar, as an idyllic place, has its lasting deep impression on the mind and personality of Zakir.

The journey of Zakir's imagination into his idyllic past of Rupnagar, where he found himself listening to the explanation of Maulana Abba Jan regarding the beginning of the world and Doomsday being given to Hakim Bande Ali and Musayyab Husain, ends abruptly because of the political slogans that penetrated into the room. The political disturbances form the backdrop against which the characters face the trials and tribulations of life. The novel moves back and forth in time to connect present with the past, to counteract the harsh reality of contemporary times of Zakir with his idyllic past:

... Nowadays rallies are like that. They begin with shouts, and ends with shots.

But it was strange; he began to wonder at himself. The more the turmoil increases outside, the more I sink into myself. Memories of so many times come to me. Ancient and long-ago stories, lost and scattered thoughts. Memories one after another, entangled in each other, like a forest to walk through. My memories are my forest. So where does the forest begin? No, where do I begin? And again he was in the forest. As if he wanted to reach the edge of the forest; as if he was searching for his own beginning.

(Husain, *Basti*, 5-6)

Thus, his train of thoughts and memories finally bring him back to the station of Rupnagar, a town that has shaped both his psyche and personality. Zakir's consciousness is on the quest for identity and meaningful existence. Going down the memory lane, like a true historian

(Zakir is a Professor of History), he explores the memories of Rupnagar, and thereby tries to give himself a sense of belongingness, roots and citizenship.

The first memories that come to his mind are the installation of electric poles which gradually became the part of dusty choked landscape without electricity and Rupnagar devastated by an epidemic. A conversation between Bi Amma and Sharifan highlights the commonsense logic of the villagers:

‘Bi Amma, more Hindus are dying.’

‘Bibi, when cholera comes the Muslims die, when plague comes the Hindus die.’

But then the plague ceased to distinguish between Hindus and Muslims. More funeral procession came out to the sound of the *kalimah* as well.

(Husain, *Basti*, 8-9)

Soon, they find an empty bullock-cart waiting outside their door. It has come from Danpur to take the family members away from Rupnagar. Abba Jan’s (Nasir Ali’s) uncle has sent it. However, Abba Jan returned the bullock cart empty and pasted a paper with five names on it – the name of Prophet Muhammad, Fatimah, Hasan, Hussain and Ali. Abba Jan’s faith in religion is undying and unflinching. According to Abba Jan, death is inescapable. And the same is reflected in the fact that even village Messiah Dr. Joshi finds himself helpless in the face of this brutal epidemic, which even claimed his wife.

But soon the tables turned. Bi Amma had a divine vision during the morning prayers which pointed at the diminishing power of the plague. And soon Dr. Joshi is found proclaiming that Rupnagar is out of the danger of epidemic. This resulted in the return of the natives. Life defeated death and claimed Rupnagar once again. A sweet experience of

touching the bare arms of Vasanti is an occasion of eternal pleasure for Zakir. He felt a melting sweetness of this experience on his fingertips for the rest of his life.

As soon as life came back to Rupnagar and its Bazar, the empty spaces and gaps are filled by new people and their activities. The familiar faces of Pandit Hardayal, Misra-ji and Jagdish are replaced now by new faces. The deserted town of Rupnagar is inhabited again. With the passage of time, Rupnagar's dusty light poles also get life. Soon, the electrification work of light poles gets over and the supply of electricity begins. However, the age of electricity in Rupnagar commences with the sacrifice of three monkeys. The troops of monkeys that probably came from the Black Temple of the nearby forest ransacked Rupnagar and its Bazar for several days, and finally three of them died out electric shocks. They landed on the electric wires, their body became limp, they fell with a thud on the ground and collapsed. Soon, the monkeys deserted the town. Rupnagar with its dust-laden roads, trees, birds and simple men and women gives great pleasure to Zakir. Zakir, the professor of history is primarily a complex bundle of memories that are deeply rooted in the cultural ethos and rural experiences of Rupnagar. Love and localized truths reign supreme in Rupnagar as people arduously remember and cherish even the love episode of Laila-Majnu in the form of folk songs. It's a part of Rupnagar's historical and cultural heritage.

Another experience that changes the course of Zakir's life forever is the arrival of Khalah Jan and her two daughters Tahirah and Sabirah from Gwalior to Rupnagar. After the death of Khalah Jan's husband, she had no one to fall back upon. She finally decided to come to Rupnagar at her sister's place.

Living in the present, Zakir is often overpowered by the powerful bout of imagination. He is mentally transported back to Rupnagar and its eternal sagas of love and relationships. He begins to recollect the gentlest experience of his life, that is to say, how he and Sabirah (Sabbo) played the game of bride and bridegroom during childhood, how they

came close romantically like Laila and Majnun and fell in love with each other. On one hand, he was overpowered by the melting emotions of love, and on the other, Abba Jan resisted, with all his might, the modern “innovation” called electricity. He goes to the extent of withdrawing himself from offering prayers in the mosque. He was also against the playing of drums during the *majlis* or procession of Moharram. Gradually, Abba Jan felt that his stronghold on Rupnagar is getting diminished. The old order is replaced by the new one, not only in politics but also in the religious matters. At the level of village, the power equations have changed. Now, Abba Jan finds himself powerless in the face of change and modernity. The last thing that Zakir remembers is that Abba Jan got reticent as days passed by. And finally one day, he asked Zakir and his mother to leave for Vyaspur, where Zakir’s uncles lived. The momentary happiness of Zakir as a child filled with the imagination of seeing new places, meeting new people is juxtaposed by a gloom when he saw Sabbo crying incessantly. For Zakir, it’s a partition of a kind, as he is going away from his childhood sweetheart, and heading to a distant land.

Suddenly, the string of his memories is snapped when Abba Jan comes back to the room. Neither Abba Jan nor Zakir are able to comprehend the sudden aggressiveness and violence that the people of rallies exhibit. It is quite disparaging for Abba Jan to see a twisted and distorted form of a political movement. Whenever Zakir is unable to comprehend the present, and future seems dark, he always looks back to the past for meaning and courage.

Vyaspur had a new reality to offer to Zakir. Leaving behind the mythic era of Rupnagar with its people like Bi Amma who died and Sabbo, his childhood sweetheart, Zakir tries to understand the new locale and its strange reality. Probably, close to their house in Vyaspur is a burning ghat where the dead bodies are cremated. Whether it be Rupnagar or Vyaspur, Zakir is all engaged in either listening to folk tales or concocting new stories with the help of his imagination. Memory and its associations continue to influence Zakir even in

Vyaspur. It was Bhagat-ji in Rupnagar whose influence was paramount on the budding imagination of Zakir, and it is Phullo's art of telling incredible stories that captivates the imagination of young Zakir. Both his memory and imagination are fully activated in his growing years due to such influences. From a limited, easy-going and smooth life of Rupnagar, Zakir has come to the commotion of an emerging city with railway tracks and big market. The house of Khan Bahadur Uncle in Vyaspur, where he stays, provides an experience of its kind to Zakir, the child. Staying here expands the horizon of his knowledge and experiences. He looks at the railways station and passing trains, the symbol of modernity, day in and day out. On various occasions, Abba Jan would narrate the heroic tales of late Khan Bahadur and of his numerous services that he rendered to the British. All, including Zakir, would sit mesmerized as if listening to the heroic tales of a mythical or a legendary hero.

In Vyaspur, Zakir meets Surendar while studying in college and talks about the days of the famous Mutiny of 1857 that began from Meerut. When they reach college, they find a group of boys shouting the slogans, 'Quit India!' 'Long Live the Revolution!' 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi!' These moments combine both the past and the present. The journey of freedom struggle of India has come a long way from 1857 to 1942.

Zakir's tryst with Vyaspur is short-lived. He returned to Rupnagar after several years. The effect of time is evident on the sleepy town of Rupnagar. It has undergone too many transformations, ranging from people to places – Sabirah has turned into a full-grown, attractive woman; the age of electricity has dawned upon Rupnagar; he visited significant places like Karbala, Black Temple (without monkeys), Fort, Ravan Wood etc. Rupnagar, with its idyllic atmosphere, provides an opportunity to Zakir and Sabirah to come close to each other. Before he leaves Rupnagar for Vyaspur and then for college, a brief love episode

ensues between Zakir and Sabirah, whose future is threatened by the recent geographical, religious and political division of India.

Zakir, like a true historian, connects past and present. On one hand, when Zakir turns nostalgic, he recollects the pre-Partition days of Rupnagar and Vyasapur, whereas on the other, it shows the on-going protest at the rally ground near Zakir's home:

In the lights, he watched the ruined, desolate, abandoned rally-ground for a long time. He had come back after a long journey, and was now breathing the air of his own time. (Husain, *Basti*, 42)

Zakir witnesses wide-spreading rioting and violence not only at the college where he works as a history professor but also at the rally-ground near his home. The long and extended shadow of India's Partition now threatens Pakistan in 1971. Based on the corruptive policies and dictatorial rule of Pakistan, Bangladesh became a reality in 1971 but at the cost of massive violence and genocide of the masses.

Zakir remembers that Khalah Jan and Sabirah are still in India, whereas Tahirah had to go to Dhaka at the behest of her husband. It has been ages Zakir met his lady-love Sabirah last. Their existence and life too are divided by the political, geographical and religious division of India. The tragic Partition of India resulted in the migration of Zakir and his family. They finally land in Lahore. The *Shiraz*, a tea-house, is the meeting-place of Zakir and his five friends, Afzal, Irfan, Salamat and Ajmal and Surendar. The waiter Abdul treats them as his masters. In a way, the *Shiraz* becomes a space of conflicting opinions and contradictory realities. The political discourse amongst friends at the *Shiraz* is immediately counteracted by the personal memories of Zakir. He constantly moves back and forth in time to maintain a fine balance between the soothing, pleasant memories of the past related to India and the troubled contemporary times in Pakistan.

Zakir loves to let himself loose in the absorbing memories of the past. His roots give him a sense of meaning and belongingness. Escaping from the harsh reality of the present world, Zakir distinctly remembers the times when Sabirah came to stay at Vyaspur. They got intimate and as if they non-verbally committed each other that they would settle down in Delhi as soon as Zakir takes up job there after completing his studies. However, Khalah Jan wished that Sabirah should travel back to Rupnagar, which Abba and Ammi Jan prohibits looking at the communal frenzy of Partition. Amidst wide-scale rioting, looting, raping, and killing, Zakir and Sabirah are not allowed to travel, especially through the train.

One fine day, Zakir receives a letter from Surendar, his bosom friend, who is working with All-India Radio, Delhi. Surendar informs Zakir that he happened to meet Sabirah, Zakir's childhood lady-love. She had decided to stay back in India though her mother and sister Tahirah had already left for Dhaka soon after the Partition of India. Sabirah too is working with All-India Radio as an announcer. She decided to live all alone in India. At present, she is extremely worried about the well-being of her mother and sister who are in Dhaka. It seems that Dhaka is in turmoil and Sabirah has not received any message of her mother and sister for two weeks. She tries to look for recent news related to Dhaka in newspapers, and that's where she comes across Surendar. He is amazed at Sabirah's decision and courage to stay in India after the Partition. This forces Surendar to be a bit reflective and philosophical. It is difficult for him to understand that what makes people take such decisions, especially when the whole world around them does the opposite:

In Vyaspur that Hakim-ji from the big house, you remember? – his whole family went off to Pakistan. He stayed in his same place, and continued to take sick people's pulses. I asked him, 'Hakim-ji, you didn't go to Pakistan?'

'No, young man.'

'And the reason?'

‘Young man! You ask for the reason? Have you seen our graveyard?’

‘No.’

‘Just go sometime and take a look. Each tree is leafier than the next. How could my grave have such shade in Pakistan?’

I laughed inwardly. Yar, you Muslims are wonderful! You’re always looking towards the deserts of Arabia, but for your graves you prefer the shade of India. Seeing the old people who had stayed behind here, I realized what great power the grave has in Muslims’ culture. (Husain, *Basti*, 106-107)

It is evident from the words of Surendar that what gives a sense of belongingness and citizenship to people is their roots and cultural heritage. The commonsense logic of Hakim-ji exemplifies the axiom, ‘home is where the heart is.’ The temptation of going to Pakistan was not great enough for people like Hakim-ji and Sabirah, whose roots are firmly grounded in the soil of India. For them, their cultural identity and their ‘basti’ or ‘home’ is all-important. They are strongly attached to the flora and fauna, the lanes, the people, the graveyard etc. of their ‘basti’. There is no question of leaving this Paradise (Rupnagar, Vyaspur, India) for an elusive Promised Land (Pakistan). People like Hakim-ji and Sabirah were not influenced by the high-sounding rhetoric of the political leaders who favoured the unfortunate division of India. For them, the local truths and daily realities meant more than the discourse of hatred, revenge and violence. Their conscious decision to stay back in India is borne out of their cultural identity which cuts across the barriers of religion, caste, creed and community.

Surendar further mentions in his letter to Zakir:

Zakir, this Sabirah of yours seems less like a girl than like a historical relic!

Yar, don’t take it amiss, your history in India has progressed very awkwardly.

First your conquerors came – so forcefully and tumultuously that their horses’

hooves made the earth quiver, and the clashing of their swords echoed in the air. Then the political leaders appeared, and thundered out their power. The great Mughal emperors – Babur, Akbar, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb. Then Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Maulana Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and all the others – and after them, your Sabirah. A silent melancholy girl, staying on alone in the whole of India. I don't know whether your history is unique, or whether the histories of all cultures progress like this. (Husain, *Basti*, 108)

The act of writing a diary is both an act of emancipation from the burden of oppressive time and preserving personal memories in times of great historical upheavals. Zakir can be at least true to himself while writing the diary. Like a true historian, he maintains a written record of his exact feelings and emotions, thoughts and ideas during the long wartime nights. The historical method of documentation is a way to preserve memory, to remember the 'significant past', to rescue it from getting lost.

Zakir and others in Pakistan listen to the rumours that say that Amritsar has been won over and Agra has been completely destroyed. These rumours are believed to be victories by the common mass of Pakistan and to celebrate these victory moments as the restoration of old dignity. Zakir broods over deeply and think that it is war, violence and its resulting destruction which doesn't allow either human beings or buildings to attain grandeur and dignity. Places like Rupnagar and Vyaspur are best preserved in memories because their existence is perpetually endangered during the times of war and violence.

Ammi Jan asks Zakir to keep the keys of Rupnagar's home safe:

A trust from my forefathers, he murmured. 'Son, these are the keys of a house to which you no longer have any right.' The keys of that house, and of that land. The keys of Rupnagar. The keys are here with me, and there a whole

time is locked up, a time that has passed. But time doesn't pass! It keeps passing, but it doesn't pass. It keeps hovering around. And houses never stay empty. When those who lived in them go away, the time lives on in the houses. So many empty old houses in Rupnagar came and occupied his imagination... How surely houses that lies locked up inside, turns into forest. My memory – my enemy, my friend – leads me into the forest and abandons me there. (Husain, *Basti*, 190)

5.1.3 Contemporary Politics, Violence and Bangladesh Liberation War

Often, the buck of Zakir's imagination stops because it is interrupted by the harsh political reality of his times. The gathering of the crowd at a nearby ground, their rallies and shouting of slogans are simply endless. Zakir is of the opinion that nowadays all the political movements have turned noisy, crowded and violent. At which Abba Jan retorts:

‘What did you say – movement? Is this a movement? Son, have I not seen movements? Has any of them ever been bigger than the Khilafat Movement? And Maulana Muhammad Ali – oh God, oh God! When he spoke, it seemed that sparks were raining down. But not a single word ever fell below the standard of cultural speech. (Husain, *Basti*, 18)

The opinion of Abba Jan is a severe indictment on the political discourse of contemporary times which spreads fears and anxieties; creates discord and violence in society leading to vengeance, hatred and communal disharmony. The political discourse of pre-independence era was never below the belt. Political ethics and etiquettes were maintained in public speeches. Abba Jan is lost in the memories of Khilafat Movement, an occasion which not only brought disparate Muslims together but also demonstrated Hindu-Muslim solidarity against the British at its best in the year 1919. Abba Jan longs for those cultured days when

the mannerisms and speech of people spoke volumes of their character and behaviour. Zakir too is lost on the roads to the same cultural heritage that belongs to Abba Jan.

Suddenly, the narrative of past ends abruptly and we are jolted back to present. When Zakir returns home from the Shiraz, he found the streets filled with scattered bricks, buried vehicles, but without people. Abba Jan's commonsense logic about the on-going strife and conflict is noteworthy:

‘... What hard times Muslims have faced!’

‘But, Maulana, now what times are coming upon the Muslims?’

Abba Jan raised his forefinger toward the sky: ‘Only He knows.’

‘Maulana! Let me tell you one thing: we’re destined to endure bad times at the hands of our sons. I tried to make Salamat see reason: “Son, your wits are wandering. Why do you ruin your throat yelling slogans?” And what answer does he give me, but “we’re going to change the system!”

Abba Jan said gravely, ‘Khvajah Sahib! In this world there have lived one hundred twenty-four thousand Prophets, and has the world changed?’

‘No sir, it hasn’t changed.’

‘Then when the Prophets haven’t been able to change the world, how will your boy and mine change it?’

‘Maulana, you’re quite right. The world cannot change.’ (Husain, Basti, 57)

The views of Abba Jan emphasize the fact that the basic nature of human beings cannot be altered by practising religion. Moreover, it is also the opinion of Abba Jan that the youths of today won’t be able to alter the century-old realities of Pakistan.

Both time and slogans have changed in Pakistan. The dark clouds of war are seen hovering over the sky of Pakistan. The slogans talk about crushing India by fighting a war.

On one hand, the dictatorial regime of General Ayub Khan brought Pakistan on the brink of war with India and on the other East Pakistan was in turmoil as it is to be liberated and a new nation named Bangladesh would emerge from it. Abba Jan and Khvajah Sahib put forward the question of war to Zakir as he understands political affairs better than them. When Zakir doesn't reply, Abba Jan retorts in a prophetic tone:

‘... I only know one thing: I tell you that when the masters are cruel and the sons are rebellious, any disaster at all can befall the Lord's creatures.’...

‘When the masters are cruel, and the people lick the dust.’ (Husain, *Basti*, 94)

At the *Shiraz*, the friends Irfan, Zakir and Salamat meet. Salamat has turned a reactionary and has been giving revolutionary speeches giving a vent to his anger and hatred for India. People like him welcome war with India. Irfan and Zakir feel disgusted at the shallowness and foolishness of Salamat. They are unable to see Pakistan slipping into the hands of vulgar, base, mean and ruthless people. Zakir is totally lost into the memories of past, in the old times with their old realities. He is least bothered about the possible war of Pakistan with India.

Zakir feels that the whole of Pakistan, its familiar lanes and houses are suddenly filled with gnawing mice. All have lost their human identities and have turned into mice. He poses the same question of identity to himself and then analyzes his walk, which is an important identity-marker. Symbolically, mice represent the rotten and slimy ideals of the new dictatorial regime, which treats the ‘other’ as sub-humans.

The historic India-Pakistan war of 1971 breaks out with the Bangladesh Liberation Movement. The declaration of war leaves everyone including Zakir unnerved. People started not only deserting Pakistan but also the *Shiraz*. However, Irfan is happy that *Shiraz* is now cleansed of impure people. Irfan considers himself, Afzal and Zakir as virtuous people as well as the protectors of good and benevolent in Pakistan.

In order to pass the long and boring wartime nights, Zakir decides to write a diary. The diary entries give a historical authenticity to the narrative. The entries are made from December 5 to December 16, and historically, the India-Pakistan war of 1971 too was fought between December 3 and December 18, ending with the surrendering of Pakistan army and the liberation of Bangladesh:

The primary point of writing this diary is that during the long wartime nights it will help me discipline my distracted mind, which suffers from insomnia and wanders restlessly all over; it will help me put my mind on a single track and protect myself from confusion of thought. But now I see another advantage of it as well. I'll be writing my wartime autobiography. After the war is over, provided I'm alive, I'll know how many lies I heard and how many lies I uttered and how afraid I was during the wartime nights, how often I trembled. I ought to preserve the record of my lies and my cowardice.

(Husain, *Basti*, 125)

While returning home in the days of curfew imposed in the town due to war, Zakir came across a muddy lake wherein a tortoise and an elephant were engaged in a battle. A passer-by *fakir* explained the hidden moral behind such a scene with the help of a story of a father and his two sons. Instead of sustaining the material, intellectual as well as the spiritual legacy after the death of their father, the two sons fought like tortoise and elephant for their unlawful share and made the water of the lake murkier. Given the tale and its moral, one can interpret that India too like a materialistically, intellectually, culturally and spiritually rich father parted with his legacy, which was first inherited by the elephant-like Pakistan and later by tortoise-like Bangladesh. Anger, hatred and violence replaced the erstwhile peaceful co-existence.

In a moment of frenzy and angst, Zakir believes that while returning home, he has finally reached an unknown town where everything is completely the opposite and different from Shamnagar. Most surprisingly, he found that the body of the people is hale and hearty but they lacked heads. On an enquiry, he came across a wise old man who told him that everyday lots are casted, and the heads of the chosen ones are offered to the two hissing serpents of the king. Gradually, all the men in the town have lost their heads. Such and many other stories fill the mind of Zakir with awe and a sense of mystery. Rumours come from all directions pronouncing at times the victory of Pakistan, the arrival of Persian and Chinese army to defeat the British. Shamnagar has become the repository of localized tales – some real and some imaginary, legendary and mythical.

After Pakistan gets defeated at the hands of India and with the creation of Bangladesh, the atmosphere in Pakistan seems troubled. On one hand, there are sympathizers of Pakistani's dictatorial regime like Salamat and on the other, there are people like Zakir, Afzal and Irfan, who are bluntly compared to British stooges for adopting a no-violent, no-fundamentalist approach towards the problem of Bangladesh.

Zakir then refers to the deaths of two most innocent, most respected, most pious people of his home – Abba Jan and his grandmother. Both Abba Jan and grandmother died after experiencing the contemporary times, after seeing the consequences of Bangladesh War of 1971. The grandmother died yearning to return to India, whereas for Abba Jan, the god-fearing man, the atrociousness, ferocity and violence of the present times proved too much. Ultimately, they realized the futility of life in Pakistan, especially during the time of war.

Khvajah Sahib pays his heartfelt condolences at the occasion of Maulana Sahib, Zakir's father. He had received lots of support, encouragement and patience from Maulana Sahib in times of adversity. He is disheartened to see that his good-for-nothing son Salamat has returned and probably more fanatic than ever, whereas he doesn't have information about

his good and obedient son who lived in Dhaka. Amidst the atmosphere of fear and terror, Khvajah Sahib tells Zakir:

‘You see what’s happening. There’s no telling what will come in the future!

People’s blood is up, there’s no knowing what they’ll do. I’ve heard that marks have begun to appear on people’s houses.’

‘Marks? What kind of marks?’

‘Son, what world are you living in? Preparations are being made for war. Both sides have gathered so much ammunition that it only needs a fuse attached to it. This city will blaze up like dry fuel when a match is lit. (Husain, *Basti*, 181)

The perception of people like Khvajah Sahib and Abba Jan was almost prophetic as far as the situation of war and violence in Pakistan was concerned.

The novel ends in bewilderment, disillusionment and hopelessness for the three friends – Zakir, Irfan and Afzal. They are compared to motionless shadows sitting against the setting sun. They are mute witness to the massacre, looting, raping and widespread destruction and violence that brings the whole of Pakistan to a standstill. According to Zakir, they are living in times where wiser people with their heads filled with brains run the risk of losing it.

The fundamentalist groups in Pakistan, most of which comprise of misguided youths, have come under the spell of the magical new slogan ‘Crush India’. All their energies are directed towards two things – waging a war against India and suppressing the Bangladesh Liberation Movement. They failed miserably at both. But in the process, they commit atrocious and heinous crimes against their fellow countrymen. Women and children are the worst victims. It was a reign of chaos and violence, especially in East Pakistan where Pakistani army perpetrated gruesome crimes against women and was involved in genocide of

innocent civilians. The narrative of *Basti* runs parallel to the official version of history, which focuses primarily on facts and figures, and not on human pain, suffering and trauma.

5.1.4 The Partition of India

In Christmas vacation, both Zakir and Surendar plan to visit Vyaspur together. However, their joyous talk of visiting ‘basti’ (home) is negated by the menacing reality of India’s Partition. Surendar refers to ‘ghost trains’ and refrains Zakir from going to Rupnagar by train. Even the usually crowded platform of Vyaspur could not escape the impact of Partition. It is dead silent. The discussion between Zakir and Surendar presents the ghastly reality of Vyaspur during the time of Partition:

‘Then we’ll go on foot. After all, everyone else is going on foot.’

For a little while, the travellers who had gotten down from the train could be seen walking along ahead and behind. Then suddenly they realized that the street was empty. For a long way, the street was empty. The Jagat Talkies movie house, which was the noisiest place on the street, was closed and absolutely silent. The billboard-like affair on its front, which had been there for ages with the face of Kanan Bala smiling down from it, had fallen into the middle of the street. Kanan’s face had been torn in half, and bricks lay scattered all around in the street.

‘Yar, we made a mistake,’ Surendar said slowly. ‘We shouldn’t have come.’

Then they walked on in silence. The evening was deepening, and for a long way there was no one. Only bricks and more bricks. He looked with fear and wonder at the scattered bricks – imagine there being so many bricks in Vyaspur!

Walking on, they came to Meerut Gate. On the road straight ahead was Khirki Bazaar, which was shut and lightless. This was the road that came out in the Hindu neighbourhoods. Nearby was the road that went to the Muslim neighbourhoods. At this fork both hesitated, looked at each other in silence, and set out on their different roads. (Husain, *Basti*, 40-41)

Symbolically, Intizar Husain represents the tragic division of India when the two friends Zakir and Surendar went their way as soon as they reached a forked path close to the Meerut Gate. It's a walk into the garden of forking paths. India too got divided on the basis of a bigoted religious ideology of the Muslim League. The unfortunate division finally resulted into a Hindu-dominated India and a Muslim-dominated Pakistan. These two countries eyed away from each other in 1947. The Partition of India changed the existing reality of millions of lives forever.

Next day, when Zakir as usual starts from his home for college, he finds everything turned strangely peaceful. Things looked orderly and life appeared normal, with only a few remnants of yesterday's violence. Zakir and his friends finally meet at the *Shiraz*, where his friend Irfan has an argument with a white-haired man:

‘I want to tell you how my hair became white.’

‘What difference will it make if you tell us?’

‘A big difference.’ He paused, then said, ‘When I set out from my home, my hair was all black. And I wasn't any age at all, I was only twenty or twenty-one. When I reached Pakistan and washed myself and looked in the mirror, my hair had turned entirely white. That was my first day in Pakistan. I left my home with black hair and my family, when I reached Pakistan my hair was

white and I was alone.’ He fell silent and went away, without waiting to see the effect of his words, as though he had said what he had to say.

(Husain, *Basti*, 63-64)

In a moment of conversation with Irfan, the white-haired man reveals the deep scars that the Partition of India and its aftermaths have left on his mind and heart. These are moments of eternal truth. Communal riots and forced migration during the Partition left the man not only white-haired but also bereft of his loved ones. The white-haired man lost not only his ‘basti’ or home but also his family members. The white-haired man tries to pass on his wisdom related to life in general and about violence in particular to Irfan in his one-sided conversation. The words of white-haired man come as a warning to those who aggressively pursues the path of division and violence. The whole of human history bears testimony to the fact that anything based on hatred, violence and genocide can neither be auspicious nor ever achieve eternal peace and happiness.

Feeling lost, Zakir prefers to be in solitude, first at the *Shiraz* and then in the company of Nature. Zakir then recalls the days of Pakistan and her grandmother’s rigidity to leave India. He tells Afzal about the circumstances of migration during the Partition:

‘When we left it was the rainy season, there was a flood. On the one hand riots, on the other hand a flood. But my grandmother wouldn’t leave the land. My mother explained to her that we were leaving because of the flood, and when it went down we’d go back. My simple grandmother was taken in. But those words stuck in her mind. Every few days she demands “Daughter! The flood must have gone down, take me back.” (Husain, *Basti*, 157)

The grandmother had nothing to do with the creation of Pakistan or Mohammad Ali Jinnah. She was attached to her ‘basti’ or home, which she wasn’t ready to leave at any cost. No

amount of exhortation or persuasion would have convinced her to leave Rupanagar (India) and migrate to Pakistan. Even after the passage of two decades, the grandmother still asks whether the floods have receded or not so that she can go back to her ‘basti’ or home. People like grandmother did not migrate to Pakistan out of Muslim League’s rhetoric in favour of Pakistan, but simply out of helplessness.

5.1.5 Migration, Dislocation, Uprootedness

Zakir intensely recollects his first day and night in Pakistan. When he walked on the new land under a new sky, it all seemed strange to him though filled with happiness. But it was the time of night that brought memories of home in India, his dimly lit room etc. from the distant past. Days passed in happiness of exploring the new place, but nights brought tears to his eyes as he turned nostalgic. Zakir is unable to forget the illumination of the memory related to his initial days in Pakistan. He also distinctly remembers the arrival of refugees from their long journeys and migrations – either forced or voluntary – and the hardships, pain, suffering and loss borne by them. Partition forced people to undertake the hazardous journey of crossing the border. Zakir is amazed to see how people accommodated the ceaseless flow of refugees in their all-occupied homes. The extensive home spaces reflect the large-heartedness of people who welcomed the refugees, especially the known ones. Walking down the lanes of Shamnagar in Pakistan, Zakir came across homes either abruptly deserted with things lying helter-skelter on the floor or homes properly locked with its original inhabitants hoping to come back after the troubled times of Partition are over. However, Zakir has also observed a drastic transformation. With the passage of time, the space in homes and the space in people’s hearts narrowed down, leading to frequent rifts and quarrels, lawsuits, court cases, expressing the cunning and crafty behaviour of human beings. The good times that Zakir once experienced at his arrival in Pakistan looked like a distant dream – a piece of unattainable past, a forgotten historical saga of amity, peace, kindness, love and brotherhood.

Zakir re-visits at least through his memory what has been left behind. Revisiting history or his past is a way to give meaning to his life. He also remembers the last ride together with Sabirah from Vyaspur to Rupnagar and the sensuality that it carried. In his conversation with Afzal, he nostalgically remembers the neem trees, other lost trees, lost birds and lost faces. There is an acute sense of loss in Zakir.

Auntie Sharifan pays a sudden and surprise visit to Zakir and his family. She has brought memories of homes across the border. Back in India and in Rupnagar, homes are empty and families are scattered. Rupnagar has lost all its erstwhile charm and glory. Most of the people have migrated to Pakistan leaving behind only a few recognizable faces who were too attached to their homes to migrate. She also brings the news of Zakir's aunt and their daughters especially his lady-love Sabirah. Tahirah has already left with her husband to Dhaka and Sabirah is yet to get married. However, Zakir seems to be less affected by the talks of Auntie Sharifan about Rupnagar and its inhabitants. The new one replaces even the old order in Pakistan. Newly built, fragrant houses and shops now replace the burnt-out, collapsed houses of the Partition times. Migration, dislocation, uprootedness, violence, mass killing, firing, looting and raping during the Partition has settled down like dust in Pakistan. Over a period, individuals and families have learnt to come to terms with life. Even Zakir, who started out as a timeless explorer and wanderer, has settled down with the *Shiraz* as his camp:

In those days when the whole population seemed to be homeless, we knew we had a home – as if we had been sitting in the Shiraz through many births, like faithful priests sitting smeared with ashes, and would sit there for many births to come. (Husain, *Basti*, 79)

However, the mixed group of radicals, thinkers, and intellectuals like Irfan, Afzal, Salamat, Zavvar and Zakir too succumbed to the changing times in Pakistan. Earlier, the *Shiraz* was a place of discussions and debates. Now, people have deserted it, as political conversations are not allowed there anymore. The group scattered gradually, leaving only Irfan and Zakir who continued to meet at the Imperial. Soon, the Imperial too lost its vitality when Miss Dolly, the fabulous cabaret dancer left the show. These developments put an abrupt end to the regular meetings of these friends. They feel actually homeless and uprooted. Except for Zakir, all have proved to be social and professional misfits in the new dictatorial regime of General Mohammed Ayub Khan.

5.1.6 Reading History from Below

For days, Zakir and his father have not been able to sleep due to consistent sloganeering at the rally ground. However, for the past few days, the rally ground is empty. Zakir heaves a sigh of relief at the thought that he would now get good sleep. Nevertheless, sleep proves to be illusive. His mind is attacked by memories, both past and present. He even expresses his boredom with teaching history at the college. As a critique of traditional historiography:

How boring it is teaching history to boys. And studying history? Other people's history can be read comfortably, the way a novel can be read comfortably. But my own history? I'm on the run from my own history, and catching my breath in the present. Escapist. But the merciless present pushes us back again toward our history. The mind keeps talking. Are you looking at my hair? I'm looking, it's all white. Irfan answered that poor man's straightforward question in such a bitter tone. I want to tell you how it became white – when I reached Pakistan my hair was white and I was

alone. His first day in Pakistan. The white-haired man swam before Zakir's eyes. And my own first day. My first day in Pakistan – (Husain, *Basti*, 65)

Zakir relates himself with the destiny of the white-haired man. As a professor of history, he understands the significance of 'loss' better than his friends like Irfan. In larger historical upheavals, individuals and communities have to pay a very heavy price.

Literature focuses its gaze on the histories of individuals, groups and communities, their pains, sufferings, fears, concerns, anxieties, moments of crisis, so and so forth. Surendar charts out the bewildering history of Muslims in India, that is to say, from powerful Mughal Emperors in Medieval India to outstanding individuals like Sabirah who stood the test of time. Such individuals defeated the larger historical forces which determine the destinies of millions. Sabirah is both the relic of the past and also the future of Muslims in India. Surendar sounds extremely nostalgic when he talks about his last visit to Vyaspur. He was overcome by two emotions – sadness and melancholy.

The conversation between Abba Jan and Ammi reflects their belongingness and near yearning to visit Rupnagar once, though 25 years have passed since they came to Pakistan. Abba Jan has kept the key to the storeroom safely for these many years. The store room contained shrouds made from Karbala, praying mat from Medina, the tablet of healing earth from Karbala, mother's chest and Quran's stand. This is the legacy that they have left behind. According to them, living life doesn't require elaborate arrangements. It is only the death that demands special attention. They are neither going to have the same Imambara, nor the same burial spot in the graveyard, nor the shrouds. An acute sense of loss prevails.

History is represented in two forms in this novel – the personal history of the protagonist Zakir based on his vivid memory and imagination gets unfolded against the backdrop of India's struggle for independence, the Partition of India and the Bangladesh Liberation Movement and Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. The narrative moves back and forth in

time to represent the personal history of Zakir against all the above mentioned historical discourses. Whatever is either left out or suppressed in the mainstream historical narrative becomes the subject matter of *Basti*'s narrative.

The diary writing of Zakir appears more like the soliloquies of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, reflecting the deepest and the darkest recesses of mind. It conveys two things- the horrors of war and the miserable plight of common people and Zakir's nature, his dreams, visions, and his remembrances of the epics, history, folktales. Every nook and corner around Zakir including the *Shiraz* bears the brunt of war and violence. They are the mute witness of the whole tragedy. Zakir has developed an independent thinking about the moral lessons learnt from the Jataka tales and Buddha's subtle teachings. Mythological tales, folk tales, history, legendary stories function as a sub-text to the main narrative.

Zakir's mind seems dislocated, fragmented at times. His personal history often gets mixed with fables and parables. The disturbing memories of the Partition and the violence of present has left Zakir in turmoil and bemused. Zakir has lost the sense of time and place. His nights are filled with menacing dreams, visions and nightmares. Zakir, the historian, maintains a diary from December 5th to 16th, 1971 just to keep his wayward mind occupied and disciplined. His visions are truly illuminating. In one he sits in a cave and outside there is black night with its jaws opened wide. War sound and noises are not heard. He is encircled by fear. Times and places scrambled within, he wonders where he is going while every direction confuses him with places around lying disordered.

In another vision, Zakir sees a faqir who tells him a story about the chief of a town who before his death calls his two sons and tells them that he divided his knowledge and his property between them equally cautioning them that if they seek for more than one's right it would bring disaster on the Lord's creatures. The brothers differed sometime later and cursed one another: one became a tortoise and the other an elephant and they began fighting. The

outcome of this battle, according to the faqir is that the water some day became muddy first and then turned into a swamp. This fable or parable is very suggestive of Zakir's own contemporary troubled times.

The physical walk of Zakir leads him to the inward journey of visions and meaningful dreams. He has a vision that an old man told him that how their king's shoulders have two snakes eating the brains of people chosen by a cast. He dreams of a Shiva-like one in contemplation with a Nandi like bull standing before him. Then there are all kinds of rumours among people, of the Seventh Fleet, Persian Army and Chinese Army coming. There is a talk about the coming of the Lady Green who would fall on the enemy like a bomb. Zakir loses his mind further and talks meaningfully though of the 1857 Mutiny and Taty Tope.

Zakir also remembers the old saying that when the wise fall silent the shoelaces speak. Bewildered, Zakir records and utters his reflections on the nature of things he sees around. He remembers many things related to or quoted from the epics like the *Mahabharata*, from the *Bible* and Urdu and Persian poetry. The novel ends with a reference to a 'sign' which can be interpreted in many ways. 'Sign' may refer to an approaching greater danger like Doomsday or another war. Positively, it may either refer to the reconciliation of Zakir and Sabirah or the resurrection of a prophet or saint like Jesus Christ to lead humanity towards and peace and paradise. This gives an open ending to the novel and thereby suggests an inconclusive, open-ending for history as well.

Basti represents the history of people – tried and perplexed in real life troubled situations. Its focus is on the individuals and communities who are at the mercy of larger historical forces, and who feels traumatic at losses they incur. Losses are many and varied – loss of 'basti' or home, loss of culture, loss of language, loss of family members, friends and acquaintances, loss of physical landscape with its flora and fauna. Literature highlights this irreparable loss which history does not owing to its objective mode of representation.

Therefore, a novel like *Basti* very well complements the undocumented history of people which is equally significant as the history of elites. As a part of the cover story of *Dawn*, Raza Rumi, the noted writer and the director of Jinnah Institute, Islamabad comments:

Basti weaves an epic and also challenges it from within by underlining the grains of nothingness in our everyday lives. Basti does not have a well-defined ending, as it reinforces the melancholy mood and raises more questions about the emptiness of human existence. (Rumi, *Basti* by Intizar Husain)

5.2 Representation of Partition in Abdullah Hussein's *The Weary Generations*

Abdullah Hussein was born in 1931 in Rawalpindi, a city incorporated into newly created Pakistan after Indian independence in 1947. He published his first Urdu novel, *Udas Naslein* (*The Weary Generations*) in 1963, for which he won the prestigious Pakistani Adamji Prize.

His novels and short fiction have been translated into several Indian languages as well as into English and Chinese, and in 1996 the BBC based a feature film, *Brothers in Trouble*, on one of his novellas. Regarded as the leading novelist in the Urdu language, he lived in Britain from 1967 until his recent return to Pakistan. He died on 4 July, 2015 after suffering from blood cancer for several years.

Published before Paul Scott's "Raj Quartet" and long before Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Abdullah Hussein's *The Weary Generations* is an ambitious saga of social upheaval and a vivid depiction of the decades that led to Indian independence and the creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The struggle of the Indian people against the British Raj runs parallel to the story of love and marriage between two people of very different social backgrounds, which starts to

disintegrate almost immediately, thus mirroring the partnership between the British and their Indian Empire – both unions ending in a parting of the ways.

Naim, the son of a peasant, marries Azra, the daughter of a rich landowner. Fighting for the British during World War I he loses an arm. Back home, he becomes angered at the subjugation of his countrymen under the Raj and aligns himself with the independence movement. However, his ideals are swept away after Independence in 1947 when he realizes that, as Muslims, his family is no longer safe in their homeland and that they must migrate to the newly created Pakistan.

Regarded as one of the half-dozen most influential novels dealing with Partition and its aftermaths, *The Weary Generations* is an immensely powerful novel in its own right and remarkable in its depiction of life under colonial rule and the seismic upheavals that unfolded in the wake of independence. First published in Urdu in 1963, Abdullah Hussein's prize-winning novel was an immediate bestseller and has since translated into a number of languages.

In the opinion of Peter Kemp:

The Weary Generations is a very powerful, enthralling and informative novel.

But what is especially fascinating about it is that it offers, as it were, a missing piece of the jigsaw. It's an Indian-eye view of the Raj, of the struggle for independence, all the horrors of Partition – an Indian-eye view written in fiction that is very, very naturalistic, completely different from the post-colonial style, the magic realism that Salman Rushdie patented and very many Indian writers now imitate... In this novel you see things from inside. (Kemp, BBC)

5.2.1 Roshan Pur – Village as Home, Identity, Culture

In the beginning of the novel, the omniscient narrator tells us that Roshan Pur derived its name from Roshan Ali Khan (Roshan Agha), the founder of this village, which comprises of Muslims and Sikhs in equal number. However, the actual location of the village is a matter of debate and folklore:

Harnam Singh, head of the Sikhs, claimed that the village in fact lay within the bounds of the province of the Punjab, while Ahmed Din, the oldest resident and chief of the Muslims, maintained that it was indeed part of UP (United Provinces). It was topic of ongoing argument, frequently contested by the two sides in the village chopal, more by way of passing time of an evening than as a point of principle. It may, however, be safely, assumed that the settlement lay at some undefined spot on the very border of the two provinces.

(Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 18)

It appears from the description that Roshan Pur is more like “no man’s land”; it neither belongs to Punjab nor to United Provinces and yet it has inhabitants, unlike the “no man’s land.”

Once Roshan Ali Khan saved a young British officer Captain Johnson from getting killed at the hands of Indian sipahis during the 1857 Mutiny, he not only earned the title of ‘Roshan Agha’ from the High Command but also the opportunity to claim as much uncultivated land as he could. It finally resulted in the founding of Roshan Pur village. He also built a house in named ‘Roshan Mahal’ in Delhi, which is occupied by his only son Nawab Ghulam Mohyyeddin Khan. His marriage to a woman below the status and class created a rift between father and son. The reconciliation took place with the birth of Roshan Ali Khan’s grandson and grand-daughter.

As per the version of Ahmed Din, it is Roshan Ali Khan who invited Mirza Mohammad Beg, a Mughal descendant, to come and live in Roshan Pur, built him a pukka house, and offered 500 acres of land for cultivation. As rumours have it, if Roshan Agha was fascinated by the unparalleled beauty of Mirza Beg's wife, Colonel Johnson too was infatuated with the beautiful wife of Roshan Agha. Roshan Pur is full of stories – some real, some historical, some folk in nature. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator outlines the family history of Roshan Ali Khan and Mirza Mohammad Beg against the backdrop of India's struggle for the political independence of India.

While Naim visited his father Niaz Beg, his mother stepmother after several years in the village of Roshan Pur, he decides to stay back with his father and learnt the art of sowing seeds. Mahinder Singh, the Sikh became his friend too. Naim is the only son of a land-owner and educated too in the whole village. He is given to keen observation, criticism and self-introspection. For example, the Sikhs of this village consider it as a matter of great pride and heroism if a Sikh pinches someone's buffalo and brings it to his house. A ceremony equivalent to the coronation ceremony, the one witnessed by Naim in Delhi, is kept to honour the brave Sikh for his act of theft. In this case, it is Sardar Juginder Singh Ji who commits this act of theft and is revelled by the members of his community. On the other occasion, Naim reflects when he observes his friend Mahinder Singh battling with a buffalo:

Both creatures, man and beast, had the same animal wildness on their faces, the same desperation in their respective struggles. The buffalo, which at first had been trying to run away, now stood her ground, determined to fight as Mahinder Singh became more reckless with the passing of each second. Naim stood transfixed by the two warring beasts.

(Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 75)

The beastliness and violence that Naim observed in this case stands also true for the communal violence during Partition. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were equally hostile, beastly and inhuman in perpetrating violence on “the religious other.”

The police party gives the three Sikh brothers – Sardar Juginder Singh, Mahinder Singh and Karam Singh – the third degree corporeal punishment. They tried to get the truth out of their mouth, but in vain. Finally, the buffalo is returned to the original owner but no legal punishment is awarded to any of the Sikh brothers due to lack of evidence and witnesses. The whole of Sikh community gathers at their house to celebrate their unusual victory. Naim is unable to understand this uncouth manner of celebrating an immoral victory.

Naim witnesses another bestial action on the part of Juginder Singh, Mahinder Singh and Karam Singh, who went to a nearby village to avenge the cold-blooded murder of their cousin. They not only killed the murderers, but also chopped off their heads, sliced their bodies into pieces and threw them into a nearby canal, while the womenfolk cleared the ground of the spilled blood. There is sharp contrast between the refined and cultured Naim and the base, vulgar and violent Sikh brothers. It is Roshan Pur and its influence as a village that make and mar these characters. It shapes their personality, attitude and character either for the best or for the worst.

After being away for several months from home and performing the role of an underground revolutionary fighting for the *Swaraj*, Naim finally returns to Roshan Pur, exhausted and lifeless. On his return, he is surprised to find a large house built, several acres of land tilled successfully and a *mushki* bullock bought by his father Niaz Beg. Moreover, all this has become possible due to the amount of pension and ten acres of land that Naim has received in return for his services to the British government. From being homeless and an aimless wanderer, Naim now decides to stay in Roshan Pur forever. Naim feels eternal bliss

and serenity by being in Roshan Pur. His conflicting selves find refuge and peace in Roshan Pur.

5.2.2 Colonialism: British (colonizer) v/s Natives (colonized)

While going to Roshan Pur in a train to meet his parents, Naim witnessed a terrible sight. He saw a bare-chested white man in the first class compartment thrashing a poor peasant who in a hurry, lest he missed the train, has entered the first class compartment instead of third. The white man beat the poor peasant severely with his heavy boots. The body of the peasant became limp and his face smeared with blood. Yet he clanged on to the outside handles till the train stopped at Rani Pur:

Within fifteen minutes Naim had seen a man deprived of his whole world. An old woman with an equally beaten-in face came and bent over the body, looking at it in disbelief. She poked at it a couple of times, saying, ‘Get up!’ quietly, then kneeled beside it as if in prayer and, gathering it in her arms, began to utter, low, animal-like moans. (Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 54)

Naim witnessed the inhuman treatment of the colonized by the colonizer for the first time. There is a feeling of dismay, bewilderment, and pain after seeing such a bloody sight. This experience soon creates a conflict within Naim, that is to say, whether to live under the tutelage of the ruling British and thereby remain a pseudo-colonizer himself or to join the on-going India’s freedom movement and thereby sympathize with the colonized. Naim’s cultural inheritance would favour the first option, whereas his individual self protest against the tyranny of British rule.

5.2.3 First World War: Role of the Natives

When an English Sahib visits Roshan Pur to enlist young men for the on-going war, Naim comes forward and gets himself enlisted as a soldier. The villagers resist the temptations put forward by the English officer while they are asked to join the war and fight on behalf of the British government. The novelist has represented the commonsense logic of the villagers when they refuse to join war in favour of enjoying the pleasures of harvesting for which they have toiled harder. Their primary concern is bare survival, neither royal association, nor military benefits, nor government favours. However, under the influence of Roshan Agha, 16 young men including Naim finally go to the war front. The loss of Naim in the life of Niaz Beg is presented through the dark stormy clouds that hovered over the village a day before Naim left. At the end, both disappear and are lost – Naim as well as the storm.

Naim soon finds himself moving on with the Indian battalion fighting for the British. From India to Cairo (Egypt), from Egypt to Marseilles, the French coast and finally posted at the war front of Belgium, waiting for the German attack. Naim is given the post of Lance Naik, accompanied by Captain Thakur Das and Abdullah. Naim is too inquisitive about the real face of war. As the son of a peasant his mind is filled with questions about war, and which he addresses to Captain Thakur Das, who at times get irritated with his boy-like ignorance and at times reveal his heart out to Naim and treats him as a companion in loneliness. Naim has chosen a life of action at the war front rather than the life of thoughts and ideas by being in village. His academic background and sophistication would serve him right in the education department rather than at the war front. Thus, he is the most ill-equipped of all the Indian soldiers who have joined the war for one or the other reason.

Naim and his friends Thakur Das, Riaz Ahmed faced the worst of the German attack. The water-filled trenches became their graveyards. The 129 Baloch battalion had lost all its men including Captain Thakur Das. Lance Naik Naim Ahmad is bleeding in his left forearm.

In the beginning, the soldiers gossiped, cracked jokes, talked about women, sex and marriage to overcome ennui borne out of endless waiting for the German attack. However, once the German attacked, they fell short of ammunitions and soldiers. Soon, the enemies captured their trenches and machine-guns. Naim's participation in war turns his life upside down.

After a long one year of posting at France and Belgian border, finally Naim is sent to East Africa, where he incidentally meets Mahinder Singh of his village who is now a part of Ambala Brigade and waging a war against unknown enemies (Germans) on behalf of the British. Mahinder Singh emphasizes the fact that war brings anonymity on both the sides. The conversation between Naim and Mahinder Singh brings out the absurdity and inhumanness of war:

‘Mahindroo, are you well?’

After a pause, Mahinder Singh said softly, ‘I am well. Only tired. Much tired.’

‘Of the war?’

Mahinder Singh shrugged.

‘I didn’t think war would do you any harm,’ Naim said, laughing. ‘Remember back in the village? You could kill without blinking an eye.’

Mahinder Singh left the path and went to sit on the raised slab of a grave.

‘That was different,’ he said after a few long minutes. ‘To avenge the blood of one of your own, even a rat can kill. Here we don’t even know the people. It is like killing a pig, or a jackal in the jungle.’

‘Well,’ Naim said, ‘that is what war is.’...

‘Tell me,’ Mahinder Singh asked suddenly, ‘why are we here?’

‘Because of the war,’ Naim said. ‘The enemy has attacked.’

‘What, attacked our village?’

‘Attacked the British sarkar and their friends.’

‘What is it to us?’

‘They are our masters.’

‘Our master is Roshan Agha,’ Mahinder Singh said simply.

‘Yes, and the English sakkar is Roshan Agha’s masters.’

A brief hollow sound emerged from Mahinder Singh mouth. ‘How many masters do we have?’

Naim laughed. ‘Well, it’s just the way it is.’

(Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 119)

The Indian and British soldiers fighting in the forests of East Africa faced three-fold enemies – mosquitoes, malaria, diarrhoea and skin diseases, and German soldiers. Naim gets badly wounded in his left arm. After a brief period of stay at the hospital and losing his left arm, he meets Khalik from Jat Nagar at the headquarters. Khalik informs Naim about the untimely and mysterious death of Mahinder Singh. Naim feels deeply affected and lost when he listens to Khalik’s version of Mahinder Singh’s death:

‘What happened?’

‘His unit was ordered to advance, but he stayed put, wouldn’t move. After many warnings, finally his company commander shot him.’

Naim inhaled deeply on the cigarette several times.

Khalik continued in a low, flat voice. ‘He had, you know, grown a bit poor in the head. Oh, I don’t know, don’t want to talk bad about the dead. Anyway, there was something wrong with him.’ He saw signs of distress on Naim’s face and said, ‘Mind you, he may have died in some other way. This is just the story that I heard.’ (Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 123-124)

At headquarters, Naim happened to pass by the ward of wounded prisoners of war. His eyes caught the sight of an enemy soldier in distress. The scorching heat of the sun troubled the wounded soldier too much. With the permission of the doctor, Naim managed to attach a tarpaulin on the window and restricted the rays of the sun falling directly on the soldier. The enemy soldier wanted to do something in return for this simple act of kindness. He proposed to make an artificial wooden limb for Naim. The doctor consented and in a few days, Harold, the prisoner of war could come up with a fine artificial wooden limb except for the hinges that needed to be made in the factory. The humanitarian concern and the unspoken bond of love and trust between Naim and Harold are indescribable. The moment of parting between Naim and Harold is heart touching:

Finally he asked it. 'Why did you do it for an enemy?'

Harold first answered with a pause and a shrug, as if he didn't understand the question. Then he said, 'I not know you enemy, only man.'

(Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 127)

Naim returns to Roshan Pur, and he is awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, ten acres of land in his village, a promotion-on-retirement to Subedar and an increase in his pension by the army authorities in Delhi.

5.2.4 Injustice, Tyranny, Violence, Suffering and Death

Back to village and armless, Naim is greeted with mixed feelings by the family members, friends, acquaintances and villagers of Roshan Pur. Though restricted, Naim tries to cope up with the routine work that he did before he joined the war. People looked at him with a sense of pride and glory. One fine day Naim learns from Ahmad Din that during his absence, the villagers have started paying 'motorana' (motor tax) to the Munshi, the collection agent on behalf of Roshan Agha. A sizable amount of harvest goes to the Roshan

Agha as motor tax, and its continuation means a certain starvation and death for the villagers, especially in the times of flood and drought. For Naim, this is yet another war-like situation though internal and with his own people apparently.

Naim remembers Mahinder Singh and the war, which took away both his arm and his friend, while he went on a hunting party with Juginder Singh to kill the wild boars. After wounding one boar, Naim pierced the pointed weapon deeper and deeper into the internal organs of the boar till it died giving out an agonized cry. He told a different version of Mahinder Singh's death to his family members and the villagers that he died fighting bravely on the battlefield. He didn't tell them that the absurdity of war deranged the mind of Mahinder Singh and he was shot dead by his company commander.

Being in Roshan Pur, Naim witnesses yet another death and this time it is of Master Hari Chand who have been murdered brutally. The guilt and anonymity of several deaths burdens Naim's psyche. The last person added to his long list of deaths is Naim's own father Niaz Beg, who left the world abruptly.

Naim gets filled with the feelings of patriotism and nationalism when he witnessed an incident in the nearby village. A peasant is asked to hand over his share as per the 'Landlord's Law' by the Munshi and representatives of Roshan Agha. Failing which, the peasant is asked to put a thumb impression on the document saying that he owes the next year crop to the landlord. The peasant revolted by chopping off his thumb than putting a thumb impression on the document. Naim feels incited as this form of injustice and exploitation. This also becomes the cause of a strained relationship between Naim and Azra. On one hand, Azra is attracted and feels excited at the glamour of being recognized as elite in the Indian National Congress. On the other, Naim silently but strongly disapproves of this opportunism. Moreover, there is a direct confrontation between Roshan Agha, the representative of the British government and his son-in-law, Naim Ahmad Khan, the sympathizer of the poor

peasants. Naim experiences a conflict between a long life of inaction, leading to inertia and the present situation of torment, exploitation and injustice. His rebellious self overpowers his complacent self.

5.2.5 Swaraj: Naim as an Underground Revolutionary

At Roshan Agha's Mahal in the village, Naim witnessed the atrocious behaviour of the Munshi towards the poor and helpless Ahmad Din. The Munshi and his men treat Ahmad Din like an animal and humiliate him like a sub-human. At this juncture, Naim meets Hari Chand, the schoolmaster, who seems to be an underground revolutionary. Hari Chand and his friends Balkamand and Kishan Das wished to have Naim Ahmad Khan, the brave, educated young man as a part of their underground movement. Naim agrees to be a part of this movement irrespective of the fact that he runs the risk of losing his reputation, awards and government pension. It is unbearable for Naim to see his own men being treated like slaves and that too by their fellow countrymen under the tutelage of the British.

After being a part of the underground freedom movement for forty days, Naim felt a sense of void and purposelessness. On the top of it, Kishan Das, Banerjee, Madan and Iqbal have killed an innocent peasant who worked as a chowkidar at the forest office by mistake. This irritates and angers Naim extremely. Naim's idealistic, humanitarian speech is counteracted by Madan:

'You say you learned things in the war. All right, did you go and talk to the enemy to get them on your side? Do you know what you are talking about? I have learned something in life as well. I will tell you what it is. I ran away from home and went to Nagpur. For six years I worked as a sweeper in a bookshop. You are not the only one who has read books, I read them too. From them I learned that in order to wake up those millions you have to knock

them. Before you become a bullock to till the land and produce food, you have to become a beast. You know why? Because you are castrated.’...

‘Listen, Naim Khan sahib, I am what you call an achhoot, given the respectable name of scheduled castes. In my village we ate with other people’s dogs. That was the schedule of our caste. You have seen a year or two of war and boast about it. In my twenty-five years every single day was a war to stay alive with respect. I remember everything. If I join your millions and offer myself for prison, my sister will live on the street and go from hand to hand.’ (Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 153)

5.2.6 Naim: The Incurable Lover, Idealist and Nationalist

Further, Naim gets an invitation to attend the wedding ceremony of Pervez at Roshan Mahal in Delhi. Here, he meets his long-lost love Azra after a long duration. The fire of love gets re-kindled. Amidst all oppositions, Naim and Azra decide to get married. Roshan Agha and others finally surrender the headstrongness of Azra and marry them off without much pomp and show. Now, Naim is the sole owner of 23 acres of land and the supreme head of the village and his wife Azra supervises the vast garden round the house and helps her husband in maintaining the large estate. However, soon Azra gets tired of living the life of a peasant’s wife. She is bored of Naim’s indifference as well. Despite of the fact that he has heard about Khilafat movement, Jalianwala Bagh massacre, Naim shows least interestedness in knowing about the facts related to these events. With the help and influence of Roshan Agha, Azra is successful in enlisting herself and Naim in the fact-finding committee of Indian National Congress appointed in relation to the Jalianwala Bagh massacre.

As a part of the fact-finding committee, Azra, Naim and the whole team reach Amritsar. They come across a very old fisherman who had only three teeth in his mouth. He narrates the whole massacre of Jalianwala Bagh substituting human beings with the fishes

kept in the bucket. Human beings, like the fishes, felt out of water. They wriggled with pain and looked for escape but in vain. The bullets of the white officers followed them mercilessly and pierced their bodies ruthlessly. Here, the novelist does not present a historian's account of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre. Instead, he gives us a common man's account of this known event in the annals of Indian Freedom Movement.

Naim had three tasks on his hands – first of all, he arranged Ali's marriage with Aisha who was already engaged with Rawal. This leads to animosity between Ali and Rawal, who even tried to kill Ali in Naim's absence. Threatened by Rawal, Ali leaves the village with his wife Aisha the next day. Secondly, he performs a miniature 'salt satyagraha' in the garden of his house. It is an act of solidarity shown to the 'Salt Satyagraha' undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi at Dandi in the year 1930. Thirdly, he goes to meet his long time war-friend Amir Khan in Peshawar and while reporting the impact of Dandi March in Peshawar, the gathering in the Bazar of Peshawar turned violent. Gunshots were fired at the mass and the streets of bazaar were littered with the dead bodies of the satyagrahis. Moreover, Naim gets arrested again.

After a long struggle with the government, Naim is finally released. He goes back to Roshan Pur but in a bad physical condition. For several months, he remains bed-ridden. There is decline in his energy as well as his enthusiasm. His body and face look worn-out. The visit of Azra to Naim renews their almost dead relationship. The novelist brings out a contradiction between Naim and Azra as far as memory and imagination are concerned. Naim tells Azra that he could go through the most difficult times of his life only by recollecting and imagining Azra's face, whereas Azra could not do so. Both her memory and imagination failed to recreate the face of Naim. This also points out an important difference between the two. Naim's personality and character is in a constant flux. It is ever changing. He has not attained a stable identity yet. Mutability is the hallmark of Naim's life, and that is why it

becomes difficult for Azra to recall and imagine Naim in his absence. Azra hasn't changed much in these many years. Naim has always felt the presence of Azra intensely. Naim's memory and imagination has never failed him.

Naim finally got the job of a personal assistant to Anees Rahman, the member of the Indian Legislative Assembly – MLA (Centre). Soon, Naim developed a personal friendship with Anees Rahman, as he was a good speaker and Naim, a good listener. Naim and Azra also occupied the ground floor in the house of Roshan Agha. Historically, this was also the time Cripps Mission which failed and the launch of 'Quit India Movement'. Stafford Cripps offered to grant Swaraj to India after the Second World War is over. The Indian National Congress rejected it. Though reminded of his disturbing past, Naim felt least interested in such news and hardly read newspapers. Probably, both the Indian National Congress and the underground revolutionaries disillusion him.

Anees Rahman invited Naim to stay with him in the weekend. Here, Naim witnessed the restless, desperate aspects of Anees's personality:

'You have only seen the living, I have seen the dead in Bengal. Piles and piles of them. If you can spare a day's supply of rice, you sell it. If you haven't, you beg. The difference between rich and poor is a handful of rice. No, not between rich and poor, actually between life and death. We live our lives according to simple rules. When we are young we read history and come to know of the disasters that befell our ancestors. From these lessons, we deduce some rules. Look before you leap, that sort of thing. My father gave me a book called *Golden Rules*....'

'When we grow up we see that there is no such thing as a regular shape of history. Come floods, come epidemics, come famine. But they are never the

same. Like each life, each disaster is different. There is a fixed pattern, it's called helter-skelter.'...

'In order to form a reasonable pattern, we invent the idea of justice. When that doesn't work, we go further into helter-skelter and invent God. I will tell you one thing: there are no golden rules.' (Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 300)

Meanwhile, Naim's personal world gets another shock when he learns that his mother and Ali's wife Aisha are dead. No one knew about Ali's whereabouts. There was both a sense of guilt and pathos in Naim's mind and heart. However, he returned to Roshan Mahal to continue his routine life as the personal assistant of Anees Rahman.

5.2.7 Swaraj: Naim as the Member of Indian National Congress

Naim decides to live a life of action now. As a member of Indian National Congress, he organized a grass-root level meeting in Jat Nagar, the largest village in the territory in the year 1924. Two speakers are going to come from Delhi to address the gathering. Suddenly, the gathering turned violent as police barred entry to the mass from entering the ground. People crossed over forcibly amidst the lathi-charge of police. In the absence of the two speakers from Delhi, Naim took the reins of meeting in his hands and starts addressing the gathering, and to his greatest surprise people obeyed. Naim emerges as the accepted leader of the mass:

Naim was babbling on when suddenly something happened to his perception: the crowd that he had been seeing as an amorphous body composed of irregular heads and bodies began to appear as a solid mass, joined up by unseen strings, expanding and shrinking like a lake of rubber, and the strings, he felt, were in his hands – both hands, he thought happily – and he could pull and push and tug, draw and withdraw and direct this concentrated centre of

power whichever way he wished. He even waved his left hand to the right and left, and people would obey the command, draw in or out, sit down and listen to whatever he was saying. (Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 211)

Naim gets arrested and is taken to the Lucknow goal. His initial hope of immediate release subsides and is replaced by hopelessness. Azra came to know about Naim's arrest very late. With the help of her contacts amongst the high officials, she is able to find out the place of Naim's imprisonment. In Lucknow, Azra is going to do three things – join the protest against the recently deputed Simon Commission that came to India in 1927, attend the elite party organized by Roshan Agha where she would function as a host, and meet the imprisoned Naim in the Lucknow gaol.

5.2.8 Partition of India and its Aftermath

The talk of imminent Partition of India dominates the Roshan Mahal. Arguments, debates and opinions followed. Pervez is of the opinion that they all can uproot themselves and re-locate in the new country called Pakistan after the Partition. According to him, none had anything to lose because they are neither attached to the land ('basti' or 'home') nor to the people around. However, Azra holds a contradictory opinion. According to her, migration and rehabilitation are extremely difficult. Naim remains silent for the most part of the conversation and does not express himself at all.

Many Indian Muslims felt a sense of insecurity in their homeland. They decide to leave for Pakistan. Amongst them is also the family of Roshan Agha, who wait in the comfortable lounge of Delhi airport for their departure to Pakistan. Some Indian Muslims have decided to align with the idea of Pakistan willingly under the influence of Muslim League, especially the landowners and the Muslim elites, whereas most of the common mass, poor peasants and labourers undertake this journey unwillingly. It is a forced or a coerced

migration. In the long columns that marched toward Pakistan, Naim meets Ali on the way, who pours out his anger and frustration with life. When Naim enquires about Ali's well-being, he expresses his years of suppressed emotions and scoffs at Naim by emphasizing his loneliness, homelessness, dislocation in the absence of Naim and Aisha. The long columns of people walk ceaselessly towards an unknown destination, the so-called 'Promised Land' (Pakistan). The sick, the old, the hungry and the weak are left behind and they would die on this long, endless march. The walking dead soon face the worst reality of their life when they get closer to Amritsar:

... For they were soon to enter a province in the fields of which death stalked its prey in the shape of marauding Sikhs and Hindus on one side of the border and Muslims on the other – the province of the Punjab, across a map of which the good judge Cyril Radcliffe, after much concern and absent-minded deliberation, drew a line in red ink dividing it in two, each half going to a different country. (Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 320)

On the way, Naim and Ali meet a haggard history professor. His name is Jamaluddin and is from Aligarh. Like a true historian, he imparts his wisdom of history to Naim:

I taught old history, rajas and maharajas and the Mughals and English kings. Waste of time. This,' he pointed again to the corpses in the field, 'is history now. I shall be teaching this next to the boys and girls so they don't forget. Only what you don't forget is history.'

(Hussein, *The Weary Generations*, 324)

One can important lessons from history provided one wishes to learn them. Cataclysmic historical events like Partition impart significant wisdom to the future generations. Soon, the

resting caravan of tired Muslims are attacked by revengeful Sikhs and Hindus, who loot, beat, kill people and abduct young girls and women. Even Naim and Ali are badly injured. The whole atmosphere is filled with the acrid smell of newly spilled blood.

The Roshan Agha and his family reached safely to the newly created Pakistan. They chose 'Rai Manzil' built in the 1870s by Rai Bahadur Kaidar Nath of Lahore as their new abode. The local landlord's family has already left for India. The Rais and Rajput families of Lahore were swept away by the frenzy of communal riots during Pakistan and they were forced to migrate despite their unwillingness. Soon, the Roshan Agha and his family finds it difficult to maintain such a huge house on the meagre salary of Pervez. Roshan Agha is waiting for the ordinance to pass, which would allow him to change the name of their new home from 'Rai Manzil' to 'Roshan Mahal'. However, the final wish of Roshan Agha does not get fulfilled and he dies in a few days after reaching Pakistan.

On the other hand, Ali finds himself alive but almost dead and close to the Wagah border. He crosses over and reaches the Lahore station. He witnesses the scenes of utmost bestiality and violence in the name of religion. Separated from his stepbrother Naim, Ali now fights for survival. Fortunately, a woman named Bano, who brings him to her house and attends to his worn-out body, rescues him from a certain terrible death out of hunger and thirst. Bano narrates her life-story to Ali, which has its own vicissitudes. However, Bano has entered as a beacon of hope and a meaningful future in the life of Ali. The novelist concludes the novel on a positive note. Despite of all the difficulties, troubled times and tragedies faced both by Ali and Bano, they can hope for a bright future together.

5.2.9 Reading History from Below

The first major historical reference comes in the form of the coronation ceremony of Nawab Ghulam Mohyyeddin Khan, which is going to be attended by historical personages named Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Annie Besant. This gives historical authenticity to the

narrative and places it in the middle of India's Freedom Movement. There is also a reference to the Partition of Bengal (1906), which according to some historians sowed the seeds of India's Partition. While Gokhale and Annie Besant are into political discussions, Naim, the observer refers to Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who in the eyes of some is an Indian nationalist and a politician, whereas for people like commissioner and the newspaperman, he is nobody. The personal emotions of Naim for Azra develop gradually against the backdrop of political discussions held by Ayaz Beg, Gokhale, Annie Besant, Nawab Ghulam Mohyeddin Khan, the Englishman, the commissioner and the newspaperman. To Naim, Tilak is a political revolutionary, whereas for the elite gathering at the coronation ceremony, Tilak is not less than a terrorist, especially for the Muslims and the British. The individual and the personal account of Indian history represented through Naim stands in sharp contrast with the official historical discourse which foregrounds only a few elites as great nationalists, whereas undermine the contribution of Indian nationalist like Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Azra after performing the role of a perfect hostess at the elite gathering of Roshan Agha, she participates, willingly or unwillingly, genuinely or for the namesake, in the procession taken out against the Simon Commission. The police riding on the horseback lathi-charged the gathering. They struck a heavy blow on the head of Lala Lajpat Rai causing his death. Azra too is injured on the head. Azra even saw her brother Pervez, the government official backing the British-appointed Simon Commission. The close account of historical event lends genuineness, authenticity and a ground-level perspective, which highlights the role played by the common mass alongside the nationalistic leaders of India.

With the help of Roshan Agha's influence, the trials were conducted and Naim got released from the Lucknow gaol. The confinement didn't break Naim physically, but his spirit has passed out. There was a growing distance between Azra and Naim. Though in love, they hardly stayed together. Soon, they planned to visit the Jama Masjid of Delhi to attend the

All India Muslim Conference to be presided by Sir Aga Khan. Sir Shafi, the head of the Punjab faction of the Muslim League; Dr Mohammad Iqbal, the poet; Maulana Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali of the Khilafat Movement; Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madni and Shabir Ahmad Usmani of Jamiatul-Ulema-e-Hind also participated in the conference. Naim feels disillusioned after attending the conference. The whole of Muslim world in India has come to a common platform, yet is divided into several factions. Under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the All India Muslim League demands the precedence of Islam over politics. Naim is unable to understand this divisive discourse of Muslim League elites. Naim feels perplexed at the fact that the hardliners of Muslim League tried to suppress the voice of Muslim liberals and nationalists at the All-India Muslim Conference. Naim provides a historical testimony to the fact that Pakistan was demanded only by a few elite leaders of Muslim League at the behest of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whereas all the Muslims of India had to pay a very heavy price of the same. He leaves the conference half way and return to the village.

The title of the novel is very apt and suggestive. The adjective “weary” in English suggests connotations like “sad”, “sombre”, “melancholy”, “pessimistic”, “depressed”, “Exhausted”, and “somnolent”. Naim is hopelessly ideal right from the beginning of the novel and that his whole personality exudes a personal sense of deep melancholy, suffering and loss. The generations shown in this novel are drained of their life-blood. The world Naim lives in is too volatile, aggressive and violent, especially at Roshan Pur, whereas he is refined, sophisticated, and amiable. The historical forces beyond his control drive Naim to his ultimate tragedy. If a historical event like the Second World War brought glory, honour and prosperity to Naim’s life, a historical event like Partition swept away everything that he claimed his own once, including Azra and Ali. The novelist has represented Naim as a complex protagonist. On one hand, despite of his feudal family allegiance and English

education, he never exhibited the same, either personally or publicly. On the other, he is born in too high a family to take sides with peasantry, with whom his actual affiliations lay. His middle-class values constraints him as a hero. He shuttles between aristocracy and peasantry. He wishes neither to be a personage whom history would remember nor to be a forgotten hero.

Naim's unintended political activism, his thoughtless marriage with Azra, his melancholic and reflective demeanour, his constant shuttle between aristocracy and peasantry, and the difficult choice of staying back in India after the Partition, or to migrate to Pakistan, lead to Naim's tragic downfall. Through the representation of life of Roshan Agha, his family members and Naim, the novelist gives us the exact picture of circumstances during the Partition of India. Adhering to the historical details but with an eye both on the life of elites and the common mass, Abdullah Hussein captures the pre-Partition Indian culture as well as represents the harrowing days of Partition marked by bloodshed, massacre, loot, rape, arson, abduction, revenge, migration etc. History is represented through the filtered consciousness of the omniscient narrator as well the subjective consciousness of Naim. Despite of the efforts of the novelist, the personal and the political remains isolated.

The final section of *The Weary Generations* named "The Epilogue," invokes a terrible sense of horror at the incompetency of the newly formed governments and their greatest failure to offer a safe and smooth passage to the migrants. *The Weary Generations* is hardly about the struggle and desire for freedom, about moral courage, about growing amidst crises, about forging new identities, about offering sacrifices and in the process getting destroyed and yet coming back to life like the sphinx. It is probably more about Naim's acute sense of loss, about some unarticulated grief that comes from historical disorientation. In the words of Rauf Parekh:

Written against the backdrop of the First World War and the events that took place in the run-up to Independence in 1947, Udas Naslain captures the essence of the social and political upheaval that the subcontinent was passing through. (Parekh, *The Weary Life of Abdullah Hussain*)

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CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Traditionally, the shaping of history is regarded as the territory of the historian. Historians have intentionally regarded themselves as the spokespersons of the past events. Their craft of using the available corpus of historical records is their most preferred way of formulating a discernible past. Their versions of history or a historical event primarily depend on the written documents, which gradually, if put together with other sources, attain the status of “history”. The fundamental principle that governs historical recording is one of truth-telling. Overall, one can say that history as a discipline intends to establish true statements about events which have occurred and objects which have existed in the past. Historians have produced a record which is predominantly based on truth and which is attained through the technique of distancing or objectivity. However, in the modern light, this traditional view of history has been challenged at regular intervals with the arrival of scholars like Fernand Braudel, Pierre Nora, Philippe Aries, Hayden White, Michel de Certeau, Lionel Gossman, and Hans Kellner on the scene, and whom have demonstrated that what we call history or objective past is primarily a product of many stories or versions about the past and therefore, complete objectivity or distancing is more than a possibility.

History, as a discipline in post-modern context, is an intricate affair. The unilateral, authoritative and hegemonic narrative of history has grown more complex, multi-dimensional and interpretative. Now, other sources of past events like journals, magazines, archives, newspapers, oral accounts, literary texts and films are also consulted, analyzed and interpreted for creating a more comprehensive and interpretative version of history. The weaving of history done through its safest fabric, that is to say, the history textbook, as we know today, is also under scanner and therefore is looked upon as not the ultimate and the most reliable source of history. Historical memories and historical evidences are now no

more only the dwellers of history books resting peacefully on the shelves of library, rather they are found everywhere – in popular culture, in individual accounts and in public discourse. Pieces of history are also found in the relics of the past, either in the form of monuments or artefacts, or images and they are usually institutionalized in theme parks, cinema and museums, which are the non-official sources of shaping and enriching history.

The perennial question is, “has this baffling diversification of history-making affected our understanding of the past?” The answer to this question is that the presence of history proper found in textbooks is maintained but at the same time the alternative sources of history are also positively considered for history-making. In other words, through detailed accounts of historical events, objectivity is maintained but simultaneously, history proper is also given to the narrative mode of representation, in other words, what is called as “narrativization of history.” The past is retold in ways and through modes that render it more entertaining, compelling and in some cases even controversial. Therefore, the readers and audiences across the world have tended to give license as if to popular forms of cultural representations that might not be forthcoming for the so-called serious modes of historical recording. Often, it is seen that the outlines of a historical event based on facts is retained whereas its specificities and particularities which involves a particular locale, culture, community or individuals, have been fictionalized. The whole process involves a blurred demarcation between fact and fiction and the historical material is adapted for a more presentational format for a popular culture. This feat has been usually achieved by the literary writers and filmmakers without the fictionalized presentation losing its grip on the original historical event. And in the hands of a matured craftsman, at times, the fictionalized version attains an aura of verisimilitude to historical recording that can be difficult to challenge. Thus, the world of literature and popular culture has created new avenues for common readers and public to experience history or past in a more intelligible manner.

However, the followers of traditional modes of historical representation do not universally recognize these new methods of history-making. This too much insistence by traditional historians on the proven traditional modes of history-writing, has not allowed marginalized voices to be a part of the discourse which deals with the question of how history is made. The privileged position of the traditional historian gives him an unrivalled authority of representing, reproducing and documenting past in his voice, and which invariably subjugate other marginalized voices who crave to be heard and documented. Professional historians have traditionally come first, followed by journalists, politicians, and perhaps at times even religious heads, finally followed by literary writers and filmmakers. This very ranking and hierarchy undermines the individuality of other voices, which are equally important.

Holocaust and Partition: Cataclysmic Historical Events

Holocaust (1939-1945) and the Partition of India (1947) ravaged two different continents, namely, the Europe and the South Asia respectively and almost at the same time. The communal riots were a by-product of the unfortunate Partition of India resulting in the gruesome deaths of millions, whereas Holocaust (Nazi persecution of Jews) was implemented as a policy based on the racial ideology of Nazi Germany. On one hand, if Holocaust was a systematic, state-sponsored, and scientifically engineered genocide of European Jews, the large-scale massacres and killings during and after the Partition of India just blew out of proportion. It was an unplanned and arbitrary form of human treachery. In Holocaust, there were no warring factions, that is to say, Nazi Germans were the victimizers and the Jews were the victimized. Jews were rightly compared to the sheeps going willingly to the slaughter house. Whereas, in the communal riots during and after the Partition, both the sides, that is to say, Hindus and Muslims, looted, killed, abducted and raped one another.

Despite of the fact that in Holocaust and Partition, the state agencies were involved in deciding the fate of millions, there is a marked difference in their *modus operandi*. In other words, the Nazi regime institutionalized anti-Semitism, which was then supported by the common Germans. In the case of Partition, people fell back upon communalism because of an atmosphere of gloom, disappointment, frustration and most importantly fear. Communal identity and affiliation became the strength and it overpowered cultural ties. Holocaust was an accepted but a bigoted racial ideology, whereas the Partition of India was an unpragmatic division leading to instigation of communal violence.

Both Holocaust and Partition as historical events were intense, atrocious, barbaric, and resulted in genocide and terrible crimes against humanity. Holocaust is primarily limited to a specific duration during the Second World War. With the establishment of Israel as a nation exclusively meant for Jews, anti-Semitism could not sustain long. Nevertheless, this does not stand true in the case of Partition. India and Pakistan, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs still face the aftermaths of Partition. Agony, animosity, vengeance are the unwanted legacies of India's Partition.

One should consider the fact that in Nazi Germany, the ordinary Germans turned away from their Jewish neighbours in great number. They not only refused to help the suffering and humiliated Jews but also went to the extent of mocking, jeering at them and their state of victimization. Stories of solidarity between ordinary Germans and Jews are very few. Whereas, in India, the common mass has unanimously accepted that the Hindu-Muslim relations were concordant and cordial before the Partition. Though there were noted differences in the life style, mannerisms and festivals, both the communities had mutual respect for each other's religion, festivals, and saints; and used to celebrate festivals with great pomp and show. Those who discard the existence of 'Ganga-Jamuni' culture in India

before the Partition are, thus perennially wrong. We also come across many acts of heroism and courage in the stories of people who ultimately turned out to be saviours.

Both the Jews in Nazi Germany and the Hindus and Muslims in divided India believed that the Holocaust and the Partition was a transitory phase and a temporary arrangement, and at the end of which they will be able to return to their respective homes. But no one ever imagined that the Holocaust and Partition would turn their lives upside down eternally.

While implementing the Final Solution, the Nazi Germans goaded the Jews into believing that they are going to be re-settled, that is to say, a sort of 'Promised Land' and a 'New Life' is waiting for them. At no point either in the labour camps, concentration camps or death camps, the Jews felt that they are going to die. A great facade was created by the Nazi Germans to beguile the suffering Jews in to a belief that they are going to survive. The Muslim League and Mohammad Ali Jinnah also showed the vision of a 'Promised Land' to the Indian Muslims, some of whom later migrated to Pakistan in search of a better and secured future. Half of them died on the way and the rest that did reach Pakistan are still considered as '*mohazir*'. Reality is far cruel than what is portrayed in both the Holocaust and Partition texts. When we see that fact is worst than fiction, we feel compelled to state that these literary texts are not merely products of writer's imagination, but are firmly grounded on real life historical facts.

Holocaust and Partition Literatures: Alternative Versions of History

The act of writing literary texts about the 'significant past' is a way to reclaim the history of voices that are either lost beneath the burden of official version or are deliberately evaded or suppressed by the elite groups, and hence tend to be forgotten. The whole exercise of unearthing narratives from the historical world of amnesia is a quest. The formative influence of history is unquestionable in the lives of individuals and communities, both in

Europe and Asia. The aesthetic recreation or representation of history in literary texts enables human beings to understand not only the ‘significant past’, but also its relevance in the present. In order to understand two of the most complex historical events in the history of Europe and Asia, namely, the Holocaust and the Partition of India, history proper is not enough. It is essential to understand them in the light of their representation in literary narratives, which counteracts the grandiose claims of ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’ in historiography.

Traditional historiography falls short to capture and represent the bruised memories of human beings, tried and perplexed in real life situations. Holocaust and Partition narratives, in a way, force us to rethink about the mode of historical representation. They attempt to render a more meaningful version of history, which can be termed as ‘people’s history.’ The inaudible, marginalized, suppressed voices find central position in Holocaust and Partition narratives. This top-down approach of looking at ‘history from below’ primarily deals with the history of the losers, with the envisioning of counterfactuals and provisional historical worlds, with delayed and alternative chronologies, with the reality of unrealized possibilities, and lending voice to the silenced. Such a comprehensive understanding of the ‘significant past’ would enhance the possibilities of establishing and sustaining a seamless, harmonious relationship between past, present and future.

Narrativization of history in Holocaust and Partition texts frees history from the tyranny of standardization of what we call representing historical truth. It appears less as a monologue from an omniscient authorial voice but rather looks more as a dialogue between two participants who are meaningfully involved in the task of reproducing history collectively. Thus, without undermining the hegemonic significance of traditional historians and their modes of representation, Holocaust and Partition narratives foreground the newer

ways of recreating and representing history, and thereby demands equal space in the process of history-making.

Representation of History in the Select Holocaust and Partition Texts

Elie Wiesel's *Night* gives voice and identity not only to those victims who survived but also to those whose voices are drowned or obscured in the anonymity of the magnitude of six million deaths. Elie Wiesel's narration of the predictions, selections, deportation and extermination in the form of a victim's story of terror is at par with historians' account or to be more precise presents a more interpretative and comprehensive picture of Holocaust and its psychological implications. After all, physical scars get healed with the passage of time, but it takes ages to overcome trauma and a scathed psyche. A historian can explain the scale of devastation in terms of Nazi perpetration of violence, physical properties that got destroyed and number of human beings annihilated. However, he cannot fathom deep into the psyche of individuals, wherein lies the reality of victimized and not the victimizer. *Night*, as a testimony, is a history in itself.

Fateless is a semi-autobiographical story of a 14-year-old Hungarian Jew named György "Gyuri" Köves and his experiences in the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. The novel doesn't function as a grand narrative which discourses about eternal conflict between good and evil and which employs grandiose metaphors and leads to metaphysical ruminations. On the contrary, the focus is on the mundane, day-to-day reality of the camps. By reducing the narrative of *Fateless* to the everyday life, Imre Kertész undermined the grand narrative of Holocaust as a closed chapter in a teleological narrative of progress, and presented it as a comprehensible, meditated human act and therefore as something that could happen again. As per the popular expectation, Gyuri's tale, as a tale of Holocaust survivor, should have been loaded with disgust, scorn, horror, indignation and outrage at the mechanical deportation and extermination of Jewish prisoners, which reflects

the inhumanity of the perpetrators. *Fateless* provided a subaltern narrative and constituted a challenge to this sanctimonious pose. Gyuri's narrative prevents Holocaust from being portrayed as apocalyptic, which would have easily fit in the narrative of Communism as a kind of new beginning after a historical conflagration. *Fateless* emphasizes the indifference and callousness with which the crimes were perpetrated rather than the crimes themselves. This novel is an admixture of historical authenticity and fictionality. Features of the post-modern novel are evident in *Fateless* which include intertextuality, subversion, mixing of genres, various losses – loss of stable identity, loss of truthful introspection, loss of unified selfhood, loss of authentic memory, and the inability to translate the most untranslatable experiences of life into language, and most importantly, the questioning of grand narratives.

Thomas Keneally's novel *Schindler's List* as a Holocaust narrative intends to achieve a different milestone. The story told by Pfefferberg to Keneally and its literary version reduces this apocalyptic event named Holocaust to an understandable, almost personal scale. Using Oskar Schindler as a lens, one can get an inside view of the whole Nazi machinery at work, and how that machinery was involved in the total annihilation of Jews and what its impact was on people with names and faces. Holocaust Historiography, on the other hand, with its broad and sweeping generalizations, cannot give us an insider's view as is achieved by the novel of Keneally. For history proper, data, facts and figures on and about Holocaust are more important than registering the emotions and feelings of individual lives.

Asghar Wajahat's play *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Jamyai Nai* with major themes of Partition literature like migration, dislocation, trauma, violence, death, displacement, fragmented identity, multiculturalism, nationality, belongingness and citizenship, fundamentalism versus liberalism and secularism, language etc. Wajahat's play represents the struggle of common people to grapple with pain and suffering on a scale that was unprecedented in South Asia. It becomes a repository of localized truths, sought to be evaded

and minimized by the dominant discourse on the Partition. As a playwright, Asgar Wajahat focuses his lens on individual lives and their troubled experiences during and after the Partition through the characters like Ratanlal Johri's old mother, Sikander Mirza and his family members, and Shayar Nasir Kazmi. The perspective is of the common mass trying to make sense of larger historical events. If the play displays the traumatic consequences of Partition on one hand; it celebrates the syncretic culture, the age-old history of Hindu-Muslim solidarity on the other. Wajahat re-affirms his intrinsic faith in culture and reiterates the fact that religion is but only one of the aspects that defines the social and cultural identity of people.

Basti by Intizar Husain is one of the most powerful novels centred round Partition and its aftermath. The political disturbances are the backdrop for the tribulations of the characters in the novel where folk stories, epics and the political turmoil that people suffered in the past are dealt with in detail. Although the novel chronicles only a few months in Zakir's life, his whole life, and, more importantly, his entire cultural personality extending back through a millennium and a half of Muslim history, is recalled through skilfully deployed flashbacks. Being a professor of history, Zakir is aware of the course of Muslim history in the Subcontinent; being a Shiite, he is also aware of the course of this history beyond India in the mainlands of Islam. This history has been one of constant internecine feuds among Muslims for political dominance. In fact, for Zakir, it was the advent of the scheming Umayyads on Islam's political horizon in 661 C.E. that inaugurated an interminable era of dissension, strife and hatred. There are references to Muslim South Asian history throughout the novel: the 1857 war of independence from the British Raj; the creation of Pakistan in 1947; the 1965 war between India and Pakistan; and finally the 1971 political disintegration of Pakistan with the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation.

Abdullah Hussein's ambitious saga of social struggle entitled *The Weary Generations* is one of the bestsellers in Urdu literature. A vivid depiction of the widespread disillusionment and seismic upheavals of the Partition era that lead to the creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh, there has never been a more opportune time to discover one of the most important writings about the post-colonial trauma in the region. Beginning with the struggle of the people of India against the British Raj, this story of love and marriage between two people of totally different social backgrounds which crumbles almost as soon as it takes place mirrors the uneasy 'marriage' between the British and their Indian Empire – both unions ultimately ending in parting of the ways. This debut novel of Abdullah Hussein touched upon universal themes of love and separation within the context of Partition and war. It is an elegant saga of India's struggle for freedom from British rule and the subsequent partition of the country.

In the middle of all fiendishness and monstrosity, we come across characters like Oskar Schindler, Sikander Mirza and Nasir Kazmi from both the literatures, who prove to be the beacons of hope, life and love. Both Holocaust and Partition literatures deal with major themes like dislocation, large-scale migration – willing or coerced, fragmented identity, loss of language, culture and home, death, violence, trauma etc. All the Holocaust narratives taken for the present study tends to be autobiographical. Subjectivity is the hallmark of Holocaust literature. It lends credibility and authenticity to the narrative, whereas, the texts pertaining to Partition literature are an admixture of first person and third person points of view. The narrative in both the literatures is woven with the strands of fact and fiction. The journey of characters in the chosen Holocaust and Partition texts is from disillusionment to enlightenment, from subjugation to liberation, from pain to painlessness and even happiness, from victimizer to being saviours, from homelessness to home, and most importantly from death to life. Holocaust and Partition literatures manifest that bigoted racial ideologies,

fundamentalism and fanaticism can be used as the most effective tools to hoodwink and mislead the common mass. The chosen Holocaust and Partition texts not only resist but also reject the discourse, which aims at the deliberate demonization of both Jews in the context of Holocaust and Muslims in the context of Partition.

Memory and Remembrance: Essentials in the Re-writing of History

Memory plays a key role in the remembrance of historical events like Holocaust and Partition. It is an act of emancipation from the traumatised past. The individual memory becomes a repository of localized truths, and is extended to the cultural memory of societies, communities and generations. It is as Francesco Loriggo explains:

The authors often act as the memory of the group: they are scribes who give voice to those who have lived or live in silence. By their mediation, because they managed to master a language, an experience otherwise lost, left unsaid, is communicated. (Loriggo, *History*, 111)

Both Holocaust and Partition Literatures vividly depict individual and collective memory with all its dynamic contents and subjective distortions through narrative structures, symbols and metaphors. They are full of the survivors' testimonies and imaginative reconstruction of traumatic pasts. Most of the Holocaust and Partition texts are autobiographical as they are based on the first-hand accounts of the writers. However, it is interesting to see how the first person accounts or personal testimonies of historical events are transmitted to the generations with the help of memory (transgenerational memory). Transgenerational and transcultural memories help us to come to terms traumatized pasts and they take on a new significance and meaning for the present generation. It is as Dominick La Capra rightly expresses:

All history is trauma or that we all share a pathological public sphere or a “wound culture.” (La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 64)

Thus, the re-enactment of history in fiction is a way of preserving the residue of the ‘significant past’. Remembering Holocaust and Partition in literary narratives based on memory is an aesthetic response of saving history from getting lost and forgotten. Intizar Husain, probably the most accomplished writer in Urdu after Manto says:

The agony of India’s partition could be lessened—perhaps—by exploiting the event’s potential creativity: ‘to salvage whatever of that [pre-partition] culture, if only by enacting it in literature’. To preserve a memory, however fugitive, of that culture before time and history have placed it beyond reach.

(Husain, *The Seventh Door*, 16)

Amitav Ghosh favoured the representation of history in fiction against the history proper by saying:

I think the difference between the history historians write and the history fiction writers write is that fiction writers write about the human history. It’s about finding the human predicament; it’s about finding what happens to individuals, characters. I mean that’s what fiction is ... exploring both dimensions, whereas history, the kind of history exploring causes, causality, is of no interest to me. (Bose, *Amitav Ghosh*, 18)

Symbolism in the Select Holocaust and Partition Texts

Eliezer, the narrator of *Night*, is in a true sense a child of the Night, who relates the journey from the amiable Jewish community located in the mountains of Transylvania to Auschwitz, the concentration camp, which is the frightening and unknown capital of the

kingdom of Night. Life in the concentration camp obliterates the difference between day and night, in other words, it takes away the sense of time. It is the overshadowing darkness of night that structure and punctuates the whole memoir because all suffering, pain, torment and death borne by Jews is usually carried out during the dead of night. Darkness engulfs the existence of Eliezer and other Jews and his spirit and faith in God gets eclipsed. In concentration camp, the time of night stands for eternal damnation. It is quite ironical that Eliezer has acquired the mysticism of religion through the study of Talmud and Kabbalah in evenings and at the time of night; whereas he experiences the monstrosity of fellow human beings in the darkest hours of night only. “Night” also symbolically stands for the reality hidden beneath. In other words, Germans were notorious for their methods of deceiving their victims by dispelling notions of fear and creating the illusion of normality as they went about setting the machinery of extermination in motion. In the first place, all the deported Jews were made to believe that they are being re-settled. Secondly, if they were to be sent to the concentration camp, they will probably never be exterminated. Even the edifice of death camps was deceptive as it was referred to as “shower rooms”. Thus, the victim would not know about his or her imminent tragic death till the last moment. Right from the first news of deportation pronounced by Eliezer’s father Shlomo when he returns at midnight from the council meeting to the journey in the cattle wagon, extermination at Auschwitz, and the death march at Buna – all take place at the time of night. The symbol of fire is present, indeed, throughout the text, from the half-burned candles of the synagogue, where Eliezer and Moishe attempt to illuminate the mysteries of the universe, to the relentless sun of the ghetto liquidation, culminating in the savage blaze of the death pits and crematoria. Fire is, indeed, an integral part of Night, as suggested by the term *Holocaust* itself, which signifies widespread destruction by fire or a sacrificial burnt offering. The journey of Eliezer and other Jews from Sighet town to Auschwitz is the journey from reality-oriented structure of “outer”

night to the “inner” night, in which time is suspended. Night extinguishes the sense of time. Thus, fire, night, silence and death are intermingled as principal metaphors of *Night*.

Imre Kertész’s *Fateless* symbolizes the loss of innocence, loss of security and safety in childhood during troubled historical times through the character of Gyuri. The Hungarian boy suddenly faces the worst moments of crisis of his life and is expected to come to an age emotionally, mentally and psychologically. However, it is the ending of the novel when Gyuri refers to a peculiar time of the day that also used to be his favourite hour in the camp, that gives us the most important symbol of the novel. On the horizon of the sky, it is the evening time – a time neither of glorious brightness nor of pitched darkness. It symbolizes the life of Gyuri – a life which is torn between light and darkness, hope and despair, fate and fatelessness. It also symbolizes homesickness and nostalgia that overpowers the mind of Gyuri throughout the novel.

Schindler's List uses a number of symbols and images, some of them recurring, to underscore its central questions and ideas. One of the most memorable scenes in the book is when Schindler, sitting on his horse, observes the destruction of the Jewish ghetto and, amidst all the turmoil, the figure of a small child wearing a red dress. It is after witnessing this event that Schindler vows to do everything he can to defeat the system. The red dress makes the young girl stand out, and it seems, for the first time, Schindler really understands that the Jews in the ghetto are individuals—humans—who are being subjected to the most inhuman treatment imaginable. The small-ness of the child may be seen to represent innocence and the red to represent the blood of the Jewish people.

Oskar Schindler in *Schindler's List* symbolizes as a "minor god of deliverance, double-faced" who brings salvation to his Jewish workers. This ties in with the question of the complex nature of morality, for Schindler is not a conventional type of god. He is like Bacchus, the god of wine, who loves to indulge in good food and drink, but he also performs

good acts. Amon Goeth is symbolically represented as the Roman emperor Caligula, famed for his cruelty and excesses. Another effective symbol is the piles of personal items. In one of the most jarring scenes in the novel, Jews are loaded onto cattle cars as a recorded voice tells them to leave their luggage on the platform, as it will follow on a separate train. The luggage, however, will not follow them. Instead, Nazis bring it to a back room, where they dump out and sort the contents. This room holds huge piles of personal belongings, including photographs, shoes, hairbrushes, and clothing, all separated for processing. At a table sits a group of Jewish jewelers, forced to sort and determine the value of the gold, silver, and jewels belonging to those on the train. These piles symbolize the millions of lives that were lost—not just the physical lives but the very essence of the victims, who are stripped of their identity.

Lahore in Asgar Wajahat's play *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Jamiy Nai*, like Gangauli of Rahi Masoom Reza and Mano Majra of Khushwant Singh is largely shown as a space of religious tolerance though it has its own limited share of hooligans like Pahalwan and his disciples Anwar, Siraj, Raza, Muhammad Shah and Fayaz. The communal frenzy represented by Pahalwan and his disciples is not sufficient enough to disrupt and shake the firm foundations of 'secularism' and 'syncretic culture' represented by Sikander Mirza, Shayar Nasir Kazmi and Maulvi Sahib. Their roots are firmly grounded in their intrinsic faith in 'Ganga-Jamuni' culture. Almost all the characters in this play, whether Hindu or Muslim, have shared a common cultural heritage and it is evident from the fact that though Ratan's mother is a Hindu, but her language as well as the language spoken by Maulvi Saheb is Punjabi, whereas the immigrants who came from India spoke Urdu. The character of Maulvi is usually shown as an orthodox and a conservative figure by most of the writers; however, Maulvi Saheb as projected by Asgar Wajahat is far more liberal, tolerant and secular in his beliefs and attitude. Through the character of Maulvi Saheb, the dramatist reinforces and re-

states his firm belief in the history of Hindu-Muslim solidarity of more than thousand years and which has been a part of our nation's cultural heritage. Like a true humanist, Maulvi Saheb champions the cause of humanity and noble human values. His discourse is deeply founded in the long-lasting cultural roots which promote tolerance, brotherhood and syncretic culture. In no time, the old mother of Ratanlal Johri creates a space for herself in the hearts and minds of all with her generosity, kindness, hospitality, helpfulness and by rendering selfless services to one and all. She has become 'Mai' to all – an old Hindu woman worthy of admiration and love, an idol of inspiration and courage. It is through her altruistic and philanthropic acts that she has assimilated herself into the social structure of newly created Pakistan. Sikander Mirza and his family permit her to carry on all Hindu traditions, customs, rites and rituals related to daily life as well as festivals. 'Haveli' itself becomes an important metaphor of the co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in a socio-cultural space.

Whether it is Rupnagar, Vyaspur, Shmnagar or Dhaka, Intizar Husain in his novel *Basti* symbolically represents these villages as places in transition. These places withstand the worst harrowing days of Partition and bear testimony to the inhuman violence. However, the best symbol employed by the novelist to represent history in the novel is the protagonist Zakir. As the professor of history, Zakir symbolizes the analyzing of traditional historiography, its methodology and modes of historical representation. Zakir represents the passive intellectuals who are bewildered looking at the course of history.

Abdullah Hussein's *The Weary Generations* symbolically represents the weariness and the exhaustion of at least three generations through its characters. The preceding events of Partition and the communal violence that took place in the wake of Pakistan proved to be a blood-sucking monster, which symbolically drained life out of these weary generations. The life of Naim Ahmad Khan epitomizes the youths confused between their love for the roots and belongingness and a life of action, which would bring glory, fame and prosperity.

Concluding Remarks

Post-Colonialism, New Historicism, and Subaltern Studies fix the lens of history on the subalterns, victims and marginalized sections of society rather than on the elites. They look at history from the grounds of ambivalence and subaltern provides the vantage point. In spirit, this approach of historical investigation is closer to a writer's representation of history in a literary text. A writer also focuses on individuals caught and trapped in the turmoil of large historical events. Counter-history in the form of literary narratives oppose not only the dominant narratives on history, but also the prevailing modes of historical thought, methods and research. Re-writing of history from the perspective of the victims and sufferers is a way to re-claim the 'lost' or 'unheard' history. It is an act of emancipation, that is to say, freeing history from being hegemonic and unilateral.

The present thematic and comparative study was an attempt to re-claim the history of millions of victims of war and violence, and thereby to contribute to the debate about the representation of history in literature. Literary narratives unearth the hidden individual narratives of trauma and violence; bring them to the surface; give them a voice and break the silence in the collective sphere. Literature neither negates nor is antithetical to history. At best, it is supplementary and demands readers to universalize, empathize, to visualize and imagine than being merely informed. Literary narratives on and about historical events are as crucially important as are mainstream written histories. If the objective of the history is to teach and inform, then literature rouses and intimately disturbs. Literature as an emotional chronicle is a history of the indescribable and in many ways a quest to impart sentiments rather than information. Given the scope of interdisciplinarity, the time has ripened for an academic collaboration between a literary writer and a historian, which would culminate into a venerable and protracted tradition of writing history.

Thus, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Kertész's *Fateless*, Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's List*, Asghar Wajahat's *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Jamiyai Nai*, Intizar Husain's *Basti* and Abdullah Hussein's *The Weary Generations* exhibit the possibilities of human evil, suffering and its various manifestations. They also argue that how an ideology fails to justify itself in the face of acute human suffering. Identity politics in terms of binary polarities (German-Jew, Hindu-Muslim, Sikh-Muslim) proved absurd and meaningless in the face of human crisis. They also show that how religion is used as an ideological political weapon for the process of 'othering' and victimization of 'the other'. Yet, all the literary narratives highlight the strategies adopted by individuals and communities for survival, for resisting the penetration of racial and communal discourse in their day-to-day life. Representation of history in literary narratives is in many ways a quest – a quest for survival, identity and human solidarity.

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- www.bethshalom.com (Holocaust Web Centre)
- www.hmd.org.uk (Holocaust Memorial Day)

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