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A Lull in the Language: Language as a Zone of Problematization in Selected Partition Narratives

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Abstract: The Partition of India in 1947 was a defining moment in the socio-cultural and political history of the Indian subcontinent. Although elided as an acarpous incident to the appeal of a decolonized India forwarded by the saga of India's independence at midnight, the Partition of India and the birth of Pakistan are two incidents indelibly important to our cultural topography. As such feminist scholars, writers, creative and critical thinkers composed a series of narratives dramatizing, illustrating, problematizing the Partition problem from a literary, and cultural and humanistic point of view. The present research paper reads two such creative works that problematize the ideology of division, the violence of rioting and particularly, the sectarian nature of human viciousness. However, the paper performs this task by reading the language of the two short stories and underscoring how etymological and philological qualities of a language can be used to creatively represent and illustrate a violent incident.

Keywords: Partition, short stories, language, culture, violence.

Introduction

Yeh daagh daagh ujaalaa, yeh shab gazidaa seher
Woh intezaar tha jiska, yeh woh seher to nahin
Yeh woh seher to nahin, jis ki aarzoo lekar
Chale the yaar ki mil jaayegi kahin na kahin
— Faiz Ahmed Faiz, "Subh-e-Azadi"

The iconic voice of the famous Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz expresses the instability and the disequilibrium, as well as the torment and frustration that the Partition entailed. In fact, the fallout of kinship structures, the dilution of popular heterogeneity in the political rigmarole of cartographic negotiation, the nightmarish reality of communal violence, not to mention the loss of belonging contingent to territorial displacement, manifestly delineate the Partition as something more problematic than merely the price the "Indian subcontinent paid for freedom from the British rule," (Penguin India 2017).

Still residing in "an inassimilable place outside history" (Bhaba 250), the Partition of India as a historical event that altered South Asian culture (nationally and translationally) is severely restricted and laden with liminality. The territorial fragmentation and the violence the Partition generated still remain steeped in exclusion in nationalist historiography committed to eulogizing the freedom from British rule while minoritizing the price paid by the people for the emancipation. Nevertheless, the historicization of the subaltern voices of the "unhistorical bodies" (Daiya 313) of the "undead, dead" (ibid) refugees that interrogate the violence of politics and the Partition is voluble in works of art and literature, feminist historiography and a gamut of performance and visual texts that form a rich archive of alternative history concertedly interrupting the anti-verbality of nationalist documentation on the subject of Partition and the ensuing trauma and violence.

The present research paper has sought to align itself with the works of these feminist scholars, activists and artists in

appropriating the Partition as a major historical event that needs to be legitimized and critically examined as a "founding moment of cataclysmic violence" that continue to "inform newer waves and forms of violence in the subcontinent" (Misri 7).

From the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, the Bhagalpur riots in 1989, the Babri masjid demolition in 1991 to acts of anti-Dalit violence, anti-Adivasi, gender violence and episodes of mob lynching it seems that "memories of Partition" (ibid) still produce "divisions and inequalities" in the postcolonial life of India thus manifesting itself not as a "phenomenal event" (Misri 9) laden with violence that occurred "out of time and place" but as a "historically and socially" elemental process that not only travels in the demesne of discourse but hypotheses it at the same time. With such a purview, the present research paper has sought to explore how the violence of the Partition has left its impact on "literary and cultural production," (Misri 8). Accordingly, I have studied the narrative documentation of violent in two iconic short stories problematizing the Partition problem.

Taking a leave from theme-based study of Partition narratives, my paper seeks to offer a new point of view in that directs attention toward the question of language as a cultural agency, something that is powerfully and politically used by violators and in this case, creative writers.

My paper follows the narrative trajectory of two short stories: "The Savior" ("Traankarta") by Nabendu Ghosh and "Peshawar

Express" by Krishan Chandar and seeks to underline how violence as a central idea in the short stories is communicated.

Reading "The Savior" ("Traankarta") by Nabendu Ghosh

The story "The Savior" shows how communal violence during the Partition was enacted by the subalterns of the society at the behest of the upper classes. The epithet, the savior, is meant for Jhogru Sardar, a low-caste *dom*, a Hindu undertaker whose principal duty is to cremate the dead and look after the crematorium. The complex narrative documents how men like Jhogru who dwell on the periphery of the society are engulfed by the spirit of rioting and violence during crisis for the sake of their community that in normal times disowns them. Jhogru is depicted as a leader of a claque that played a key role during the Kolkata riots and is well known by the police. The middle-class gentlemen of the locality where Jhogru lives bribe and recruit him and his clan to fight on their behalf during a communal strife. In the end, when the Jhogrus of their neighborhood die after deadly clashes with the police, the genteel middle-class quietly take their leave. The story in many ways reminds one of Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery". Like Jackson's classic, Ghosh's story too dwells on the idea of a scapegoat, a community stooge who is dispensable and superfluous in normal terms. Nevertheless, it is the scapegoat whose sacrifice is needed to purge the evil in the society and restore good/normalcy. The violent undertone in both the stories is unmistakable.

The story begins in an atmosphere of foreboding and shares resemblance with other short fictional narratives on Partition where the contingency of violence is similarly represented:

The terrible news had reached the neighborhood too, news of the riots. Tension was palpable on the streets. It was deserted. Even the stray dogs had disappeared. Only a few daring young men were puffing at their cigarettes while clustering around the entrance of the lanes.

The other neighborhood was up in flames – severed heads soaked in blood landed here and there, breasts of 16-year-old virgins had been cut off, angelic infants were bashed against the hard concrete, in pitch-dark hell the devil was ceremoniously installed tonight over there. The news had reached the locality—details of the horrific incident drifted through the breeze before halting there.

People didn't know the way out. They were mesmerized by a torrent of fear. Fear that was unspeakable. Fear which made the hearts pound and made them want to huddle together. Fear that was ugly. This made life lose all flavor. (Ghosh 131)

The opening is notable for its marked convergence on the contingency of violence that besets the neighborhood. The narrative voice belongs to a third-person extradiegetic narrator figure and gives us a systematic presentation of the setting and surroundings. The setting of the story in a riot-torn city, still anonymous, allows us an insight into the narrator's equation of a prospect of violence with the depiction of external visual realities. The author uses a combination of long and short sentences to reinforce the dramatic effect of foreboding. The

short sentences accentuate the suspense emphatically. In the first and the third paragraph at least, the effect derives more from the obvious relation between a long and a short sentence, sited thoughtfully. The impact of the first sentence is considerable. The intransitive conclusion of the first sentence actively supply the rhythm for the subsequent narrative development. Here, for instance, what forcibly suggests itself to us is the final noun "riots" highlighted by its position, its particular emphasis set off by the comma. The usage and positioning of adjectives like "deserted," "palpable," and "daring" within sentences in the first paragraph combine to artfully intensify suspense.

The tautness in narration is carried over to the second paragraph where the sense of foreboding is further intensified by the imagery of violence. The usage of verbs animate the first sentence where violent actions are set forth one after another, their sequence vividly illustrating the violence experienced by the people. The verbs "severed," "soaked," "bashed," "installed", in collusion with adjectives— "angelic," "16-year-old," "pitch-dark," "hard" — animate the syntactic structure of the first sentence and unfolds a series of violent events with stark precision. The intensity of the first sentence in the second paragraph is furthered by the contrastive parallelism created by the adjective "angelic" and following noun "devil" who is being "ceremoniously" (adjective) installed in the "pitch-dark" (adjective) "hell" (noun). The particular sequence of the two words "angelic" (adj) and "devil" (noun) in consecutive clauses creates a vivid visual image of the violent proceedings in the *other* neighborhood with unequivocal precision. The final

sentence in the second paragraph uses synesthesia, "the figure of speech in which the subject and the subject and the image to which it is being compared come from different sensory domains: visual as sonic, tactile as olfactory, etc.," (Saussy 328). Synesthesia (*sound as vision*) in the sentence "The news had reached the locality—*details of the horrific incident drifted through the breeze before halting there*," (Ghosh 131) complement the sense of foreboding and direct our attention to the contingency of violence that lurks in the vicinity. The sense of anxiety the author wishes to communicate relies heavily on the discourse. Suspense is created in the first two paragraphs, at least, by foreshadowing through hints of what might happen.

Suspense is more focused in the third paragraph where people are described to be stuck in a hermetically sealed environment of impending violence. The usage of short sentences in the paragraph, four times in a five-sentence paragraph, impart a doubled emphasis on the eventuality of violence and adds an insistent finality. The simple flat sentence that begins the paragraph serves as a kind of fundamental declaration, creating a dramatic effect. Repetition of the word *fear* — "They were mesmerized by a torrent of fear. Fear that was unspeakable. Fear which made the hearts pound and made them want to huddle together. Fear that was ugly," (Ghosh 131) — as opener in three consecutive sentences intensifies the focus on the emotion and the exigency of violence that surrounds it. Considering that "[r]epetition is, naturally, one of the easiest symbolic effects to create, since it is also a quality of grammatical constructions when they are compounded and

repeated, and needs no ingenious translation by the reader from symbol to sense, from syntax to meaning," (Tufte 256) Partition short stories often use the symbolic effect of repetition to illustrate an atmosphere of violence and foreboding. For example in Yashpal's "Holy War" translated from Hindi to English by Alok Bhalla, the words *darkness* (noun) and *silence* (noun) are repeated in the first, second and fourth paragraphs respectively and synonyms of the following and the latter words are used time and again to convey the sense of foreboding and to illustrate the effect of communal violence: "Profound *darkness* and deep *silence* of a city under curfew…*Darkness* and *silence* also lay along the entire length and breadth of Sayyidmittha Bazaar which ran perpendicular to the Gali…The *dark* clouds above the still and *silent* city had closed it in so firmly that even the breeze could not stir in it" (Yashpal 193).

In more than one way, the openings of the two short stories— "The Savior" ("Traankarta") by Nabendu Ghosh and Yashpal's "A Holy Way", one dealing with Bengal Partition, the other with the Partition experience in the Punjab, and both representing the effect of violence— seem analogous in their dealing with the central problem of violence and its representation. A comparative analysis of the openings of the two stories suggest a similar fixation with fear and foreboding. Fear, darkness, silence, emptiness and fire are motifs common to the openings of in both these short stories. Darkness as a motif suggesting an absence of hope is treated as such: "Profound *darkness* and deep *silence* of a city under curfew" in "Holy War" (Yashpal 193) while Ghosh deals with the same motif almost synonymously in his story –-"Tension was palpable on the streets. It was

deserted. Even the stray dogs had disappeared" (Ghosh 131). Similarly, the fixation of people being stuck in a hermetically sealed world of continuous violent action is evident in both the stories. Ghosh talks about it in the thirds paragraph "[p]eople didn't know the way out. They were mesmerized by a torrent of fear" while Yashpal in the fourth paragraph: "[T]he curfew had made the night even more gloomy and suffocating. The dark clouds above the still and silent city had closed it in so firmly that even the breeze could not stir in it" (Yashpal 193). Fire, too, is a motif that the two writers dealing with two distinct and different chapters of the Partition episode, is used to demonstrate violence. Fire as a motif suggesting violence appears in the second paragraphs of both the short stories: "The other neighborhood was up in flames" (Ghosh 131) and "Four days ago, a fire in the Gali had destroyed all the electric wires and street lamps" (Yashpal 194). Another example of a narrative text where the author uses fear as a metaphor of violence is Agyeya's story "Muslim-Muslim Bhai-Bhai" translated from original Hindi by the author himself: "There is no epidemic like fear, particularly .because fear not really a sickness—even the healthiest know fear—and fear kills not by itself but through other sicknesses. One could almost say that it is not a pestilence but the mother of pestilences" (Agyeya 64). In fact, as we go along reading narratives of the two chapters of India's Partition side by side, we learn to see similar narrative techniques used for symbolic effects in both instances. Fear, darkness (suggesting an absence of light and hope), desertion (suggesting lifelessness, lack of vitality), silence, heat (suggesting discomfort, lack of fecundity) and fire appear more than once in Partition narratives from East and the West to

illustrate violence. Longer works like Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* also use synonymous motifs to represent violence. The first paragraph of *Train to Pakistan* is particularly illustrative. This similarity in narrative techniques suggest the portrayal of violence involves usage of motifs that share similar signification across myriad cultures

Ghosh's narration in the following paragraphs intensifies the sense of uncertainty and anxiety that qualify the opening of the story. This juxtaposition accentuates the sense of foreboding and leads us to the rising action in the plot. The fourth paragraph is particularly important in conveying the tenseness of the situation. On the one hand, the narrator describes how the adults of the community, at the realization that the prospect of violence looms large, insist on quietude as a rudimentary strategy of evading attention of the violent party. At the same time, the narrator directs our attention to the innocent children who do not quite grasp the gravity of the situation and end up being loud. The only instance of direct speech in the first five paragraphs occurs here:

> *It was the children who did not understand very much. They broke into laughter now and then, went up the stairs noisily, talked loudly among themselves. All of a sudden, the vigilant adults would bark at them, 'Shut up, or else you'll be slapped hard enough to make your head reel' (Ghosh 131).*

While the direct speech performs the illocution (Chatman 162) of reprimanding the kids, the "perlocutionary" (Chatman 161) aspect communicates fear intrinsic to the tensed community to

the readers. The passage most importantly allows us an insight into the narrator's equation of external situation with the impending prospect of violence. It is important to note that the speaker of the aforementioned speech is not named, the speech is not tagged to one person suggesting a harmony in perspective: the setting and circumstances have apparently imprinted their apprehension in vocabulary. People are inextricably caught up in a scheme of things from which there is no escape.

Ghosh's story is a narrative about the collective, the neighborhood that is at the mercy of violent communal forces outside its control and beyond its hold. The narrator mediating our vision resorts to diegesis (telling) to narrate their helplessness and fear:

> *They could find no way to save themselves. Behind closed doors they were discussing a possible course of action. It wasn't just bad news they had heard the terrible news that tonight those others from that neighborhood would attack these people here. Shivers ran down their spine when they heard this—what could they do? How could they save themselves? (Ghosh 131)*

The authorial narrator informs the readers that violence is inevitable. The binaries of us/they having established, the narrator suggests that the situation has gone from "bad" to "worse" and until something is done and that too speedily, there is no way the neighborhood could save themselves. The apprehension of the situation is documented by the immediate somatic reaction of the people to the revelation that violence is unavoidable. They experience shivers running down their spine

out of fear and anxiety. A cohering parallelism is created by a couple of rhetorical questions in the final sentence that set the agenda for the next part of the story: the way the people would extricate themselves from the impending violence.

Ghosh's story deals with irony with an almost Mantoesque appreciation of the situation of the subalterns in the context of communal violence during the Partition. In acknowledging the ravages of communal disturbance, the story unequivocally accounts the human cost of rioting where the marginalized are enrolled to fight for the cultural hierarchy. The extradiegetic/authorial narrator having introduced us to the scenario and the setting with a broad sweep now concentrates on one family and the reactions of their myriad members to the prospect of violence. Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* has dealt with "[v]alues, norms, beliefs" and is especially useful in showing how the implied author '"molds beliefs" by discriminating among and emphasizing certain values, whether traditional, as in *Tom Jones, Pride and Prejudice*…or unusual, new or "nonexistent"…' (Booth qtd. in Chatman 241). In Ghosh's story too we can see the narrator wielding his judgment as he interprets the actions of the members of the household of the barrister Mr. Bose in so many words: Arun, Mr. Bose's son, could not "sneak in or out of his home" because it reassembled the heavily guarded palace of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Ghosh's ideological machete further sharpens when he interprets the actions of Ruby, Mr. Bose's daughter who has been forced by the circumstances to "stop going out to movies, parties and picnics" (Ghosh 132). With the contingency of violence looming large, "[t]he desire to flit like a butterfly" has

"vanished totally" (Ghosh 132). The interpreting narration summons an optative mood by conjecturing what Arun and Ruby would have done if the situation had been otherwise. If the daughter's social life strikes us as frivolous, Mr. Bose's own uncommunicated fear despite being armed with "two rifles, 500 cartridges, a gatekeeper, bearers, servants and a driver" (Ghosh 133) is ironic and his wife's exclamations of helplessness dramatic. Clearly, although Ghosh's story entails narration that is strongly covert, the narrator makes chance interpretation to underline the irony of the situation wherein we have a narrator carrying on a communication with the reader inconsistent with the actual words he uses in the text. Based on that, the unfairness of the situation gradually becomes apparent wherein the subalterns— bearers, servants, gatekeepers— are meant to protect the aristocratic moneyed class by default; but who would protect them? This is the query Ghosh's narrative implies.

Ironic narration saturates the rest of the story as well as irony becomes the narrator's consistent deportment. Once we are attuned to the narrator's ironic wave length, we can read its manifestation in the story: Jhogru Sardar is at one a member of the *dom* community whom "the aristocratic and respectable neighbors would rather disown" and a savior ("the trankarta") of the same aristocratic community. The irony emerges as we learn the nature of the real business when the *doms,* who in normal circumstances "are denied entry to the Shiva temple at the entrance of" the neighborhood" in question because of their low caste are enrolled by means of petty cash and sweet talk to fight for the neighborhood. In times of crisis, Ghosh points out, even untouchable *doms* become "equals" (Ghosh

136) and Jhogru Sardar, whose appearance makes Ruby screw up her nose and mumble '"how ugly and dirty'" (Ghosh 140) grows into "a human being…a Hindu" and a "brother" (Ghosh 140) in the eyes of Mr. Bose and his allies of the defense community who signs him up to protect them from impending communal violence. This inclusiveness reminds one of Laing and Cooper who suggested that "fraternity is always invented in particular circumstances, in a particular perspective, evoking a particular reciprocity. Given this specification, fraternity is the right of each over each…" (Laing and Cooper qtd. in Singh 60). The violence that the local elite wield to serve the interest of their class is founded on their belief in the legitimacy of their authority to use their "freedom" to make decisions to "annihilate" (J.P. Sartre, op. cit., in Singh 58) the "freedom" of men like Jhogru and his community. Masquerading as a "bond of fraternity" their action is in actuality an act of "oppression" (ibid) "imposing an untranscendable (sic) statute on" (ibid) Jhogru Sardar that makes him by virtue of his newly-pledged relation to the group of Hindus, to which he now belongs, a savior of his clan. Jhogru, however, doesn't realize the politics of the elite intellectuals or their stratagems, for he is truly touched by this inclusion. Herein, the irony becomes sharp. The irony emerges when we read the direct tagged sentences of dialogue among the allies of the Defense Committee. There is minimal narrator mediation and the story turns increasingly dialogic relying heavily on the inferences the implied readers draw from the illocutionary effect of the sentences spoken by the characters to one another. In the "Defence Committee" meeting at Mr. Bose's home "[a]lmost all local heavyweights" like "the elderly professor Nibaran Mukherjee, the lawyer

Haridas Mitra, Dr. Santosh Dutta (MB, FRCS), and the iron merchant Sukumar Roy" are engaged in conversation trying to figure a way out from the impending violence that is soon to befall them. In the middle of the elaborate discussion on resistance strategy should the enemy attack them, the central problem manifests itself:

> *But suddenly a young man called Jatin began the trouble…He asked, 'You have taken care of almost everything. But if they come and attack us right here, who's going to put up a fight?'*

(The expression "you have taken care of almost everything" implies that the discussion so far has been purely academic. Jatin has protested to its inadequacy of the conversation so far by drawing attention to the nub of the problem.)

That was the bombshell. It shook the whole place. Absolutely right. It had never occurred to anyone even in a flash! One had to think about it.

(The use of exclamation here, together with the fragmentary sentences, produces a particular emotional emphasis and almost verges on the melodramatic. The juxtaposition of narrative telling (diegesis) along with dialogue intensifies the urgency. Irony here is stable and intended. Considering the situation, it seems unbelievable that a real contingency of violence wherein the elites would have to put up a real fight had not occurred to them so far.)

The businessman said, 'But all of us will fight, we'll take the plunge.'

> *The elderly academic shook his head, 'This doesn't seem satisfactory. A group of people always has to be on guard on the streets ready to fight, should the enemy attack. Therefore, they have to be prepared to be lay down their lives all the time. Will all able-bodied men do that or will they be willing to do that?'*
>
> *This caused another explosion. True, who would actually fight them? If their worst fears turned real; if thousands of people came and stormed this place all of a sudden, would they be able to save themselves from this island-like abodes by stocking up on bricks, stones and sticks?*
>
> *(Ghosh 137)*

Ghosh's narrator interprets the gist of the dialogue in the above passage. The rhetorical questions used set the agenda for what is to follow. A conversational consistency is created by elaborating the central problem that manifests itself before the neighborhood elites. Commentary here "conveys the…narrator's voice more distinctly" (Chatman 228) and makes the reader aware of a sense of premonition. In the narrator's interpretation, there is a union of narrator and character considerations. The narrator seems to be helping the characters in becoming conscious of the fact that violence is inescapable and they need a real, practical defense mechanism to cope with it. Repetition of the central concern, the need to find an active security group to protect the elites should the Other community attack, simultaneously creates an ironic effect wherein the narrator implies that despite all their talk, the elites would be unwilling to actually engage in an act of counter-violence and increases the dramatic effect by accentuating the

rhythm of the narrative movement. We now a resolution is lurking in the vicinity. The following passage reflects the tenseness of the current situation and the dominant sense of purpose as it presented itself to the characters within the story who find themselves trapped in a moment of certain viciousness:

> *Jatin smiled and nodded, 'Fine, I'll suggest a way out. Are you aware of the group of poor people who reside between our neighborhood and theirs?'*
>
> *'The doms?'*

'Yes. They are not part of the other neighborhood. In fact, they consider themselves belonging to our area and though they are denied entry into the Shiva temple at the entrance of our lane, they offer prayers to the idol. In other words, they are Hindus.'

Mr. Bose smiled at him appreciatively, 'The idea!'

Jatin continued, 'They eat less, hardly have anything to wear; yet they are strong. So many of us have us have come together today but we are helpless because we have lost something in which they have practiced ease. So if you really want to form an effective defense committee, call them. And raise funds— now.'

The business man immediately became alert. 'Why funds?'

'You have to feed the cow you milk,' Jatin smiled.

'What do you mean?' The business man asked, irritated.

'It's very simple. We have to buy them arms, feed them well, supply them with cheap booze.'

Mr. Bose supported Jatin and said, 'That's right. We have to fulfill the demands of those who are ready to die.'

(Ghosh 137-38)

In the above passage the following are ironized:

1. Jatin's assertion that the doms, who in normal circumstances, are not willingly considered part of the Hindu community; who are poor, have less to eat and yet are powerful and naturally hostile. They are, therefore, logically adept in the art of self-preservation in a way that the elites are not.
2. The disparity between Jatin's remarks and the implied reader's reconstruction of the situation as a scenario of exploitation of the poor.
3. People who secure the service of the marginalized in violent actions without even securing their approval in the first place.
4. Charity, which should be a product of compassion, is found to descend specifically from its nonexistence. To the exploiting capitalists the poor doms are subalterns who must naturally be willing to die for them for the sake of the pittance they offer as handouts. The generalization is tongue-in-cheek.
5. The capitalist blindness to human miseries of people lower down the social scale and their social irresponsibility that prompts them to regard them in animal terms: bovine creatures, to be exact, acquiescing and obliging without complaining.

In the context of the story, it is important to address this representational trope of the cow for the dom Jhogru Sardar. Akira Muzuta Lippit has examined the "role of the animal in philosophic enquiry" (Wells 135) and has suggested that "by tracking the animal across the philosophical spectrum, one discovers the systematic manner in which the figure of the animal comes to portray a serial logic: the animal is incapable of language; that lack prevents the animal from experiencing death; this in turn suspends the animal in a virtual, perpetual existence. The figure of the animal determines a radically antithetical counterpoint to human mortality, to the edifice of humanism" (Lippit 73).The perspective that emerges from the assessment of the visualization is that the "denial of consciousness…accords the animal," Jhogru in the story, a particular kind of statelessness" (Wells 153) hence the dwelling in the liminal space between the two warring communities. It also defines his alienness and highlights the avaricious tendency of capitalists, epitomized in the scheming Bengali elites, forever abusing and exploiting the animal merely because they believe that "animals do not have souls…therefore animals cannot have consciousness either" (Page 7) and consequently, cannot "imagine, anticipate, or fear death" (Wells 153).

Further, the idea of a scapegoat, a victim from the lowest community is problematic and violent as well. Considering that the ancient Hindu text, the Rig Veda, states that in the dawn of creation there was man and it's from man's martyrdom and dismemberment that the entire world came into being, including the hierarchical arrangement of human society, the

cultural elites in the story seem to attest this traditional sacrificial world view without equivocation. The suggested strategy of appeasing the sacrificial victim before the actual act of killing is reminiscent of religious sacrifices common in Hindu tradition, especially in the worship of Shakti, deities who receive blood-offerings. By offering money to Jhogru Dom, Jatin and his allies seem to disclaim any guilt they might have had if he died in the process of protecting them. Their act metaphorically intones the words: "We bought you with a price and did not seize you; now we sacrifice you according to our custom, and no sin rests on us," (Padel 111). Dialogue here establishes individual specificity and the author seems to use mimesis deftly to highlight Jatin's calculative nature, the businessman's blatant materialism and Mr. Bose's wry shrewdness. Language is a significant tool, as Ghosh seems to suggest for uses language to "deploy a wide range of verbal underlings and concealment, promotion and deception," (Chatman 209).

Narrative commentary that follows the above passage places in categorical positions a series of nouns and adjectives that contribute to the ironic effect. The cultural elites gather a sum of fifty rupees to be *donated* to the dom community: "It was a *noble* (adj) cause". They believe it is the small price for their life: "After all, what could be more *valuable* (adj) than life? Let them have a *feast* (noun)" (Ghosh 138). Also, the use of short sentences and repetition (the expression "noble cause" is repeated twice, for example) imparts a telling emphasis appropriate to the context. The short basic sentences intensifies the readers' focus on the persons gathering the funds to lure the unsuspecting low caste doms into sacrificing their lives for

them. The emphatic positioning of the rhetorical questions—"After all, what could be more valuable than life?", "Was it not worth doing at least this bit for the people who would lay down their lives for the sake of their neighbors?" (Ghosh 138)—creates a persistence and echoes the smug rationalization of the neighborhood elites.

It is interesting to note that the implied author prefers a record of speech (dialogue) between Mr. Bose and Jhogru dom in the crucial episode when the services of the latter are actually are actually employed. Bakhtin has suggested that quotations, like other conventional emblems that are focused on a certain signification, are also '"objectivized" and understood "not only from the point of view of [their] object, [but] become [themselves] object[s] as…characteristic, typical, or picturesque" that is reflective of the characters' (Bakhtin qtd. in Chatman 167). The implied author merely transcribes the oral speech into a written record, thereby conveying the idea that "[c]haracters use language to argue…to carry on business, to rhapsodize, to cogitate, to promise, to make commitments, to lie, and so on, always within the boundaries of the world of the story," (Chatman 166) and the semantic authority of the implied author may not tamper with the characters' intention:

'Listen Jhogru, we'll give you and your people lots of cash for buying booze—as much as you want. We'll give you money not only for the booze but for a feast as well.'

(…)

'It's very kind of you hujoor, but…'

Mr. Bose interrupted him and said, 'I'll tell you. You know there have been riots, don't you?'

Jhogru nodded.

'They might attack us tonight.'

'Yes'

'We are Hindus, both you and us.'

'That's true.'

'If Hindus don't help each other, who will?'

'Sure'

'If they come will you put up a fight? We…we are going to join in too and fight united.' (Ghosh 140)

Several important point suggest themselves here. First, the narrative record is a mix of free style and tagged narration, although tags which suggest narrator presence are limited, and so is narrator commentary. The implied author's "foreign intention does not penetrate inside the objective word; it takes it rather as a whole and without altering the sense or tone, subordinates it to its own tasks," (Bakhtin 156). Mr. Bose's words perform the illocution (See Chatman 162) of proposing an alliance with Jhogru and achieves the perlocution (the effect of the illocution on the hearer, Jhogru, in this case) of persuading Jhogru to fight the attackers in exchange for the money that they offer— ''If they come will you put up a fight? We…we are going to join in too and fight united' (Ghosh 140). Their joining in in the attack and fighting united seems to be an afterthought inserted only inveigle Jhogru as suggested by the ellipses. It is

interesting to note that when Jhogru doesn't unequivocally agree to the scheme at first, Mr. Bose makes a big show of including him in the fraternal bond: "'Dom? ...What if you are a dom? You are a human being just like us and a Hindu— sit down brother'" (ibid). The statement performs the illocution of admitting an intra-communal bond between the low caste doms and the high caste elites and performs the perlocution of deceiving Jhogru into accepting the words as true. To the perennially marginalized low caste Jhogru, such an inclusion means the world. It grants him a voice, a formal social acceptance that he might have always wanted but never managed to get. The sudden turn of luck— the prospect of monetary gain and the formal social inclusion into the Hindu community— renders him momentarily speechless. The implied author employs the narrator's voice to communicate Jhogru's emotion: "Jhogru tried to speak, but couldn't utter a single word. He was used to speaking non-stop even while he was dead-drunk. But today he was bereft of words in amazement, gratitude and a kind of happiness he had tasted for the first time," (Ghosh 141).

Violence is a leitmotif in Ghosh's story and the author deals with two kinds of violence in the narrative text: intra-communal violence of the elite Hindus on the marginalized doms; intercommunal violence between Hindus and Muslims, the stereotype of Partition violence. The author brilliantly combines these two distinct acts of violence—one a covert act or "soft violence" as Jayanti Basu puts it, another overt communal violence of rioting – and seems to suggest by virtue of narrative focus and attention that in his view both are equally heinous.

Toward the end of the story the author situates the narrative text squarely in the calamitous moment of impending communal riots. The paragraphs are adjectival, although nouns and adverbs are deftly used as well. It seems that the parts of speech here are carefully chosen, apportioned and affixed together with attention to narrative cadence, clarity, effect and emphasis. In the following passage the author aims to give a view of the sensory perception of hearing attributed to slogans uttered during communal riots: "Sounds of a commotion reached the ear at times. A death-dance accompanied by the slogan 'Allah ho Akbar'. The sound waves crashed upon their consciousness like a raging tide." The use of the literary device of synesthesia is interesting in the passage. The trope here combines the aural sensation with the sensation of vision. Ghosh associates the effect of the loud slogans of Muslim communal rioters on the people with the intense crashing of tide with, and thus connects the sonic with the visual.

Popular narratives on Partition violence, especially those that concentrate on naturalistic violence have referred to religious slogans as metaphors of communal politics indissolubly allied with violence. In Krishna Sobti's "Where is My Mother?" the author uses the trope of religious slogans to illustrate the picture of violence: "Cries of 'Allah-ho-Akbar' and 'Har-Har Mahadev' could be heard at a distance. 'Catch him, kill him,' 'No, no, please…' Yunus Khan heard all of them," (Sobti 135-36). Manto in his story "The Will of Gurmukh Singh" refers to the religious slogans of Hindus and Muslims as battle cries as well: "The night presented an entirely different scenery now. Big flames of fire rose like big giants in the utter darkness of the

night. These giants emitted fire from their mouths like a fountain, slogans like Allah-o-Akbar and Har-Har-Mahadev made the night terrifying," (Manto 47). Thus Ghosh's usage of religious slogans as a harbinger of violence seems to follow the popular trend of Partition literature, modelled after actual incidents of communal violence, where "[r]eligious slogans were used to provoke already charged emotions and to maximize the damage to the 'other'. Such slogans as Narai-Taqbir, Allah-ho-Akbar, Har-Har Mahadev and Jo Boley So Nihal were considered war cries during the carnage," (J. Singh, 20I0: 233).

Contrary to stories of Bengal Partition where reference to violence in general and communal violence in particular is conspicuous by its absence, Ghosh's illustration of communal rioting in Kolkata strikes a unique chord. He paints a graphic picture of communal violence and deftly uses language to invoke the fierceness of communal passion at large:

A few dogs barked now and then. And the Sardar stayed awake in this desolate and still night. He looked ahead; his ears alert to all sorts of sounds and counter-sounds.

> *They declared war around one at night.*
>
> *'Allah-ho-Akbar'*
>
> *'Long live Pakistan'*
>
> *Jhogru sounded his dhol. Dum, dum dum, dum. (Ghosh 141)*

Jhogru Sardar awaits a sound that is finally heard in the fifth sentence of the passage. The onomatopoetic ending of the final

sentence dramatize its arrival and add momentum to the impending story events.

The rivals came playing their bands. They were holding up blazing torches. It seemed as if a part of hell descended with them and blood thirsty spirts from a primeval forest had found shelter in their dark minds. (ibid)

The intentional use of hyperbole primarily accomplishes the task of emphasis. The two previous short sentences intensify the focus on the third and long sentence. In vivid contrast to the exaggerated third sentence, the first two sentences are used for "particular effects," "their length making effective juxtaposition with [the] longer and more complicated" (Tufte 9) third sentence.

The entire neighborhood was on alert. Sirens were sounded, the red lights blazed menacing signals atop the buildings, children were heard crying, doors and windows were slammed shut, footsteps rushed past and conch shells were blown.

[---]

> *Suddenly, they came in a flood. Their sparkling swords and knives glistened in the light of the blazing torches that shone like the mid-day sun. (Ghosh 141-42).*

On the narrative level we see a composite of surprise and suspense. The pattern of suspense foreshadow the threat that looms large for the neighborhood which is accentuated by the reference to the "swords and knives". The author uses a volley of adjectives— "red," "menacing," "sparkling," "blazing"— and verbs— "sounded," "blazed," "slammed," "rushed," "blown,"

glistened," "shone"—illustrate a picture of impending violence. The adverbial opener "suddenly" and the simile "blazing torches that shone like the mid-day sun" possess potency and claim our attention. Though the imagery is not original, it is resonant and deftly conveys the ominous atmosphere in a condensed manner. The author uses figurative language to depict a vivid mental picture of violence.

The network of suspense and surprise balance each other in the narrative as the two work together and create a configuration of suspense followed by a surprise: Jhogru's death in the communal battle. At the climactic moment of impending raw violence, the author resorts to irony:

> *The Shiva temple which they were never allowed to enter, the damp walls of which they were only too happy to caress and seek blessings of the mute stone idol who had never protested against the blatant discrimination they faced— Jhogru raised his slogan to hail that God.*
>
> *'Har Har Mahadeo— Glory to our Lord Shiva' (Ghosh 142)*

The irony is intended and casts in sharp relief the poignancy of the situation wherein the gullible subalterns, who were previously never considered part of the mainstream culture of the elites, are deceived into believing that they are now part of the fraternity. The narrator performs an interpretation herein to direct the reader's attention to the blatant discrimination the marginalized face, to their gullibility and innocence, and to the powerlessness of religion to safeguard the interests of the poor. In the author's view religion too has become a play thing of the

moneyed and the Gods are mere puppets in the show. In the above passage, the point of interest is Jhogru. The author depicts how despite his extraordinary muscular power, he is ignorant to the cunning of the elites who put him in the forefront and themselves manage to escape the scene of violence, unharmed. The narrator's interpretation "molds" our "beliefs" (Chatman 240) by emphasizing the complex pattern of intra-communal regularly violence meted out to Jhogru's community that the author seems to place higher up in the scale than simple communal violence. The syntactic format of the first sentence in the passage is particularly appropriate to the context. There is a complex syntactic enlargement that defines a sequence of actions illuminating the routine of exploitation the narrator puts forward. The controlled acceleration of rhythm and the use of appositive, set off by punctuation, grips the reader with its structure and content.

The author resorts to figurative language to imbibe the scene of violence with color and clarity. A simile being a powerful element of style, effectively lends itself to vividly illustrating the scene of violence:

> *And then it was like two mountains clashing. Not mountains made of soft earth but rock hard mountains of primitive times.*

There were rivers of blood. Limbs and heads flew here and there. Grey matter oozed out of crushed skulls; sharp knives kissed the soft tissues of the heart and came out victorious. (Ghosh 142)

The author creates a distinct rhythm by using "a neat braiding of a contrastive pair of adjectives" (Tufte 93) and a pair of nouns

to communicate a vivid mental picture of the rioting: "soft", "rock-hard" "sharp" "limbs and heads". The use of verbs add energy and rhythm to the passage: "clashing", "flew", "oozed", "kissed" along with the adverbial "here and there" add cohesion to passage. Adjectives and verbs are prime materials the author deftly uses to demonstrate with clarity and impact the actual act of violence.

Tomashevsky has said that "since narrative appeals through the emotions and moral sense, it requires to share interests and antagonisms with the characters. Thereby arises the story situation, with its tensions and conflicts and resolutions," (Chatman 111). Jhogru is unequivocally the main point of interest in the story and the scene of violence wherein he literally lays down his life doesn't present him as courageous but underlines his stupidity and pride and self-esteem that led him to captivated by the evil manipulations of the cultural hierarchy whose entropy of emotions for the subalterns is what troubles the narrator most. Jhogru's character has been doomed since the beginning and the post-violence section of the narrative text only justify our belief that in the clash of the warring communities, Jhogru would lose his life.

Throughout Ghosh's story there is a strong narrator prominence, waning at time, nevertheless present and correct that powerfully direct our attention to the hypocrisy of the cultural elites:

But there were many casualties. Both, on this side and the other side. Those who died on this side were the doms. The respectable babus were holding fort behind the frontline—the

fight didn't stretch that far. *If it had, they would surely have fought they said, laid down their lives.* (ibid)

The italicized presupposed portion of the sentence is particularly problematic. It possesses no conviction: we doubt if such a contingency of violence as mentioned would have arisen the cultural elites would indeed lay down their lives. Their act is presupposed; all that is mentioned is that they surely would have been part of the fight if the eventuality had presented itself. It must be noted that the narrator has used the words "they said" suggesting a lack of narrator responsibility for the assertion. The deft use of presupposition "facilitates a surreptitious narration" (Chatman 210) behind the actual text which confirms a value structure the narrator wishes the narratee to share: the characters whose consciousness is presented here are self-deceiving.

The ending of the story is poignant and the generalization employed: "philosophical observations that reach beyond the world of the fictional work into the real universe" (Chatman 243) — is motivated by the narrator's own sense of judgment:

> *Yes, Jhogru was dead because people like Jhogru were always born to save the likes of Mr. Bose. The Pandavas would never have lived if the five Nishads had not died in their place. (Ghosh 143).*

The narrator seems to be in conversation with the narratee and the paragraph that begins with a positive and goes on to provide the philosophical generalization— "Jhogru was dead because people like Jhogru were always born to save the likes of Mr. Bose."— that makes the literary text appear "to have a universal or at least a representative quality beyond the literal

facts of the case," (Booth 198). The assertion suits the narrative context in an absolute sense as it calls attention to the trend of intra-communal violence, the exploitation of the poor by the rich, which has become a stereotype in our ordinary world. The narrator simply directs our attention to this undocumented "general law," "supposedly unknown or... forgotten by the reader, which the narrator needs to teach or recall to him," (Genette qtd., in Chatman 145) to explain the actions of characters like Mr. Bose who are motivated by this unsubverted traditional code of conduct silently constructed by the likes of him who validate such intra-communal violence as we see in the story. The generalization is followed by an allusion to the episode of the *Five Nishads* in *The Mahabharata* wherein the Pandavas, the high-caste Kshatriyas, escaped from certain death by deliberately letting a family of five hunting men and their mother to die on their behalf. The narrator's citation of this episode of intra-communal violence in the ancient Hindu epic serves as a reminder that exploitation of the poor by the rich is an act of violence that predates history, thus we should not be surprised by the scapegoating of Jhogru and his community members by Mr. Bose and his allies. The narrator seems to direct our attention to the unproblematic rationalization of this social equation wherein the poor are always refused basic human rights simply because of their monetary and social standing which he thinks is more lethal than communal violence, hence the belabored discussion of the theme in the text.

Nabendu Ghosh's story from beginning to the end through its narrative style, its treatment of narrative standpoint and the

nature of the characters and their destiny makes a mindful effort to render the cruelty, indifference and hypocrisy of the elite Bengali society. As the readers become more involved in the world of Jhogru Sardar, the savior, we seem to be ensnared in the protagonist's state of affairs with no prospect of evading its horrors. With the device of providing an intimate view of the consciousness of the elites and the subjective stance of the protagonist Jhogru, Ghosh's story is a complex documentation of violence: intercommunal and intra-communal that makes it a rare cultural discourse on the Partition problem.

Reading "Peshawar Express" by Krishan Chandar

The Partition of India and the violence it unleashed occasioned one of the largest mass migrations in the history of the Indian subcontinent. Of the total number of people who migrated "2,800,000 alone are supposed to have moved in 673 refugee trains" (Butalia 58) and "[a]lmost all of these journeys resulted in surreal encounters between the two warring communities leading to death or miraculous …and exposed people to more than one side of man, who had turned into a beast, a mad fanatic, a mindless revenge seeker…" (Singh: 2007, 87-88). Several stories on the Partition, therefore, that "have captured the horror, trepidation and fear of passengers" (ibid) have problematized the train as a metaphor of violence. The train in these works is looked upon as a liminal zone with a unique power-dynamic playing within its "closed and autonomous" precinct. In many ways, therefore, a railway carriage became a "bubble of panoptic and classifying power, a module of imprisonment" (Certeau 111) a microcosm of the Partition-

wrecked social-cultural space outside dominated by violence. Krishan Chandar's "Peshawar Express" is a unique narrative record in first-person of the saga of violence. As a narrative text its singularity comes from the narrative act being performed by the anthropomorphized train acting as the first-person narrator. The narrative is autodiegetic, which according to Gerard Genette, involves a narrator and a protagonist being synonymous and encompasses the main protagonist telling his/her story. Also, the synthesis of the automated to "the embodied and the communal" (Aguiar 89) makes the story a singular narrative text in which a train that has left Peshawar with a group of refugees witnesses their violent death and recounts several other horrific events. The story starts as follows:

> *I heaved a sigh of relief as I pulled out of the Peshawar railway station. My carriages were packed with passengers, all of them Hindus. They had converged here from Peshawar, Hoti, Mardan, Kolhat, Char Sada, the Khyber Pass, Landi Kotla, Bannu, Naushehra, and Mansahra. Overcome by a sense of grave insecurity in Pakistan, they were trying to escape to India…The refugees who had taken shelter with me felt greatly relieved when I started moving slowly towards the beloved land of Punjab.*

The first line of the story suggests a homodiegetic narrative, with the protagonist and narrator, the experiencing and the narrating self, being identical. The immediacy of the situation is suggested by the narration and the reader is drawn into the narrative moment. She is invited to share the narrator's point of

view and experience the unfolding of the account. The first paragraph performs a dual function: first, it foregrounds the narrator-protagonist's indelible presence in the heart of the narrative act; second, the immediacy of the narration abstracts the pastness from the bygone action. The short final clause in the first sentence performs an enlargement of meaning by emphasizing that the refugees are Hindus and suggests that the narrator's sympathies rest with this community. The adjective *beloved* in the fourth sentence to qualify Punjab proposes a similar enlargement of meaning. The narrator's voice *tells* us what the refugees are feeling: relieved, without them admitting it. The narrator is, therefore, helping the passengers to articulate feelings which they themselves cannot express because of "inarticulateness, dramatic impropriety, or whatever" (Chatman 240).

In the subsequent paragraph as well the narrator's voice directs our attention toward the abject nature of the refugees with the intention to evoke sympathy. The narrator's interpretation justifies the decision of the Hindus to vacate their native land, which in times of communal furor after the Partition has "forsaken them, refusing to shower its bounty on them" (Chander 207). The first foreshadowing of violence is suggested by the sentence: "They were grateful that they were still alive and their womenfolk had escaped molestation" (ibid). The sentence reflects the foremost concerns: being alive and the contingency of gender violence— that occupy the consciousness of the refugees at the time the train started its journey toward Punjab and aligns the climax of the story with the passengers' trepidations.

As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the anthropomorphic train is the reflector figure and that the story is a largely diegetic communication (telling) with the train acting as the focalizer, from whose viewpoint narrative focalization is carried out. The story moves through extended passages of narrative report and the narrative action through the train's outlook leads us the readers to commiserate with the train's disquiet and anxiety. The narrator makes use of expressive features: exclamations and emphasis, for example, in the third paragraph, to dramatically animate its concerns:

> *I sped on while people sitting in the carriages cast the last lingering looks at the high-rocky cliffs, the green fields and the happy valleys with fruit laden orchards—if only they could tuck the scenery into the folds of their dresses and carry it along with them! I felt so weighed down under the cataclysmic grief that it slowed down my speed. (Chander 207)*

The exclamation that concludes the first sentence makes vivid the intensity of the longing and pain experienced by the refugees. In the following sentence the transitive verb 'weighed down' and the adjective 'cataclysmic' appropriately amplifies the emotive appeal of the paragraph. The stylistic merging of the nonverbal elements that cross the refugees' consciousness together with perceptual point of view of the inanimate narrator in the above passage insures an intimate connection between the refugees and the train, by virtue of physical contiguity, which needs to be noted.

Having given us a poignant summary of the general situation in which the refugees find themselves, the narrative moves on to a stark depiction of violence made more poignant by the fact

that just before its occurrence the refugees had felt a false sense of security. They had "taken out their food and started eating. The children…began to chatter and laugh. Girls peeped out of the windows and old men got their hookahs going," (Chander 208). The sudden subversion in the general situation in the following paragraph adds a rawness to the scene of violence that terrifies the reader. The scene of violence is extensively dwelt on and adjectives and verbs are deftly used to illustrate the graphic violence. Their emphatic positioning creates a forceful rhythm that contributes to the dramatic effect:

Soon they heard some noises in the distance mingled with the booming of drums…The long procession came into sight. The drums boomed and the processionists raised slogans…Every Muslim in the procession was carrying the corpse of a Hindu on his shoulder. They had been caught while trying to escape. Two hundred corpses. Arriving at the station the Muslims, with great solemnity, entrusted the corpses to the care of the Baluchi guards, enjoining them to escort the corpses with every care across the border. (Chander 208)

The passage is significant not only because it foreshadows more violence that is to follow, but also because it exposes the vulnerability of the passengers on the train. The narrative plays on the subversion of the role of the protector: the Baluchi guards who had been vouchsafed the task of protecting the Hindus on the train now agree to "escort" the corpses of members of the same community across the border. The situation is laden with irony: the processioninsts *entrust* corpses, and not people who are alive, to the care of the Baluchi

guards "with great solemnity" as if some virtuous act is performed. And the guards in return accept the task "gleefully". The adjective is directly judgmental and pointedly directs our attention to the inherent malevolence of the guards. The violent obliteration of life embodied by the corpses invokes an eeriness that is intensified by the matter-of-fact narration. The short minimal sentences used in conjunction with long sentences impart a telling emphasis to the passage and foreshadow a grim turn of events. Further, this scene of violence and ferocity, of suffering and the lack of humanity, is written with a prevalence of verbs, emphatically positioned and contributing to dramatic effect of the narrative as it slowly reaches toward the climax.

Once the consignment of dead bodies is loaded, the narrator feels it might now be allowed to leave. However, the situation takes a different turn as the leader of the procession suggests that to compensate for the loss of two-hundred Hindu villages, who are now dead, they would like to pick out an equivalent number of people from the train. That the proposition will be readily accepted by the Baluchi guards who praised the "wisdom" of the violators doesn't surprise or shock us for the previous passage has suggested such a turn of events. The following scene of violence is grotesque in its ferocity and uses a network of action and narrator commentary to communicate the horror. A parallelism is created by the juxtaposition of long and short sentences and similar sentence structures are repeated to create a calculated prose rhythm appropriate to the subject matter:

> *The Baluchi soldiers went into action. Fifteen people fell.*
>
> *This was the station of Taxila.*

The place once boasted of the leading university of Asia, where thousands of students flocked from different places to study civilization and culture.

Fifty more people fell.

The museum of Taxila housed unique images and inimitable jewellery, representing the finest examples of ancient art.

Thirty more collapsed on the ground.

[...]

> *Here for the first time on the border of India had flown the flag of Islam—the flag that stood for brotherhood and equality among men.*
>
> *They were all killed. Allah-O-Akbar! (Chander 209).*

The alternating long and short sentences illustrate a syntactic balance that create a distinct prose rhythm in the passage. Parallelism is established by the repeated pairing of long and short sentences as well as by the contrastive pattern created by the content: action followed by narrator commentary. The short sentences create an insistence and particularly emphasize the acts of violence. The third short, unadorned sentence with its minimal pattern simply reminds us that the communal violence is taking place in Taxila, a universal seat of learning and culture. The narration of the virtues of the bygone seat of learning alternating the factual records of communal killings create a

stable irony that permeates the narration. "Irony" here "calls attention to itself by posing irreconcilables" (Chatman230): Taxila is at once a "place [that] once boasted of the leading university of Asia, where thousands of students flocked from different places to study civilization and culture" and the station where violent communal killings sadistically eradicated innumerable Hindus. Obviously, Taxila cannot boast its bygone tradition of universality and engage in communal violence, and the irony emerges when we realized that communal violence has transmogrified a seat of learning into a grotesque landscape red with murder. The nonrestrictive appositive in the penultimate sentence set-off from the rest of the sentence by a dash performs an expansion of meaning and directs our attention to the irony of the situation. The Pakistani flag that was first unfurled in the same area where the communal killings are taking place had represented the qualities of universal brotherhood and now the Muslims have under its aegis brutally murders the Hindus in the name of Allah, the merciful.

"Peshawar Express" consistently maintains the train's perspective— the experiencing self dominates the narrative text embodied more dreadful. Verbs in the paragraph are perfectly selected to give a view of the violence. By this time, communal violence has become the leitmotif in the story and the combination of verbs and unembellished prose strike a matter-of-fact tune that intensifies the dramatic impact.

The young women posing as Muslims are dragged off the train and despite its empathy, the anthropomorphic narrator cannot do anything to stop the injustice. The narrative text achieves its upsetting quality by altering the normal order or things. The

emphasis is on the inherent bestiality of men that the Partition let loose. The sentence "" is highly purposive and performs the function of "foreshadowing"–"the semination of anticipatory satellites" (Chatman 60) — an impending doom.

Suspense and surprise work together in the text and resolve in a twist. The dramatic event that we now behold surpasses our expectation and comes as a surprise. To add to the complexity, surprise and suspense now operate on the story and the discourse level as the surprise comes as a shock for the anthropomorphic train who is unprepared for what is to follow. We experience a twofold suspense, that of the story, the train's own anxiety, and that of the discourse, for we anticipate a horrific turn of events that the narrator is not conscious of. The train now reaches Wazirabad, where in the recent past both Hindus and Muslims were known for celebrating festivals like Baisakhi. The narrative focuses on the experiencing self of the train and a haunting atmosphere is created by the sight of slaughtered bodies littering the platform. The narrator is openly bewildered by the illogicalities between the established cultural norms of society and the appearance of things which are violent, communal, and threatening. The reference to sound is particularly important in the scene: its beat accentuate the atmosphere of impending doom:

> *Smoke billowed up from the city and near the station one could hear the sound of an English band to the accompaniment of cheering and clapping by the crowd. In a few minutes, the crowd had surged over the railway platform, dancing and singing …a concourse of naked women ranging from old grannies to young virgins. They were*

> *Hindu and Sikh women and together with the Muslim men they were celebrating the most gruesome Baisakhi. (Chander 211)*

The "clapping and cheering" of the crowd punctuating the orchestral drone of the band create a mimicry of the celebratory sounds of a universal festival. The subversion of the common cultural heritage is stark. The association of the festival of Baisakhi with the parading of naked women emphasizes the grotesqueness of the situation that defy logic and moral standards in all aspects. The reader is made to realize that violence is the common denominator that serves as the bedrock of the new nation states of India and Pakistan. The above passage exemplifies an extreme instance of gendered somatic violence that marks itself as an incomparable item to a series of violent incidents of myriad shades, differing only enough to get an individual emphasis.

The saga of violence continues unabated and as the narrative proceeds toward its resolution we encounter more incidents of violence that stridently ignore the moral standards of a civilized society. In Lahore, four hundred Hindu men and fifty women are made to disembark. The men are mercilessly massacred on the railway platform while the women are abducted because a similar number of men had been "missing from the train from Amritsar" and a similar number of women "had been abducted from the same train" because a "population parity between population of India and Pakistan had to be maintained" (Chander 212). The narrator uses irony to rationalize the sadistic murdering of people and their abduction. It also highlights the power that violence accords to a group of people and the

powerlessness of their victim. The word "parity" is problematic and sounds as an ironic euphemism for the murderous inclinations of the rioters.

After this point in the story the narrative turns its attention to the violence unleashed by the Hindus on Muslims on the other side of the border that reflect the gruesomeness of the violence by Muslims on all aspects. The synonymy in violence create an unusual tie between the two communities and suggest their antagonism more forcefully. The narrative, however, suffers from a serious fault. Although it depicts the scenes of violent massacre by Hindus on Muslims with vividness, yet the immediacy that is apparent in the previous scenes is conspicuous by its absence in these incidents. The representation of violence do not stir the readers' emotion because we get a feeling of déjà vu that mutes the intended effect. Nevertheless, two separate incidents strike a unique chord because of the similarity in dark irony that they share with Manto's vignettes in *Siyah Hashye*:

Four Brahmins got into the compartment. Shaved heads, long tufts, they were wearing Ram-nam dhotis and declared they were bound for Hardwar. A couple of Hindu Jats and Sikhs…also got into the same compartment.

One of them became suspicious. "Holy Brahmin, where are you going?" he asked.

> *"To Hardwar on a pilgrimage," the Brahmin replied.*
>
> *"Good man, are you going to Hardwar or Pakistan?"*
>
> *"Ya Allah!" the Brahmin blurted out.*

> *The Jat laughed. "We have got you," he said. "We'll remember our Allah together." (Chandar 213)*

The passage deals with how violence "acts on the relationship between the male body and the religious discourse that produces that body as a *religionized* body" (Misri 40). Chander directs our attention to the instability of that relationship in the above passage which reminds one of Manto's sketches like "Islah" (Reform), "Istikaal" (Firm Resolve) and "Pathanisthan" which "ironize the rigid investment in bodily markers of religion within the metonymic 'common sense' of communalism" (ibid). Mimesis breaks the monotony of narrative report and the tagged direct speech punctuate the text with emotional emphasis. The immediacy of the direct questions conveys an insistence to the narrative, helping to increase the dramatic pitch and to amplify the suspense of the story. Interrogatives and exclamations used in the passage set an animated tone and the dialogue directly guides the reader toward an anticipatory act of violence that lurks in the vicinity.

Toward the end of the story we encounter another similar passage where dark irony imposes and intensifies the effect of violence. The incident of embodied gender violence that the narrative fictively represents ironically highlights the "gender binaries of vulnerable women and violent men" (Misri 128) that manifested itself with unusual potency in rampant acts of somatic violence on women during the Partition:

> *"Don't kill me," the girl said. "Convert me to Hinduism. I am prepared to embrace your religion. I am also willing to marry one of you. What good will it do you to kill me?"*

> *"Yes, she's right," one of them said.*
>
> *"But I know of a better way," another man said thrusting a dagger into her stomach. "And now back to the train. We have no time for idle gossip" (Chander 214).*

The mimetic structure of the above passage appropriates a calculated suspense to the passage. The young woman's pleadings is forcefully muffled by the thrust of the dagger. The injury to the stomach is symbolic and reinforces the warped logic of gendered communal violence that justifies similar injury as a figurative tactic to foreclose the reproductive potential of the woman and thereby emasculate her community. The matter-of-fact narration suggests the dispensability and the vulnerability of the victim, who in this scenario of violence has lost her subjectivity before the heteropatriarchal discourse that explicitly decide her fate.

The concluding paragraph of the story harks back to the narrator whose voice unequivocally echoes the progressive ideology of Chander. The long paragraph of narrator commentary which highlights the virtues of the anthropomorphic train further mars the narrative effect by over-narration. In many ways, therefore, Chander's story is a graphic documentation of the violence of the times and reads like what Alok Rai calls a "pornography of violence" (Rai qtd. in Prakash 140) common in early Partition stories. The narrative is "formulaic: Hindu violence and communal frenzy … [is] evenly balanced with its Muslim counterpart" (Prakash 142). This balancing out with the precise objective of alerting the reader to the bestiality inherent in the society makes Chander's text

read like a propaganda. What makes the story, however, one of the classics in the genre of Partition literary despite its use of stock characters and its lack of complexity is its narrative voice and the inherent human empathy in the anthropomorphic train, a mechanized being steeped in human emotion when human beings are strangely barren of similar feelings. It is here that the irony of the story lies. By sanctioning this distinctive and remarkable perspective of Partition violence, Chander's narrative in the end comes out as a dramatic effort of great fervor that powerfully critiques the communal leanings of Hindus and Muslims.

Conclusion

Through my study of the two short stories on the Partition I have tried to see how the language and literary devices used in the narratives creatively represent the violence of the Partition. In the paper, I have tried to delineate a new structure in the study of the Partition that seeks to move away from simplistic theme-based study of partition narratives and includes a wide array of regional stories, often untranslated and this, unread, in their scholastic problematization as well as focuses on the language and narrative structure of such texts. In my reading of two Partition stories, one focusing on the Bengal area, included in the discussion by virtue of its thematic similarity with a pale of other Bengali short stories on Partition, and a famous short story from North India, I have presented violence as an area that needs to be more critically examined and researched language, form and structure of the narratives of Partition.

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