



## Representation of Emotions in the Literature: A Study of the 1947 India Partition

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## **Representation of Emotions in the Literature: A Study of the 1947 India Partition**

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper explores the emotional landscapes depicted in the literary narratives surrounding the Partition of India in 1947 and their profound influence on individuals' lives. Partition literature vividly encapsulates a spectrum of emotions, including love, sorrow, despair, hatred, and anger, offering a poignant reflection of the communal violence and human suffering of the era. Emotions such as hatred and anger are particularly emphasized, exposing the stark brutality of communal unrest. Many authors, deeply affected by these traumatic events, infused their personal experiences and emotional struggles into their fictional works, creating narratives that resonate with authenticity and emotional depth. This study highlights the*

*representation of emotions like hatred and anger in Partition literature, demonstrating how these works not only bear witness to historical realities but also evoke a complex range of emotions in their readers, fostering a deeper understanding of the human condition during one of history's most tumultuous periods.*

**Keywords:** Emotions, Hate, Anger, Emotionology, Partition Literature, Partition of India 1947.

## Introduction

The Partition of India in 1947 was a transformative event that profoundly impacted both Muslim and non-Muslim communities<sup>1</sup>, evoking intense emotions such as hate<sup>2</sup> and anger.<sup>3</sup> This upheaval, marked by widespread communal violence and mass displacement, left an indelible mark on the collective psyche of the affected populations. Writers and scholars, many of whom experienced these events firsthand, have captured these emotions in their works, employing symbolic characters and narratives to articulate the emotional dimensions of the partition.

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<sup>1</sup> Here both Muslim and Non-Muslim communities means the communities of India who had faced communal violence and migrated towards the two newly establish countries India and Pakistan in result of Partition of India 1947.

<sup>2</sup> According to Merriam-Webster “hate is a powerful hostility, aversion, dislike, loathing, or sense of antipathy deriving from a sense of fear, anger, or injury”. Gretchen M. Reevy, Yvette Malamud Ozer, and Yuri Ito. *Encyclopedia of Emotion*. (California: Greenwood, 2010), 302-303.

<sup>3</sup> According to Gretchen “anger is one of our most passionate emotions, and potentially one of the dangerous” Reevy, *Encyclopedia of Emotion*, 61-63.

Partition literature reveals the intricate relationship between personal experiences and literary expression, highlighting themes of human friendship, honor killings, pools of blood, and oppressive tyranny. The emotions of the time are vividly reflected in the works of notable authors such as Khushwant Singh<sup>4</sup> (1915-2014), Naseem Hijazi<sup>5</sup> (1914-1996), Chaman Nahal<sup>6</sup> (1927-2013), Saadat Hassan Manto<sup>7</sup> (1912-1955), and Quadrat Ullah Shahab<sup>8</sup> (1917-1986).

Their contributions have shaped the genre, offering invaluable insights into the emotional<sup>9</sup> realities of the partition era.

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<sup>4</sup>Khushwant Singh was an Indian author, lawyer, diplomat, journalist and politician. His experience in the Partition of India 1947 inspired him to write *Train to Pakistan* in 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Sharif Hussain, who used the pseudonym Naseem Hijazi was an Urdu novelist. He wrote the novel *Khaak aur Khoon*, which details the violence caused by religious tensions between Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus at the time of the partition of British India and the Independence of Pakistan in 1947.

<sup>6</sup> Chaman Nahal was an Indian born writer of English literature. He was widely considered as one of the best exponents of Indian writing in English and is known for his work, *Azadi*, which is set on India's Independence and its partition.

<sup>7</sup> Saadat Hassan Manto was a colonial Indian and Pakistani writer. His writings are mainly in the Urdu language, he produced 22 collections of short stories, a novel, five series of radio plays, three collections of essays and two collections of personal sketches. His best short stories are held in high esteem by writers and critics. Manto was known to write about the hard truths of society that no one dared to talk about. He is best known for his stories about the partition of India, which he opposed, immediately following independence in 1947.

<sup>8</sup> Quadrat Ullah Shahab was an eminent Urdu writer and civil servant from Pakistan. Shahab published in English and Urdu languages for contemporary newspapers and magazines of Pakistan Writers' Guild, founded at Karachi in January 1959. Shahab's essay "Maaji" poetically outlines the simplicity of his mother and the relationship that his parents shared, detailing migration, governorship, family dynamics and death in a short chapter. He is best known for his autobiography *Shahab Nama*.

<sup>9</sup> This term is borrowed from the work of Peter N. Stearns, in his works; Peter N. Stearns, and Carol Z. Stearns. "Emotionology: Clarifying the history of emotions

This research paper is divided into three sections. The first section examines the dynamic interplay between history, emotions, and literature, establishing a theoretical framework for understanding the emotional dimensions of historical events. The second section focuses on the concept of "emotionology"<sup>10</sup> in partition literature, analyzing how emotions such as hatred and anger are represented. The final section provides a detailed analysis of specific novels, including "*Train to Pakistan*"<sup>11</sup>, "*Khaak aur Khoon*"<sup>12</sup>, and "*Azadi*"<sup>13</sup>. These works are explored within the context of the history of emotions, shedding light on how negative emotions were portrayed and experienced by both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Through this exploration, the paper aims to deepen our understanding of how literature serves as a medium for documenting and interpreting the emotional impact of historical tragedies.

## History, Emotions and Literature

Emotions, a blend of neurobiological and psychological processes, are intricately influenced by literature, which shapes both individual

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and emotional standards." This is a common thread in his many books. For detail see, Peter N. Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York: University Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> This term is borrowed from the work of Peter N. Stearns, in his works; Peter N. Stearns, and Carol Z. Stearns. "Emotionology: Clarifying the history of emotions and emotional standards." This is a common thread in his many books. For detail see, Peter N. Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York: University Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, (Delhi: Penguin Books, First published in 1956).

<sup>12</sup> Written in Urdu language and title *Khaak aur Khoon* means *Soil and Blood*.

<sup>13</sup> Written in English language and title *Azadi* means *Freedom*.

neural responses and societal emotional frameworks. Characters' emotions, as depicted in literature, resonate with readers, engaging their minds through elements such as narrative points of view, character development, word choice, and tone. Understanding how literature presents emotions is critical because it profoundly influences societal emotions and perceptions. As scholars note, "The personal experiences of fictional characters or narrators, as well as the emotional contents of literary works, affect readers. They make us feel for, with, or against the characters, eliciting emotional reactions to the world created by the text."<sup>14</sup> Partition literature, in particular, elicits a broad spectrum of emotions—pity, grief, fear, hatred, and anger—through its vivid portrayals of the brutal events surrounding the Partition of India in 1947. These texts transform readers' emotional states, immersing them in the human cost of communal violence and displacement.

The relationship between history and literature is deeply intertwined, with emotions serving as a crucial link. While literature often draws from historical events, it also influences history by shaping societal understanding and emotional engagement with the past. To fully comprehend literature from any historical period, one must consider the historical context that frames it. History and literature function as

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<sup>14</sup> Pirjo Lyytikäinen, "How to Study Emotion Effects in Literature: Written Emotions in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"" In *Writing Emotions: Theoretical Concepts and Selected Case Studies in Literature*, ed. by Jandl Ingeborg, Knaller Susanne, Schönfellner Sabine, and Tockner Gudrun, (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2017), 247-64.

complementary records of the past, albeit through distinct methodologies. History unravels the forces that drive societal change, while literature offers access to implicit meanings through interpersonal relations and emotional experiences. As one scholar articulates, “History identifies the forces that bring about changes and unravels their dynamics. Literature makes these implicit meanings accessible through the medium of interpersonal relations and emotional experiences.”<sup>15</sup>

Literature is rooted in imagination, while history relies on evidence. Partition literature, although grounded in historical realities, integrates creative elements and assumptions to offer nuanced portrayals of events. Historical accounts of the Partition—documenting ethnic cleansing, communal violence, and mass migration—are supported by empirical evidence, whereas partition literature captures the emotional and imaginative essence of these events. By blending imaginative narratives with historical contexts, partition literature provides a multidimensional perspective, enriching our understanding of history and its emotional legacy.

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<sup>15</sup> K. N. Panikkar, “Literature as history of social change.” *Social Scientist* 40, no. 3/4 (2012): 3-15. For detail see Angeliki Spiropoulou, and Hayden White. “History and Literature: An Interview with Hayden White” *Synthesis: an Anglophone Journal of Comparative Literary Studies* 8 (2015):118-124.

## Representation of Emotions in Partition Literature

The emotional impact of the Partition of India in 1947 transcended socio-religious boundaries, leaving a profound mark on the collective psyche of the region. Partition literature, as a reflection of society's lived experiences, portrays a rich spectrum of emotions, including happiness, love, fear, grief, hatred, and anger. Writers, as the voices of their nations and communities, articulate the "emotionology" of the era, capturing the emotional essence of this tumultuous time. This body of literature spans various genres, including novels, short stories, plays, poetry, memoirs, and essays, and is composed in diverse languages such as Hindi, Urdu, English, Punjabi, and Sindhi.<sup>16</sup> Fiction from this period serves multiple emotional functions, addressing the progression of feelings from initial shock, hatred, anger, fear, and grief, to eventual acceptance and healing. Through their works, authors provide insights into the emotional experiences of both victims and perpetrators of communal violence, contributing to a literary tradition that continues to resonate with readers and scholars alike.

The communal violence accompanying the Partition obliterated the emotional stability of millions, a devastation that found powerful

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<sup>16</sup> Qurratulain Hyder, *Aag Ka Darya (River of Fire)* (1959), Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1980), Bhisham Sahni, *Tamas* (1987), Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), Shauna Singh Baldwin, *What the Body Remembers* (2001), Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, (2001), Krishna Baldev Vaid, *The Broken Mirror* (2014).



expression in the works of contemporary novelists. These writers, deeply affected by the brutal events, channelled their inner turmoil into narratives brimming with emotions such as love, sacrifice, fear, grief, hatred, anger, and revenge. Partition literature strives to capture the breadth of human experience, documenting the emotional journeys of ordinary individuals amid extraordinary circumstances.

The trauma of Partition remains ingrained in the collective consciousness of writers from both India and Pakistan, continuing to shape their creative endeavors. Through vivid and often harrowing depictions, Partition fiction skillfully portrays the emotions of both communities, particularly the hatred and anger fueled by the violence. By employing diverse characters and perspectives, these works offer nuanced insights into the emotional realities of one of the most defining events in South Asian history.

### **Hate and Anger Represented in Partition Literature: Novels**

Novels recounting the Partition of India in 1947 explore the emotional landscapes of both Muslim and non-Muslim communities as depicted by authors from Pakistan and India. These narratives examine themes such as communal harmony, violence, migration, and abduction, evoking emotions like fear, grief, hatred, and anger. Through works like *Train to Pakistan*, *Khaak aur Khoon*, and *Azadi*, diverse perspectives on the Partition are presented, with a particular focus on the portrayal of hate and anger.

## **Train to Pakistan**

In *Train to Pakistan*,<sup>17</sup> the author vividly captures the emotional and social turbulence experienced by both Muslim and non-Muslim communities during the partition of India in 1947. The novel provides a direct portrayal of the pre-partition era, effectively presenting the events and the complex dynamics that influenced these communities. Divided into four sections—"Dacoity," "Kalyuga," "Mano Majra," and "Karma"—the narrative traces the emotional journey of the people in Mano Majra, a fictional village. In each of these sections, the shifting emotional landscapes of the villagers are explored, highlighting the transition from fear and grief to hate and anger.

In "Dacoity," the pre-partition emotions are presented, setting the stage for the communal unrest that would follow. "Kalyuga" delves into the fear and grief that unsettled the social fabric of the village, ushering in an era of destruction. The third section, "Mano Majra," depicts the breakdown of inter-community harmony, as fear transforms into hate and anger. Finally, "Karma" illustrates the culmination of these emotions in the form of organized communal violence. The novel's strength lies in how it conveys the emotional turmoil—fear, grief, hate, and anger—that permeates the narrative.

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<sup>17</sup> Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, (Delhi: Penguin Books, First published in 1956).

The narrative also highlights the complex dynamics of communal violence, specifically the animosity between Muslims and non-Muslims. The arrival of a 'ghost train' from Pakistan, carrying the bodies of Sikh victims, deeply disrupts the peace in the village, instilling fear and grief in the non-Muslim community. This event amplifies the existing sentiments of hate and anger, particularly towards the Muslim population. The author portrays the Muslim characters as being responsible for the ensuing violence, capturing the widespread belief that the Muslim community, by seeking a separate homeland, had precipitated the violence.

A poignant example of this growing animosity is found in the character of Iqbal,<sup>18</sup> a social worker who becomes a target of suspicion and hatred. Iqbal, who had arrived in Mano Majra after the murder of a local moneylender, is wrongfully arrested and imprisoned based solely on his Muslim-sounding name, despite having no connection to the crime. Both the police and Magistrate Hukam Chand<sup>19</sup> accuse him of being an instigator of the violence, despite his lack of involvement. Iqbal's character exemplifies the prejudice and discrimination faced by the Muslim community during the partition. The narrative clearly illustrates how Muslims were unjustly blamed for the violence, even when they had no direct role in the events.

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<sup>18</sup> Iqbal a social worker who is from city with western education and awareness.

<sup>19</sup> Hukam Chand, magistrate and Deputy Commissioner of the district.

The novel subtly portrays the Sikh and Hindu communities in a biased light, reflecting the author's attitudes towards the Muslim population. The growing resentment towards Muslims is linked to their demand for a separate homeland, which posed a challenge to the Hindu majority. Muslim characters, particularly those who aligned themselves with the Muslim League, are depicted as antagonistic figures. For instance, the conversation between Magistrate Hukam Chand and a police officer reflects the deep-seated animosity towards the Muslim League, painting them as the primary instigators of the violence.

“The Sikhs retaliated by attacking a Muslim refugee train and sending it across the border with over a thousand corpses? They wrote on the engine “Gift to Pakistan!” The sub-inspector looked down thoughtfully and answered: ‘They say that is the only way to stop killings on the other side. Man for man, woman for woman, child for child.’<sup>20</sup>

The novel vividly portrays the complicity of state institutions in the violence that erupted during the partition. In one particularly disturbing passage, the police sub-inspector reflects on the retaliatory violence carried out by the Sikhs, where they attacked a Muslim refugee train, sending it back across the border with over a thousand corpses. This chilling exchange highlights the justification given for

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<sup>20</sup> Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, 28-29.

such brutality—that it was necessary to stop killings on the other side. The author's narrative emphasizes how such violence was not only perpetrated by individuals but also sanctioned and perpetuated by those in power.

The portrayal of the Muslim community in the novel also reflects a sense of weakness and disintegration. The Muslim characters, particularly Imam Bakhsh<sup>21</sup> are shown to be disconnected and unaware of each other's actions, reflecting the social and familial breakdown within the community. The lack of communication and the absence of strong familial bonds further accentuate the vulnerability of the Muslim population during this turbulent period.

The emotional landscape of Mano Majra undergoes a significant transformation with the arrival of the 'ghost train' and the subsequent events. The once harmonious village is torn apart by fear and suspicion, and the emotions of the villagers shift from love and sympathy to hatred and anger. This transition is vividly illustrated through the character of Jugga, whose anger is palpable as he stares at the police station bars, feeling the weight of injustice. The villagers, once united in their loyalty to one another, are now divided by their emotions, with the call to relocate the Muslims to a refugee camp reflecting the growing sense of distrust and animosity.

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<sup>21</sup> The leader of the Muslim community, who is presented as a 'blind man'.

“.....Jugga kept staring through the bars as if he had not heard. He turned pale with anger. All the blood drained from his face. His hands tightened around the iron bars.”<sup>22</sup>

The character of Malli plays a central role in further exacerbating the communal tensions. Malli, along with his cohorts, spreads the rumor that Sultana Dacoit, who fled to Pakistan after the murder of the moneylender, was responsible for the violence. His actions incite further hostility, and the villagers resolve to act against the Muslim community in retaliation. This decision culminates in the traumatic assault on a refugee train, a brutal act that further fuels the anger and hatred between the communities.

“Muslims to go? Quite emphatically not! Loyalty to a fellow villager was above all other considerations. Despite the words they had used, no one had the nerve to suggest throwing them out, even in a purely Sikh gathering. The mood of the assembly changed from anger to bewilderment.”<sup>23</sup>

As the narrative progresses, the emotions of the villagers shift towards organized violence. The speech delivered by one of the Sikh characters, calling for the killing of Muslims in retaliation for every atrocity committed by the other side, exemplifies the escalation of emotions from fear and grief to outright hatred. The author illustrates

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<sup>22</sup> Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, 72.

<sup>23</sup> Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, 79.

how the emotional landscape of Mano Majra becomes increasingly charged, culminating in violent acts of arson, looting, and murder.

“‘But, Sardar Sahib,’ said the lambardar falteringly, ‘do tell us what we can do.’ ‘That is better,’ answered the lad. ‘Now we can talk. Listen and listen very carefully.’..... ‘For each Hindu or Sikh, they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For each home, they loot, loot two. For each trainload of the dead they send over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attacked, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we also play this game of killing and looting.’”<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, the novel ends with Jugga Singh's heroic act of sacrifice, as he shields Muslim refugees from the wrath of the Sikh community. His actions, driven by love for Nooran<sup>25</sup>, whom he cares for deeply, illustrate the complex emotional journey of the characters. In the end, *Train to Pakistan* stands as one of the most significant works in Indian literature, capturing the evolution of emotion and the horrors of communal violence during the partition of India in 1947.

### **Khaak aur Khoon**

*Khaak aur Khoon*<sup>26</sup> is a monumental literary work that captures the profound emotional transformation during the partition of India in

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<sup>24</sup> Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Nooran lover of Juggat Singh.

<sup>26</sup> Naseem Hijazi, *Khaak aur Khoon*, (Lahore: Qoumi Kitab Khaana, 1993).

1947, particularly focusing on the experiences of Muslims in Gurdaspur, a village that found itself within India's borders after the partition. The novel<sup>27</sup> intricately weaves the journey of Saleem, the son of a Tahsildar, through the shifting emotions of love, sympathy, fear, hate, and anger, amidst the violent and traumatic upheaval caused by the partition.

The narrative is divided into four parts, each reflecting a significant stage in the emotional and social evolution of the characters and their communities. The first part introduces Saleem's childhood in a village where Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus coexisted peacefully. However, as the political landscape of colonial India began to change, tensions escalated, and the emotional harmony that once existed started to unravel. The second part delves into the rise of nationalism and the political machinations surrounding the partition, sowing seeds of division between communities.

In the third part, the story shifts to the tragic eruption of communal violence—marked by massacres, genocides, abductions, and forced migrations. Saleem, now an adult, becomes a central figure in orchestrating the rescue of Muslims trapped in the violence, trying to

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<sup>27</sup> Characters: The main character of the novel is Chaudhary Rehmat Ali who has a leading and very influential role in the village. Other main Muslim Characters are Ali Akbar Afzal, Saleem, Majeed, Dawood, Dr. Shoukat, Arshad, and Asma. The characters of Sikh communities are class fellows of Saleem and Majeed i.e. Mahinder Singh, Balwant Singh, Shair Singh friend of Afzal (uncle of Saleem and father of Majeed), Indher Singh, Charan Singh, and Hari Singh. The Hindu characters are Saith Ramlal and Ramchand.



facilitate their journey to Pakistan. However, despite his heroic efforts, he fails to protect his own family from the wrath of the Sikh militants, who, with the support of the military and other external forces, carry out brutal acts of violence.

The final section of the novel transitions to the Kashmir conflict, where Saleem's deeds continue to echo as he fights for his personal survival while trying to help others in the midst of a war-like environment. His story is one of perseverance, courage, and sacrifice, despite the overwhelming odds stacked against him.

The novel poignantly depicts the atrocities inflicted upon the Muslim community, specifically highlighting the role of the Sikh and Hindu communities in perpetrating violence. Characters like Charan Singh, supported by Hindu moneylenders, fan the flames of hatred, leading to widespread massacres and the disarming of Muslims in Gurdaspur. As the violence escalates, emotions of fear, grief, and hatred intensify, especially after the news that Gurdaspur would remain in India. The announcement shifts the community's feelings from initial happiness to deep fear and grief, particularly among Muslims, who now face the imminent threat of violence.

Saith Ramlal and Ramchand play pivotal roles in inciting the Sikh community's rage, using religious fervor to stoke anger toward the Muslim community, while rallying support for the violent assaults on Muslims.

“Saith Ramchand said: My Sikh brothers! You are the loins of Punjab. Don’t let down the name of Guru Gobind Singh. You should not be happy with some districts of Punjab that you have now. My brothers! Muslims got their Pakistan. But Khalistan is yet to be. Congress has taken some districts for you……. Now, the Police are yours, the Army is yours and the Government is also yours. Now the responsibility is yours to do the work that you have to do.... If you don’t attack Chaudhary Rehmat Ali’s village then some other ‘Jatha’ (mob) will take away the ‘doolies’ (women).”<sup>28</sup>

The author captures the calculated nature of the violence, where leaders like Saith Ramchand mobilize the Sikh populace, invoking historical grievances and a desire for revenge against Muslims. This manipulation of religious sentiment culminates in the organized

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<sup>28</sup> Hijazi, *Khaak aur Khoon*, 357-360.

violence against Muslim villages, as Sikh mobs, aided by the police and military, attack and loot Muslim homes.

Through vivid and harrowing descriptions of the atrocities, including the martyrdom of Saleem's family and the forced migration of Muslims, the author illustrates the deep emotional turmoil experienced by the victims of the violence. The horrors of abduction, rape, and mass murder are starkly depicted, as the Muslim women of the village, including Saleem's beloved Asma, bravely recite the Kalma to protect themselves from the Sikh attackers. The emotional intensity is palpable throughout, as the characters wrestle with their fear, grief, anger, and the harsh reality of their new lives in the aftermath of the violence.

Despite the overwhelming challenges, Saleem emerges as a beacon of hope. His dedication to saving the lives of others, even at the cost of his own family's safety, highlights his heroic character. Saleem's decision to protect Muslim refugees, particularly women and children, illustrates his unwavering commitment to humanity and the fight against communal hatred. His efforts to keep hope alive, even in the face of relentless brutality, make him a symbol of resilience and courage.

The novel also portrays the destruction wrought by the ideological and religious divisions fostered by the partition. As communal violence spreads throughout Punjab, the region becomes engulfed in

a bloodbath that sees not only the death of innocent civilians but also the tearing apart of communities that once thrived in peace. The conflict is further exacerbated by the involvement of external political and military forces, who aid the violence, resulting in a catastrophic breakdown of society.

“This tragedy was not only for Gurdaspur, its nearby districts ‘Kangra, Hoshiarpur, and Amritsar’ were also under the same fire. Gurdaspur was awarded to India only for the sake of Kashmir, if it was done by Nehru and Mountbatten then Muslims of Hoshiarpur could take shelter on the bank of the Beas River. But the unfair decision of Mountbatten closed off survival of the Muslim community.”<sup>29</sup>

The inclusion of Gurdaspur in India, driven by political decisions made by Nehru and Mountbatten, deepens the grief and fear felt by the Muslim population, who now find themselves trapped in a land where they are no longer welcome. The novel’s emotional depth is conveyed through the personal stories of those who suffer from the

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<sup>29</sup> Hijazi, *Khaak aur Khoon*, 520.

decisions of politicians, as well as the social and religious fabric that is torn apart.

*Khaak aur Khoon* offers an unflinching portrayal of the emotional devastation wrought by the partition. It explores the evolution of emotions within various communities—love, sympathy, fear, grief, hate, and anger—and shows how they fuel the tragic events of the partition. Through Saleem's journey, the novel captures the human cost of religious and political strife, and provides a profound commentary on the destructive power of hate and the possibility of redemption in the face of overwhelming adversity. The reader is immersed in the emotional upheaval of the partition, experiencing the pain, suffering, and heroism of those caught in its wake.

### *Azadi*

"Azadi,"<sup>30</sup> a novel<sup>31</sup> by Chaman Nahal, intricately explores the emotional turmoil surrounding the partition of India in 1947, presenting a detailed portrayal of the evolving dynamics of intercommunal relations and the shift from peace and love to hate, fear, and anger. The novel is set in the pre-partition town of Sialkot, where various religious communities coexisted harmoniously,

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<sup>30</sup> Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975).

<sup>31</sup> Characters: The main characters of the novel are, Lalaji and his wife Prabharani, their children Arun, Madhu, and younger daughter Bibi Amar Vati, her husband Gangu Mull: their son Suraj Prakash, and daughter-in-law Sunanda Bala, Chaudhari Barkat Ali, his son Munir and daughter Nur.

participating in each other's religious events and living in mutual respect. However, with the announcement of the partition, the emotional fabric of the village is shattered, leading to a transformation in the communities' perceptions and interactions.

The central character, Lala Kashi Ram, embodies the human experience of this emotional shift. His feelings evolve throughout the narrative, reflecting the disillusionment that many faced during this tumultuous period.

“Like any other Indian, he had a prejudice against the British (he spoke them as Angrez-the English). He hated them for what they had done to his country and wanted Azadi”<sup>32</sup>

Nahal powerfully portrays his anger toward the British for their role in colonial rule, as well as his disappointment with Nehru and the political leadership responsible for the division of Punjab.

“What stupid thing was he talking about? Was he Nehru? The drawl was the same, the emotion in the words was the same, and the disjointed, queer Hindu syntax was his alone, but what

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<sup>32</sup> Nahal, *Azadi*, 18.

had happened to his akal, his mind?

Have partition if there is no other way,

have it that way- we're willing to make

sacrifices.”<sup>33</sup>

The protagonist's evolving feelings of frustration, fear, and grief are deeply tied to the socio-political changes that rip apart longstanding relationships among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.

The novel brings forth a vivid account of how the announcement of the partition led to violent reactions from the communities. The Muslims in Sialkot celebrated, while the Hindus and Sikhs grew increasingly fearful and hostile. The partition divided families and neighborhoods, resulting in communal violence and large-scale displacements. Nahal deftly illustrates the resulting shift in emotions as these communities turn against each other with increasing intensity.

Through his characters, such as Captain Rehmat Ullah Khan, who perpetrates abduction and violence, Nahal highlights the personal and collective impact of the partition. The novel paints a horrific picture of the atrocities, including rape, murder, and ethnic cleansing, that occurred as a result of the incited hatred. Women, particularly from the Sikh and Hindu communities, became the primary targets of this

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<sup>33</sup> Nahal, *Azadi*, 56-57.

violence, symbolizing the dishonor and vengeance inflicted upon the opposing group.

“The rape was followed by other atrocities, chopping off the breasts, and even death. Many of the pregnant women had their wombs torn open. The survivors were retained for repeated rapes and humiliations until they were parcelled out to decrepit wrecks – the aged, the leftovers who couldn’t find a wife, or those Muslims who wanted an additional wife.”<sup>34</sup>

The emotional landscape of the novel includes moments of human compassion, despite the violence. Characters like Chaudhri Barakat Ali, who opposes the violence and expresses concern for the safety of others, represent the few instances of solidarity and humanity amidst the rage and destruction. Nahal explores the complexity of human emotion, where hatred and anger coexist with moments of empathy and forgiveness.

“He caught hold of Ghani by the neck with both his hands. Chaudhri Barakat Ali shook him as if he were a reed. His

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<sup>34</sup> Nahal, *Azadi*, 293.



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powerful head was bent low on Ghani's  
face and one could see the anger  
flashing in his eyes. 'you shaitan - you  
shaitan - you blot on the name of  
Islam'.”<sup>35</sup>

Through letters and exchanges, the novel also portrays the poignant personal losses caused by partition. The love story between Nur and Arun symbolizes the tragic rupture of relationships, as communal tensions drive them apart. The letter Nur sends to Arun, expressing sorrow and longing, encapsulates the grief and fear that pervaded the lives of those torn from their homes and loved ones.

“I'm weeping when I write this to you,  
will I ever see you again? God alone  
knows why people are so full of hate. I  
wish they were not to part souls that  
love each other. But I'll think of you till  
the day of my death. May Allah protect  
you, Khuda Hafiz.”<sup>36</sup>

The novel also offers a critique of the political leadership of the time, illustrating how the decisions of leaders like Nehru and Mountbatten had far-reaching emotional consequences on the lives of ordinary

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<sup>35</sup> Nahal, *Azadi*, 185.

<sup>36</sup> Nahal, *Azadi*, 266.

people. Lalaji's reflections on the communal violence and his ultimate realization that both communities are equally guilty of perpetuating hatred and violence emphasize the cyclical nature of conflict.

In the aftermath of the partition, the characters, especially Lalaji, grapple with the realization that both Muslims and Hindus were complicit in the atrocities. His reflection, "I have ceased to hate ... I can't hate the Muslims anymore... we are all equally guilty... We have sinned as much. We need their forgiveness," is a powerful acknowledgment of the shared responsibility in the brutality that occurred during this period.

"Azadi" not only examines the physical violence but also delves into the emotional violence that defines the partition, making it a poignant exploration of how hate and anger, once ignited, can transform the human experience. The novel captures the complex interplay between love and hate, empathy and anger, and loss and survival, offering a profound reflection on the emotional devastation caused by the partition of India in 1947.

## **Conclusion**

Partition literature stands as a powerful and emotional testament to the devastation wrought by the 1947 partition of India. It encapsulates the profound emotional and psychological toll experienced by individuals in the wake of this monumental upheaval. Writers, through their vivid storytelling, have brought to life the anger, fear,

hate, and grief that consumed communities, leading to unimaginable acts of violence, ethnic cleansing, and the brutal abduction and rape of women. These literary works not only reflect the traumatic realities of the time but also offer a means of processing and expressing the collective sorrow and disillusionment felt by those affected by the partition.

The works of writers like Khushwant Singh ("Train to Pakistan"), Naseem Hijazi ("Khaak aur Khoon"), and Chaman Nahal ("Azadi") have made an indelible impact on readers, transporting them to the era of partition and helping them connect emotionally with the stories of those who lived through it. The depiction of atrocities, such as the abduction and rape of women, serves as a poignant symbol of the devastating hatred and violence that tore apart communities. These acts highlight the horrors of communal violence while also shedding light on the intricate psychological and emotional dynamics that underpinned these events.

However, partition literature is not limited to depictions of violence. It also explores the full spectrum of human emotions, from love and sympathy to grief, friendship, and sacrifice. It offers a multifaceted exploration of the human condition during a time of unimaginable strife, illustrating both the cruelty and the compassion that existed amidst the chaos. These diverse emotional expressions invite readers to understand the complexity of human experience during one of history's most painful periods.

The continued study of partition literature offers immense potential for gaining deeper insights into the psychological legacy of this traumatic event. By analyzing the emotional and psychological impact of partition on both individuals and societies, scholars can continue to explore how the experiences of partition reverberate through contemporary culture and consciousness. The enduring legacy of partition literature remains a powerful tool for understanding the complexities of identity, community, and the lasting effects of violence on generations. Through its portrayal of suffering, resilience, and human connection, partition literature continues to serve as a vital cultural and historical resource.

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