POST-INDEPENDENCE/POST-COLONIAL PAKISTANI FICTION IN ENGLISH: A SOCIO-POLITICAL STUDY WITH FOCUS ON TWILIGHT IN DELHI, THE MURDER OF AZIZ KHAN, ICE-CANDY-MAN AND MOTH SMOKE

Submitted by:
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PhD (English)
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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES
ISLAMABAD
December 2009
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To

FACULTY OF ADVANCED INTEGRATED STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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ISLAMABAD
December 2009
CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM

I, Munawar Iqbal Ahmed, son of Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Registration # 172-PhD/ENG/2004, Discipline (English), candidate of PhD (English) at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis “Post-Independence / Post-Colonial Pakistani Fiction in English: A Socio-Political Study with Focus on Twilight in Delhi, The Murder of Aziz Khan, Ice-Candy-Man and Moth Smoke” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of PhD degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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December 3, 2009

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ABSTRACT

Title: Post-Independence / Post-Colonial Pakistani Fiction in English: A Socio-Political Study with Focus on Twilight in Delhi, The Murder of Aziz Khan, Ice-Candy-Man and Moth Smoke

Since Independence in 1947, Pakistan, as a nation and state, has been grappling with socio-political and economic problems, the issue of national identity and even an existential dilemma. Its postcolonial existence has also been threatened by the failure of its leadership that lacked imagination and vision. Therefore, questions like “Can Pakistan survive?” have often been posed by the political pundits. The subject of this research is how Pakistan’s national texts, particularly creative writings in English, reflect socio-cultural and political transformations since Independence. Ethnically and linguistically, Pakistan is a pluralistic society, but the state has pursued centrist and unitary policies. Islam has been (ab)used to justify the unitary character of the state. Thus state and ‘ideological state apparatuses’ have been in collision with the natural pluralism of its society. Therefore, various conflicts have been raging and boiling over to shake the foundations of the state and the society. The response of Pakistan’s creative writers, with few exceptions, has been ambivalent towards these issues, until a new generation of young writers since early 1990s began to respond more openly and critically. In 1967, Zulfikar Ghose, with the advantage of geographical distance, gave a powerful critique of Pakistan’s new ruling elite in his novel The Murder of Aziz Khan. The same sentiments are expressed by Mohsin Hamid in his 2000 novel Moth Smoke. By analyzing these texts I have tried to show how Pakistan is frozen in time: its socio-political problems still persist with the same frequency and intensity. While analyzing Pakistan’s texts in English, I have tried to make use of the theoretical frameworks expounded by such social theorists as Michael Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser as well as the theoretical underpinnings of larger postcolonial theory. The study has a topical significance as Pakistani writers in English, in my view, after a long period of marginalization, are registering a strong presence in the global academia. This dissertation aims at contributing to the growing field of Pakistani literary studies and the wider English Studies.
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Munawar Iqbal Ahmad
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
PAKISTAN AT THE CROSS ROADS

Why do you ask my native place?
O dwellers of the East,
Making mock of me for the poor plight I am in?
Delhi, which was once the jewel of the world,
Where dwelt only the loved ones of fate,
Which has now been ruined by the hand of Time,
I’m a resident of that storm-tossed place …
[Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Emperor of India]"
What has been the response of Pakistani writers, especially creative fiction writers, writing in English, to this state of affairs is the subject of my study. Since political corruption, military rule, a crumbling social order, and a tattering economy have been the major issues Pakistani society has been grappling with, it is not surprising to find that a number of writers have also responded to them in one way or the other, that is, directly or tangentially. Also, many of these creative writers, either due to political persecution, or by their own will, chose to live in Western Diasporas, from where they still write about ‘God’s Own Land’<sup>2</sup>, Pakistan (or ‘the Land of the Pure’).

The writers that I have selected to carry out my analysis of Pakistan’s socio-political milieu since Independence are Ahmad Ali, Zulfikar Ghose, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Mohsin Hamid. I have incorporated Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* in my study to prepare a temporal and spatial background before Partition against which many of Pakistan’s post-Independence problems can be understood and analysed. It is the decline and eventual fall of the Muslim culture, in the wake of the collapse of Mughal Empire, that *Twilight in Delhi* documents. Its opening paragraph sets the symbolic resonance that still echoes tragically in contemporary Pakistan:

Night envelops the city, covering it like a blanket. In the dim starlight roofs and houses and by-lanes lie asleep, wrapped in a restless slumber, breathing heavily as the heat becomes oppressive or shoots through the body like pain. In the courtyards, on the roofs, in the by-lanes, on the roads, men sleep on bare beds, half naked, tired after the sore day's labour. A few still walk on the otherwise deserted roads, hand in hand, talking; and some have jasmine garlands in their hands. The smell from the flowers escapes, scents a few yards of air
around them and dies smothered by the heat. Dogs go about sniffing the gutters in search of offal; and cats slink out of the narrow by-lanes, from under the planks jutting out of shops, and lick the earthen cups out of which men had drunk milk and thrown away (Ali 1941 and 1984:1)

The collapse of the social order during colonial India and the Muslim culture in particular that Ali depicted so graphically was inherited in many ways and means by the newly independent Pakistan.

**Politics and Pakistani Fiction**

Due to recent surge in the issues surrounding politics and globalization of cultures and economies, the position of our writers vis-à-vis socio-political concerns is being mooted once again. The relationship between literature and politics has always been a contentious affair. Some argue that they are two different things. While others challenge this view on the grounds that the social reality ‘constructed’ in literature with the help of the most powerful social institution that is language, cannot be free from the politics, ideology and personal beliefs of those who are involved in its making. Since the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, in particular, these warring positions are further polarised. According to the view propounded by the postcolonial critics, literature is a social fact and, as such, fulfills a political function. In reality, things are not as clear-cut as they first seem, nor are they as simple. Such hastily formulated alternatives, these concepts of art-as-end or art-as-means, are far from resolving the problems that the intellectuals of today’s troubled world confront. In
an essay entitled "Literature Pursued by Politics," Alain Robbe-Grillet criticized the politicization of the work of art in these terms:

Writers are not necessarily political brains. And it is no doubt normal for most of them to limit themselves, in this field, to short, vague thoughts. But why do they feel such a need to express them in public at every opportunity? ... I believe, simply, that they're ashamed of being writers and live in perpetual terror they'll be reproached with it, be asked why they write, what good they are, what their role in society is.... The writer suffers, like everyone, over the misfortune of his fellow human beings; it's dishonest to pretend he writes to allay it.... The writer can't know what end he's serving. Literature isn't a means he's to place at the service of some cause. (1999:38)

The contrary view is led, among others, by Ngugi wa Thiongo who holds that “Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics?” (Ngugi 1981:3)

It is interesting to see that, unlike writers from other postcolonial countries, the Pakistani writers have desisted from giving a powerful creative response to the socio-political conditions. Except for a few Urdu writers like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmad Faraaz etc., majority of Pakistani writers, particularly those writing in English, have traditionally refrained from delving into the realm of Pakistani politics since Independence. The reasons for such self-censorship are numerous. If on the one hand, the repressive military regimes are an obvious reason, on the other, the divisive and ideologically confused nature of Pakistani politics might be responsible. This lack of political commitment, or, one may say, ambivalence on the part of Pakistani writers, became acute after 1958 when the first military coup was staged. Before that period, there were a number of writers who showed their response to the dominant socio-political trends of colonial times. Perhaps it is due
to this fact that before Partition the British colonial rule provided a clear site of resistance to the writers. As the political rift and social divide between various social and religious groups in India became accentuated, it became another important area which some writers addressed in their fiction. The political and ethnic divisions between Hindus and Muslims became too vocal to be ignored. The first writer among Indo-Pakistani writers to take up this theme was Mumtaz Shahnawaz who in her posthumously published novel *The Heart Divided* (written during 1943-48 and published in 1957) addressed the Hindu-Muslim communal problem. The setting of the novel is pre-Partition India. The story revolves around the social interaction between a Hindu and a Muslim family, the Sheikhs and the Kauls, both belong to the upper class social status. Like most novels of that era, it depicts how different members of both the families go through a transformation in their thinking about the politics of their time and how it affects their social attitudes. The actions and thoughts of various characters are weaved around the figure of Zohra, daughter of barrister Sheikh Jamaluddin. The major concern of the novel is to show how she gradually renounces the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity and accepts the idea of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. This transformation is attributed to the Congress government in various provinces of India in the wake of 1937 elections. In the first part of the novel, before political developments destroy human relations, the love story dominates. It also presents the necessary contrast in the Hindu-Muslim relations before and after the establishment of Congress ministries and the damage they had done to the centuries old social fabric in the undivided India. Mohni, the daughter of Sham
Lal, falls in love with Habib, Jamaluddin’s son. The girl is a freedom fighter and staunchly believes in the Hindu-Muslim unity as does the Muslim man. However, in spite of sincere emotions and the good wishes of Habib’s sister Zohra, the marriage cannot take place as the social taboos do not allow the two families to let such a union materialize. The narrator shows how both families are helpless in the face of emerging social realities determined by political changes. With the separation of lovers, Hindus and Muslims become alienated, just as the tragic events of Partition massacres transform the fun-loving and friendly character of Ice-Candy-Man in Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel. The communal harmony in Lahore is destroyed due the events taking place in other parts of India. Part two of The Heart Divided begins with the death of Mohni and an account of the lives of Zohra, Sughra and Habib. To her utter dismay, Zohra discovers that the Congress ministers allow Hindus to perpetrate injustices upon the Muslims. However, she is not yet completely disillusioned with the Congress, unlike Sughra who is against the Congress now. Meanwhile, Zohra meets Ahmad, a socialist, and falls in love with him. She is now introduced to a new political ideology and becomes committed to it when Ahmad is arrested. She helps factory workers win some of their demands in a strike. As Ahmad is released from the jail they are allowed to marry.

With the emergence of Pakistan, the old world, the united India, was coming to an end. The country was in the throes of birth pangs. Those were the times when a new order was shaping the destiny of millions of people across the Subcontinent, carrying the thrill of expectation of a new life and, at the same time, the horrors of
the holocaust which came in the wake of freedom. With this dual character the age had turned into a great human experience, posing a challenge to the writers living in those times. Did they prove themselves creatively equal to the task? Yes, the writers in those days were very much alive to what was happening around them. Fiction writers in particular were actively responding to the riot-ridden contemporary situation.

The dominant trend in the fiction of that age was that of realism. Journeying through the fifties and sixties, realism had touched its heights in the hands of Manto. But side by side with realism, there was another trend in vogue which laid more emphasis on the study of psychological complexities than on explicit social problems. At the same time, due to those problems, majority of the population suffered an identity crisis and it gradually stopped associating itself with the state; many regressed into their subjective cocoons or emigrated to other lands in search of economic opportunity and a sense of belonging.

The disturbing questions such as, ‘Is it the history of the land or our Muslim past which forms the basis of our culture leading to the evolution of our identity’?, were casting their shadows in our fiction that could not remain unaffected by the changes going on within and without. The direct ways of expressing a situation were substituted by symbolic expression, and realism gave way to abstraction. In fact, the new fiction writer did not feel attracted to the external situation. What was brewing within appeared to him more meaningful. So he did not care to depict the external situation. The portrayal of anguish instead of the events is what s/he aimed at. In *The River of Fire*, for example, Quratul-Ain, desists from
writing anything about the events of 1947. Her only comments are ‘Hindustan in 1947’ and she skips that painful history.

In 1967, Zulfikar Ghose captured the prevailing socio-political conditions in the making since 1947. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* is, in fact, the only important work of fiction representing the immediate post-Independence social reality and the emergence of gangster capitalism in Pakistan in the nineteen sixties. The textile industry was one of the most important industries to crop up during that time. The rural areas of Layalpur (now Faisalabad) and the area between Lahore and Multan passed into the hands of the industrialists. Except for Ghose’s novel, there is no work of imagination either in Urdu or English that documents the socio-economic and cultural changes that came on the heels of large-scale industrialization and urbanization.

Sidhwa’s work, on the other hand, is very pertinent as a reflection of Pakistani society where the position, problems and the status of women have been relegated to the back-burner. Her *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) and *The Bride* (1983) in particular address this issue with great sensitivity. In my scheme, Sidhwa is relevant for another purpose as well, that is, when I discuss Partition and its tragic aftermath as one of the most potent factors that impacted and continue to exert influence on Pakistan’s polity, I have contextualized her work in the politics of partition discourses. She has developed a very balanced account of the Partition that has ever emerged out of India or Pakistan about that charged tragedy. Also, she has perceptively captured that mood of the 1980s and onward. The treatment of women in general and the discriminatory laws against them promulgated during
the Zia regime have been a source of marginalization of women who constitute almost half of the population of Pakistan. At the same time, for cross-reference purposes, I have, very briefly, discussed the work of Urdu writers like Fahmida Riaz and Kishwar Naheed for powerful feminist narratives emerging in response to the social conditions prevailing during the 1980s.

Mohsin Hamid is a leading emerging voice who has come up with a strong critique of Pakistani elite who, in his view, have been responsible for Pakistan’s ideological, educational and socio-political mess since 1947. His Moth Smoke (2000) is a severe indictment of the ruling elite, particularly during the 1990s when, in the wake of nuclear tests of May 1998, Pakistan was on the brink of failure as a viable economic state, followed in October 1999 with the dismissal of Sharif government by General Musharaf. The famous 9/11 U-turn by the Musharaf regime was the beginning of a new history that continues in the present.

Statement of the Problem

Since independence from the British colonial rule in 1947, Pakistan’s journey has been punctuated and marred, time and again, by martial laws, dissolution of Assemblies, assassinations, hangings, wars, military coups and political crises, eventually leading to its break-up in 1971. This study is an attempt to see this chequered history as reflected and interpreted in Pakistani fiction in English. In the course of this dissertation, I shall attempt to seek answers to the following questions through an in-depth analysis of the selected novels:
1. What are the causes of Pakistan’s lingering socio-political and economic problems?

2. Have those causes hampered its growth as a sovereign state and does it still suffer from an identity crisis even after sixty-three years of independent existence?

3. Have the colonial history and Partition legacies contributed in its postcolonial problems? If yes, to what extent?

4. Have the post-Independence creative voices incorporated the reflection of these national issues in fiction in English, in particular?

5. Has Pakistan failed to emerge as a sovereign postcolonial country, keeping in view the neocolonial order that became well-entrenched right after its coming into existence?

**Methodology and Plan of Research**

This study focuses on Pakistan as a postcolonial country, still grappling with the colonial legacies, and going through the pangs of neocolonialism. It is, therefore, pertinent that various aspects of colonial discourse and postcolonial theory should be employed to develop well-defined benchmarks against which creative response of the Pakistani writers should be analysed. At the same time, ‘Social Theory’ provides a useful theoretical tool in such research that deals with the político-socio-economic problems. I shall mark well-defined areas from the history of Pakistan in order to contextualize and historicize the creative writings. Therefore,
I intend to make good use of Marxist critical and literary theory and its variants in the social analyses of Antonio Gramsci, Michael Foucault and other such theorists. This mode of study is likely to emerge as a diachronic as well as synchronic analysis. I also intend to carry out close reading of the suggested texts to sort out relevant passages for analysis. Ultimately, my project will be shaped as a historical, social, ideological and literary analysis of Pakistan’s post-Independence voices with special emphasis on the selected novels written in English. The works I have selected for this study are distinguished examples of the art and craft of Pakistani fiction. At the same time they represent the ‘state of the nation’ at some critical juncture of its historical existence, providing us with valuable insights from the imaginative writer’s perspective. In their own way, these works tell us something crucial about Pakistan, something which would not have come from other sources. The work of Pakistan’s fiction writers give voice to the experience of living inside and going through the various stages of the country’s growth and development, a progress of the nation as told by its fiction writers. What follows is an attempt to read Pakistan’s reality in its fiction. In this regard the Pakistani writers’ situation and their modus operandi is easily comparable to those of Latin American writers who, under the tyranny of their respective governments, resorted to such innovative literary devices as Magical Realism to respond to the prevailing political corruption and social chaos.

In order to discuss the post-colonial concerns like identity, culture, nation and narration. I intend to study in detail well-marked passages culled from the novels under my study.
**Structure of the Study**

The whole project is divided into seven chapters, excluding conclusion, as under:

In chapter one, the basic theme(s) is introduced along with the rationale of the study. It is a brief chapter that highlights the plan and significance of my dissertation.

Chapter two is the review of literature. As literature in this field is enormous and varied, it would neither be desirable nor possible to review all of it. Therefore, only selected writings are reviewed.

In Chapter three, socio-political conditions in the Subcontinent before partition are mapped out in order to develop a thorough background for the subsequent detailed analysis. Besides, this chapter also contains some discussion of the creative response of the Muslim writers like Ahmed Ali who wrote about the Muslim society, culture and politics since the downfall of Mughal Empire in 1857. Ali’s celebrated text *Twilight in Delhi* has been analyzed and contextualized at this stage in the dissertation.

Chapter four has two parts. In part one, partition of the Indian Subcontinent, as a turning point in the destiny of millions, is discussed. Also, how this event has set many socio-political trends into motion that became part of the national psyche for the newly created state of Pakistan. There is no dearth of the creative responses towards this tragedy of epic proportions. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsee
and many other writers of various faiths and political affiliations have written in prose fiction as well as in other creative genres. I have summed up their varied observations. At the same time I have discussed certain issues that led to the creation of Pakistan and the Partition Plan as envisaged and implemented by Lord Mountbatten in connivance with Congress leaders that deprived Pakistan of its rightful assets. It ultimately resulted into many economic, social and political problems that Pakistan faced right after coming into existence. This chapter will also serve the purpose of providing an historical backdrop of the whole dissertation for the international audience and the less informed readers as well. In part two, Bapsi Sidhwa’s work, with focus on her partition novel *Ice-Candy-Man* has been discussed in detail as this is the logical place in the thesis where it must be contextualized.

In Chapter five Pakistan’s postcolonial existence, facing numerous problems is discussed. In the backdrop of these issues and problems lie its colonial history and the abortive act of Partition. This discussion will help us understand the response of the Pakistani writers. At this point in the dissertation, a survey of Pakistani creative and imaginative writings, tinged with politics, is carried out. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Zulfikar Ghose, Ahmed Faraaz, Fahmida Riaz, Shaukat Siddique, Abdullah Hussain, Kishwar Nahid and more recently, Danial Moinuddin and others have negotiated with the socio-political, economic and cultural dominance of an exploitative elite minority and the military rulers. Without such a survey, I believe, the creative response will not be representative in this thesis.
Chapter six focuses on the creative response of Zulfikar Ghose with close textual study of his novel *The Murder of Aziz Khan*.

In Chapter seven, I have focussed on Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke* that documents the post-nuclearization phase of Pakistani society since May 1998.

A comprehensive Conclusion will sum up the whole discussion, raising many questions for future researchers, understandably, since this is one of the few research projects of its kind about Pakistani writers.

**Significance/ Aim of the Study**

There is a need to critically evaluate and recognize the contribution of the Pakistani writers both on the national and the international level. Writers from other countries of South Asia have been the subject of many critical studies. However, Pakistani writers, unfortunately, have seldom been in the critical limelight. This study is an effort to bring them into critical focus and will help pave the way for other researchers to take up such projects in the future.
Notes

1. Quoted in Ahmed Ali’s novel *Twilight in Delhi*.

2. ‘God’s Own Land’ is the title of a novel by Shaukat Siddiqi, *Khuda Ki Basti*, translated from Urdu by David J. Matthews

3. Since the late-1990s, however, a number of young writers belonging to Pakistani Diasporas in the west in particular have started to address such issues.

4. The list is too long. However, for reference purpose please see novels by Nasim Hijazi, Khushwant Singh, M.Aslam Rahi, and Manto’s short stories.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

My thesis has three major concerns: (1) the socio-political conditions of the pre-Partition Muslim community in India; (2) the post-Independence problems of Pakistan and the emergence of Pakistan as a postcolonial state; (3) and the creative responses of the Pakistani writers in English. There is no dearth of writings about the Partition of India, Pakistan’s socio-political conditions since Independence, and creative responses to the tragedy of Partition are very well documented. In fact, writers from Pakistan, India, Great Britain and other countries have carried out many valuable studies. Some British, American and Pakistan scholars like Lawrence Ziring, Ian Talbot, Stanley Wolpert, Craig Baxter, Khalid bin Saeed, and S.M. Burque and others have contributed voluminous studies in this field. In fact, the bulk and number of these books is so bewilderingly high that I will have to be selective, as is evident from the select bibliography. On the other hand, the situation regarding critical studies about Pakistani fiction is quite the opposite, that is, there is a frustrating lack or absence of such studies. Except for some newspaper reviews and brief commentaries and a few Journal articles, there is no systematic study available as yet. This absence of critical work will obviously determine my methodology.
Due to the highly charged nature of the Partition debate and the consequent problems confronting Pakistan since Independence, the trajectory of literature addressing these issues is tilted one way or the other. We clearly discern a dividing line and the polarization of opinion when we approach such studies. That is why we can see that three or four types of ‘national’/critical responses emanate from a comparative analysis of these studies, viz, (1) the Indian perspective, (2) Pakistani point of view, (3) the British perspective, (4) other perspectives, particularly American and French scholarly interventions. None of them can be regarded as ‘unbiased’ studies since they have invoked counter responses. It is, therefore, advisable that, while promoting the Pakistani national perspective, I should carry out my analysis in order to maintain balance.

For convenience, I have divided this chapter into three distinct sections, dealing with studies pertaining to (1) pre-Partition Indian Muslim situation and the Partition itself, (2) the post-Partition scenario in Pakistan, and (3) the limited critical studies (that are available) about the Pakistani writers of fiction in English. Following is the list of writers that I have included in my review of literature.

**Section I**

**PARTITION AND ITS POLITICS**

In this section, I have reviewed a number of books that deal with the pre-Partition India with particular reference to the Muslim situation in the Indian polity, and the
causes of their disadvantaged position since a number of those factors have continued to haunt the Muslims after the Partition both in India and Pakistan.


Of these the most balanced accounts of partition, in my view, and more relevant to my study, are arguably those of Khalid bin Saeed, Stanley Wolpert, and H. M. Seervai, belonging respectively to Pakistan, Britain, and India, the three main stakeholders during and after India’s Partition.
Khalid Bin Sayeed’s *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857-1948* is an objective analysis of the formative phase of Pakistan’s creation. Beginning with the war of independence in 1857 and ending at partition of sub-continent. The writer has taken stock of all important events which paved way for the partition. The writer also describes different phases of Pakistan movement and how something which was once nothing more than a dream turned into reality, and that too in a short span of time.

Stanley Wolpert’s *Gandhi’s Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi*; *Jinnah of Pakistan* and *Shameful Flight* are important historical studies that, by and large, give an unbiased position on the politics of partition and its aftermath.

Mahatma Gandhi, the spiritual leader and founding father of today’s India was a man, who along with Jinnah and Nehru had a huge influence on the lives and destinies of millions of Indians. Wolpert had to develop an insight into the elusive personality of Gandhi to dilate on his views pertaining to life and his political ideology. In a lucid and succinct manner, the writer explains evolution from Mohandas to Mahatma. Wolpert relates Gandhi’s “passion” with the “suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross.” The author sees Gandhi’s whole life willfully courting suffering. For Gandhi, “sacrifice” was the “law of life.” He renounced the comforts of life, braced himself for the scorching Indian summers, would walk barefoot, preferred travelling with the common-public in their rail compartments, gleefully accepted longer periods of incarceration. His greatness owes to his faith in Tapas (suffering), teachings of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Satyagraha (hold
fast to the truth), coupled with indomitable will and inflexible opposition to the British Raj.

Wolpert holds that Gandhi’s approach to life took its shape in reaction to the circumstances he was exposed to. The bitter racial discrimination and unjustified grudge that Gandhi was meted out in South Africa and at the outset of his legal profession in India are at the centre of his later philosophy of life. Drawing upon his religious leanings he stuck fast to his political credo of non-violence. He always resorted to non-violent means as compared to constitutional struggle to achieve independence. Jinnah and Gandhi were poles apart on the strategum of how to win freedom from the foreign rule. Gandhi was a great critic of constitutional means whereas Jinnah exclusively relied on such means. Jinnah won the goal of Pakistan through consummate advocacy and Gandhi on the other hand, at the twilight of his political career failed to muster enough support to achieve independence by means of non-violence.

Wolpert’s *Jinnah of Pakistan* is considered as one of the most objective analysis of Jinnah’s personality and his contributions for the Muslims of the sub-continent. Wolpert has not elevated Jinnah to prophetic status and also refrains from painting him as a villain or a spoiler, as many Indian writers portray him. He is depicted as a wise politician who played his cards remarkably well and outwitted both British and Hindus. This book testifies meticulous research and scholarship coupled with a very interesting style, a style characterized with putting everything with ease. Wolpert's book reveals Jinnah the Man to the readers. Steadily the author peels
away the angelic countenance of Jinnah. Walpert portrays Jinnah as a man with all physical and emotional shortcomings. Jinnah's greatness lay in his ability to rise above these weaknesses and then to spearhead the struggle for changing the map of the South Asia. Jinnah is shown as a pragmatic leader who was not clamouring to divide India for the sake of his own political ambitions, as has been suggested by many Indians. Instead the book illustrates how the Muslims of India were pushed with their backs towards the wall as a result of political maneuvering. In such backdrop Jinnah pursued the only viable course, which was partition.

Walpert also reveals Jinnah’s strong character, his resilience in the face of heavy odds and his defiance. Jinnah was very much mindful of the fact that he was suffering from a fatal disease and clock was ticking fast at him, yet he did what he set himself to do. Stanley’s depiction of Jinnah rebuffs charges of pursuing personal agenda and political ambitions, a man who knows that he is performing the last act of his life and curtains will soon fall on him will not think of nurturing such ambitions which spans over many years. Napoleon has famously remarked: “What is history, but a fable agreed upon…” And indeed, because history is written by people who have won the war, it contains just one side of the story and that too overly glorified. There are umpteen examples of this phenomenon but no one knows that better than the people of India and Pakistan. The uncomfortable facts that have been conveniently wiped out still happened. In the British bureaucracy, records were meticulously kept of almost everything. Similarly all the documents of that period (correspondences, agreements, memos, memoirs,
journals etc.) were kept with the British government. These papers however were kept under the 50 years secrecy law. But because all the relevant people had already been dead by 1977, the British government decided to reveal the documents.

Recently, Wolpert has come up with book-length scathing criticism of the British inefficiency in handling the Partition of India. As the title, *Shameful Flight*, indicates the book tells the shameful fleeing of British from India, which caused the butchery of millions and, at the same time, leaving behind such intractable issues which would not be settled even after sixty-three years.

Addressing at a session of the House of Commons on the “India question”, as a leader of the opposition, Churchill categorized the hurried withdrawal of the British from India as a “shameful flight”. Wolpert has spun the events leading to the partition of India around this central idea. He has carried out the thought provoking study trying to dig out the specificities and complexities of the relationships that existed between Hindus, Muslims and the British. The partition horrors resulting in the bloodbath that claimed about two million lives was not unavoidable, Wolpert holds. He has charged all the key players of the terrific events but has nominated the last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, as the principal accused. Making the fall of Singapore to the Japanese a starting point, he talks about the failure of constitutional parleys among the leadership of Hindus and Muslims with Sir Stafford crip at the centre-stage. The study ends with the first India-Pakistan war over the Kashmir embrolio.
The surgical nature of partition of India, Wolpert condemns, owes greatly, perhaps solely, to the egocentric and rather narcissistic temperament of Lord Mountbatten. He lacked the political knack for dealing with the intractable Indian political leaders. He unwisely accelerated the process of partition. British govt had scheduled to quit India by June 1948. The viceroy manoeuvred to cut the process short and bisected India by mid-August 1947.

Mountbatten stained the British reputation of fairplay and neutrality by keeping the boundaries’ demarcation maps secret till the end of independence celebrations. Some Muslims majority districts and tehsils had been given to India in violation of the agreed formula of the boundary commission. Wolpert maintains that the reason of acceding to the proposal of whirlwind division of India was the lack of trust that had developed between Indian politicians and the Labour govt.

*Partition of India: Legend and Reality*¹ by H.M. Seervai contains information from the last 10 years of the British Raj. The various events that led to the partition are looked upon from different point of views. How the Hindu Muslim deadlock came into being. How the various proposals were made, the reasons for the rejection and the reaction afterwards. The strengthening of the Muslim League after their disastrous performance in the 1937 election, and the haughty attitude of the congress leaders. In this case he sounds like Abul Kalam in his *India Wins Freedom*. He puts the blame on the Congress leaders for the Partitions as they had rejected the Cabinet Mission proposals to keep India united by forming a coalition government with the Muslim League at the centre in a loose confederation of Indian states. Up to the end, Quaid-e-Azam proved that as the ambassador of
Hindu-Muslim unity he had the broad-mindedness and the vision to live with the Hindus in united India. This study exposes the dual face of the Congress leaders of the time. They took their decisions on the basis of political judgement, which as we know is often worst in any other context but politics.

In *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj*, the question which Dennis Judd seeks to answer is how a handful of foreign intruders were able to sweep through the whole of sub-continent and that too with remarkable ease, with no stiff resistance in sight. This is an interesting short history of British Raj (1600-1947) and the writer analyzes the impact of British rule on both Indians and British. The book begins with early contacts of locals and British and covers all events which took place as an aftermath of this contact. Dennis Judd unfolds the history in the form of a story which slowly builds tempo and then there is a crescendo rising until the curtain falls in 1947. A professor of British Imperial, Commonwealth, and Indian History at the London Metropolitan University, Dennis has tried to narrate events in a dispassionate way.

There was absolutely no presence of any English man before the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan first granted permission for trade to a few English merchants of the East India Company. It happened about 400 years ago when Queen Elizabeth-I was the ruler of England. The British had already been outsmarted by the Dutch in the spice trade in the East Indies. They, therefore, looked to India as a next option. Owing to their naval supremacy, technological prowess, alliances with local elite won over by guile, bribery or intimidation, and financial/administrative support from home, the British attained the status of superiority in the 18th
century. Explaining the implication of the British rule both for the masters and the subjects, Judd poses pertinent questions: “Were the British keen on development or exploitation? Did they live up to their self-proclaimed mission and image of civilizing the uncivilized and uncouth races?” The writer doesn’t proffer simple and plain answers to these questions which don’t look as mind-boggling as the writer perhaps treats them. Judd spruces up his narrative with interesting anecdotes and quotations of astute observers and famous writers such as, Rudyard Kipling, Noel Coward, George Orwell, and E.M. Forster.

In *The Shadow of the Great Game: The untold story of India’s Partition*, Narendra Singh Sarila has analysed the ‘great game of partition’ and believes that by accepting partition as the only plausible solution, the British gave in to the religious basis of partition. Jinnah’s relentless pressure on British is also dilated upon. Interesting contrasts regarding how Muslims, Hindus and British viewed partition are given.

This book brings out a very different account of the events that led to partition. As a young diplomat the writer served as a staff member of Mountbatten, Sarila’s depiction of the last viceroy fits into the pattern of Stanley Wolpert’s *Shameful Flight*. As the name of the book suggests, the writer is of the view that the partition was not a result of the political strategies; rather it is the outcome of a great game that the west has been playing in this region since long. He sees that the seeds of religious fanaticism and communal hatred were sown by the ‘Great Game’ which British played in the name of partition. The book is an interesting reading especially in post 9/11 scenario.
Lady Pamela Mountbatten’s *India Remembered* offers an interesting reading as it recounts the eventful days of Mountbatten as the last Indian viceroy. Pamela Mountbatten accompanied her parents to India and stayed for 15 months during the tumultuous time of 1947-48. She recorded her observations in her diary. In these diary accounts, the most interesting are her recollection of events that took place in Aug 1947. Her depiction of Jinnah’s personality is quite interesting too; she calls him “cold” and “remote” on the day of independence but had a “magnetic quality” in his personality, enough to mesmerize anyone. He was also shown as a man of no emotions, “icy”. She also recalls with a heavy heart her father’s transformation from the most powerful man in India to a man yielding no power at all. The entry in her diary for August 15 ran for four pages scribbled in very small handwriting, as she tried to jot down every worth mentioning detail.

The book is a fascinating reading as one reads the first hand account of someone who was witness to those events which shaped the destinies of millions and had cascading impacts on the generations to come. Someone who wants to get some political insight from the book, this book perhaps may not offer a great deal.

Charles Ball in his *History of the Indian Mutiny*, explores the mythical character of Mangal Pandey. The book was published on the 150th anniversary of Indain Mutiny with an aim to reinvigorate the patriotic passions which were dying with every passing day. Most of the books written on this subject by English writers were personal narratives of those Englishmen who had survived the tumultuous events.
Charles Bell’s book was perhaps the first of the official histories of the event. It is refreshing to see that Bell tried to inject objectivity instead of falling in line with those writers who vilified the locals and glorified the British. When Bell explains the causes of discontentment among the locals he explains the attempts of British missionaries to convert locals especially the sepoys to Christianity, an attempt that outraged the locals and ignited their hatred for British. He has also explained the hatred which was piling up even before Plassey. Even then Bell’s history cannot be termed as unbiased as he believes that the locals had themselves to blame for their tragic fate. To him the Hindu caste system was the key reason which made sepoys to challenge the British.

The book gives readers an insight into colonial mindset, and the first official version of the events.
Section II

POST-PARTITION PAKISTANI SOCIETY AND POLITICS


15. Hussain Haqqani: *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*. (Karachi: OUP, 2005.)


In *Pakistan Studie: An Investigation into the Political Economy 1948-1988*, Nadeem Qaisar has presented a thorough analysis of Pakistan’s socio-political cum economic matrix from 1947 to 1988. It underlines the economic woes of Pakistan, beginning with inheriting a fragile economic base and later the incompetent handling of economic matters. The author has showcased the bearings of the tattering economy on shaping the socio-political conditions of the country.

*Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* is a searing study in which Ayesha Jalal has come up with another thought provoking endeavour which further cements her credentials as a researcher. This book is another study on contemporary South Asia. The theme is somewhat different from her previous works on the evolution of Pakistan’s polity.
The research focuses on the issue that how a shared legacy evolved into altogether different political modes of developments. India continued to pursue the democratic tradition. Pakistan unluckily fell a victim to militarily authoritarian mode. She has presented a well researched analysis of the colonial past in the backdrop of the partition as well as its administrative legacy and the ideological dimensions.

While analyzing the political processes in the two countries, the writer chooses the debacle of 1971 as a classic case of authoritarianism and political immaturity. According to her the military debacle in its eastern wing was the “cumulative result” of the Pakistani defence establishment’s political rather than military failures. The lack of political insight of the military establishment was central to the inability of an authoritarian regime to facilitate the transfer of power after country’s first general elections.

The success of “formal democracy” in India owes greatly to the seasoned and mature political leadership of the congress. Other favourable factor was that India directly inherited the unitary centre, Delhi, after the Raj. The formulation of the “very different sorts” of foreign policy in the wake of independence also played a key role in this regard.

Almost in the midway, Dr Ayesha switches the focus from political to economic developments. In the case of New Delhi, the political economy has developed in line with the “formally liberal democratic mould”. The dividends of development
may not have been “spectacular” but they were shared on a wide scale as compared to Pakistan or Bangladesh.

The chapter on central power and regional dissidence plays down the much hyped “democratic federalism” of India. It also brings to light the recent efforts “to manipulate” communal divisions among linguistic minorities. In Pakistan’s case she believes that mainly due military-bureaucratic-industrial axis at the federal centre economic gains could not be evenly distributed among all provinces.

In Pakistan’s military-bureaucratic state, the failure to evolve a democratic political system and state structure has so far proved “irreversible”, while the future looks not that rosy at all for the subcontinent’s “historical legacy of layered sovereignties” needs to be fitted into innovative frameworks of decentred democracies.

*Pakistan - A Dream Gone Sour* presents powerful and scathing criticism in which Roedad Khan reflects the pain which a sensitive Pakistani feels when he glances at the modern day Pakistan. In the words of writer, “This is not the country I opted for in the Referendum held in my home province of NWFP”. Roedad Khan has held multidimensional positions in life. He has not only been a keen observer of the turbulent history of Pakistan since its birth in 1947 but also has had a role in the musical-chair game of its power politics. Mr. Khan entered the Pakistan Administrative Service in 1949 and struggled his way to the most coveted position of Federal Secretary in the Govt of Pakistan. He got retired from service in 1985. When the then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan axed Benazir Bhutto’s
govt, Roedad Khan was inducted in as an advisor to the President. In the Preface, to the *A Dream Gone sour* Mr. Khan succinctly observes that all the five presidents with whom he worked, in their own way “directly or indirectly contributed to our generation's anguish and sense of betrayal”.

The Martial Law imposed in October 1958 startled the writer and all the idealism of a democratic order dashed to ground. He quotes Diecy that Martial Law could only be resorted to in a situation of “commotion in the country, preventing the judges from going to the court”. There was hardly any sign of such an alarming situation in the country. This proved the starting point of a long tragedy. The author dilates on the circumstances which led to bringing of Bhutto from Rome for transfer of powers to his new govt. Bhutto took good steps in the begining. His greatest contribution was the 1973 constitution agreed upon by all political parties. Bhutto duly deserves the credit for the development of Pakistan’s atomic energy programme. Roedad Khan then describes the coup' d'etat of General Zia and the judicial trial of Bhutto. Roedad compares Zia with Roosevelt who was “deeply receptive to the needs of the people”. He would attend to them with “deep attention”. Zia was a good listener. “He enjoyed clash of views, conflicting opinions and discordant notes”. Roedad, however, also labels Zia as a “great hypocrite”, a title originally given to him by Altaf Gauhar. Roedad mentions his retirement in 1985 when he “experienced a strange feeling of liberation”. Zia died in an aircrash in 1988 in circumstances still shrouded in mystery. Ghulam Ishaq Khan (GIK) rose to most prestigious position of the President of Pakistan. General elections were held in 1988. Benazir won the elections and took the oath
as Prime Minister. Benazir was suspicious of GIK for having a role in the hardships her family had faced. Roedad advised her that “she was lucky to have an honest man like GIK at the helm of affairs”. However, Benazir govt was axed in 1990 under the article 58-2(b) of the constitution. Roedad Khan had been taken as an Adviser to the President. The next General Elections provided Nawaz Sharif a chance to become the Prime Minister. Warmth of relations between Nawaz Sharif and GIK persisted for about a year. Situation started changing when Benazir chanted the slogan of “Go, Baba Go” in the Parliament and Nawaz Sharif's reticence was indicative of the trust-deficit which had developed between Prime Minister and President.

_A Dream Gone Sour_ expresses severe heartache of the author regarding the painful picture of the country. It also warns about the future. The comparisons made with the events of similar nature from the world history are realistic and thought-provoking. The corrupt politicians, landlords, industrialists, bureaucrats, and business tycoons have devoured Rs. 140 billion of the national exchequer.

Lawrence Ziring in his book _Pakistan in the Twentieth Century: A Political History_ portrays a chronological account of the political history of Pakistan. Very few western writers could parallel Lawrence Ziring’s insight and the authority he wields when it comes down to Pakistan’s political development. The first few chapters (“Before the Beginning”, “The Formation of Pakistan” and “The Agony of Partition”) are kept shorter than in most other books on Pakistan's history. While dealing with the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India and
the outbreak of war over Kashmir, Ziring supports the Pakistani reading of events more than the Indian one.

According to the writer the early phase of martial law and “basic democracies” (The Ayub Khan Era) met with initial successes, but finally led to creation of Bangladesh - “The Dismemberment of Pakistan”. Ziring puts great emphasis behind the argument that the single most important reason for the secession of East Pakistan is the shameful absence of a constitution in 1970 at the time of first general elections in Pakistan. Otherwise, Ziring holds, “the results would have been manageable”. The absence of a constitutional framework and the abortive attempt to put one in place from the election results merely provided both Mujib and Bhutto with opportunities to press for their separatist and highly personal ambitions. The first-ever national election, tragically, were conducted without an established legal structure. In addition to this no effort was made to forge an understanding among the competing political parties regarding the post election scenario.

Yahya Khan, Pakistan's second general in power, was succeeded by a politician “The Bhutto Legacy”, who, once president, “also became Chief Martial Law Administrator, the first civilian to hold such a position among the new nations” (p.375), and before he was ousted six years later, he had established martial law in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Lahore, a decision declared “unconstitutional” by the Lahore High Court. Ziring has little sympathy for Bhutto, a man of “questionable behaviour”, “arrogance”, and “lust for power”. (p.419)
Another general followed ("The Ziaul Haq Decade"), who "was not the strategist in the overthrow of Bhutto, but he was made its instrument" (p.420). "Zia's choice lay in preserving the integrity of the army or saving Bhutto. In the end, he chose the army." (p.422) For discussions on the external dimension and Islamisation sub-chapters have been developed. There is also a brief reference to the 1979 Iranian revolution. War in Afghanistan has not ended with the withdrawal of the super powers from Afghanistan and the disintegration of the USSR. Ziring does not divulge his views about the plane crash resulting in the sudden demise of General Zia in 1988.

Two chapters are devoted to describe the power struggle between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif -"Democracy Revisited”and“The End and the Beginning”; the book ends with his conclusions on “The Meaning of History”. It is well documented and indexed book availbe for future writers on Pakistan.

Lt. Gen. A. K. Niazi in The Betrayal of East Pakistan paints a picture of the events preceding the 1971 debacle which resulted in the breaking away of the East wing of Pakistan. General Niazi was the commander of Pakistan Army at the time of Bangladesh war. Gen Niazi, who was one of the prime targets of Hamoodur-Rahman commission report, and who was allegedly indulged into “debauchery” when Indian troops were at the threshold of victory, seeks to clear his name in this book. He gives an impression that he was a victim of fate rather than being a coward who meekly surrendered to the Indian army in a disgraceful manner.
Ian Talbot in his book *India and Pakistan* provides a wide-ranging study of nationalism in the sub-continent in a non-European context, showing how the 'invention' of modern India and Pakistan is heavily interwoven with indigenous values. Analyzing the effects of colonial rule and the post-colonial era, the book provides an up-to-date introduction to the major issues in the sub-continent.

*Pakistan: Founder’s Aspirations and Today’s Realities*, a voluminous and enlightening study, is edited by Hafeez Malik. The book is a collection of papers by renowned Pakistani scholars to understand Pakistan’s development as a state. These papers are frank and objective scholarly analysis of politics, role of judiciary, economic development, foreign policy and sectarian strife in Pakistan.

*Pakistan: History and politics, 1947-1971*, by M. Rafique presents a detailed account of Pakistan’s history from its inception to East Pakistan debacle in 1971. What is refreshing about the book is writer’s originality in dealing with a subject which have been told and retold many times. The writer has not only expounded his views on politics, but also brings Pakistan’s economic situation and foreign policy in his ambit.

Safdar Mahmood in his book *Pakistan: Political Roots and Development, 1947-1999* has discussed Pakistan’s checkered political history which is marred by military interventions, political intrigues, and bureaucratic gimmicks. The book takes a detailed survey of political development in Pakistan and aims at analyzing a disturbing question, why democracy and a democratic culture has failed to acquire firm roots? The writer describes the functioning of elected civil governments and military dictatorships in Pakistan from 1947 to 1999.
Pakistan: The Contours of State and Society, edited by Soofia Mumtaz and Imran Anwar Ali, contains papers by French and Pakistani scholars. These papers were read out in a conference in Paris, held to mark the fiftieth year of Pakistan’s independence. These papers address wide ranging issues which modern day Pakistan is facing. The views of French researchers on Pakistani society and state make an interesting and rare appearance in this book.

In Pakistan at the Millenium, Charles Kenedy, Kathleen McNeil, Carl Ernst, and David Gilmartin (eds) have presented a collection of scholarly articles by well-known international experts on South Asia. The collection brings to light various factors constituting the very fabric of Pakistani society and state. The articles have been laid down on a huge canvass which offers a panoramic view from the nuclear standoff to the rich cultural heritage. On the cultural side wide ranging areas including forms of music, mysticism, pictorial arts are discussed. This book is a pleasant amalgam of culture and politics.

Pakistan on the Brink, Politics, Economics and Society edited by Craig Baxter is another searing study. Baxter along with a group of experts probe their way through Pakistan’s economy, politics, foreign policy especially relations with the US, education, local government system. As post 9/11 scenario put Pakistan in a position which could at best be described as between devil and the deep blue sea, the book presents itself as an important learning for an academician or an ordinary reader who wants to understand the situation present day Pakistan finds itself negotiating with.
In *We’ve Learnt Nothing from History: Pakistan-Politics and Military Power*, M. Asghar Khan, the former chief of the Pakistan Air Force, has carried out a detailed analysis of Pakistani politics. He comes up with the conclusion that army and civil bureaucracy is responsible for all commotion in the country.

Air Marshall (Rtd.) M. Asghar Khan has been active in Pakistan politics for the last four decades. His other noteworthy works include: *Pakistan at the Crossroads; Generals in Politics; Islam, Politics and the State*.

*Divided by Democracy* is co-authored by Meghnad Desai (India) and Aitzaz Ahsan (Pakistan). It is a unique study in the sense that the authors hail from two countries with inherently contrasting interests and perceptions. Meghnad Desai considers that the momentous decision of adoption of “universal adult franchise” is at the heart of the survival of democracy in India. The leaders of the independence movement were overwhelmingly in favour of a Westminster-style democracy. The adoption of this model led to demands for inclusion from lower and backward castes and Dalits. Modern Indian democracy is an admixture of ethnic and immigrant groups with class cleavages as well as rural/urban and north-south divisions.

Aitzaz believes that Pakistan, instead of becoming a welfare state, turned into a national security state where military rulers have been leaving no attempt to scare people into believing that if military is not strengthened, Pakistan’s existence will be endangered, hence strong military is a must for Pakistan’s survival. When such ideologies are being constantly churned out, and that too in a country which is
still struggling to wean itself away from military dictatorships, one can’t imagine of a welfare state. Aitzaz believes that in the modern world national security states are bound to fail, he gives the example of socialist states where military might and stockpiles of nuclear weapons could not stop the downfall and disintegration of these states.

Aitzaz Ahsan argues that at partition, “while India had a strong middle class and political structure and a subordinated civil and military bureaucracy, in Pakistan it was the opposite. It inherited a strong feudal class, an insignificant bourgeoisie and an entrenched civil and military bureaucracy. These groups have never relinquished their control over the country, and have in the process choked the spirit of democracy there.”

*Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* by Hussain Haqqani recounts the history of military interventions in Pakistani politics and aims at digging into the reasons why Pakistan is still under military rule for more than 50 years. The book was published during the regime of Gen Musharraf, when the alleged nexus of ‘mullah & military’ received lot of attention and many probing and disturbing questions were asked. Haqqani chronicles the history of military incursions in Pakistani politics. His narrative joins various strands into an informative and tale of political maneuvering characterized by bullying, coercing people to fall in line and sometimes using carrot and stick policy by military rulers in Pakistan.

The writer explains interlinked problems that have affected Pakistan’s internal politics since the country’s birth: the state’s use of religion and religious groups
for political gains which ultimately gave rise to religious fanaticism, and the military’s failure to put things right after maligning politicians.

The author argues that it is not the religious devotion of citizens to Islam that has shaped Pakistan’s state ideology, but rather “the military’s desire to dominate the political system and define Pakistan’s national security priorities.” The military’s adoption of Islamic ideology by early military leaders such as Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan “conferred legitimacy on its right to rule Pakistan.”

Founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, had a vision to create a separate homeland for the Muslims of subcontinent. Islam was deemed as a powerful force to tie and unify the Muslims of distant regions and of diverse cultures, into one nation. The unifying force had its first failure when Esten wing got separated through a civil war in the first 25 years of its creation.

The equation between military and Islam in Pakistan became all the more pronounced in the wake of coming to power of General Zia ul Haq in 1977. Mr. Haqqani holds that General Zia used Islam as a vehicle of ruling force in Pakistan. This nexus “brought the relationship between Pakistani state and Islamic groups to a new level” and resulted in the creation of such an all-powerful force that civilian governments could hardly control.

Mr. Haqqani sympathises with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto while relating her quest to grapple with a powerful military, intelligence services and the presidency. None of the civilian governments in Pakistan could succeed in
achieving public acclaim because of what Mr. Haqqani calls a “fault line” within the country. He emphasises the tragic fact that the civilian rule could not take roots in the country because the military governments did not allow our politicians to attain maturity through learning process. The civilian governments had been sacked in so hurried succession that the politicians always ruled under a perpetual threat of being overthrown anytime.

Haqqani concludes that “the unequal partnership with the U.S. will have negative consequences” because Washington has always had its agenda of seeking short-term gains that has served no better cause except multiplying our already existing worries and woes.

*New Perspectives on Pakistan, Vision for the Future*, edited by Saeed Shafqat, carries papers presented at the international conference on Pakistan at the Columbia University in April 2003. Some of these papers examine the history, society and culture of Pakistan and offers a fresh and an unorthodox approach to understand Pakistan, its culture, history and politics. This is an inter-disciplinary volume that cobbles together scholarly insight and empirical research on Pakistan.

The most interesting thing which a reader notices in the *Diaries of Field Marshall Muhammad Ayub Khan* is that the diaries which are said to cover the period 1966 to 1972, do not include the main events taking place in these years. These events include tensions with India, accession to SEATO, Pakistan’s alignment with US, imposition of Marshal Law in 1958, Basic Democracies system etc. Ayub Khan’s silence over key issues and specially the aftermath of 1965 war with India, which
torpedoed his advances and marked the beginning of end, is hard to understand. Hence many critics call this book, which was much hyped, as ‘revealing nothing’. The book becomes a real disappointment for those who want to hear Ayub’s version of political and economic scenario which brought his fall and re-imposition of Marshal Law in 1968.

The silver lining comes through his views on Pak-US relations and his prediction suggesting that India is on a fast track to revive the Hinduism and on her way to become an expansionist state in the years to come. This shows his political acumen and foresight as a leader.

Muhammad A. Qadeer presents his searching analysis in *Pakistan: Social and Cultural Transformation in a Muslim Nation*. The book explains the social and cultural transformation of Pakistan since independence. A journey that starts with Jinnah’s liberal ideas based upon the principles of democracy and later such ideas received a fillip at the hands of Bhutto who instilled the ideas of masses’emanicipation. This journey was somewhat stalled by Zia who brought islamisation and military rule together, hence strengthening the idea of Pakistan being a national security state instead of being a welfare state.

The writer also explains the role religion plays in Pakistani society, and the fact that Pakistanis are still in search of their identity. The rulers and the military and civil bureaucracy feed the masses with different sets of ideologies, based on the rules of what suits their vested interests. Its quite ironic that Pakistanis are still suffering from identity crisis.
Globalization has had its impacts on Pakistan, but modernism is still a confusing picture here as there is still a fierce resistance to change. Religion, family structure and social status are the three key dimensions of Pakistani society. Writer being an urban planner presents the urban development theory and applies it on Pakistan. For a student of Pakistani culture this book offers a pleasurable reading.

In *Military Inc*, Dr Ayesha Siddiqa addresses an important question: why military in Pakistan has assumed the role of corporate boss and clandestinely protects its economic interests through shady and often questionable antics. The book when published invited the wrath of the then military ruler which was quite understandable but it holds the distinction of being the first such research of its kinds which tends to lay bare certain facts which are guarded in supposedly no go areas where no researcher in Pakistan has dared trespassing. She uses the term “Milbus” to refer to “military capital that is used for the personal benefit of the military fraternity, especially the top brass, but never figures in the defense budget.”

Her research spans over many years and most of her findings are based upon figures obtained from Pakistan Army. According to her, ‘Milbus’ is worth $20.7 billion, a huge sum in the context of faltering Pakistan economy. She terms military as a greedy corporate giant with investments in security related businesses, shopping malls, real estate, insurance companies, banks, farms, airlines etc. She believes that military incursion in the politics of Pakistan and derailing democracy again and again has its roots in protecting its economic
interests. Even when military is not in power, no civilian ruler can say stop it from expanding its economic interests.

Post-independence expansion of ‘Milbus’ occurred most prominently via welfare foundations claiming to provide for the needs of the troops and their families. In addition, land grants, pensions five times the civilian level and post-retirement jobs — “the most significant group involved in Milbus are retired personnel” were designed to make service attractive. The writer believes that “out of the 46 housing schemes directly built by the armed forces, none is for ordinary soldiers.” Milbus showers its blessing on the officers only. A number of military companies were allowed absolute monopoly as no civilian company was allowed to operate, hence giving a field day to these military companies to reap as much profits as they can.

*The General and Jihad: Pakistan Under Musharraf* is a propaganda book written to tarnish Pakistan’s image and aimed at dubbing it as a rogue state. The writer, Wilson John, ratchets up figures and churns out such facts which are hard to be substantiated, yet it brings our attention towards mullah-military nexus which has raised many eyebrows in Pakistan and abroad. According to writer, "No other country in the world has spawned and supported as many extremist and terrorist groups as Pakistan. The size of the *Jihadi* population could be gauged from one simple fact that Karachi alone has as many as 30 terrorist groups. Many of these groups are sectarian in nature; some purely criminal; others are aligned with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban; all of them, however, boast of links with ISI”
The writer believes that President Pervez Musharraf claimed time and again that he had been trying to put these Jihadi groups in check. He launched several high-profile campaigns to rid Pakistan of terrorists. He has even caught a few of them and handed them over to the United States.

According to him the War on Terror has only created more terrorist groups in Pakistan, more lethal, better armed and networked before September 11, 2001. Musharraf, in the saddle since October 12, 1999, is singularly guilty of foisting lies and deceits in the name of fighting terrorism.

The book exposes Musharraf's alleged duplicity in dealing with terrorists, his policy of keeping the Jihadi option alive as a strategic tool and exploiting the presence of Jihadi terrorists in Pakistan to project himself as a savior of Pakistan.

A keen observer of Musharraf since 1999, the author falsifies Musharraf's lopsided claims of fighting terrorism and reveals how “Musharraf has hoodwinked the world through a web of lies and deceits, leaving the world a more dangerous place to live."

Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within, by Shuja Nawaz is considered by many critics as one of the most insightful study of an institution that has been, and remains, nerve centre of power in Pakistan. This superbly researched book comes at a critical time in Pakistan’s history. It helps to understand the past and the ongoing events. Military role in Pakistani politics has received flak and come under fire in recent times especially after the judicial
crisis, Shuja Nawaz has tried to answer many probing questions regarding the questionable role which military has been playing in politics of Pakistan.

*The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power* is a frank account of failure of political system in Pakistan to deliver the goods. Tracing the roots and evolution of Pak-American relationship, Tariq Ali has come up with a well written account of regional politics today, in the backdrop of the current Afghan situation and explains how deeply Pakistan has fallen into the trap of international power politics.

In *Frontline Pakistan: The Path to Catastrophe and the Killing of Benazir Bhutto*, Zahid Hussain, a well known journalist, has given a balanced account of the multidimensional challenges which Pakistan has found itself dealing with after becoming a key US ally in war against terror. The writer believes that the repercussions of this horrific wave of terror are getting out of control and the assassination of Benazir Bhutto is an example of it. Pakistan, according to him, is treading on the path of disaster and one wrong move in the wrong direction could prove fatal.

*Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West* is remembered as Benazir Bhutto’s last testament, a statement of the ideals she aspired to. It is also believed that she made the last few changes to her book the day she died. Her long-time friend and adviser, Washington political consultant and lobbyist Mark A. Siegel, indicates that he collaborated on the manuscript. In this book Benazir seems to bridge an ever widening chasm between East and West and believes that
reconciliation is the only way forward. She urges Muslim world to avoid clash of civilizations. She has also described her dialogue with the then President Gen. Musharaf, she is of the view that this dialogue was important to take Pakistan out of the deep crisis.

Dr Ayesha Jalal in *Partisans of Allah*, explains shifting discourse on jihad in South Asia over three centuries – placing politicians, thinkers, mystics and warriors all within the same ambit. The book if seen in the post-9/11 discourse on Jehad, seeks to clarify many misconceptions and analyses the true essence of Jehad.

The writer seeks to explain how the principles of Islamic ethics within the Muslim world itself have been abused by political, economic and social vested interest groups. She concentrates on South Asia, where Muslims are in the minority and where they are pitched against a tough battle for many centuries.

One thing that *Partisans of Allah* makes clear is that religious discourse within Islam fluctuates widely, and is inextricably linked with geopolitics. During colonial rule, in the post-1857 period, discussion of jihad revolved around the need for Indian Muslims to prove their status as loyal citizens. The injunction that it could only be fought when Muslims were prevented from freely practising their religion was always voiced loud and clear. But in the 20th century's early years, jihad was redefined and entwined with anti-colonial nationalism. The two leading figures who spearheaded this movement were: Abul Kalam Azad who was a member of secular Indian National Congress, while Maulana Mawdudi was the
founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami, which went on to play an important role in Pakistan's political history.

“Jihad in the modern world has become a political weapon with which to threaten believers and unbelievers alike,” Ms. Jalal writes. And the salvation of the word can only come from Muslims returning it to its original meaning — the struggle for high ethical values and submission to God.

Partisans of Allah is an enjoyable and enlightening reading for contemporary Muslims, in the context of sub-continent it is an erudite and thought-provoking study of the interplay of religion and politics. The writer in her own words sums up her research in these words.

“My exploration of the literature on the subject immediately brought home to me the intrinsic connection between the concept of jehad as endeavour and the Muslim faith. Far from being a passive and mindless activity, submission (Islam) assumes dynamic effort and reasoned self-control against the personal inclinations and social tendencies preventing a believer from heeding God’s commands, and thereby destroying any internal or external sense of balance and proportion…. It is commonplace to assert that the sacred and the temporal in Islam are inextricably intertwined. However, the interplay of ethics and politics in the unfolding of Muslim history has not been subjected to critical scrutiny. One way of remedying that oversight is to train the spotlight on the much-contested idea of jehad and its practice.”
Roots of 1971 Tragedy, an illuminating work by Brig (Retd) Asif Haroon covers not only the sad saga of East Pakistan debacle but the entire Indian history and may well be used as a text book for history students in addition to serving the researchers.

One could dispute the objectivity of this book as to the writer even the sad events that weaned East Pakistan away have their roots in Hindu-Muslim hatred that led to partition, and those who were restlessly conspiring against Muslims had the last laugh by sowing the seeds of hatred in the hearts of Bengalis. This hatred snowballed into an avalanche and swept everything aside. The crisis which unfolded in East Pakistan is not as simple as the writer puts it, military, politicians, and civil bureaucracy, all have to be blamed for the failure to see the writing on the wall and mitigate the sufferings of Bengalis before India could step in and play a key role in final rituals. The writer at a later stage admits the inept handling of political crisis and using force to set things right in a highly volatile situation, a strategy which was bound to fail in the given situation.

After reading this book, one can’t help saying that if this book was focused on the crisis in East Pakistan, it might have been a more pleasurable reading. Nevertheless the painstaking research is quite evident and for a researcher there is a lot to lay his hands on.

Making Pakistan a Tenable State is a product of the brainstorming done by a group of 17 reputable Pakistanis, including Dr. Mubashir Hasan, I.A. Rehman, Shahd Hafiz Kardar, Hussain Naqi, Dr. Pervez Tahir, and M.B. Naqvi, under the
umbrella of the “Independent Planning Commission of Pakistan’. In due course, they produced a valuable document which has now been published in the form of a book for wider circulation.

*Making Pakistan a Tenable State* blames the centralized, elitist West-oriented structure of the Pakistani state for the current socio-economic crisis and the breakdown of governance. The system has led to discontent and alienation in the backward regions and the under-privileged classes.

The authors advocate a revamping of the system of governance and a change in the direction of policies to move the country towards self reliance, peace and social justice. They are particularly critical of the economic policies of deregulation, liberalization and privatization that serve the interests of a small elite at the cost of the majority.

Explaining why the group felt the need to do this exercise, the first chapter states: that today Pakistan stands as a monument to the unfulfilled hopes and aspirations of the people inhabiting it. They want to live in freedom as a progressive and prosperous nation, powerful and pledged to peace and harmony. This state, so respondent with a noble purpose, as it seemed in the beginning, has fallen prey to internal weaknesses, and has become apathetic to its own people’s freedom and welfare.

Tracing the political history of Pakistan the authors identify neocolonialism as the single most devastating force that succeeded in establishing its hold soon after the birth of the country.
The book points out that a disproportionate share of the central government’s expenditure was incurred in the western part, mainly in the province of Punjab and the city of Karachi. The development schemes were so conceived that the private sector enterprises remained in the hands of a small number of businessmen in West Pakistan who adopted the concept of development on capitalistic lines.

The authors are of the opinion that the frequently recurring crisis of the state of Pakistan have made it an untenable state. They base their conclusion on three premises: Pakistan has failed to provide (a) protection to life, liberty, property and dignity of its citizens, (b) dispensation of justice and (c) equality of opportunity.

Taking the right direction, the second part of the book gives the outlines of a system that could deliver all that the current system has failed to achieve. It suggests a three-tier system of governance with clearly defined domains. It says, ‘The constitution of Pakistan shall guarantee that no level of government is in a position to legitimize any usurpation of power of a lower authority.’

On the economy the book says ‘The economy of Pakistan needs to be restructured in order to afford relief from economic oppression and exploitation of many by the few to put an end to loot and plunder of the less privileged classes and to put the country on the road to progress and prosperity.’
Section III

CRITIQUES OF THE PRIMARY SOURCES

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is a conspicuous lack of critical studies of Pakistani writings in English. Scattered reviews and a few journal articles are the only sources available.


2. Fawzia Afzal Khan. ‘Structures of Negation’ *World Literature Today*; Summer 94.


In Jussawala’s book, a comprehensive interview of Zulfikar Ghose is available. In the closing paragraphs of their introduction, Jussawalla and Dasenbrock argue for the value of allowing the writers they interview to "speak for themselves about their work, their politics, and the traditions--both Western and nonWestern--that
made them who they are.” Instead of coming to these writers with a critical kit already in hand, readers should learn from the work itself how best to approach it—a principle the validity of which is not limited to "writers of the postcolonial world." (Jussawala and Dasenbrock 1992: 21)

Reviewing Kanaganayakam’s book Structures of Negation: The Writings of Zulfikar Ghose Fawzia Afzal Khan writes that Structures of Negation is a critical study of the prolific and multi-genre writings of Zulfikar Ghose, a much-neglected writer of the Indo-Pakistani region who has been living and writing in the West for much of his adult life. Chelva Kanaganayakam's avowed purpose, as she states in her introduction, is, then, "to explore, through a survey of his literary and critical works, the significance of Ghose as a postcolonial and contemporary writer." Though it would appear that Kanaganayakam's thesis is that, despite his eschewal of "political" literature, Ghose is hardly apolitical. She seems constrained by the very paradox she discovers in Ghose's position—that is, to show that he both is and is not "political" and, consequently, that he both is and is not a "postcolonial" writer. The strength of Structures of Negation lies in its close textual readings of all of Ghose's major works—a not insignificant achievement. For readers unfamiliar with his writings, this study should certainly provide useful critical commentary and a point of departure for further investigation from a multiplicity of "postcolonial" perspectives.

R.K. Dhawan and Novy Kapadia’s The Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa is the largest and the most comprehensive attempt yet made to probe the diversity of her writings. In the context of writers of English fiction in the Indian subcontinent, she is
unique because of her raucous humour, caustic wit, a sense of fair play and shrewd observations of human behaviour. It is difficult to categorize her because of the multiplicity of themes in her four published novels, namely *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice-Candy-Man*, *The Bride* and *An American Brat*. However, the reflection of the Parsi ethos and comic tone in her writings make her both a trend setter and one of the finest Asian writers in the realm of fiction. On a sociological level, Sidhwa’s work is crucial to an understanding of the cultural complexities of post-Independence Pakistani cultures, and the diaspora they have occasioned. On a literary level, Sidhwa’s novels are constructed with grace and written with an exquisite sense of humour, so that the subtleties of their irony totally dispenses with bombast or grandiloquent claims about “postcolonial history.”

Niaz Zaman’s *A Divided Legacy: The Partition in Selected Novels of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* is the first attempt aimed at presenting an analysis of the partition novels in three widely used languages of the subcontinent that is English, Urdu and Bengali. The book is considered a brilliant addition to the entire corpus of texts produced so far on the deathly event that not only resulted in the carving of two nation states but also charted the psyche of a newly divided people which lingers on to the subcontinent’s turbulent present.

**Brief Survey of Pakistani Novels in English**

The introduction of English language proved instrumental in strengthening the British Raj in India during the early years of 19th century. Subsequently English attained a prestigious position, being the language of the rulers. Because of its superior status it became the vehicle of literary and intellectual expressions of the
people who got education either directly from England or the elitist institutions established in India under British administrators. For the reasons of maintaining their distinction or to address a wider international audience, many of the subcontinental writers opted to outpour their creative work in English language. The British Raj ended in 1947 but the Englishness has survived in varied forms and positions. The superior status of English language has not changed. It has taken roots in the local soil and has entrenched itself in the local environment. It is major source of communication and staying in touch with the world at large.

Distinguished patrons of the tradition of outpouring the creative literary product in English from the Indo-Pak writers in the colonial past are people like Ahmed Ali, Shahid Saharwardi, Mumtaz Shahnawaz, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K Narayan and Kamala Markandeya. In the post colonial period also this tradition has lived in both countries. To the Indian literary luminaries like Khushwant Singh, Dom Moraes, Balachandra Rajan, Arundhity Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Pakistani co-equals are Ahmed Ali, Zulfikar Ghose, Taufiq Rafat, Daud Kamal, Kaleem Omar, Maki Kureshi, Bapsi Sidwa and others. New voices continue entering this expanding tribe. These new voices include the names of Tariq Ali, Moniza Alvi, Hanif Kureishi, Sara Suleri, Shahid Hussain, M. Athar Tahir, Alamgir Hashmi, Mohsin Hamid, Bina Shah, Nadeem Aslam, Aamer Hussain, Kamila Shamsi, Adam Zameenzad, Mohammad Hanif and Daniyal Moeenuddin.
Novelists of Earlier Era

Looking back at the contribution of the Muslim intelligentsia in bringing the tradition of writing fiction in English, we come across Ahmad Ali. His role is that of a pioneer among the Muslim writers of the Subcontinent.

He came from a noble family of Muslim theologians. His forefathers were Imams in a great mosque at Delhi. He got early education at a missionary school in Azamgarh, where he came in contact with English. Later he joined Aligarh Muslim University where he met Prof. Eric Dickinson. Ali was greatly influenced by Dickinson, teacher-cum poet. On persuasion of some senior friends he left Aligarh and moved to Lucknow University as a student of English Literature. Subsequently he became a lecturer there. He published his first short story in English in the Lucknow University Journal in 1929. He opted for Pakistan in the wake of the upheaval of the partition in 1947. He became a member of Pakistan Diplomatic corps. In addition to his contribution in the realm of poetry, he has to his credit the translation of the Holy Quran in English. However, the primal fame came through *Twilight in Delhi*, a noval written in nostalgia about the past glory of Delhi, the capital city of mighty Muslim rulers for centuries together. Ahmed Ali has presented the dying culture of Muslims in the wake of the blood-curdling events of 1857. His second novel, *Ocean of the Night* (1964), presents the theme of the decline of aristocratic feudal families because of their moral dissipation. Ahmed Ali’s last novel *Rats and Diplomats* (1985) is an allegorical story which aims at satirising diplomatic circles.
In the context of Muslim writers a worthmentioning novel is *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) by Attia Hosain. She was born in Lucknow in 1913 in a prosperous feudal family. She received her schooling in a liberal English academic system. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is about life in a large joint family presided over by an authoritarian grandfather. It narrates saga of three generations of men and women living in the same house where they are dominated till their humanity is totally crushed.

Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Crow Eaters* has significant role in establishing the identity of the Pakistani Novel in English. She was born in Karachi in an affluent Parsi family. During her childhood the family migrated to Lahore. Sidhwa spent a painful childhood because of the attack of Polio. Her movement was restricted to her home where she was educated till the age of fifteen. Bapsi did her graduation from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. Bapsi Sidhwa has produced four masterpiece novels. The first two novels *The Crow Eaters* and *The Bride* are good examples of realistic fiction in Pakistan. *The Crow Eaters* (1978) is developed on the theme that the unbridled pursuit of wealth brings out the worst in the people. The second novel *The Bride* (1983) portrays the conflict of values in Pakistani society. It is the story of Zaitoon and her cultural maladjustment in tribal society. Her third novel *Ice Candy Man* (1988) depicts the horrors of traumatic events of the partition. Her last novel *An American Brat* (1993) is about Feroza Ginwalla who wants to marry outside her community and the traditional anxiety of her parents.
Tariq Ali, famous student leader and leftist activist, was born in Lahore in 1943. He got his education first at Government College Lahore and then at Oxford University. His major novels include a quartet dealing with the history of Islam: *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (1992), *The Book of Saladin* (1998), *The Stone Woman* (2000) and *A Sultan in Palermo* (2005).


Another expatriate writer is Adam Zameenzad whose novel *The Thirteenth House* (1987) describes the inalienable themes of migration and the resultant loss of identity. It is profoundly moving political novel.

**Young Voices in Fiction**

Progressing steadily the Pakistani novel in English has taken firm roots and has started blooming. Many young and ardent novelists are contributing to give a distinct identity to this genre. The most prominent among them is Mohsin Hamid. Born in 1971, Mohsin was educated at Lahore and later in USA. His debut novel
*Moth Smoke* (2000) is a scathing indictment of the exploitative elite minority, which has taken control of all resources, leaving the masses in abject poverty. His second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) discusses the reaction of an American educated young Pakistani in the post 9/11 world.

Nadeem Aslam is another young expatriate writer. He was educated at University of Manchester. Before the completion of his degree he left his studies to become a writer. His first novel *Season of the Rainbirds* was published in 1993 and immediately received the public acclaim. The novel depicts tragedy, loss, and betrayal in exotic style. His second novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), took more than a decade to see the light of the day. It elegantly portrays immigrant life in England. His latest novel *The Wasted Vigil*, published in 2008, is set in Afghanistan. It gives a photographic account of lives of individuals caught in the civil war since the departure of Russia leaving behind an administrative vacuum.


Another prominent female writer is Kamila Shamsi. She comes from a Karachi family with strong literary traditions. Her first novel *In the City by the Sea* (1998),
set in Karachi, yields insight into the city through the eyes of an 11-years-old boy. *Salt and Saffron* (2002) is a compelling novel, lovingly written. It relates the life and love account of a Pakistani girl living in the USA. But it is the third novel *Kartography* (2004) that has sprung her to a high pedestal of popularity. It is a penetrative analysis of cultural life and ethnic tensions prevailing in Pakistani society of 1970s. Her last novel *Broken Verses* (2005) is the story of a person’s pursuits who is out in search of truth.

Another addition at the expanding horizon of Pakistani novelists in English is Bina Shah. *Where They Dream in Blue* (2001) is her first soul searching novel. Drawing upon the pristine tradition of mystics, she carries out a search for past and future. Her second novel *786 Cybercafe* (2004) is developed around the central themes of religious extremism and corruption. Shah’s third novel *Slum Child* has yet to see the daylight.

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) by Mohammed Hanif has received an outstanding acclaim. Hanif in his debut has created ripples on the literary horizon. It is a superb creative response to the mystery behind the demise of General Zia-ul-Haq who died in a plane crash in 1988. The novel has been short-listed for many prestigious awards including the Booker Prize.

That is not all in the treasurehouse. The writers like Aamer Hussein, Faryal Ali Gauhar, Shandana Minhas, Daniyal Mueenuddin, Ali Sethi, and many others are waiting to shine on the literary horizon. It goes without saying that the tribe of Pakistani novelists is showing great promise.
Notes

1. This book has led me to revisit all history skeptically. Take everything with a pinch of salt. I think all Indians (and Pakistanis for that matter), should read the book. This will clarify a lot of misinformation that we have been harboring in our midst.
CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITY BEFORE PARTITION WITH FOCUS ON TWILIGHT IN DELHI

Historical Forces at Play

The area which constitutes Pakistan has always been at the crossroads of history. For thousands of years, politically, militarily and economically, it has been the centre stage of world affairs, attracting traders, adventurers, pilgrims, holy men and most of all warriors. Culturally, it has been the melting pot of diverse races, languages, religions and customs. The ancient Silk Route, part of which is revived in the Karakoram Highway between China and Pakistan, has been a busy trade route. It still conjures up images of romance and mystery and resonates with names such as Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane and Marco Polo.

Pakistan’s strategic location is where the road from China to the Mediterranean meets the route from India to the Central Asia. The traces of many world civilizations and empires are found at this junction. Pakistan’s proximity to Afghanistan, China, Iran, India, Central Asia and the Middle East is the single most important factor which has shaped the many turns and twists of history.
Through the notorious passages of the Hindukush and many other passes came a number of adventurers and invaders. None could, however, leave behind as lasting an influence as a young Muslim General, Muhammad bin Qasim who, braving the rough waters of the Arabian Sea, came to change the destiny of the Sub-continent forever. His political acumen laid the foundations of an Islamic polity in the Subcontinent, culminating into Pakistan.

In the wake of this Arab conquest came a wave of Sufis, saints and scholars from Arabia, Persia and other regions of Muslim influence. Their plurality of thought shaped a new culture of tolerance and mutual coexistence in the Subcontinent. Thus culture and religion formed a natural symbiosis.

Numerous other adventurers came to conquer this land of plenty, yet none could match the glory and power of the Great Mughals. The remains of their splendour are scattered all over the subcontinent, as they were great connoisseurs of art and music. They have left behind great architectural monuments which speak volumes of their skills and tastes.

As the sun set on the ailing and crumbling Mughal Empire, another mighty power, the British, took over the destiny of the teeming millions. The concern of my study begins at this point when the fading Muslim glory of almost a thousand years was giving way to the rising sun of the British Empire. Rudyard Kipling, the laureate of this Empire muses over the glory of these days.

When Spring-time flushes the desert grass,

Our Kaflas wind through the Khyber pass
Lean are the camels but the fat the frails,
Light are the purses but heavy the bales,
When the snow-bound trade of the north comes down,
To the market squares of Peshawar town. (in Raine 1992:98)

If a single factor needs to be mentioned to explain the present condition of the Muslims of Pakistan and India, it should be the fact that they belong to a warrior race that had ruled the world, with some variations of time and place, from the 8th to the 18th century. The nostalgia of that glory still haunts them and is one of the major causes of the prevailing socio-political situation.

For centuries, they controlled the politics and economy of this region and shaped its society and culture. Unlike many other indigenous religions and thought-systems, like Buddhism and Jainism, Islam created a distinct identity for its adherents and refused to be absorbed within the medley and vast multitudes of Hindu India.

The Muslims in the subcontinent could be classified into two main classes of

(i) Traders and invaders
(ii) The converts and their descendents

In Muslim India, the former class was in control of economy and governance of the country, even if they were not more than eight (08) million. The latter class was more than eighty (80) million. Muslims constituted but a fifth of British India’s population, a minority most unevenly distributed and territorially consolidated only in Sind and in the Western Punjab. The highest proportion of
Muslim population was in Sind, where three out of four people were Muslims. The lowest was in the areas of the Central Provinces and Madras, where Muslims were about one-fortieth and one-twentieth of the total, respectively. In the Punjab Muslims were rather less than half of the population, in Bengal about a half. In the North-Western Provinces and Awadh, Muslims formed rather more than a tenth of the population. In the Bombay Presidency, with the exception of Sind, they were even less than that.¹

Over the centuries, professional elite of soldiers, officials, scholars and mystics from Central Asia and from the eastern Muslim world settled in the towns of ‘Hindustan’. They created their own urban Muslim service society around them, but were content to treat the countryside not as an area for settlement. However, inland movement of their descendents triggered the conversion of non-Muslim populace. These conversions owe a great deal of debt to the preaching of Muslim Saints, Sufis and other mystics. P. Hardy observes that

Much has been said, and rightly, of the role of Muslim saints in bringing about conversions to Islam by force of personal example. In Bengal particularly, but also in many areas away from courts and fortresses, their understanding, indeed sharing of popular religious psychology, their tolerance, their cultivation of inner religious experience, … persuaded many to enter the Muslim fold … Muslim saints did not always insist on a total and immediate abandonment of all old habits and social ties on accepting Islam, and were tolerant of deviations from the letter of the Muslim law, in say, rules of inheritance. (Hardy1972: 9-10)

The first census reports of 1870s and 1880s, carried out by the British administration, revealed that the Muslim community was widely dispersed, the
greater part of which was in fact of native Indian descent and which in most rural areas and in many towns was indistinguishable in occupation from surrounding non-Muslims.

The death of the last great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1707), after a reign of forty nine years, proved a turning point in the history of India and the destiny of the Muslims. The wheel of fate, thus far put off by the iron-hand policies of Aurganzeb, started to spin against their will. The war of succession among his sons, political intrigues and civil war further debilitated the Empire. Raids by foreign invaders like Nadir Shah in 1730s and later on by his successor Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1750s undermined the central authority and the Empire started to crumble into the smithereens of tiny independent principalities. Political cells proliferated and loyalties became divided. The British took full advantage of the prevailing hollowness of the Emperor’s authority in Bengal. They played upon the internal differences of the powerful malignant classes. Clive, the Deputy Governor of Fort St. David at Madras, started negotiating with the Hindu malcontents. He also succeeded in winning over the not unwilling Mir Jaafer who had been dismissed from his post of Paymaster General (Bakhshi) by Siraj-ud-Daula, the Governor of Bengal (1756-1757). Because of the intrigues and betrayal of Mir Jaafar, Sairaj-ud-Daula was defeated by the British in the Battle of Plassy on 22nd June, 1757, and was executed. Siraj-ud-Daula’s death was mourned by many, because he appeared to them, in his idealism and youth, to be a symbol of a forlorn hope. As a result of this victory the British became de jure ruling power in Bengal.
It is not out of place to mention here about the policies of the East India Company as to how they combated and finally dismantled the threatening power of Tipu Sultan at Seringaputam (Mysore). Haider Ali, a military adventurer of genius, an extraordinary man of action, died of cancer on 7 December 1782. He left behind Tipu Sultan, a son, who to the courage and determination of his father, added a national vision. He tried hard to reinforce a national front against the British by corresponding with the Ottoman Caliph. He compelled the British to sign the treaty of Manglore on the basis of mutual restitution of conquests and exchange of prisoners. But in sheer violation of this treaty Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General (1786-1793) negotiated with Nizam and Maharattas and entered into a “Triple Alliance” against Tipu Sultan. The result was that Tipu was stranded. A double attack was launched against Tipu, from the north-west (Bombay) and the east (Madras). Seringaputam was besieged. The city was stormed on 6 May 1799 and the walls being breached, Tipu was seen leading the defence. He died with a sword in his hand and had been declared a hero and a martyr. With his death British suzerainty was complete in the southern India.

As the British had wrenched power from the Muslim rulers of India, the ensuing mutual enmity and distrust between them remained deep-seated for a long time to come. The Hindu upper-classes benefited tremendously from this situation. Their economic development under British encouragement made them politically mature. On the other hand, the Muslims kept on plunging into the abysmal position: politically, economically and socially. Especially psychologically they, as a nation, were in a wreck. The colonial administrators of the East India
company enforced certain laws which reduced the Muslim population into utter poverty and socio-political non-entity.

1. Law of resumption which divested the Muslims of their land, bringing down the peerage of Muslim landlords from 95% to 5%.

2. Misappropriation of Muslim religious and educational trusts to ensure the elimination of the separate identity of Muslims.

3. Sudden replacement of Muslim Educational system based on Persian language and Arabic script with English system and language. This was a vital blow to Muslim culture, society and economics.

4. The Muslim recruitment in the army was stopped. Also the doors of civilian employment to the Muslims were closed.

Analyzing the position of the Muslims after their downfall, Sir William Hunter writes:

The truth is, that when the country passed under our rule the Musalmans were the superior race, and superior not only in the stoutness of heart and strength of arm, but in power of political organization, and in the science of practical government. Yet the Muhammadans are now shot out equally from Government employ and from the higher occupations of non-official life. (Hunter 1974: 145)

In such dire circumstances, they decided to take dire steps. And thus, without any planning or war strategy, in 1857 they began the fateful war of Independence. The results were devastating. The remains of the fabric of their society, built
during the last many centuries, were also destroyed. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan depicts the doomsday scenario in such bleak colours.

No calamity started from heaven which before reaching the earth did not seek the house of Mussalmans. In all the English newspapers and books, I saw during those days, I invariably marked one thing namely “none is wicked and mischievous except the Muslims, Muslims, Muslims … (Khan 1997: 67)

The renowned poet Ghalib who himself had narrowly escaped the gallows has depicted the plight of his people in Dastanbuy. The British were “ruthless in victory; the slightest suspicion was sufficient for a man to be hanged”. Ghalib tells us that “the people have lost all their power to endure” and that “in these days we think of ourselves as prisoners and we are in truth, passing our days like prisoners”. He further describes the gruesome conditions by saying

Most of the citizens have fled the city, but some caught between hope and despair, are still living inside the walls. So far no information has been received about those hiding in lonely places outside of Delhi … The hearts of the helpless inhabitants of the city, and those of the grief stricken people outside, are filled with sorrow, and they are afraid of mass slaughter. (Ghalib 1970: 50)

While writing about the Mughal princes, Ghalib tells us “some were shot… and some were hung by their necks with ropes and, in their twisting, their spirits left them”. Ghalib has given a clear account of differences in the post-Rebellion political fortunes of Hindus and Muslims. He maintains

In January 1858, the Hindus were given a proclamation of facedom by which they were allowed to live again in the city … But the houses of dispossessed Muslims had long remained empty and were so covered with vegetation that the walls
What the narrative invokes then is the beginning of the total destruction of the Muslim nobility, hence the Muslim political power, in the post-Rebellion political order. The hallmark of this political cataclysm was fall of the Muslim elite and the flight of Muslims from Delhi.

Altaf Hussain Hali, a renowned leader of the post-Rebellion Muslim literary renaissance, writes that the conditions were exceedingly harsh for the Muslims. “To incriminate a Muslim there was no need for any proof”. (Hali 2004: 8).

However, the awe of Muslim power in the subcontinent was such that it took the British one hundred years since the Battle of Plassey in 1757 to finally overthrow the Muslim rule in 1857. This is not a mere point of rhetoric since there are very plausible reasons to support the view that the socio-political and economic institutions that the Muslim rulers built in the subcontinent were of such nature that India had truly become a unified country. Prior to the Muslim rule, India had never been a political unit even under the greatest of Maurya dynasty rulers like Chandragupta and Ashoka. It is one of the greatest ironies of history in India that the Muslims made India one country under a strong central government and ultimately they were compelled to demand a separate homeland for themselves. Before the Sultanate period, India was divided into small principalities. The Arab Muslims conquered it and gave it its name ‘Hind’, derived from ‘Sind’, the
might Indus river. Dr I. H. Qureshi has elaborated upon this point in The

*Struggle for Pakistan:*

The conception of a land called India was created by the Muslims, before whose rule its several parts were known by different names. In fact, having seldom known political unity, it was a collection of several countries with their distinctive languages and customs, though it had a certain amount of homogeneity because of a common civilization and outlook on life. (Qureishi 1974: 2)

They turned the vast Indian geography into a single political unit, at the same time preserving its cultural diversity. The great irony is that they have been accused of breaking India’s geographical and political unity. I shall analyse the truth behind India’s partition in the next chapter. Suffice is to say here that the post-Mutiny political scenario and workings of All India Congress pushed the former rulers of India into isolation and thus they were compelled to think in terms of partition.

In the wake of the “Mutiny”, as most British historians like to refer to the events of 1857, the Muslims were subjected to a persistent campaign of calumny and veritable vendetta.

**Response of the Creative Voices**

The fall of Mughal Empire started a chain reaction in which changes of epic proportions started to beset the society, politics and culture of the whole of India. However, the Muslim community was the worst affected. As a nation their morale dipped extremely low and nostalgia gripped them firmly. The wheel of fate was constantly turning against them, and the visions of their past glory and
prosperity haunted them. Out of the nostalgia came the creative response of many writers during the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, writing in Persian and Urdu was perhaps the most poignant and subtle voice of the 19th century, who, both in his poetry and prose, took up the theme of decline and fall of the Muslim rule and with it their rich culture. In 1854, he wrote to his friend, the poet Junun,

Inside the Fort a few princes get together and recite their verses. Once in a while I attend these gatherings. Contemporary society is about to vanish. Who knows when the poets would meet next or meet again at all? (in Hyder and Jafry 1970: 28)

Three years had hardly passed when the court, along with its total milieu came crashing down amidst unprecedented upheaval and violence. Prescient poet-observer as he was, Ghalib responded to it in the following words of eternal veracity:

The world is contingent – boast not of greatness
This zenith one day defeat will depress.

(in Hyder and Jafry 1970: 76)

In one of his letters he laments the lost glory as: “Alas for my fate; born to be struck down by misfortune and to see my granaries reduced to ashes. I had not the means to ride to war like my ancestors.” (Varma 1989:28)

Expressing his gnawing distress on the British occupation which had totally sanitized the Muslim elite’s aspirations in the political sphere, Ghalib bewails:
They have plucked the pearls
From the banners of the kings of Ajam,
And in place have given me
A treasure-scattering pen

(Varma 1989:78-79)

Ghalib had sensed, by virtue of his imagination and intelligence, the eroding foundation of the Mughal edifice and the fundamental change in its concomitant socio-politico-economic institutions. He demonstrates in the following verses the painful feelings of this irrevocable metamorphosis:

The wind is contrary, the night pitch dark,
And the sea is lashed by storms;
The anchor is broken
And the ship’s master is asleep.

(Varma 1989:88)

The scathing sarcasm in the following couplets, in spite of the deliberately ambivalent imagery, says Pavan K. Varma, exhibits clearly the cognizance of the lack luster of the old order.

Were I not robbed in broad daylight,
How could I sleep so well at night?
No fear of theft remains now
I give blessing to the dacoit
How unfair for us to claim the return of past glory
What has been stolen was but a debt due – ‘tis not robbery.
Another couplet expresses the sense of helplessness quite explicitly:

Misfortune came, and having come
Made no signs to leave
A checkmate somehow was deflected
And the king got reprieve.

Further he complains to God

Thou hast set over us
The sky for our destruction;
Whatever the robber has from us snatched
Does not reach thy treasury

(Varma 1989: 90-91)

Ghalib set a standard tone for the coming writers who kept on bewailing the loss of an affluent civilization. The following themes are recurrent in most of the writings of the time.

(i) Loss of culture
(ii) Loss of identity and self-hood
(iii) Utter destruction of Muslim institutions especially, educational and financial system.
(iv) Atrocities that they suffered at the hands of their colonizers and
(v) A nation-wide low morale and the resultant nostalgia.
Ahmed Ali was the second prominent creative writer who took up all these themes, first in his short stories, and then in his celebrated novel in English *Twilight in Delhi*. In the introduction to this book, he himself narrates how the English publishers were reluctant to publish the novel due to certain ‘subversive’ portions which would give rise to anti-British sentiments. It was only at the interference of his great contemporary British writer E.M. Forster that the book was ultimately published. Ahmed Ali also discusses at length the purpose of writing such a book:

Be that as it may, my purpose in writing this novel was to depict a phase of our national life and the decay of a whole culture, a particular mode of thought and living, values now dead and gone already right before our eyes. Seldom is one allowed to see a pageant of History whirl past and participate in it too. Already, since its publication, the Delhi of the novel has changed beyond nostalgia and recognition. For its culture had been born and nourished within the city walls which today lie demolished; and the distinction between its jealously guarded and well-preserved language and the surrounding world has disappeared in the rattle of many tongues even as the homogeneity of its life has been engulfed by the tide of unrestricted promiscuity. (Ali 1984: x)

The treatment of this major theme by Ali is unique. In fact, before the publication of his first novel Ali had already published a number of short stories that earned him notoriety, particularly due a collection of short stories, *Sholay*, that he published in collaboration with Sajjad Zazeer and other prominent progressive writers of his time. Ali’s story ‘Hamaari Gali’ (later translated by himself as ‘Our Lane’) has the same theme in miniature as that of *Twilight in Delhi*. In the short story, he narrates the story of the non-cooperation movement started by Gandhi and actively participated by all segments of society. During this movement, the
lives of many were destroyed by the British high-handedness. Ali uses the locale
of a lane in the city of Delhi to frame the lives of its inhabitants many of whom
are victims of Imperial atrocities. The story paints an atmosphere of gloom and
doom: “The sky was overcast with dust, the roads deserted… In a gutter lay a
dead pigeon, its neck bent to one side, its stiff, blue legs sticking up towards the
heavens, the wings soaked in dirty water, and one of its eyes still open, was ugly
and sickening” (Ali 1984: 11-12). Stray dogs and beggars are a conspicuous
presence in that Mohallah. It represents the collapse of the colonial social order in
which the rulers are indifferent to the plight of the masses. Poverty, misery and
breakdown of the society and a whole culture are underlined thus by Ali:

He [the beggar] looked mean and insignificant like a swarm
of flies over a dirt heap or the skeleton of a dead cat. But his
voice had sadness and pathos which spoke of the futility and
transience of life. It came from far away on winter nights,
bringing with it gloom and hopelessness. Never a sadder
voice was heard from a man, and it still rings in the ears.
Bahadur Shah’s poem that he sang brought back the memory
of olden days when this land had not been shackled in its
modern sorrows. (Ali 1984: 12)

A similar imagery of sorrow and doom is abundantly employed by Ali in *Twilight in Delhi*. Through a mosaic of images from the life of his protagonist, Mir Nihal,
and his extended family, Ali shows us the loss of a vibrant culture. So much so
that the plight of the last Emperor of India, Bahadur Shah Zafar, is depicted in
glaring colours by rendering his poetic pieces in English and incorporating them
into the text. There is utter sorrow and bleakness arising from the loss of personal
identity.
The grandeur of a fallen civilization is not mentioned in any objective or 
impersonal terms. There are more of broken hearts than broken columns of an 
army, or burning cities or corpses. Ali quotes Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar’s 
verses.

I am the light of no one’s eye
The rest of no one’s heart am I
That which can be of use to none
- A handful of dust am I. (quoted in Ali 1984)

And then goes on to relate this personal pain of a nation’s king to the nation’s 
situation:

And, as if to echo the poet-King’s thoughts, a silence and 
apathy of death descended upon the city and dust began to 
blow in its streets, and ruin came upon its culture and its 
purity. Until the last century it had held its head high, and tried 
to preserve its chastity and form. (Ali 1984: 3)

Ali uses powerful imagery, almost like symbols, which paint the old Delhi in 
grey, overwhelmed by the ‘heat and dust’. Bewailing in nostalgia, he expresses 
the loss of past glory, decay of the past culture and ideology.

But gone are the poets too, and gone is its culture. Only the 
coils of the rope, when the rope itself has been burnt, remain, 
to remind us to past splendor. Yet ruin has descended upon its 
monuments and buildings, upon its boulevards and by-lanes. 
Under the tired and dim stars the city looks deathly and dark. 
… Like a beaten dog it has curled its tail between its legs, and 
lies lifeless in the night as an acknowledgement of defeat. 
(Ali 1983: 3)

However, a paradox is perceptible in Ali’s position. He is writing of the tragic 
loss of a great Empire and an ancient, pure culture and at the same time, it seems,
he feels the fall was justified. The characters, through which he depicts the loss and the fall, are portrayed as suffering from moral inconsistency and deformity. There is no tragic grandeur about them. It seems these characters have been embracing false values nurtured for a long time by their ancestors. One finds the male characters eccentric and strayed and the female quite ignorant of the truth of their situation and high moral values.

However, one may say that the loss of values, in fact, is narrated in terms of the loss of innocence. As if these characters have been living in a state of pigeonholes from where they have been dragged by the mighty force of a new power, and they like pigeons, like to close their eyes. Mir Nihal’s pigeons in this respect are perhaps an apt metaphor, while he himself is a representative figure, symbolizing Delhi and its culture. One may say that he is the incarnation of the great city in ruins. Through the related motifs of Kite-flying, Pigeon-flying, Dancing girls, and poetry recitation, Ali has underlined the major theme of his novel, which is the socio-political decline of the Muslims of India:

Kite-flying, a sign of an ailing society with a tattering economy, is absolutely an unproductive pastime. It lacks the spirit of creativity and progress. It stands for purposelessness of their life. A large section of the populace is so much obsessed with a passion for kite-flying that it seems to be the only aim of living on earth. Ali mentions ironically:

The sky was full of kites, black kites and white kites, purple kites and blue. They were green and lemon coloured, red and peacock blue and yellow, jade and vermilion, plain or of various patterns and in different colours, black against yellow, red against white, mauve alternating with green, pink with
purple, striped or triangular, with moons on them or stars and wings and circles in different colours, forming such lovely and fantastic designs. There were small kites and big kites, flying low and kites that looked studded in the sky. They danced and they capered, they dipped down or rose erect with the elegance of cobras. They whirled and wheeled and circled, chased each other or stood static in mid air. There was a riot of kites on the sky. (Ali 1983: 28)

Another unproductive and futile pastime of Delhiites was pigeon-flying. People were so infatuated with a propensity for it that they would fly their pigeons every morning with a worship spirit. Tending pigeons with utmost care, feeding them more fondly as compared to their children seemed to be the sole charm of their life. Every evening the sky got blotted out with the flying-pigeons.

The sky was covered with the wings of pigeons which flow in flocks. These flocks met other flocks, expanded into a huge, dark patch, flew awhile, then folded their wings, nose-dived, and descended upon a roof. The air was filled with the shouts of the pigeon-fliers who were rending the atmosphere with their cries of ‘Aao, Koo, Haal!’ (Ali 1983: 17)

Developing clandestine relationship with the dancing girls and visiting them at night to idle away time epitomises the decline of higher moral standards of a society. Youth and age of Delhi were regular clients of the dancing girls. Asghar and Mir Nihal, the son and the father, would allay their grief by attending on Mushtari Bai and Babban Jan respectively.

As they reached the landing and stepped into the courtyard Mushtari Bai (a dancing girl), who was lying on a bed, got up to receive them. As Asghar saw her he suddenly felt lonely and his heart seemed to burst. Mushtari Bai salaamed them and took them inside the room. (Ali 1983:74-75)

At the death of Babban Jan, Mir Nihal cried bitterly and disconsolately. Ali puts satirically
Who would care for him when she had gone? His wife was there, no doubt; and so were the children. But the world they lived in was a domestic world. There was no beauty in it and no love. Here, at Babban Jan’s, he had built a quiet corner for himself where he could always retire and forget his sorrows in its secluded peace. (Ali 1983: 109)

Story-telling tradition is an important part of all oral cultures. In the following scene we see how in times of decline people resort to such folk tales to give themselves moral and psychological prop.

It must be eleven O’clock, and your father has not come back yet’, Begum Nihal says to her daughter. You’d better go to sleep. It’s very late…. No, mother, … the story … ‘It’s a long story .. so oppressive. (p.5,6)

Similarly, in his short story ‘Our Lane’ Ali’s characters gather at night to narrate stories that tell them how ‘miracles’ can bring wonders to the oppressed. (Ali 1983:18-19). Here the scene and dialogue are a perfect example of a number of Ali’s concerns

- Oral culture and the tradition of narrating stories.

- Social pattern of life of the Muslims.

The city of Delhi is the definitive symbol of loss and Muslim sense of nostalgia. The city, at least six or seven times in history, has been plundered and destroyed.

But the city of Delhi, built hundreds of years ago, fought for, died for, coveted and desired, built, destroyed and rebuilt, for five and six and seven times, mourned and sung, raped and conquered, yet whole and alive, lies indifferent in the arms of sleep. It was the city of kings and monarchs, of poets and story tellers, courtiers and nobles. But no king lives there today, and the poets are feeling the lack of patronage; and the old inhabitants, though still alive, have lost their pride and grandeur under a foreign yoke. (Ali 1983: 1-2)
Like William Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury*, which depicts the decline of the Southern American culture by showing how the Compson family gradually falls from grace and loses their values, Ahmed Ali also depicts the fall of a city, and by implication the whole Mughal Empire, by focusing on the downfall of Mir Nihal family. Lawrence Brander sums up the epic structures of *Twilight in Delhi* thus:

> It offers fascinating historical pictures of the Great Durbar when George V visited India in 1911, of early subversive activities against British rule, of the 1914 war as it affected India, of the horrifying influenza epidemic (when the crocodiles could not eat the bodies in the rivers fast enough), and the serious unrest which the old house in the by-lanes of the old city where the family of Mir Nihal lived, witnessed. It is a picture of Indian combined family life even more vivid than that of Bengali family life in the autobiography of Rabindranath Tagore. (Brander 1968:77)

In ‘Our Lane’, the narrator tells us about an old date-palm tree that was once heavy with fruit, and the bees flocked round it, descending to the ground in search of food. Birds came to and perched on its expansive boughs, and stray pigeons rested in them at night. Now its boughs had withered, leaves seared and fallen, and its trunk ugly and dark, stood like a scare-crow in the darkness of the night. No more did the birds flock over it, nor were the bees attracted to it… (Ali 1983: 8-9)

To my mind, this is a potent symbol that represents the old glory of the bride of cities that was Delhi, but that lost its beauty and the status of the centre of Muslim power and culture in India. Instead of bees and beautiful singing birds (might be referring to the poets and artisans of Delhi), only ugly ravens are attracted to it, ravens that might be the emblem of foreign powers that looted and plundered this city to its present state in which we find it in the story. In *Twilight in Delhi*, Mir
Nihal’s, who once belonged to the Muslim aristocracy, personifies that decline of a whole people who lost political power and cultural ascendency. But the novel is also about the new cultural fusion taking place due the imperial presence of the British. The make-up of the new emerging social reality is beautifully depicted by Ali in ‘Our Lane’ too: all sorts of men passed below my window. “Sometimes a person dressed all in white went by finding relief from the scorching sun of the summer under his umbrella.” But sometimes under the same scorching sun and indifferent to the heat “a person rigged out in English costumes went by stepping lightly over the sprinkled water or jumping away quickly as someone threw more on the road, avoiding the boys and urchins, or glaring at them for staring at him.” (Ali 1983: 5). David Anderson while writing about this aspect of *Twilight in Delhi* notes that it was an important contribution that highlighted:

“The fusion of two cultures. Western English culture, colored strongly by post-Darwinian determinism and pessimism, is merged with the Eastern Muslim culture that combines a reverence for life with a sense of hope. This fusion has become particularly important in the Pakistani literary tradition…” (Anderson 1971: 81)

Another clear manifestation of “the fusion of two cultures” is evident when we see Asghar, son of Mir Nihal, entering his home late at night walking quietly on his tiptoe. His outfit is an emblem of this fusion.

He is a tall and handsome young man with his hair well oiled and his red Turkish cap cocked at a smart angle on his head. The upper buttons of his shawl are open and show the collar of the English shirt that he is wearing under it. … as he enters his pumps creak, Mir Nihal stops and turns to Asghar and says in any angry tone: You are again wearing those dirty English boots! … I will have no aping of the Farangis in my house. (Ali 1984: 11)
As it has transpired from the above discussion, the colonial settings, with strong political and critical concerns, make *Twilight in Delhi* a veritable and strong postcolonial narrative that is comparable with Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Just as in Achebe’s novel, in *Twilight* too, ‘things fall apart’ as the centre of Mughal Empire could not hold and mere anarchy became the order of the day. In the next chapter, I shall discuss how various crises confronting Muslim community in India due to loss of political and cultural power multiplied due to yet another tragedy of epic consequences, that is the partition of India and the way it was carried out by the British before their own “shameful flight” from their colonial responsibilities.
Notes

1. For details of the demographic picture of Indian Muslim community please see the census reports of 1870s and 1880s in P. Hardy (1972) pp.7-8.
CHAPTER 4

PARTITION AND THE MAKING OF POST-COLONIAL PAKISTAN WITH FOCUS ON ICE-CANDY-MAN

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way… (Dickens 1859)."}

Perhaps no piece of writing captures the sense of tragedy and trauma of the turbulent times of partition of India in 1947 as well as these opening lines of Charles Dickens novel A Tale of Two Cities about another traumatic event in human history. In this chapter, I intend to foreground the Partition of India and the politics surrounding it that ultimately resulted into a number of tragedies, including those that deprived Pakistan of the colonial assets. The political machinations of Mountbatten, Nehru and Patel to cripple Pakistan by depriving it of its rightful assets are an important motif in a number of fiction and non-fiction works, including Bapsi Sidhwa’s Ice-Candy-Man, that consistently employ historical facts to underscore the politics of Partition.

India and Pakistan came into being with surgical swiftness. To use the metaphor of surgery is apt in many ways, as those who worked out the Partition Plan acted more like butchers than doctors. The formal articulation of the demand for Pakistan was made on March 23, 1940 in Lahore in a public meeting of the
resurgent Muslim League. The suddenness of the Partition belied most anticipations of the immediate future. The boundaries between the two new states were not officially known until two days after they had formally become independent. But the most unforeseen aspect of the Plan was the bloodbath that followed and created a historical hatred that is still simmering in India and Pakistan.

The character of the violence was not only unpredictable it was also unprecedented, both in scale and method. This burden of history has left behind deep resentment and animosity, and the most militant of nationalisms that is incomparable was also created through the official discourse of history in Pakistan and India, now backed up by nuclear weapons as well. On the other, a considerable sense of nostalgia also gripped the two nations (or various national groups), frequently articulated in the view that this was a partition of siblings who could not live together and decided to divide their home and property.

From the 1940s to the present, a great deal has been written about 'the partition of India' and the violence that accompanied it.\(^2\) Literary responses, as creative index of history as ‘lived experience, of the past, possesses significant interlinkages with the present. It is both compelling and challenging for a creative writer to assimilate critically the legacy of history, as a reference point for the present and formulate his/her own reflections. The legacy of history is variantly reconstructed in imaginative writings, for instance, through crystallization of the ‘particular’ or an expansive probe into the general. Creative practice operates through ‘selection’
in order to be meaningful. However, the artist’s prerogative of selectivity does not rule out commitment to an idea, ideal or ideology in aesthetic interpretation. A case in point, in this chapter, is Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man*. History thus selected and reenacted may be less ‘scientific’, less sequential, yet more interpretive in human terms, that is, in terms of the hopes and despair, aspirations and ideals of real human beings in concrete life situations.

Keeping in view the specificities of the Indian history, however, the ideological function of ‘partition’ historiography and creative responses has been very different from other such accidents of history. One case in point can be the history of Holocaust literature. Hisdus, Muslims, Sikhs, and other nations had been living in India for centuries together mostly in great harmony and peace. But in right-wing writings, it is painted in altogether different colours. Unfortunately, what happened on and around 1947 has elided that actual history has justified the right-wing view that there had always been animosity between the main interest groups, and that Muslims had been only an imperial power in India for eight hundred years.

I wish to ask how one might write a history of an event involving such grave violence, following all the rules and procedures of disciplinary, 'objective' history. My purpose, partially, is to underscore how different the history of Partition appears from contending perspectives. More crucially, however, I hope that what sometimes looks like a plethora of quotations, and the simply overwhelming
nature of many of the reports, will help to convey something of the enormity of the event.

A growing number of scholars have given attention to this contentious site of history that is avidly fought and has become the subject of heated debate. The good that has begun to filter out of this historical continuum is that many previously marginalized and ignored areas are constantly revisited by historians in India, Pakistan, Great Britain and elsewhere. This marks an important advance in the process of rethinking the history of Partition, of nationhood and national politics in the subcontinent. Time, after all, is a great healer. With the passage of time, emotions have been replaced by rational analysis, as is evident by a new book by Jaswant Singh. But the passage of time does not unconsciously produce a set of new perspectives and questions. On the contrary, a set of far-reaching political and historiographical considerations lies behind such revisionist thinking in this area.

With reference to the creative response as propounded by Sidhwa in particular, one may say that art contests reality, but it does not avoid it. Indeed, it is this creative contest of art and reality that the aesthetic interpretation of the artist is articulated. Ultimately, and specifically in the context of historical socio-political discourses, the true significance of historical fiction lies in its aesthetic interpretation of salient historical and socio-political themes. In Ice-Candy-Man, Sidhwa has foregrounded a number of socio-political issues surrounding Partition as this is the major theme of her novel. For example,
1. Cabinet Mission and the reasons of its failure

2. Contrasting attitudes of Muslim League and Congress

3. Removal of Lord Wavell and appointment of Mountbatten as viceroy of India in the months leading to Partition.

4. The Sikh question

5. Riots in Punjab and its partition

6. Redcliff Award and the boundary commission

7. Gradual eroding of communal harmony

8. Congress ministries of 1937, and other historical problems of the time that ultimately resulted into Pakistan emerging as a ‘moth-eaten’ country.

9. Gandhi’s Non-Cooperation Movement

My whole point in including the following survey is to highlight historical truth that has begun to emerge in the revisionist histories written more recently. The credit goes to Sidhwa, who, much before Stanley Wolpert’s *Shameful Flight* (and other such ‘re-writings’ of history), had the artistic courage and historical acumen to put that contested history of the Partition in its true perspective.

What culminated from 1940 Lahore Resolution to the Partition in 1947 was based on a long and bitter history of animosity and mutual distrust between the Muslim and Hindu communities. Much before the sun finally (and formally) set on the Mughal Empire in 1857, the Hindu community had come to terms with the new imperial power in India. They whole-heartedly embraced the British educational system and welcomed the administrative changes brought about by the British to
annul the Muslim influence. As they had wrested power from the Muslim of India, they were naturally wary about their intentions as the events of 1857 made it amply clear. Keeping in view this double jeopardy that the Muslims suffered, their leaders started thinking in terms of having a separate homeland for them.

**Genesis of Separatism**

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his comrades at the MAO College Aligarh are considered to be the first to introduce the language and vocabulary of minorityism and to raise the spectre of Hindu domination. They enunciated the first political rumblings, which gave the initial spur to the initiatives towards the creation of a separate Muslim homeland. “Sir Syed Ahmad Khan vividly described his dreaded fear of the elective, representative government and majority rule in his 1883 speech of a local self-government bill for the Central provinces. (Philips 1962: 185)

Added to these fears were the grave apprehensions caused by the Hindu revivalism and its stridently anti-Muslim posture. “Arya Samajists” and “Hindu Mahasabhites” contributed, in their capacity, to the heightening of communitarian consciousness. Inter-community relations, however, were not greatly strained until the post-Khilafat Movement (1919-1920) and Non-cooperation movement (first in 1919 and second in 1930). The process of communal embitterment was, however, slow and tardy until the Muslim League could manage to emerge effectively on the political horizon of India in the closing years of the 1930s.
The years 1937-40 are seen as crucial to the legitimization of the Muslim League as a powerful political force and as a political bandwagon of an aggrieved and beleaguered ‘community’ which gradually distanced itself from ‘secular nationalism’ – the rallying cry of the congress – to create a separate Muslim nation-state. Fears and apprehensions generated as a result of the discriminative rule of the Congress ministries (1937-39) against the Muslims during these critical years offered Jinnah and the League a constituency which they had not managed to secure for so long. They were able to press home the political advantage in the months following the resignation of the Congress Ministries.

The outcome of particular scenario in the wake of Quit India resolution (August 8, 1942) of the All-India Congress and the turning of Second World War in favour of the allies altered the tenor of political discourse in India and created some space for Jinnah to manipulate. A beleaguered war-time government now turned to Jinnah for political and moral support and, in return, legitimized his critique of the Congress claim to represent all the communities of India. These developments ameliorated the quantum of struggle and what Muslim League achieved on August 14, 1947, was just unthinkable a decade before.

There was no blueprint of a future Pakistan in the 30s, no Islamic flag, no visible symbol, no common platform, no shared goals and objectives. Rehmat Ali’s scheme nurtured in Cambridge was an illustration of obscurantist political eccentricity. It caused much political embarrassment back home and was dismissed as chimerical and impracticable. (Ahmed 1967: 169)
1937 Congress Ministries

The formation of Congress Provincial governments in the wake of 1937 elections marked a watershed in the communal antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. “The Congress truculence over a coalition ministry with the League, in its historical sequence, was a political miscalculation”. (Hasan 2001: 12) Nehru, sedate as he was over the unexpected large Congress majority secured in the election, botched up all talks of a coalition government. Nehru turned down the appeal of Jinnah to agree to coalition Congress-League ministries in India particularly in the United Provinces (UP). He boasted that the elections have proved “there were only two parties left: the British and the Congress.” Ruffled Jinnah retorted “there is a third party –The Muslims.” To prove his words, “he devoted the next ten years of life siring the Muslims of India towards the goal of an independent, sovereign nation-state, Pakistan.” (Wolpert 2006: 7). Nehru not only humiliated Jinnah rather highlighted the feelings in Congress circles that without the League they will be freer to quarrel with Harry Haig, UP’s governor, and break with him on their own terms, jeopardizing thus all hopes of a congress-League entente. Congress’s claim to having a “non-communal character” got falsified through the anti-Muslim atrocities it unleashed during the 1937-39 ministries. Resultantly the intensity of communal distrust became the hallmark of Indian future politics. This key political theme gained unshakeable credence among the Muslims across the land and the demand of a separate Muslim dominion grew stronger in the following years.
The coalition issue cast an ugly shadow over the congress ministry in UP and elsewhere. There was talk of overt manifestations of aggressive Hindu nationalism, of the tyranny of a brute Hindu majority over the Muslim minority, and a reiteration of the fear – expressed by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in the 1880s, by the Simla Deputationists of 1906 and by Muhammad Ali at the Round Table Conference in 1930 – that a non-Muslim majority would use its powers under democratic institutions to undermine the ‘Muslim interest’s and offend cultural sensitivities and religious susceptibilities. (Hasan 2001: 15-16)

The crestfallen Muslim League leadership resolved to launch a Mass Contact movement in retaliation to the imprudent and ill-advised Congress decision of denying the offer to join the coalition government. Congress was singularly responsible for providing Jinnah a space to spearhead the Muslim revivalist campaign. He wasted no time to rally the recalcitrant elements under the banner of Muslim League.

Denying partnership in the ministries had the effect of prompting a far broader unity among the divergent Muslim sections of society. In his spree to unite all segments of Muslim population, Jinnah got convinced to press the Ulema into politics. He wooed two great and renowned theologians – Shabbir Ahmad Usmani and Ashraf Ali Thanwi – from Deoband to join hands for the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims. Aligarh Muslim University turned into the “arsenal of Muslim India.” An atmosphere of “mystic frenzy” prevailed as students and teachers “poured their idealistic zeal into the emotionalism of Pakistan” (Smith 1943: 181-2). Phillips Talbot, an American student at the Aligarh University (1939-40) recalls how his fellow students perceived Pakistan
“as a bright dream, a passionate goal, and the vision of a Muslim paradise on earth.” Talbot mentions this in his essay, ‘I am a Pakistani’, published on 28th November 1956 (Quoted in Hasan 2001:14).

The Congress rule in the provinces sent a shock-wave down the spine of Muslim leadership. In the past League tended to emphasize for Hindu-Muslim unity or at last co-existence and perceived the communal configurations as the indisputable facts of Indian reality. Now they launched a conscious campaign to redefine the constitutional position of Indian Muslims by institutionalizing the equitable modes of representation than those proffered by western political liberalism. The League argued that the Muslim self-determination rights have been overshadowed permanently as a result of Hindu domination instituted by congress ministries. “The League reaffirmed its opposition to the inadequacy of the liberal democracy in the given circumstance of inflexible communal ill-will.” (Gwyer 1957: 411-2)

Jinnah showed his deep and utter distrust of Congress policies. Contrary to his previous creed of Hindu-Muslim unity, he was now convinced of their wicked intention to nip and split the Muslims and secure Hindu domination. To investigate into the grievances and miseries of the Muslims, a committee under the headship of Raja of Pirpur was constituted. The reported is known as Pirpur Report. Other reports like the Sharif Report in Behar were also prepared. All these reports confirmed discriminatory treatment of the Muslims at the hands of Hindu Mahasabhits dubbed as Congressites. Reports from certain districts
witnessed “the arrogance and oppression of Hindu officials” and the coming of “Hindu Raj.” (Hasan 2001: 16).

In UP an unduly large number of cases were sent to anti-corruption dept against Muslim police officers. Haig, the UP governor had to intervene to ‘protect Muslim officials from unjust treatment’. In Bombay a glaring arrogance of the Congress leadership was noticed. The Muslim leadership was much perturbed over the tales of woe that came up to them from Muslims in villages and towns where the local congress boss made it apparent that in his eyes the congress rule meant that he now wielded local power and that he had every intention of making things uncomfortable for the Muslim minority. “Since governments run by the congress party in the provinces were controlled by the top leaders of the Indian National Congress, the injustices could not be attributed to local lapses” (Ali 1973:31).

Both the reports, that of Pirpur and Sharif, reached the same conclusion that never before in India’s history did riots take a heavier toll of life and property within such a short span of time than during the two and a half years of congress administration in some of the provinces of India. There was a marked deterioration in communal relations, affecting large part of the north and centre of India. In addition to rioting, there were added grievances, like exploitation of Muslim work-force, anti-Muslim bias which adversely affected the Muslim entrepreneurs. Adding insult to injury, the municipal boards doled out services, contracts and scholarships to Hindu benefactors. Muslims were totally left out of the patronage network. “In Bihar and the Central Provinces, the Wardha and
Vidya Mandir schemes of education, the singing of Bande Mataram song and the hoisting of Congress flag were serious issues of communal mobilization.” (Hasan 2001: 17)

Two and half a year of Congress rule exceedingly embittered the communal scenario. Muslims and Hindus got polarized giving way to unbridgeable schism and resulting into a massive movement struggling for a separate homeland where the Muslims could live without the oppression of numerical and inimical majority. The years from 1940 onwards witnessed the consolidation of Muslim League negating the Congress claim to be the sole spokesman of Indian people and the only party to negotiate with the Raj. Muslim League unequivocally started sounding its demand for a constitutional arrangement in which Muslims should be treated at par with the Hindus on the logic of its being a completely separate community. They ceaselessly emphasized that no constitutional changes be made without the consent and approval of both the communities. Community-based political dynamics provided the Muslim League a strong bastion to combat the Congress claim to represent the whole India.

March 23, 1940 provides a landmark to the League’s struggle for the creation of an independent and sovereign nation state for the Muslims of India. Mushirul Hasan comments that this day in Lahore, the city of motley cultures and incongruent beliefs,

Jinnah raised a cry of war. The mild, moderate statesman … spoke angrily and defiantly, sending out alarm signals all around. … He talked of ‘two-nations’, of Muslims having ‘their homelands, their-territory and their state’. Refuting the theory of a plural, composite nationhood … Jinnah argued that
it was a ‘dream’ for Hindus and Muslims to evolve a common nationality. They belonged to ‘two different civilizations which are based on conflicting ideas and competition’. To yoke together two such ‘nations’ under a single state ‘would lead to growing discontent, and the final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state. (Hasan 2001: 26).

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah raised the banner of demand for Pakistan amid cries of ‘Allah-o-Akbar’ and epitomized his movement through the passage of the ‘Pakistan Resolution’. Resignation of Congress ministries in November 1939 and the domestic and global compulsions of the British government provided him a space to outmaneuver the Congress leadership. From now on he got his claim to be the ‘sole spokesman’ of ‘Muslim India’ firmly established.

The Congress and its leaders remained stuck to their dream of swaying an undivided India in the wake of the colonial Raj. They resisted the idea of partition till the last moment. They yielded only when they realized that the alternative was an indefinite perpetuation of the foreign rule or civil war or both. The brief experience of coalition government of the congress and the Muslim league in 1946-7 turned to be an utter failure. This experiment conceded to the logic of partition demonstrating that no real coordination or co-partnership was possible between the ‘secular nationalism’ of the congress and the ‘narrow communalism’ and the two-nation theory of the Muslim League.

Aziz Ahmed has endorsed the logic of partition as envisaged by the ‘Leaguers’ who were apprehensive that a Hindu-dominated federal structure is out of place in
a society where the ‘divisive forces have proved much more dynamic than the cohesive ones’ (Ahmad 1964:74).

Hindu-Muslim antagonism was deeply entrenched in the very dynamics of the belief system, mores and rituals and the historical roots of the Indian sub-continent. Farzana Sheikh has dilated on the genesis of Hindu–Muslim divide from a more sophisticated level. She argues that the evolution of ‘Muslim politics’ which led to the cry for partition owes greatly to, and heavily draws upon, a long history of ideas:

Ideologically Muslims cherish the faith of being an exclusive political entity separate from others. The whole edifice of the Muslim identity derives strength from an ‘awareness of the ideal of Muslim brotherhood, a belief in the superiority of Muslim culture, and recognition of the belief that Muslims ought to live under Muslim governments’. (Sheikh 1989:23)

Foundational postulate of the Pakistan ideology, to be sure, is the two-nation theory, which breathed life into the Pakistan movement. However, the ‘decisive shift’ took place when the landed aristocracy in Punjab titled the balance to the League candidates in the 1946 provincial elections. Jinnah’s political ascendancy owed little to Punjab in the beginning but ultimately he contributed a lot in shaping the events there. He succeeded in convincing the landlords and the Sajjada Nasheens (the custodians of shrines) that their interests would least be hampered, damaged or interfered in the wake of emergence of Pakistan. Thus the support that League garnered from the landed and religious elites of Punjab in the
elections of 1946 carved the destiny of Muslims and the creation of Pakistan could not be denied.

It is important to note that mutual acrimony between Hindus and Muslims had been a permanent feature of the provincial politics. Belief system and Communal interests were the hallmark of all the political tangles. The communal issue was at the heart of the Muslim demand for provincial autonomy and separate electorates which ultimately boiled down to the idea of a separate nation-state consisting of the Muslim majority areas in the north-west and north-east of India.

In fact this whole issue of antagonism and divide between Hindu and Muslim leadership stems from ‘the chief differences that characterize Islamic and liberal democratic approaches to representation’. Farzana Sheikh argues that:

The attempt to establish the ideological basis of Muslim representative politics in India has necessarily implied the assumption that ideology may, in some instances, constitute an independent variable in politics … … The study of Indian Muslims separatistic attitudes to representation provides an opportunity to gauge the influence of ideology in the definition of political issues and the formulation of political demands. It is neither insignificant nor coincidental that the manner in which Indian Muslims expressed their opposition to Western representation conformed closely to the basic political norms of Islam (Sheikh 1986: 549).

According to liberal approaches to representation the political legitimacy is seen to depend primarily upon the elected status of the representatives. Farzana continues that:

The political legitimacy and representative status in Islam, on the other hand, tends to rely much more upon visibly shared social and communal affiliations between the representative and his communal group than upon his elected status per se. It
is important to content here that within the context of Islamic political values, it is more important to Muslims to be represented by a Muslim than by elected, politically accountable, non-Muslim. It is primarily the incidence of similarity, essentially communal in nature, between the candidate and his constituency that constitute the foremost condition of representativeness in Islam. But the contention that those who are of the group are preeminently qualified to be for the group, is wholly at odds with the liberal view which distinguishes sharply between a representative’s political commitments on the one hand and his religious and communal affiliation on the other. (Sheikh 1986: 550-51)

Despite its dismal electoral performance, in 1937, the All India Muslim League proclaimed itself the authentic representative of all Indian Muslims. Muslim League leadership never ignored or compromised on the centrality of the communal ethos in Islamic political norms till they achieved a separate nation-state for the Indian Muslims, of course through a constitutional warfare spearheaded by M.A Jinnah. The popular slogan of Hindu-Muslim parity, enunciated during the political and constitutional dialogues between Muslims, Hindus and the British, falls back to the same ideological variable in Muslim politics. Unequivocal and unerring Muslim opposition, throughout the constitutional parleys of the 1940s, to the representative institutions based on flexible political alignments proceeded from the same perspective that society was divided into immovable religiously defined political blocs consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The irresolvable Congress-League conflict on modes of representation ultimately led to the partition of India and the creation of a separate nation-state for Muslims. The League in the 1940s rejected Congress’s claim to be the majority party and the only legitimate wielder of political power in independent India. The
League pressed forward the idea of representative parity independent of numerical proportions, on the basis of inherent schism between Muslims and non-Muslims. Resultantly the League was to be viewed as the sole representative of a unanimous Muslim political consensus and the congress as the principal organ of non-Muslim interests.

The important factors underpinning the question of parity versus majority rule were mainly: the outbreak of the 2nd World War in September 1939, the consequences of Congress rule in the provinces from 1937 to 1939 and the resultant demand by the Muslim League for territorial redistribution to guarantee Indian Muslims complete control over their own affairs in areas where they constituted a majority. The outbreak of the World War II provided a space to the League to unleash its onslaught against liberal political institutions and to underplay the legitimacy of western democracy in the united India. The British government desperately urged for war-time cooperation from Indian political parties. Indian Muslims seized the opportunity of obtaining recognition as a distinct ‘nation’ – a status hitherto overshadowed by the so-called claims of the Congress for a supra-communal Indian nationalism. The League announced whole-hearted support to the war efforts. The All-India Congress, however, decided to launch ‘Quit India’ movement to destabilize and harass the British rulers in India.

The League’s stance during the war led to amazing and radical changes for the liberal democracy. India’s political horizon saw, for the first time, two frigidly defined groups emerging with equal standing without any reference to their
numerical proportions. This equation of minority and majority totally jeopardized the framework of liberal representation in India. Although the idea that the Muslims of India were more than a mere political minority and were a distinct political entity existed much before the war but the official British favoritism to Muslims was a characteristic upshot of their strong support to the war efforts. The status of the League got radically distinguished which enabled the Muslims to demand outright parity with congress in that they were a separate nation and not a communal organization. The resignation of the congress ministries and their refusal to co-operate with the war efforts helped the League to consolidate its position.

Leaguers now emphasized to be taken as a ‘constituent factor’ in all further constitutional negotiations. They pressed the British that they be allowed to play ‘an equal part’ with the majority community and the League be deemed the only organization to speak on behalf of the ‘Muslim India’. (Gwyer 1957: 488-89)

Muslims in the past, though without much acclaim, had been asserting that they were a permanently defined, distinct social category entitled to claim parity of status and representation for Indian Muslims. In his presidential address to the 21st session of Muslim League in December 1930 at Allahabad Dr. Muhammad Iqbal unambiguously remarked that ‘the life of Islam as a cultural force’ and ‘the development of Shariat’ clearly demanded upon the creation of ‘one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities”. (Pirzada 1982: 159)

Iqbal’s address foregrounded the important view that the conduct and practice of Islam required totally independent areas where its adherents could abide by the
tenets of their faith. Jinnah dilated upon the issue of parity by arguing that ‘if the majority status of Hindus entitled them to represent an Indian nation, there was no reason why the Muslim community which constituted an absolute majority in clearly defined areas could not make similar claims for itself’. (Ahmed 1960: 138)

It was with the premise of territorially defined Muslim majority and its well-defined code of conduct with an absolutely separate system of laws that the Muslim League embarked upon a new clarity of demands in March 1940. In its 27th session on March 23, 1940 in Lahore, Muslim League emphatically rejected the minority status of the Indian Muslims adopting a historic Objectives Resolution, later on came to be remembered as Pakistan Resolution. It argued that Indian Muslims constituted a majority nation in the north-west and south east of India and, as such, ought to be treated at par with the Hindu majority in all further constitutional arrangements. The resolution proved to be a landmark in League’s struggle for legitimacy of its claim to absolute power in a sovereign and independent Muslim state comprising of clear Muslim majority areas. League’s demand for bi-partisan parity vested on the logic that only it represented the cohesive entity of Muslim ‘nation’. In addition to the socio-historical factors contributing to the notion of parity, equally important is the development of an insight into the ideological basis which emerged more vividly in the course of constitutional negotiations, which reveal that the claim for parity developed steadily from simple political parity between league and congress to communal parity between Muslims and Hindus and culminated finally in the demand for ideological parity between Muslims and non-Muslims. The final bidding by the
League that statutory parity be allowed to the Indian Muslims on the one hand and all the non-Muslim Indians on the other hand proved to be a final blow to downplay the chances of liberal democracy in a united India.

On 24 March 1940 Jinnah told the world what he wanted. In his mind, “partition … was the only long-term solution to India’s foremost problem’ and, having arrived at and taken this decision, he ‘lowered the final curtain on any prospects for a single united independent India.” (Wolpert 1984:182)

It seems essential to briefly overview the constitutional parlays to imbibe the League’s claim to parity. The government of India engaged the Indian leadership to resolve the tangle of constitutional imbroglios through a series of efforts like August offer of 1940; the Cripps Mission in 1942, the viceroy’s proposals of Interim Government in 1945, and the Cabinet Mission plan in 1946. The constitutional parlays in the form of the Cripps Mission and the Cabinet Mission to arrive at a consensus of opinion on the formation of a representative government of the confederation of Indian states failed to resolve the communal-cum-political impasse of India. Both the mainstream political parties rejected the 1942 proposals of Cripps and the 1946 plan of the Cabinet Mission. The massive electoral victory of the League candidature in the Muslim majority provinces of the north –western and the north-eastern provinces gave a booster dose to the confidence of the League leadership. They, thus, further hardened their demand of parity between Muslims and non-Muslims based on its claim to represent the whole Indian Muslims; a convention of League legislators from April 7-9, 1946 resolved to press for the equal recognition of “two separate constitution making
bodies … of Pakistan and Hindustan representing and taking care of the Muslims and non-Muslim separately.” (Pirzada 1982: 512-13)

The failure of any break-through in the formation of a common Indian confederation and a common Indian legislation, an objective the cabinet Mission had been striving for, closed the door of any further efforts to ensure the unity of India in the wake of the fall of Empire. In fact all efforts to reach a constitutional solution which safeguarded the suzerainty of Muslims in the northeastern and northwestern provinces of Muslim-majority were a hard nut which congress would never digest. Nehru and Gandhi wanted such a solution which would guarantee the unbridled power of congress over the whole subcontinent after the departure of their English masters.

With the end of the World War II, Labour Party came to power in Britain which had a soft opinion about Congress leadership. The Labour Party, with its serious commitment to post-war reconstruction at home and demobilization and decolonization abroad, changed the Indian political scene rather dramatically. Attlee government particularly appeared concerned about leaving behind a strong and centralized govt. in India capable of defending the British economic and political interests in the subcontinent. Gandhi started a drum-beating campaign saying that All India Congress is the only legitimate custodian of political power in the absence of the British. That India is an indivisible entity and any effort to that end would mean the vivisection of mother India. Prime Minister Attlee’s statement that ‘the rights of minorities in India are dear to him but he cannot allow a minority to veto the right of a majority’ was effusively hailed by congress.
This raised the hackles of League leadership particularly of Jinnah. He felt threatened from the furtive alignment developing amongst the British and the Congress. The British wanted to leave behind an undivided India to preserve their colonial prestige. The Congress seemed keen and looked both confident and capable to take over the rule of the unpartitioned India. It did not take very long, in the changed political scenario, for the British and the Congress to discover their common interests in an India with a strong centre. The whole scheme was totally detrimental to the Muslim demand of self-determination and in absolute defiance of their demand for a separate and sovereign nation-state.

The Cabinet Mission of 1946

In highlighting the legacy of hatred, and consequent war-mongering in both India and Pakistan before and since Independence, I would especially like to emphasize the importance of Cabinet Mission of 1946 that was the last ditch effort to avoid Partition as per British desires. In our history books, while explaining the Two-Nation theory, we often display enthusiasm which is detrimental to Muslim good intentions to live in peace and harmony with the Hindus. Cabinet Mission, and the negotiations surrounding it, is a testimony to the Muslim mind set during those turbulent times in the wake of World War II. The fact that the Muslim League accepted the proposals of the Cabinet Mission while the Congress rejected them is enough proof to establish that the Muslims of the Subcontinent should not be ‘blamed’ for the Partition. Besides, the Muslim rule in India, extending over eight hundred years, is another proof that they were still capable of living with the
Hindus and other communal groups of India. It is, therefore, pertinent to discuss the proposals and proceedings of the Cabinet Mission in a little detail.

Assessing the sensitivity of the arch rivals’ maneuverings, Jinnah became more and more convinced to the Pakistan demand. The League fought the elections of 1945-6 on that manifesto. Fortified by the League’s electoral triumph, on April 7, 1946 Jinnah led a convention of 470 League members of the central and provincial legislatures to an unequivocal resolution favouring ‘a sovereign independent state comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East zone and the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the North-West zone’. (Pirzada 1982: 512-13)

Acceptance of the demand of Pakistan and its implementation without delay, by the creation of a Pakistan constituent Assembly, was made the *sine qua non* for the League’s participation in an interim Government. That is how the opening of the imperial endgame had precipitated an immediate and full-blooded definition of the Pakistan demand.

The Cabinet Mission, at such a juncture of mistrust, hostility and controversy, came to India to settle the basis for independence of India from the Raj. The Mission presented two alternative approaches. Firstly either a truncated Pakistan, independent and fully sovereign but limited to the Muslim majority areas and thus short of far more of the territories of Punjab, Bengal and Assam than the League had demanded or secondly, the grouping together of the whole of the six claimed provinces, beside a Hindustan group, within a Union exercising power over
defence, foreign affairs and communications. The groups of provinces were allowed to have their own flags, independent constitution, forces to maintain internal order, and enjoying parity with Hindustan in an all-India government. Together the League and the Congress, on the basis of Parity would draft the Union constitution. Any group will have the right to secede from the Union after fifteen years (Menon 1956: 71, 82, 126). This remarkable scheme was the furthest that His Majesty’s Government ever went towards accepting the full Pakistan demand.

Congress launched a venomous campaign against the League-friendly clauses of the draft proposals. The mission acquiesced in the face of the Congress pressure and in order to woo it, the final draft was made far less attractive to the League. (Menon 1956: 303) It split the six ‘Pakistan’ provinces into two groups, abandoned parity in the making of the Union constitution, enlarged the Union’s power to include finance, and failed to provide for the secession of groups or provinces from the Union. The League leaders feared that the Union’s power would enable Congress to abort the emergence of Pakistan. However, the counsels that prevailed were that the Cabinet Mission’s scheme met “the substance of the demand for Pakistan.” (Philips 1970: 330).

League’s working committee assumed, on the basis of discussions that Jinnah had had with Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, that the League would enjoy parity with Congress in an interim Government, which seemed equivalent to a tacit admission of Pakistan’s right to separate nationhood. Thus the league resolved that:
… inasmuch as the basis and the foundation of Pakistan are inherent in the Mission’s plan by virtue of the compulsory grouping of the six Muslim Provinces in Sections B and C, [it] is willing to cooperate with the constitution-making machinery proposed in the scheme outlined by the Mission, in the hope that it would ultimately result in the establishment of complete sovereign Pakistan … (Menon 1956: 469)

The League Council authorized Jinnah to negotiate League’s entry to the Interim Government. Jinnah emphasized to the Viceroy that his assurance of parity therein had been ‘the turning point’ in the Council’s acceptance. League’s endorsement of the Mission’s plan on behalf of the parity principle, for joining the Interim Government, baffled the Congress to the extent that they rejected the plan.

In the eyes of the Congress President the question of parity became an “insuperable obstacle”. The real obstacle was that congress desired to enjoy unrivaled authority in the new India. Gandhi, in one of his letters wrote to Cripps, “If you have courage you will do what I suggested from the very beginning … You will have to choose between the two – the Muslim League and the Congress, both your creations.” (Pyarelal 1956: 225).

Congress was adamant to maintain such views which were totally detrimental to the interests of Muslim League; namely, a central government with limited powers and the provincial groups. In the absence of these central points, it would not be the Cabinet Mission plan. It would best be called a Congress plan forged for the making of an unfettered Hindu-dominated constituent assembly free to make any kind of constitution for the whole subcontinent. Disgusted at the
shameful haggling of Congress and the appeasing attitude of the Mission and the Viceroy, Jinnah commented that:

I maintain that the cabinet Mission and the viceroy have gone back on their word within ten days of the publication of their final proposals in not implementing the statement of 16 June and I fully endorse what has been put so well – ‘States men should not eat their word’s. (Ashraf 1946: 181-82)

The Cabinet Mission departed from India on June 29, 1946, and left behind them a legacy of discord and bitterness. Their pattern of behaviour – a brave effort at doing “justice” followed by an abject retreat in the face of Congress threats – was to recur repeatedly in the conduct of Indian affairs by the Labour Party. The clash of viewpoint between the Cabinet Mission and the Congress turned out in a way to serve the latter. The Labour government lost the battle of nerves. “Each retreat left it weaker until, in the end, it lost all power of initiative and did the bidding of the congress while making desperate efforts to save appearances.” (Ali 1973: 67). This view has also been held by the British historian Percival Spear. “The British could only argue and persuade; they could no longer command.” (Spear 1961: 415)

As time went by, the Congress hardened its opposition to the provisions of “grouping” and “a centre with limited powers, in the future Indian set up. Nehru envisaged a much stronger central government than the one proposed in Cabinet Mission plan. The central government according to him would have the authority to settle inter-provincial disputes and to deal with administrative and economic
breakdowns “The scope of the centre” he concluded, “even though limited, inevitably grows, because it cannot exist otherwise”. (Brecher 1959: 316)

Jinnah immediately pointed out that Nehru’s statement was a repudiation of the basic norms upon which the scheme rests. In his speech to the League council he retraced the course of negotiations with the Cabinet Mission and showed how the Muslim League had made concessions after concession … because of our extreme anxiety for an amicable and peaceful settlement which will lead not only Hindus and Muslims but also other communities inhabiting this subcontinent to the achievement of freedom, how the Congress had done the greatest harm to the peoples of India by its pettifogging, haggling attitude with no other consideration except to down the Muslims League; and how throughout these negotiations the Cabinet Mission were under terror and threats of the congress. Jinnah recommended in strong words; ‘All these prove clearly beyond a shadow of doubt that the only solution of India’s problem is Pakistan. I feel we have exhausted all reasons. It is no use looking to any other source for help or assistance. There is no tribunal to which we can go. The only tribunal is the Muslim nation. The League had [during negotiations] sacrificed the full sovereign state of Pakistan at the alter of the Congress for securing the independence of the whole of India. They voluntarily delegated three subjects to the Union … it was the highest order of statesmanship that the League displayed by making concessions … But this has been treated with defiance and contempt. (Ahmed 1952: 407-21)

The League Council admitted the resolution withdrawing acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan without a single dissenting voice, at the end of the council meeting on July 29, 1946. The last paragraph of the resolution noted that:

… the policy of the British government of sacrificing the interests of the Muslim nation and some other weaker sections of the peoples of India, particularly the scheduled castes, to appease the congress and the way in which they have been going back on their oral and written solemn pledges and assurances given from time to time to the Muslims, leave no
doubt that in these circumstances the participation of the Muslims in the proposed constitution-making machinery is fraught with danger and the council, therefore, hereby withdraws its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission’s proposals. (Ashraf 1946: 309)

The Council also passed another resolution which read, in part, ‘The time has come for the Muslim nation to resort to Direct Action to achieve Pakistan, and to get rid of the present slavery under the British and contemplated future caste Hindu domination’, and gave instructions for the preparation of a “programme of Direct Action … to organize the Muslims for the coming struggle to be launched as and when necessary.” Furthermore, as a protest against and in token of their deep resentment of the attitude of the British, the Council called upon the “Muslims to renounce the titles conferred upon them by the Alien Government.” (Ashraf 1946: 309-10).

Jinnah [and the League] was driven to the course of ‘Direct Action’ by his irreparable mistrust of the Congress and His Majesty’s Government’s infirmity to remain steadfast in the face of the bigotry of the Congress stalwarts. He, however, at a press conference on July 31, made it clear that direct action was not a declaration of war against anybody. He said that the Muslim league alone had scrupulously kept itself within the constitutional orbit and had been following constitutional methods. Having exhausted all such means, “We are now forced for our self-defence and self-preservation to say good-bye to constitutional methods and we have decided … to prepare and resort to direct action as and when the time may come to launch it.” (Ashraf 1946: 311-19).
The Congress, which had been resorting to the politics of resistance for a quarter of a century, considered the League decision as a threat to itself. Sardar Patel said, at a public meeting, that the threatened direct action by the League, if it was real, was not aimed at British but at the congress because the British had already made it clear that they had no intention of staying in India. (Ashraf 1946: 325)

The general reaction among the Hindus was that the resolutions of the Muslim League were bluff and bluster. They were all out for intimidating the Muslims by means of ridicule, abuse and threats which lead to the worsening of already deteriorated relations between the two communities. A distinguished British journalist, Sir Arthur Moore, former editor of The Statesman of Calcutta, commented that:

Muslim League alone had accepted the long-term and the short-term plan … No glimmer of thanks or gratitude reached them. Our concern is that by going back on the statement of 16 June we let down those who trusted us … we have produced a situation in which civil war is an obvious possibility. (Ashraf 1946: 385)

Elections to the constituent assembly, held in late July 1946, proved a watershed in making the struggle for emancipation of the Muslims from the yoke of both the present and impending colonizers a success. The Muslim League won 95 percent of the Muslim seats and the Congress captured as high a proportion of the general (non-Muslim) seats. Horns were locked again between the Congress and the League on the issue of the formation of the interim govt. The Congress became a stumbling bloc in the way of inclusion of Muslim representatives nominated by
the Muslim league. Congress also resisted the idea of an equitable share of the most important portfolios by both the parties as suggested by Lord Wavell, the Viceroy. Not only this, congress wanted to keep the Muslim League totally out of the interim govt. by picking “nationalist” Muslims and other stooges for cabinet appointments.

In such conditions of mistrust, and grudge, there was no third party wielding sufficient power and prestige to bring about some sort of rapprochement or working relationship. The structure of British bureaucracy was crumbling because many civil servants had already left or were vying to leave for England. The number of British officers in the Indian army had also decreased considerably. The British had neither, owing to their exodus to the homeland, manpower, financial resources nor the will to reestablish their grip on Indian affairs. Their efforts to woo the two main parties in the constituent assembly had failed. Under the circumstances the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, came to the conclusion, as he reported in a letter to King George VI, that

it would be better for the interests of both of ourselves and of India to remove our control as soon as possible and to leave Indians to determine their own future. … I recommend the withdrawal of British control by stages. …. The date I recommend for the final transfer of power was March 31st, 1948. (Wheeler: 1953: 44)

His plan of phased withdrawal did not seek approval of the British government, however, his assertion that British rule should come to an end in India was agreed to. Prime Minister Attlee made a historic statement, though controversial, in the
House of Commons on February 20, 1947, indicating the definite intention of the British government

to take necessary steps to affect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948. The responsibility of government will be handed over to authorities established by a constitution approved by all the parties in India … If such a constitution would not have been worked out by a fully representative Constituent assembly, His Majesty’s government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over, on the due date … in the best interest of the Indian people. (Quoted in Ali 1973: 98)

The other very important announcement, destined to cast very lasting shadows on the future of the subcontinent, Attlee made was that Lord Wavell would be replaced as viceroy in March by Lord Mountbatten. The congress took the dismissal as a result of its wire-pulling in London. In fact the hostile Congress leaders had never forgiven Wavell for his inviting the League to join the interim Cabinet without its consent. “In Nehru’s views, Wavell had made one serious blunder in inviting the Muslim League into the interim government instead of waiting a little longer for them to ask to be brought in”. (Campbell 1953: 44)

Attlee’s decision to withdraw from India by June, 1948 was highly castigated by the Conservative opposition. Their fundamental concern was that the period stipulated for the withdrawal of Britain from India was too short for dealing with the difficult questions of framing a constitution, transferring power to one or more authorities and settling the complex issues of services, defense, finance, trade, communications and a host of other matters. Concluding his speech in the House of Commons Churchill remarked: “Let us not add – by shameful flight, by a
premature hurried scuttle – at least, let us not add to the pangs and sorrows so many of us feel, the faint and smear of shame.” (Wolpert 2006: 132)

The political leadership in India responded to the announcement with mixed feelings. The idea of departure by June 1948 was warmly welcomed but the vagueness in the procedure of transfer of power was criticized both by the Congress and the League. The Congress, vying for rule over the whole subcontinent, was not totally free from the misgivings that the whole may elude their group. In that extremity, they wanted to retain as much as possible prompting them to host the idea of partition of Punjab tempting and Bengal. Nehru did not spare the chance to get the hotter of the Attlee’s announcement He conceived the genesis of partition of Bengal and Punjab and argued that since

His Majesty’s government had recognized that they could not contemplate forcing an unwelcome constitution upon unwilling parts of the country; it was only logical that large minorities inside a province, such as the Hindus in Bengal and the Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab, could also not be compelled into an unacceptable constitution” (Menon 1956: 339).

Dilating on the issue of partition in his speech to the All-India states conference on April 18, Nehru said,

The Congress … has recently on practical considerations passed a resolution accepting the division of the country. Muslim League can have Pakistan but on the condition that they do not take away parts of India which do not wish to join Pakistan. (Menon 1956: 851)
Congress acceded to partition of India but shrewdly stipulated it to the bi-section of Bengal and Punjab, conceding moth eaten and truncated Pakistan to the Muslim League.

Jinnah is unjustly lambasted often for having acceded to the ‘moth-eaten’ Pakistan. His ultimate consent to the division of Punjab and Bengal was not a sudden about-turn. Right from the point in time since the idea for a separate homeland for Muslims of India had taken birth, the Muslim leaders were never oblivious of the fact that the argument they used for the creation of Pakistan could equally be used in favour of the exclusion from Pakistan of those non-Muslim areas in the Punjab and Bengal which were predominantly non-Muslim and were contiguous to India. Allama Iqbal in his Allahabad presidential address of 1930 had conceded the rationale of exclusion of Ambala Division and some other non-Muslim majority districts of Jallundher Division from the Muslim province of his conception. The Pakistan Resolution of March 23, 1940 had also recognized some territorial re-adjustments for the demarcation of the Muslim majority areas for which its authors were demanding a sovereign status. The most important part of the Resolution embodying a political bombshell both for the Congress and the British ran:

It is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to
Both the Congress and the League were of the view that the partition of India and the vivisection of Punjab and Bengal was an unhappy compromise. At heart, neither the Congress nor the League had abandoned their stands for united India and six whole provinces for Pakistan. Tacitly both of them continued maneuverings to achieve their original objectives until the plan of June 3, 1947 decided the term of transfer of power once and for all. The Congress had an inherent edge over the League by virtue of British position on the dynamics of Partition. The British government preferred to leave behind a united India to preserve its just imperial façade to the comity of nations. Muslim League was entangled in double trouble of persuading the British and battling with the Congress for the Pakistan demand.

**Budget Proposals of Liaquat Ali Khan**

It is pertinent to discuss here the budget proposals presented by Liaquat Ali Khan as the finance minister. On February 28, 1947, in the midst of social polarity and political stand-offs, Liaquat Ali Khan presented his “Poor Man’s Budget”, as it came to be called later on, to the Central Assembly, for the fiscal year April 1947 to March 1948. Laying the budget before the assembly he claimed that his proposals not only address the financial purposes but have been made in the interest of ‘social justice and development’. First two proposals aimed at providing relief and succor to the poor. He abolished the salt tax, for which
Gandhi had launched a civil disobedience campaign which yielded only marginal success. Liaquat had fulfilled Gandhi’s long-standing wish. “By ending the salt tax Liaquat stole congress thunder”. (Burke 1996: 484) Secondly he raised the minimum exemption limit for income tax from Rs.2000 to 2500. Those proposals would involve loss of revenue. To compensate the loss, he proposed new and increased taxes. To catch the tax-evaders and squeeze the profiteers, he proposed to set up a commission to investigate the accumulation of wealth arising from tax evasion. His most important proposal was to levy a special income tax of 25 per cent on business profits exceeding Rs.100,000 and a graduated tax on capital gains exceeding Rs.5,000.

All sections of the assembly greeted the budget proposals but with momentary enthusiasm. Liaquat’s budget was in line with the avowed manifesto of the Congress. Azad remarked that it was the declared policy of the Congress that economic inequalities must be removed, replacing capitalist society by a socialist pattern. Soon the felicitation evaporated into the thick cloud of communal antagonism. A storm of opposition was raged by the capitalists, majority of them being the Hindus. Inevitably the rich Hindus were the hardest hit. Liaquat was alleged to have deliberately hurt Hindu big businessmen who financed the Congress and had profited from the congress policy of boycotting foreign goods. The loudest critics were orthodox Hindus with Patel in the lead. Patel was the Congress’s principal fund collector and had friendly links with Hindu big businessmen. It was also alleged that Liaquat had tried to drive a wedge between the right and the left wings of the Congress led respectively by Patel and Nehru.
The proposals were not revolutionary, but they were a first step towards the creation of a just social order. The Muslim League, regarded as a reactionary body of landlords and other similar elements, appeared on the political horizon working for social justice and an egalitarian society. Quite ironically, the congress, on the other hand, which had the entire posture of a socialist organization committed to the welfare of the masses was exposed as a self-serving capitalist entity. The Hindu capitalist class developed apprehension that if Muslims had any role in the future power structure of India, they would inevitably introduce social reforms, equality of opportunity and less inequality in the distribution of wealth and income. Hindu press rallied to the support of Hindu capitalists and refused to credit the League with sincerity of purpose and instead, saw in the budget proposals a design for destroying the economic power of Hindus.

The undeclared civil war had already engulfed the whole Subcontinent; political embitterment had frenzied the rival blocs in the cabinet. Liaquat’s budget strained the nerves to the breaking point. Hindu capitalists pressed Sardar Patel hard that a united India with poverty-stricken Muslims, who always campaign for social justice, would perpetually demand a share in the wealth of Hindus. In their new apprehensions, they understood that it would lead to a nightmarish fiasco. The sooner they were separated from Hindus the better. Patel who had always championed the cause of united India, was prepared for partition out of irritation and injured vanity.
With an uncanny foresight Sardar Patel came to the fateful decision that unless the country was partitioned, chaos and anarchy would spread throughout the land. The congress working committee took a realistic view and [on March 8, 1947, through the passage of a resolution] agreed with him. (Panjabi 1962: 123)

Partition had so far been an anathema to the Congress. March 8, resolution was the first indication of a fundamental change in congress mind, this shift, as discussed above, owes greatly to the economic reasons. Interestingly Muslims demanded the partition for social, political and religious factors. Unfortunately both countries are still grappling with the issues which were at the heart of their demands for partitioning of the sub-continent.

**Mountbatten’s Viceroyship and the Post-Independence Problems of Pakistan**

On March 22, 1947 Mountbatten arrived in New Delhi as the last Viceroy of India. The whole country was already in the grip of communal tensions. Fights, riots, arsons were breaking out in Calcutta, Bombay and other places where communal harmony had already been disrupted. The Punjab, in particular, was seething with communal bitterness. Sikhs were busy collecting arms to impinge havoc upon Muslims. When Mountbatten took charge, the issue of Partition had been settled as the recommendations and proposals of Cabinet mission had been rejected by the Congress. The big problems confronting him were time, manner and extent of partition, not its principle.

The Labour Party, which appointed Mountbatten to monitor, supervise and tailor the partition plan, had a heavy political bias in favour of the aspirations of left
wing of Congress – because of its belief in centralization, its concept of a socialist state. Its leadership was predisposed and keen to win the goodwill of the Congress. Mountbatten was well aware of this preference and was himself inclined to safeguard the Congress interests.

Both the Congress and the League had approved the parturition of India but a wide gulf persisted in their standpoints regarding the issues therein. To the League the division of the subcontinent into two sovereign independent states, Hindustan and Pakistan, was a just act trespassing on the rights of neither Hindus nor Muslims. Partition was conceived as a division of property between two brothers, to be carried out peacefully and fairly, with due deliberation and without detriment to the interests of either party. The Congress, however, had consented to partition in anger, anguish and disappointment. Hindus felt frustrated at being deprived of total dominance over the whole of the subcontinent without any notion of power sharing when the die was finally cast for the end of the British Raj. They swallowed the bitter pill of partition in a state of wrath and sheer helplessness. The Congress leaders, it seems, had thought of replacing the British with their own imperialist dreams. Forced to accept Pakistan as an independent political unit, the Congress pride had been hurt beyond repair; and it awakened a spirit of vengeance. General Tuker noted:

… the vindictive attitude of the majority of Hindus [at this time] … In effect they said, “well, if the Muslims want Pakistan, let them damned well have it. We shall shear every possible inch off their territory so as to make it look silly and to ensure that it is not a viable country and when they have got what’s left we’ll ensure that it cannot be worked economically. (Tuker 1950: 257)
Sardar Patel’s speech that he made in the Constituent Assembly in November 1949 stands a testimony to what Tuker noted. Patel said: “I agreed to partition as a lost resort, when we should have lost all … Mr. Jinnah did not want a truncated Pakistan but he had to swallow it. I made a further condition that in two months time power should be transferred.” (Panjabi 1962: 124)

Vengeance alone might not have driven a wedge in the just and fair drawing and then execution of the partition plan; other influences were also at work to malign the whole scheme. V.P. Menon, a Hindu official and a constitutional advisor was invariably invited to take part in the informal staff meetings that the viceroy would hold frequently at which all questions were discussed without reservations. Mountbatten, and in fact everybody, knew it clearly that V.P. Menon was, to quote Campbell –Johnson, “the trusted confidant of Vallabhai Patel”, (Campbell 1953:85) who was thereby not only kept informed of the proceeding of the inner councils of the Viceroy, but was able to influence the policies of the Viceroy through his mouth-piece. Had a Muslim officer been at the place of V.P. Menon and was known to develop a liaison with Jinnah, he would have been immediately thrown out of the council on the charge of partisanship. Secondly, the Congress would have definitely campaigned for the ouster of such an officer from such a position. Michael Brecher writes:

Mountbatten’s most notable triumph in the sphere of personal relations was an intimate bond of friendship with Nehru. Other Congress leaders, including Gandhi and Patel were well disposed to the Governor General. But with Nehru there developed a relationship of mutual trust, respect, admiration
and affection which is rare among statesmen and unprecedented in the annals of British Raj ... As for Lady Mountbatten it can only be surmised that she helped to fill a void in Nehru’s life. (Brecher 1959: 410-12)

Jinnah realized that even though the Congress had accepted partition, it was bent to do all in its power to mutilate and corrugate Pakistan. He sensed that Punjab and Bengal would have to be partitioned. He remarked frankly that “a moth-eaten Pakistan would be better than no Pakistan at all.” (Ismay 1960: 420)

The British were the most vital and central players in the execution of partition plan. If they had upheld the scales even between the League and the Congress, Pakistan might be saved from the worst depredations of the Congress.

**Mountbatten’s Partition Plan**

By April, 1947, the partition of India had become a foregone conclusion. Incidentally, and in many cases deliberately too, the circumstances accrued all the advantages to the Congress. Congress would inherit the capital at New Delhi, and the civil and military administration of the government of India, including the control over the armed forces. Muslim League would be the loser. February 20, announcement of Prime Minister Attlee had given a time frame for the partition and had urged “to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power not later than June 1948”. Delay in ‘taking the necessary steps’ would wholly be detrimental to the interests of the Muslims. Cognizant of the dynamics of the Indian politics as he was, Liaquat Ali Khan wrote a letter to the Viceroy and proposed for the reorganization of the armed forces in such a way that they could
be readily divided between the newly emergent states at a suitable juncture of time. Liaquat Ali Khan did not assert for the immediate division of the armed forces. He underscored the need for “Preparation of Plan for the partition of the Indian Armed Forces.” Ismay stressed that “to take any action on Liaquat’s letter would be to prejudice the political issue. Mountbatten agreed that there would be no splitting of the Indian Army before the withdrawal of the British.” (Campbell 1953: 58) Both Mountbatten and Ismay disagreed because it was in the British interest to keep the army united.

Not only this, the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Auchinleck also disapproved the idea of preparation of a plan for the partition of the armed forces. He held that: “As it is likely that any rumour concerning a proposal to divide the Armed Forces would have an immediate and unsettling effect on the morale of Muslim soldiers, ratings and airmen, it is urged that this matter should not be discussed except on the highest level.” (Connell 1959: 874-75)

Baldev Singh, the Defence Minister and mouthpiece of the congress block, fully supported the position taken by Auchinleck because the hidden agenda was to dole out everything to the Congress. The whole country was echoing with the discussions of partition, but the Defence Minister and the Commander-in-Chief insisted that a consideration of its logical upshot, the division of armed forces, was not viable at the moment. This decision was in total disregard to the lethal consequences of partition in the military sphere. The accepted date for the transfer of power to the Indian Union and Pakistan was January 1, 1948. Why the date
was then changed to August 15, 1947, resulting in senseless and bloody violence of extreme nature.

A very fundamental question rending Mountbatten’s mind was, “Whether both the Indian Union and Pakistan would be in the Commonwealth after the partition?” Jinnah had unequivocally conveyed his affirmation to the question. The Congress, however, stood committed to the resolution of the constituent assembly in favour of a sovereign independent Republic, which implied leaving the Commonwealth. Not only this, Patel tried hard to forestall the inclusion of Pakistan, while India not doing so, in the commonwealth declaring that India will consider it a ‘hostile act’ by Britain. Mountbatten succumbed to the venomous threats of Patel and “came down heavily against the idea of allowing only a part to remain in [the commonwealth], with the consequent risk of Britain being involved in the support of one Indian sovereign state against another.” (Campbell 1953: 50)

Mountbatten craved for achieving a solution whereby both the Indian Union and Pakistan could be retained within the Commonwealth. V.P. Menon took the lead and put it to him that congress would accept Dominion status in return for a very early transfer of power. Mountbatten was least concerned to see the congeniality or precariousness of the condition in which Pakistan would be created. He was equally disinterested to ensure the survival and sustenance of the newly born state. His mind spinned around achieving one main objective: of underpinning the reputation of the Empire by keeping the Indian Union within the commonwealth. V.P. Memon, a close confidant of Patel, brokered a secret
agreement between Mountbatten and Patel. According to the deal India would accept the Dominion status for the time being if transfer of power takes place within two instead of fifteen months. Patel had agreed to the idea of early transfer of power because it would take away from the Muslim League its bargaining power with the British. “On the 1st May, 1947 the viceroy’s secretary reported that the Sardar [Patel] was now ready to accept an offer of Dominion status for the time being.” (Pyarelal 1956:166)

Mountbatten jumped at the proposition put forward by V.P. Menon with a high degree of gratitude. In a letter to Menon, the Viceroy wrote:

"... you found the solution which I had not thought of, of making it acceptable by a very early transfer of power. History must always rate that decision very high, and I owe it to your advice; advice given in the teeth of considerable opposition from other advisers. (quoted in Ali 1983: 136)"

Mountbatten, being a seasoned administrator, knew fairly well of the immense difficulties Pakistan was destined to face owing to the whirlwind plan of partition in two months. He himself remarked that, “Administratively it is the difference between putting up a permanent building, a nissen hut or a tent. As far as Pakistan is concerned we are putting up a tent. We can do no more”. (Campbell 1953: 87)

The injustice to Pakistan, however, weighed little with him against the grand object of bringing the Indian Union into the British Commonwealth, of which he
said, “The value to the United Kingdom both in terms of prestige and strategy would be enormous”. (Campbell 1953: 87)

The cost, in terms of human life and misery, of this fateful deal between Mountbatten and the Congress leadership was incomputable. Winston Churchill called the transfer of power within fifteen months a “shameful flight” and “a hurried scuttle”. What epithet can adequately describe the same surgery being carried out in mere two months? Its appalling consequences in pools of blood and the uprooting of millions must have been foresighted by the actors in this tragedy, when presented to Jinnah, he resisted to accept it immediately. He persisted to take the matter to the working committee which would have to go before their masters, the people, for a final decision.

Jinnah continued to shake his weary head, unable to understand why this Englishman was in such a dreadful rush, when it was so clear to him how dangerously destructive to countless Punjabi and Bengali lives this hastily ill-conceived new plan would be’. (Wolpert 2006: 152)

But the perpetrators of the plan had other priorities: their greed and vengeance deprived them of the basic human values. As a result, Pakistan emerged as an unviable, moth-eaten state in the midst of smoke, fire, blood and the cries of millions.

**Demission Plan of Menon**

V.P. Menon, the Reforms commissioner on Viceroy’s staff and a staunch ally of Patel, maintained that “it was more than possible that Jinnah would not accept the
plan in the draft announcement” and persuaded the Viceroy to obtain the approval of the British government for an alternative plan for “demission of power under the present constitution. It would not in the last resort require the agreement of Indian leaders. Provincial subjects would be demitted to existing Provincial governments and Central subjects to the existing Central governments but it would put the Moslems under the Hindu majority. (Campbell 1953: 85-86)

Mountbatten, without wasting time, sought the approval of the demission plan from the British government. The Demission Plan put Quaid-e-Azam at a crossroad. He had to opt for one of the two: devil or the deep sea. The way the partition was being carried out was most unfavourable for Pakistan. It was not a Pakistan as envisaged by the Muslim League. If Muslim League does not opt for partition, they would be faced with the worst alternative of being placed in Hindu subjugation for ever. Jinnah very reluctantly and with a token of protest assented to the speedy partition plan. On June 3, 1947 Mountbatten, Nehru, Jinnah and Baldev Singh made historic announcements endorsing their approval to the partition Plan on All-India Radio.

Nehru, having agreed to swallow the bitter pill of Partition which he termed as secession, said, “It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you … For generations we have … struggled for a free and independent united India. The proposals to allow certain parts to secede, if they so will, is painful for any of us to contemplate … it may be that in this way we shall reach that United India sooner than otherwise”. (Wolpert 2006: 153)
It was only a wishful thinking of Nehru, like that of Patel, that sooner than later Pakistan will be a state of bankruptcy and would be bound to rejoin the Indian Union.

Jinnah in his nationwide broadcast that evening said,

The Plan does not meet, in some important respects, our point of view and we cannot say or feel that we are satisfied or that we agree with some of the matters dealt with by the Plan. It is for us now to consider whether the plan … should be accepted by us as a compromise or a settlement … The final decision could only be taken by the council of the All-India Muslim League. He ended by most earnestly appealing to all “to maintain peace and order. Pakistan Zindabad. (Wolpert 2006: 153-4)

Hindus had very bitter feelings and took the emergence of Pakistan as an act of extortion in the teeth of their opposition. They vociferously expressed their resolve to get back the wrested territories. In its resolution of acceptance of the Partition the All-India Congress Committee stated:

Geography and the mountains and the seas fashioned India as she is, and no human agency can change that shape or come in the way of her final destiny. Economic circumstances and the insistent demands of international affairs make the unity of India still more necessary. (Menon 1956: 389)

The Hindu Mahasabha did not conceal their venom and frankly remarked: “India is one and indivisible and there will never be peace unless and until the separated areas are brought back into the Indian Union and made integral part thereof.” (Menon 1956:382)
In addition to many other problems to be resolved, the issue of whether there should be one Governor General or two. Mountbatten desired to continue as Governor General of both Dominions for eight or nine months after August 15, 1947. The Congress readily accepted the proposal, since by then Nehru and Patel were sure that Mountbatten will protect their interest fully. Not just this, they intended to use his offices to influence the princes for accession to India. Nehru wrote to Mountbatten:

We agree to the proposal that during this interim period the Governor-General of the two dominions should be common to both states … For our part we should be happy if you would continue in this office and help us with your advice and experience. (Masley 1961: 151)

To Jinnah, on the other hand, a common Governor-General for two independent governments with opposed interests was a constitutional absurdity. He rather proposed Mountbatten to continue in the capacity of Super Governor-General after 15th August 1947, Jinnah, by temperament and life long training, had a constitutional aptitude. He was at a loss to understand how a common constitutional Governor General faced with conflicting advice from two Dominion Cabinets can discharge his responsibility properly and impartially. Mountbatten’s impatience was mounting. He sent Ismay and Melville twice to Jinnah, hoping that Jinnah would be persuaded. Ismay wrote:

It was not until the end of June, that we learned that … Jinnah had decided to nominate himself as Governor-General … In breaking the news to Mountbatten, Mr. Jinnah expressed the hope that it would make no difference to his [Mountbatten’s] acceptance of office as the first Governor General of the two
Mountbatten called on Jinnah in person. He discussed the idea with arguments, appeals and bluster. He maintained that,

> Without him as common Governor-General, Pakistan would put itself at the gravest disadvantage. The responsibility for the immeasurable loss to Pakistan would rest on the shoulders of Jinnah. He threatened to make all this public and let the world judge. (Ali 1973:177)

However, Jinnah remained cool and did not approve the idea up to the end. He pleaded that his decision was not based on personal considerations but he had objectively taken the interests of his people into account. Jinnah knew that his lungs were failing him, and that he had not much time left to lead the newly born nation. Also he would be the living symbol of Pakistan’s independent status. Mountbatten’s ego was jolted by Jinnah’s ‘rejection’ of what he considered his ‘generous’ offer to help Pakistan gain advantages in its early months of life. He was wounded where he always felt most vulnerable: his vanity was hurt and his pride affronted. He blamed Jinnah of suffering from megalomania in its worst form. Mountbatten warned Jinnah somewhat acidly, “It may cost you the whole of your assets and the future of Pakistan.” (Wolpert 2006:164)

Was it sheer vanity or a prophetic warning? From then on, Mountbatten attitude underwent a marked change towards the issue of Partition and Pakistan. The decision to propose Mountbatten a common Governor General on part of the Congress was a political tactic. Congress had nothing to lose in any case. It was
the best gamble that congress ever played. In addition to the loss in material assets, there were other intangible factors like the accession of states, the Kashmir question and the award of the Boundary Commissions, in which the balance was heavily and tragically tilted against Pakistan with far reaching consequences.

**Division of Assets and Pakistan’s Problems**

First serious setback that Pakistan had to bear was on the account of financial assets and liabilities. The cash balance of India at the time of partition amounted to about Rs.4 billion. Pakistan demanded for one fourth, i.e. Rs.1 billion. After much ado, Pakistan’s share came to Rs.750 million. Pakistan was paid only Rs.200 million. Remaining Rs.550 million was withheld on the monstrous pretext that Pakistan would use it in prosecuting the Kashmir war. India’s stand was morally untenable. To save India and her honour, disturbed Gandhi undertook fast unto death on January 13, 1948. Pressure mounted on Nehru and Patel, who finally decided on January 15 to implement the financial agreement and released the withheld balance.

As per decision of the Joint Defence Council, Pakistan was to receive one third of the military stores lying in India and Pakistan. The bulk of arms, ammunition and other military stores was lying in depots in the Indian Dominion. All the sixteen ordnance factories, were also located in India. As a part of their scheme to undo Pakistan in the days of its infancy, the Indians were resolute to deny Pakistan forces their due share of equipment and stores. They were extremely intransigent in the process of decision-making and obstructed the implementation of these
decisions. Sardar Patel was all the more stubborn to allow a simple piece of machinery to leave India. When Liaquat Ali Khan asked that one of the six Government printing presses should be moved from Delhi to Karachi, Patel flared up and said:

All six presses were fully occupied with Government of India work and could not be spared … No one asked Pakistan to secede. We don’t mind their taking their property with them but we have no intention of allowing them to injure the work of the government of the rest of India. (Wolpert 2006: 162)

The Boundary Commission and Pakistan’s Territorial Woes

Most of all, the boundary question was full of explosive and flammable prospects. It was decided that the boundary line will snake through the two parts of Punjab on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so, the Boundary Commissions, will also take into account “Other factors” Nothing had aroused such passionate controversy as the partition of Punjab and Bengal. The line of partition in each province would tear apart thickly populated areas and inflict irreparable damage to the fate of millions. It would cut into two an integrated economy, system of railways, road communication, post and telegraph, irrigation through extensive network of canals and hydroelectric system. A line drawn hastily and arbitrarily might impose immense economic injury, social divide, political tangles and other great sufferings. A dispassionate and discreet study of the land and its demographic picture was required for carrying out such a complicated and difficult task. The
task of many months, thanks to the deal between Mountbatten and the Congress leaders for a speedy transfer of power, was accomplished within few weeks.

Cyril Radcliffe, an English lawyer, landed in Delhi on July 8, 1947, on his first ever and last visit to India. He was given the responsibility to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of Punjab and Bengal. The task was gigantic, extremely sensitive and highly fateful for the future of both the new sovereign states. Radcliffe started his work in the backdrop of two inherent challenges. Firstly, he possessed very little prior knowledge about the demographic settings of the communities in both provinces. Secondly, time at his disposal, for a discreet study of the land and its people, was acutely short. He had only 4-5 weeks to accomplish a job which, in normal circumstances, would have required many months if not years. He had no choice but a heavy reliance on maps to play with the fates of millions teeming the soil. The project was fraught with dangers of communal violence, plundering, arson and senseless bloodshed. It also had a potential of unending conflicts, because of clash of interest: one man’s meat was another man’s poison, between India and Pakistan. That’s exactly what the Radcliffe Award led to. The award lopped off a number of contiguous Muslim majority areas from Pakistan. On the other hand by courtesy of the furtive equation between Mountbatten and the Congress, not a single non-Muslim majority area chopped away from India.

In Gurdaspur district, two contiguous Muslim majority tahsils, Gurdaspur and Batala, were given to India to provide a link between India and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Muslim majority tahsil, Ajnala, in the Amritsar district was also handed over to India. In the Jullundur district the Muslim majority tahsils, Nakodar and Jullundur were assigned to
India. The Muslim majority tahsils, Zira and Ferozepore, in the Ferozepore district, were also transferred to India. All of these Muslim majority areas were contiguous to West Punjab. (Ali 1973: 213)

The allocation of all the above mentioned Districts / Tahsils to India had far reaching political, social and economic impacts. Particularly Gurdaspur district provided India road and rail access to Jammu and Kashmir, which was otherwise just impossible. Gurdaspur district was contiguous to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. For India the rail and road communication with the state was only possible through the plains of this district. The award, therefore, facilitated India to tighten its illegitimate grip on Kashmir – a flash point ever since the partition.

Lord Birdwood, an officer of the Indian army expressed his views that:

It was Radcliffe’s Award to India of the Gurdaspur and Batala Tahsils with Muslim majorities which rendered possible the maintenance of an Indian force at Jammu based on Pathankot as railhead and which enabled India to consolidate her defences southwards all the way from Uri to the Pakistan border. (Birdwood 1956: 74)

Furthermore, all the canals proceeding from Ferozepore Headworks irrigated mostly Muslim majority areas in and contiguous to West Punjab. By allotting the Headworks to India he jeopardized the economic life of west Punjab, which depended heavily upon the canal irrigation system. The life giving waters of these canals had converted the arid area into the granary of India. The award vested the control of canal Headworks on Sutlej and Ravi rivers with India, giving a massive blow to the economy of West Punjab.
Mountbatten released the Radcliffe Award on August 16. If it had been published earlier to allow time for administrative and security arrangements, the troubles and holocaust in Punjab might have been mitigated if not controlled fully. On August 9, regarding the publication of boundary awards, Mountbatten remarked: “If he could exercise some discretion in the matter he would much prefer to postpone its appearance until after the Independence Day Celebrations … [when its effects could not] mar Independence Day itself”. (Campbell 1953:152.)

Commenting on Radcliffe Award Quaid-e-Azam held:

The division of India is now finally and irrevocably effected. No doubt we feel that the carving out of this great independent Muslim State has suffered injustices. We have been squeezed in as much as it was possible, and the latest blow that we have received was the Award of the Boundary Commission. It is an unjust, incomprehensible and even perverse Award. It may be wrong, unjust and perverse; and it may not be a judicial but a political Award, but we have agreed to abide by it. It may be our misfortune but we must bear up this one more blow with fortitude, courage and hope. (Ali 1973: 221)

**Living with the Burden of History**

The seed of contention sowed by the Congress has yielded interminable crop of acrimony and indomitable grudge. All Indian governments since partition have faithfully honoured the manifesto of their ancestors. India will never express sincere solidarity and take initiative for normalization of its ties with the “seceded” territories. Hindus have cherished the goal of “Greater India” ever since the partition. This legacy of ceaseless strife will keep haunting and afflicting both the countries for time indefinite.
The Muslim League viewed partition as the division of India between two successor authorities in a fair and impartial manner. The congress, however perceived it contrarily. Their view was that certain areas had seceded from the parent body, which was the only true successor of the British power. This difference deeply, adversely in case of Muslim League, affected the administrative implementation of the partition plan at every step. It is not surprising because the plan had been drafted by V.P. Menon, under instruction and illicit collaboration of Nehru and had been approved by Nehru and Patel in draft form.

On the question of division of the staff and records of the central civil departments Nehru remarked: ‘As he saw it, there was … an Entity of India. The functions of the Government of India would continue. The seceding parts would have to build up their own government’. Jinnah angrily disagreed, “It was not a question of secession but of division.” (Wolpert 2006: 157)

None the less, bitter memories of the past have lingered. The acrimonious pre-partition politics, the controversial division of territories, the violent massacres and the forced uprooting of millions which marked the birth of India and Pakistan as nation states have left behind a legacy of suspicion and distrust. Even following partition, the formative phase in which relations between the two countries evolved came to be haunted by extraordinarily inauspicious circumstances.
In the light of such perceptions, Pakistan has consistently committed a sizeable portion of its national resources to defense to augment its military preparedness in the eventuality of an armed engagement with India. At the same time, appreciating its limitations in size and resources, Pakistan has looked for outside military assistance to counter Indian military power. In the mid-1950s it entered into strategic alliances with the USA, ostensibly to check Communist advances in Asia, but in reality to secure arms to strengthen its position against India. After the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Pakistan drew closer to China and received Chinese military equipment and technical help in establishing defense production facilities. In the 1970s and 1980s, with financial assistance from the oil-rich Middle Eastern Muslim states, Pakistan was able to go on a shopping spree and acquire sophisticated military hardware from Western Europe.

**Partition and The Creative Response**

One can say almost with certainty that no single event in the history of the twentieth century has inspired as much literature as the Partition of India. It was such a traumatic experience for the inhabitants of India, irrespective of their creeds and colours, that almost everyone in the Sub-continent was jolted out of a centuries old mutual co-existence and communal harmony. The scale and depth of the tragedy was such that many writers, for many years to come, approached the subject of partition with great trepidation. Except for an artist of Manto’s caliber, no other writer addressed this issue with a directness and ruthlessness that was required. This silence is even more striking in someone like Qurratulain Hyder.
Twice, once in *Aag ka Darya* and again in *Akhri Shab ke Musafar* translated as *Fireflies in the Mist*, she writes about the years before and after Partition, but chooses to remain silent about the Partition year. Both the discourses and the silences are significant. Given the violence that attended Partition, given the traumatic movement of millions of uprooted people, it is not surprising that the first impressions conveyed by the creative writer were that of a communal conflagration. The stark images of abducted women being paraded through the streets, of mutilated bodies of men and women, of train loads of corpses, of lines of moving humanity trudging through roads strewn with bodies and baggage left behind, the religious cries now turned into battle cries or calls for vengeance strew the literature that emerges immediately after independence. Saadat Hasan Manto and Kishan Chander use Urdu to describe this violence; Khushwant Singh uses English.

Manto was perhaps the most original writer to take up the theme of partition in a number of stories. There is a passage in Sa’adat Hasan Manto’s famous Urdu short story, “Toba Tek Singh”, which could be read as an archetypal moment in the representation of the 1947 Indo-Pakistani partition. As a comment on the relative sanity of national-communal division, Manto sets his story in a Lahore lunatic asylum and here the horror of partition is conveyed in a bleak comic disorientation that takes hold of the prison inmates as they become unable to situate themselves in the changed landscape of a new independent South Asia. The passage that stands out in Manto’s story articulates this dislocation as a repeated inquiry about the exact whereabouts of the new states:
As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or Pakistan. If they were in India, where on earth was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how come that until only the other day it was India? (25)

Thus, for Manto, as for other South Asian authors of his generation, the writing of Partition entails certain level of cynicism or reflexive distance towards the very idea of located, unified identities.

As the bulk of such literature is bewilderingly high, I would like to discuss the creative response of Pakistani writers with particular focus on Bapsi Sidhwa’s work since she, in the views of many critics, has been able to handle this contentious and charged issue with utmost clarity and disinterestedness. At the same time, she has very successfully incorporated the Pakistani view of Partition.

Except for her latest novel, An American Brat, there is a common strain running in Sidhwa’s early novels. Though they are different in their central themes and yet one can trace a commonality that can be described, in the words of Anita Desai, as ‘a passion for history and for truth telling.’ In The Crow-Eaters, The Bride, and the Ice-Candy-Man, her desire to understand the terrible events of the Partition of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947 and the subsequent birth of Pakistan as a nation is evident. To understand Pakistan’s post-partition history and society, Bapsi Sidhwa appears to suggest that it is compelling to understand the events which led to its emergence as a new nation in 1947.
Even in her first novel *The Crow-Eaters*, predominantly dealing with her own Parsi community in Lahore and Bombay, she revisits history, giving clear historical signposts throughout the narrative. References to Partition or Independence recur on a number of occasions. The presence of the British Raj is evident, for example, in the character of “that bumptious son-of-a bitch in Peshawar called Colonel Williams. I cooed to him—salaamed so low I got a crick in my balls—buttered and marmaladed him until he was eating out of my hand. Within a year I was handling all traffic of goods between Peshawar and Afghanistan!” The protagonist, Freddy, has a friend, Mr. Charles P. Allen, whose name reminds the reader, of his now famous anthology of stories, *Plain Tales from the Raj* (1975), [which in turn evokes Kipling’s *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888)]. By employing such brief yet subtle historical references from the British Raj in India,

Sidhwa is writing back against the traditional pictures of the Raj—by implying that colonel Williams accepted bribes, and by showing Freddy arranging visits to dancing girls in the Hira Mandi for Charles P. Allen. The British Raj is thus transformed from the proud father of so many British versions of history to the somewhat seedy progenitor of Sidhwa’s version of Pakistan’s history (Crane1996).

By giving a rebuttal of Indian and British versions of Partition histories, Sidhwa underscores her identity as a Pakistani writer. Historiography has been a major contention in the debates surrounding the troubled history of Partition. There is a politics of exclusion and inclusion in the official histories of both India and Pakistan. Therefore, as a Parsi writer, she even appears, on occasions, to write against Pakistani interpretations of history—as with Freddy’s foreboding words
which bring the novel to a close: “We will stay where we are… let Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, or whoever rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to set— in their arses.” (283) These words echo the views expressed by the villagers of Mano Majra in Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*: “Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians—or the Pakistanis.” (62) Even in *Ice-Candy-Man*, the inhabitants of Pir Pindo, initially, refuse to believe the Partition plan and consider it a great conspiracy to divide their centuries old villages and family ties. Sidhwa thus makes a strong political statement about the nature of politics of Partition.

Whereas *The Crow Eaters* draws to a close with the horrors of Partition imminent, those horrors are the starting point of *The Bride*. Thus the story of Zaitoon, ‘The Bride’, commences as the history of Pakistan as a new nation begins. And it begins in bloodshed and tragedy. Train massacres, rapes, and arsons had been the most common brutalities which were inflicted upon those crossing borders during 1947. That is why they are also the major motifs of almost all partition novels written in India or Pakistan, irrespective of their linguistic medium. Therefore, Sidhwa also chooses to start her second novel with the familiar scene of a train massacre in which the Sikhs attack a train full of Muslim refugees. The attack on the train which is told in the first-person to add the sense of horror, together with the later attack on the refugee camp causes readers of *The Bride* to recall once more the many Partition novels, like Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Nasim Hijazi’s *Khak aur Khoon*, and Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1976), in which
similar attacks take place. In *The Bride*, however, the horror of “the chaotic summer of 1947” (14) is only the starting point of the novel rather than its subject. Its actual subject is the plight of women who continue to suffer in the new independent country as well. The Independence does not bring any fruits of freedom for them as their marginalization and exploitation continue in the light of centuries old customs.

*The Bride* is mainly the story of Zaitoon who as a child is rescued by Qasim when the Lahore-bound train is attacked and her parents are killed. Qasim adopts her and raises her in Lahore as his own daughter until she is fifteen. At this point, he takes her to his ancestral home in the mountains to be married to one of his kinsmen. This allows Sidhwa to contrast the often brutal ways of Qasim’s people with the gentler life Zaitoon has known in Lahore, and sets the scene for an exploration of the cultural divisions Sidhwa sees within independent Pakistan. At the centre of Sidhwa’s examination of the conflicts she perceives between two essentially male-dominated worlds, lies a very strong interest in the position of women in Pakistani society. The plight of women as a leitmotif is skillfully highlighted by the introduction of the young American woman, Carol, who is married to a ‘modern’ western-educated Pakistani husband.

Her presence in the novel does not emphasize the cross-cultural differences between East and West so much as the cross-gender differences that exist within Pakistani society. Women, unlike men, are expected to be silenced voices, inhabiting the shadows cast by their fathers, husbands, the family home—silences and shadows which deny an individual her identity, make her anonymous. Sidhwa uses the burkha as the ultimate symbol of shadow and silence. (Crane in Dhawan and Kapadia 1996: 51)
Zaitoon borrows a baurkha so that she can walk past her father unrecognized (91). Similarly, Carol, offended by the stares of a group of tribal men sarcastically, comments, “May be I should wear a burkha!” (113), suggesting that this would be a shadow which would hide her and metamorphoses her into an anonymous part of womankind.

Like its predecessor, *The Crow-Eaters*, *The Bride* exhibits Sidhwa’s passion for history. And as in *The Crow Eaters*, the date is introduced and a clear time-scale in adhered to. There are also references to real historical figures: to Sir Bindon Blood (116) who failed to subjugate the mountain tribes at the turn of the century. Carol’s experiences as the foreign wife of a Pakistani are juxtaposed with Zaitoon’s ordeal as an ‘outsider’ married to a Kohistani tribesman, and together Carol’s circumstances and Zaitoon’s awful plight are used by Sidhwa to highlight the position of women in Pakistani society.

The British Raj was an important shaping-presence during the Partition drama as is evident in this novel. Sidhwa reminds the reader of the role of the British in the division of the sub-continent.

The earth is not easy to carve up. India required a deft and sensitive surgeon, but the British, steeped in domestic preoccupation, hastily and carelessly butchered it. They were not deliberately mischievous - only cruelly negligent! A million Indians died. The earth sealed its clumsy new boundaries in blood as town by town, farm by farm, the border was defined. (Sidhwa 1978: 14-15)

The birth of Pakistan could not be celebrated as the mark of freedom as a great occasion in the history of this new nation. It was an abortion of history and geography.
Sidhwa casts the British not in the role of caring surgeon, but as bloody abortionist, and Pakistan as the child of their botched work survives, and is alive but damaged and literally dripping with the blood of its parent India. But in this novel the ills of Pakistan are by no means laid solely at the feet of the British Raj. Pakistan’s continuing socio-political maladies are due to corrupt Pakistani politicians and businessmen, like the ‘Leader’ Nikka Pehalwan works for. (Crane in Dhawan and Kapadia 1996: 53)

The only difference is, in Pakistan’s context, the United States has replaced Great Britain as a colonizing power.

The colonial experience and English literary heritage seem to be essentially instrumental in the emergence of novelists like Bapsi Sidhwa. Both of the factors resonate down our memory lane when in Lahore, at an early stage of the novel, “Qasim perched a frightened Zaitoon on the tall, proud snout of the Zam-Zam cannon, known because of Kipling as ‘Kim’s gun.” (Sidhwa 1983: 48) This historical/literary reference shows Sidhwa’s consciousness about her modern readers who will read her novel in perspective of Anglo-Indian writers like Kipling.

In both The Crow Eaters and The Bride, partition is an important motif, but not the shaping-force of the novels. However, in her third novel, Ice-Candy-Man, Partition is the central motif, and there is a strong sense of the politics of the time, a strong historical consciousness in this novel, as there is in her two previous novels. The narrator of the novel is a ten years old parsi girl, free both from the prejudices of religion, and from the prejudices against women and the constraints imposed on her sex which she will be subject to as she grows older:
Our shadow glides over a Brahmin pundit… Our shadow has violated his virtue. The Pundit cringes… He looks at his food as it is infected with maggots. Squeamishly picking up the leaf, he tips its contents behind a bush and throws away the leaf… I am a diseased maggot. I look at Yousaf. His face is drained of joy, bleak, furious. I know he too feels himself composed of shit, crawling with maggots.

Now I know surely. One man’s religion is another man’s poison.

I experience this feeling of utter degradation, of being an untouchable excrescence, an outcast again, years later when I hold out my hand to a Parsee priest at a wedding and he, thinking I am menstruating beneath my facade of diamonds and sequined sari, cringes.” (Sidhwa 1988: 116-17)

It may be worth remembering that Sidhwa herself was a young girl in Lahore in the years leading up to Partition, and thus, like Lenny, witnessed the historical events of the time. Due to the polarizing nature of the partition narratives, whether in fiction or non-fiction, truth becomes the biggest casualty in the writing process. Sidhwa is alive to this danger and therefore, chooses the age and sex of her narrator carefully. As a Parsi, Lenny has no Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh axe to grind. The narrative voice acquires much authenticity and validity in Lenny’s self-condemning question, “How can anyone trust a truth-infected tongue?” (243). This is a wonderful conceit, an elaborate metaphor which contains both paradoxical and ironical elements.

The word ‘infected’ loads its partner ‘truth’ with unusually negative connotations and causes us to reflect on the nature of the truth we want to hear. Though we require Lenny to be a reliable witness to the historical events she sees, and to tell an historical truth (within the bounds of Sidhwa’s fictional truth) in her narration, we are made uneasy by the unwise, instinctive truth which causes, her to betray Ayah. Only a child could own such a truth-infected tongue (Crane in Dhawan and Kapadia 1996: 54)
It is this same childish innocence which causes Lenny to suspect that her mother and godmother are behind the arson attacks in Lahore as they carry cans of petrol in their car. She also expresses her childish concern for the ‘fallen women’ in the ‘prison’ across the road. In fact the women living there are those unfortunate daughters and wives who have been abducted by the Sikhs and the Hindus and have been raped. Now their families refuse to take them back as they are a ‘stigma’ to the family name. But it is testament to Sidhwa’s skill as a novelist that the reader always sees the ‘real’ truth of the situation, while at the same time recognizing the validity of Lenny’s perception about the truth. Again, we are reminded that there is no single truth—there are always many ways of interpreting the events which are being played out in Sidhwa’s Lahore of 1947. In *Ice-Candy-Man* the fact that Lenny’s ‘unreliable’ narration proves, after all, to be reliable in its own way, causes us to at least question the British and Indian versions of the truth about Partition that have hitherto been accepted.

The dinner-party at Lenny’s parent’s house, during which Lenny and her brother hide under the large table and eavesdrop on the conversation overhead, allows Sidhwa to introduce a discussion of the major political issues of the day—Swaraj, the demand for Pakistan—and the major political players—Gandhi, Jinnah, Wavell, Congress, the Muslim League, the Akalis—which would otherwise be outside the world of her young narrator. Sidhwa brings her Pakistani identity into play as she tries to correct the misconceptions about Jinnah’s personality and role in the Partition.
Lord Wavell, as viceroy of India, was viewed by many as a judicious and fair player in the years leading to Partition. On the other hand, Lord Mountbatten’s scandalous relationship with the Nehrus and his prejudice against Jinnah and Muslims in general is now being well-documented in the revisionist histories of Partition. With uncharacteristic bitterness, Hassan the Masseur says: “So they sack Wavell sahib, a fair man! And send for a new Lot sahib who will favour the Hindus” (90).

Similarly, Lenny overhears much about the current political situation. As a child she does not understand much of those developments at the time as she sits with Ayah and her followers. And it is because of what she overhears, because of the opinions she has been exposed to, that Lenny suddenly becomes aware of the different religions all around her. How history contributes to a precocious development of a child is apparent when she says: “It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols. Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah—she is also a token. A Hindu.” (93) This signals a growth from innocence to experience, which prompts us to place more trust in the rapidly maturing narrator.

Perhaps the most significant remark for my purpose in this text is that, on the one hand, Jinnah is treated by the Indian and British historians as a monster and, on the other, he died broken-hearted in his own creation, Pakistan. “And, today, forty years later, in films of Gandhi’s and Mountbattens lives, in books by British and
Indian scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known as ‘Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity,’ is caricatured, and portrayed as a monster.” (160) In re-imagining Jinnah, Sidhwa draws on a quotation from the Indian poet and freedom fighter, Sarojini Naidu, to support the validity of her portrayal of Jinnah.

Alamgir Hashmi has expressed some reservations about the historical content of the novel. He writes that *Ice-Candy-Man* “concerns the Partition events of 1947, and is more interesting for its characterization, developing narrative techniques and the child’s point of view than what it actually has to tell about the events.” (quoted in Crane 1996: 58)

However, this is far from being a case of inaccurate historical detail; rather memory is playing a part here. *Ice-Candy-Man* is deeply political in its retelling of the events of Partition from a Pakistani rather than an Indian perspective. The historical signposts or references in this novel are necessarily limited because Lenny doesn’t understand much of what she hears. As Lenny herself says: “Obviously he (Ice-Candy-Man) is quoting Bose (Sometimes he quotes Gandhi, or Nehru or Jinnah, but I’m fed up of hearing about them. Mother, Father and their friends are always saying: Gandhi said this, Nehru said that. Gandhi did this, Jinnah did that. What’s the point of talking so much about people we don’t know?)” (29)

India has produced a number of Partition novels which have contributed to the strong body of fiction which treats the history of India. But Partition is as much a part of Pakistani history as it is a part of Indian history, and it is important to have
a Pakistani version of that shared horror. *Ice-Candy-Man* is both Pakistani version of Partition and a major contribution to the growing list of Partition novels which continue to emerge from the Indian sub-continent. Through her various marginalized narrators and through the experiences of the many marginalized characters in her first three novels, Sidhwa gives voice to hitherto silenced groups of Pakistan (and India) and in so doing tells other versions of her country’s history.

Thus even as the Partition forms, as Robert Ross notes, a myth from which writers continue to draw again and again, there are many Partitions, many treatments of Partition. These differences range from the melodramatic realism of Khushwant Singh, with his focus on the train massacres in the Punjab, to Salman Rushdie’s plethora of events and confusion of identities in his *Midnight’s Children.*
Notes

1. This is the famous opening of Charles Dickens novel *A Tale of Two Cities*.


3. This is evident from scores of studies. Following is only a selected list.


5. For Manto’s stories please see Khalid Hassan’s excellent translation *Kingdom’s End and other Stories* (1987)

6. All textual references have been taken from *Ice-Candy-Man* published in 1988 by Penguin Books, London.
CHAPTER 5

POST-INDEPENDENCE/POST-COLONIAL PAKISTAN AND LEGACIES OF PARTITION

It might be obvious from my analysis of the colonial legacy and the abortive, surgical nature of the partition process itself in the previous chapter that Pakistan appeared on the world map as “a moth-eaten” country; it inherited many problems which were socio-economic, geographical/territorial but most of all psychological and political from which it is still reeling. The various reasons at the heart of this matter as I have explained are: horrendous injustices done to Pakistan in the partition plan, the boundary commission, the division of assets, and the conspiracies of the troika of Mountbatten-Nehru-Radcliff. However, as it will emerge, gradually, in the course of this chapter, that infamous trio and the rest of colonial legacy may not be blamed for all the problems confronting Pakistan since Independence: there is a lot more that is responsible for its deplorable state, particularly the policies adopted by its leadership since Independence. In many ways they shaped the national character.

The malaise that has been afflicting Pakistan since its early life and history can be divided into a number of categories:

(i) Administrative problems

(a) Refugee problem
(b) Death of Quaid-i-Azam

(c) Absence of state machinery

(ii) Political problems

(a) Disputes with India/War over Kashmir

(b) Constitutional Crisis

(c) Ideological rift between the secular and religious parties.

(d) Dearth of strong political leadership, in the wake of the Quaid’s death.

(iii) Economic problems

(a) Unjust distribution of Indian assets

(b) Hoarding and greed of the few

(c) Absence of industry

(d) Dependence on primitive methods of agriculture

(iv) Corruption and greed of political leaders and bureaucracy.

(v) Nexus between feudalism and establishment

(vi) Military Rule / Marshal Laws

(vii) Lack of national self-confidence

(a) Problems as one unified ‘nation’ / provincialism

(b) National identity

It is a tragic twist of irony that the Muslim community that had enjoyed warm relation with the British and Anglo-Indian Community suffered a double sense of marginality: on the one hand, Mountbatten’s short period of viceroyship destroyed their confidence in the fair play of the British Raj; on the other, instead
of seeking independence from the colonial rule only, they fought for independence from the tyranny of Hindu majority which, they feared, would be extremely oppressive under the Westminster style of democracy. That is why, perhaps, the Independence celebrations in 1947 were muted and the newly won freedom was overshadowed by the trauma of partition and the resultant influx of millions of refugees. All these factors created a national psyche of low self-confidence, uncertainty and divided identity.

However, it is now established that no other factor has damaged the morale, identity and economy of Pakistan more than the successive military interventions, suspension of constitutions, and imposition of emergencies. For a whole decade after Independence, Pakistan’s leaders failed to agree about its first constitution. In 1956, when the first constitution was passed by the legislative Assembly, it was dismissed, along with the Assembly, by Pakistan’s first military ruler General Ayub Khan. He promulgated his own constitution in 1962 to cater to his personal ambitions.

Of the four military governments which ruled Pakistan for most of its history, none has damaged its foundation, national character and international image more than the military regimes of Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) and Pervaiz Musharraf (1999-2008).

Gen Musharraf’s regime was an anti-thesis of General Zia’s regime in some ways: it reversed Zia’s policies (like its Afghan and Kashmir policies). In spite of this change, Pakistan’s domestic problems are further deepened and its international
image has been further tarnished. It was during this time that September 11 attacks occurred in the US. General Musharraf made the fateful decision to join the ‘war on terror’. Now this war is being fought within its borders, threatening its very existence and creating worst socio-economic crisis of its history.

After sixty-three years of independence, Pakistan’s socio-economic stability and emergence as a unified nation have been undermined by armed conflict, militant extremism, communal tensions, internecine violence and a deeply troubled economy. The military mantra that Pakistan is a nuclear state and therefore its security is impregnable has lost its appeal to the masses as internal crises are deepening. Poverty and underdevelopment are lesser concerns today than internal strife, terrorism and extremism. The notion of a ‘failed state’, and the question ‘Can Pakistan Survive?’ is again in the air.

The creative response to these numerous problems has yet to emerge as a vocal / vital force in Pakistani society. Writers like Ahmed Ali, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Zulfikar Ghose, Ahmed Faraaz, Fahmida Riaz, Shaukat Siddique, Abdullah Hussain and more recently, Mohsin Hamid in their works negotiate with the socio-political, economic and cultural dominance of an exploitative elite minority which has formed what is dubbed as neocolonialist power structures that obscure the urgent need for socio-economic change. However, the response of these writers cab be dubbed as ambivalent at best. The elite minority, controlling and running the state apparatuses of power and control (like the Army, police and most of all the constitution) has always snubbed forces / voices calling for change in the power structures and social set up.¹
There is a growing concern among critics and intellectuals about the extent to which these tensions are a pretext for circumventing the ‘real crisis’ beleaguering Pakistan, that is, economic underdevelopment and poverty. Underdevelopment and poverty are closely linked to the question of class, a recurring issue in literary texts from Pakistan.

Economic development and aspirations can often be the motivational factors contributing to creating and sustaining ethnic or religious divisions. Economic oppression foments nationalism. A community’s disenchantment with the prevailing political climate is related to the harsh economic circumstances engendered by nationalist conflicts. A relationship between economic suppression and revolutionary politics is established in the literature of other South Asian contexts. It is one of the imperatives governing the literature of resistance from East Pakistan. Indeed, the Awami League’s appeal to a distinct culture and language was bolstered by the economic oppression of the east wing by the west wing. These circumstances are foregrounded in the literature of resistance.

As I have argued, the pioneers of nationalist ideology and activism were drawn from elite groups who constituted the ‘mimic class’ that Macaulay was so anxious to establish. This group has continued to function as the power-brokers in the post-Indepence era. Highr echelons of state apparatuses, whether they are administrative, judicial, civil or military, are monopolized by these figures. They appear in the texts in a vriety of guises: the Shah Brothers in *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, are a conspicuous example. Their interests often coincide with those of the ruling elite, and economic or material concerns get elided by the nationlist
rhetoric. Such plot devices enable our creative writers to make a powerful appraisal of the class dynamics operating in the narrative of Pakistan.

Before the secession of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, a number of racial myths propagated about the people of East Pakistan, on account of their cultural and regional affiliations with Bengal, contained a mixture of prejudice and paternalism. Pejorative terms like ‘Bangoos’ were employed for labeling of the East Pakistanis. Compared to the West Pakistani, the East Pakistani’s shorter height and darker skin colour were perceived to be reasons for their ‘inability’ to fight, while they were also accused of being ‘infected’ with cultural traditions affiliated to Hinduism (Tariq Ali 1983: 65). The suppression and denying of diversity within Pakistan made fragmentation of the country inevitable. Fragmentation or the threat of fragmentation leads to further political instability.

**Position and Problems of Women**

After the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the heightened crisis of nationhood in Pakistan prompted the enforcement of stringent Islamic laws. Those who did not rigorously adhere to these laws were relegated to the place of the ‘other’. Women, in particular, found themselves in this position. In Sidhwa’s *The Bride*, the ‘othering’ of women is presented through a range of repressive social and political mechanisms. These repressions are forcefully indicted and challenged in *We Sinful Women: Contemporary Urdu Feminist Poetry*. Anne McClintock persuasively argues that no state has allowed a large proportion of its women equal access to the rights and resources of the Nation (1995: 10). While agreeing
with her, the paradox in South Asia is that, although there is an unprecedented number of women leaders, none of them have aligned themselves in a visible way with their respective women’s movements. On the contrary, it is disconcerting to find that there is a definite dissociation on their part with any programmes which could be identified as feminist.

Striking resemblances can be found in the leadership patterns and political images of South Asian women leaders such as Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto and Chandrika Kumaratunge. Positioning themselves as ‘daughters’ of the nation, these women consciously project a traditional image and notions of martyrdom/sacrifice are inscribed in their political discourses. They wear their national dress – the sari or shlawar kameez and scarf – for every public occasion and invoke the image of mother, a conscious effort designed to appeal to the masses. They also derive their political identity from the kudos accorded to their fathers or husbands and repeatedly assert their indebtedness to these patriarchs.

Benazir Bhutto’s position can be likened to Indira Gandhi and Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge, all Westernised women who prized themselves on radical ideas, but on their return to their native countries and with the involvement in mainstream politics, conformed to the dominant patriarchal modes of behaviour and political practices. Their links with the elite, which have provided them with privilege and greater access to education and opportunity, may explain their inability to see the need for securing rights for underprivileged women. A lack of commitment to women’s rights, coupled with what Rajeswari Sunder Rajan calls ‘weak institutionalisation’ in all the countries in question, ‘allowed dynastic
succession to prevail even under the democratic system of government’ (1993: 107). Therefore, ‘the woman leader in modern South Asian nations emerged as a “type” produced under sharply specific historical conditions’ (Sunder Rajan 1993: 108).

Nationalist ideologies in Pakistan, just as in other South Asian countries like India and Sri Lanka, rely on the mobilizing potential of two other overarching constituents: religion and language. The multiplicity of female goddesses in Hinduism has been utilized by nationalists and politicians and religious discourses impinge upon the subjectivity of women and contributes to their effectual relegation into a position where ‘they lose all marks of social difference and become emblematic of national spaces’ (Tharu and Lalita 1993: 99).

A monotheistic religion like Islam does not have a potent female image. However, the Muslim societies, sometime under the influence of other religions, compensate for this lack by resorting to cultural symbols – symbols which inscribe dominant and repressive behavioural codes. In the case of East Pakistan the Bengali mother image fulfilled the objective of the nationalists and was one of the defining emblems of the liberation movement. In West Pakistan the veil serves as a useful way of constructing a religio-national identity. Although it has not been mandatory for women to wear the veil, during Zia’s regime this unwritten dictate placed significant pressure on women so that they were ‘voluntarily’ veiled (Shaheed and Mumtaz 1987: 72-73). Even after Zia’s regime, Benazir Bhutto’s public appearances in the veil endorsed the continuation of this practice and reveals how religious symbols become a part of the repertoire of the Nation.
Reliance on cultural and religious symbols is accompanied by a reverence for the national language. The influence of language in nationalist struggle is a crucial determinant in several texts. Secessionist politics in East Pakistan were triggered off primarily by the oppression of language. When Urdu was declared as the sole official and national language of Pakistan, it deprived the east wing of a right to use Bengali as one of their national languages. Prolonged antagonism towards this policy was exhibited in the language riots of 1952. This was reflected in the resistance poetry in East Pakistan. Nationalist conflict based on the issue of ethnicity has meant that identity politics are contingent upon ethnic identity. Literary texts reflect how such abstract and arbitrary terms of reference become fixed and immutable. They encapsulate the mood of Pakistan during the Zia regime, reflecting Tariq Ali’s observation that ‘inside Pakistan itself misery reigns supreme’ (1983: 9).

**Nuclear Confrontation with India and its Impact on Pakistani Society**

On 11 May 1998, the strategic environment in South Asia changed dramatically when India successfully exploded three nuclear devices in the Thar Desert of western Rajasthan. Not to be outdone, Pakistan gave a tit for a tat response and within weeks exploded several nuclear devices in the Chaghai hills. The Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif’s reply to USA President Bill Clinton’s exhortation against going nuclear was telling: he would be thrown out of office if he did not act, he told the American president.² Domestic political pressures therefore overrode international calls for restraints by Pakistan. Clearly, the possession of nuclear capability is seen by both Indian and Pakistani political
leaders as crucial symbols of national sovereignty, revealing the bitter legacies of conflict which were engendered by partition and which have been festering like a wound ever since. As a result, the prospects of peace and stability in the region have been dramatically altered and, yet again, it has been demonstrated that the bitter legacies of partition continue. As a political analyst observed:

The nuclearisation of India and Pakistan is … an extraordinary moment in the narrative of Partition: both its telos, in that it confirms that national jingoism and the bloodthirsty hatreds that propelled the mass slaying and movements of populations in 1947 and after, and its inversion, in that it reminds us that our fates as nations have never been separate, that when we look across our borders we look into a mirror, that we are locked in an embrace so close that we must draw the same fetid breath.

As the bombs exploded first ‘ours’ over two days, then ‘theirs; over few more, it seemed hard to avoid a feeling of déjà vu: you kill one of ours, we’ll kill two of yours, you explode five, we’ll explode six. Hadn’t we heard this vocabulary in 1947, and suffered its apocalyptic effects even then (perhaps a million dead, ten million dislocated)? An eye for an eye, a neighbourhood for a mohalla, a population for a population, and now potentially a nation for a nation. (Tan and Kudaisya 2000: 220-21)

While those in power lauded the coming of age of nuclear arms-based ‘security’, informed citizens in both the countries strongly condemned the explosions as populist, self-seeking and phobia-driven. Ashis Nandy, a well known political commentator, describes the ideology of nuclear arms-based security as ‘the most depraved, shameless and costly pornography of our times’ which ‘cannot be judged only by the canons of international relations, geopolitics, political sociology or ethics’. Instead, Nandy looks upon nuclearism as ‘a well known, identifiable, psycho-pathological syndrome’. He and many other scholars do not
hesitate to trace the nuclear stand-off in the region to the fault-line created between India and Pakistan at the time of partition.

Outside the sphere of the nuclear arms race, the legacies of partition continue to manifest themselves in a variety of ways. As has been argued earlier, partition engendered processes that went beyond its immediate consequences and continue to influence developments in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Far from resolving the ‘communal’ problem, partition aggravated the difficulties of minorities in several instances. Overall, its legacies are still evident as they have cast their long shadows on aspects of state and society in India and Pakistan.

**The Kashmir imbroglio**

Of the many legacies of partition that continue to leave a debilitating impact on Pakistan in particular, the unresolved issue of Kashmir is undoubtedly the most bitter and intractable in the present context. Sixty-three years after independence, Kashmir continues to occupy centre-stage in a long-drawn bilateral dispute between India and Pakistan. It is well understood that the roots of the Kashmir problem, both internationally and domestically, lie in the events following partition in 1947. When the British resolved to quit India, they had to decide on the future of more than 500 princely states of varying sizes which occupied almost two fifths of the Indian empire. As remnants of local kingdoms and fiefdoms which they had conquered in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these territories were preserved as princely states by the British under a system of indirect rule in which the princes enjoyed political autonomy in their
respective states, while ‘surrendering foreign policy and defence to the supremacy of British imperial interests’. Unlike the directly governed provinces, the princely states continued to function more or less autonomously, with their relationship with the Crown defined by the Doctrine of ‘Paramountcy’ under which the British were unquestionably accepted as the political overlords.

The sequence of events, which led to Kashmir’s merger with India, has been challenged endlessly by Pakistani interpretations which argue that the so-called tribal invasion was actually an internal popular revolt against the Maharaja, evidently in protest against the actions of his troops involved in ‘ethnic cleansing’ against the Muslims. Some other non-Pakistani scholars have also lent support to this interpretation. For instance, Alastair Lamb has argued that Kashmir’s accession was the result of connivance between Mountbatten and Nehru. Lamb has asserted that the British were keen to keep Kashmir within India for geo-strategic reasons. He has cited the Radcliffe Commission’s award of three Muslim majority tehsils of Punjab which were not acceded to Pakistan. The Gurdaspur award gave a land link to Kashmir, making its accession to India possible. The validity of the ‘Instrument of Accession’ signed between India and Kashmir has also been questioned. It has been alleged that the document was fraudulent as the Maharaja had been forced to sign it under duress.4

The conflict in Kashmir, the primary cause of continuing hostility between India and Pakistan, has led to ‘institutionalising in a microcosm all the historical irritations between the two countries’. It has also led to the perception that India-Pakistan relations are congenitally flawed. The circumstances of partition, the
hostile environment which Pakistan faced as a new nation and the debilitating conflict over Kashmir have coalesced to create an atmosphere which has ‘made normal relations between India and Pakistan well nigh impossible’. As Gowher Rizvi explains:

The rivalry between India and Pakistan is built into the political structure of the two countries. The existence of one threatens the other … the dispute of Kashmir, a legacy of partition, reactivated all the issues and the traumas which partition was intended to stop … the establishment of Pakistan merely transformed the communal fight into an international rivalry. (quoted in Tan and Kudaisya 2000: 226)

Furthermore, the antipathy between India and Pakistan is exacerbated by the sharply contrasting self-images of both countries. While Pakistan sees itself as the homeland for all Muslims in South Asia, India takes pride in regional and international forums in proudly affirming the secular nature of its polity.

In view of the continuous tensions with Pakistan, with which it fought three wars and has a continuing low-intensity conflict in Kashmir, the question of defence spending for India has been a significant one. In the last thirty years, India has committed between 3 and 4 per cent of its Gross National Product to defence. Clearly, both India and Pakistan do not take the mutual security threat lightly, as shown by their ambitious and relatively independent weapons production programme. India’s traditional defence posture, however, has been to maintain a ‘slight edge’, both quantitative and qualitative, in ground, air and naval forces against Pakistan.
**Provincialism**

From the 1960s onwards, due to significant changes in Pakistan’s politics, as the country came under martial law and the federal capital itself was shifted from Karachi to Islamabad, the Muhajirs began to experience a decline in their political and economic status. In the 1970s Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s pro-Sindhi policies, especially his decision to impose Sindhi as the official language in the province and his attempts to increase the proportion of local Sindhis in the provincial and federal bureaucracies were viewed as being detrimental to Muhajir interests. They evoked an angry reaction leading to riots when the language bill was passed in 1972. This growing alienation and frustration resulted in the formation of student and youth organizations like the All Pakistan Muhajir Students Organization, which later provided the nucleus for the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM), a separate political party formed in 1984 to champion ‘Muhajir interests.’

Since the early 1980s the Sindhi-Muhajir conflict has erupted in extreme violence. The formation of the MQM was a response to the increasing frustration experienced by the younger generation of Muhajirs who felt that their interests had not been taken care of by older nationalist parties like the Muslim League and the Jamat-i-Islami. The MQM leader Altaf Hussain, now exiled in London, controls the grassroots organization. His demands include the recognition of the Muhajirs as a separate ‘fifth nationality’ of Pakistan, alongside the Punjabis, Baluchis, Sindhis and Pathans.
The Muhajir issue, which poses a major challenge to nation-building in present day Pakistan, demonstrates that the country has yet to come to terms with the changing long-term political implications of partition. The state of affairs in Karachi is a poignant reminder that religion, which was to be the basis for forging a new nation, has failed to provide a cohesive unifying element, and Pakistanis continue to remain divided along lines of class, region and ethnicity. The Muhajirs provide an example of how heterogeneous people from all over India have forged a new ‘ethnic’ identity. The boundaries of the Muhajir identity have constantly changed, as also their allies and adversaries, in the large context of Pakistani national politics, in which their relative position has fluctuated dramatically. Overall, the old divisions which existed prior to partition have merely been replaced by new ones.

As is apparent from the ideological, social, and political analysis of Pakistan’s history so far, the causes of many, if not all, of its problems lie in its colonial legacy. As a nation-state, it started with great many disadvantages in comparison to India and to this day its people keep on suffering from the “India-fixation” and historical syndrome of being once the proud rulers of the whole of India. But, at the same time, it must be conceded that, at present, its major problems originate from the failure of its leadership. It is not inherently “flawed” as some Indian and British critics like to portray. The failure of imagination is on the part of its leaders and not the electorate. In fact, whenever they got a fair chance to give their verdict, they spoke clearly in favour of democracy and progressivism.
In the next two chapters, I shall analyse these problems of Pakistan as a state in the light of some of its national texts from literature in English.
1. The judicial activism that started as a struggle of the lawyers’ movement to demand the restoration of Chief Justice of Pakistan has become an emblem of that conflict between the ruling elite and the rising middle classes, civil society and the youth movement.

2. For a detailed account of the American pressure on Pakistan to desist from going nuclear, please see Bill Clinton’s autobiography *My Life*.


CHAPTER 6

SOCIETY AND POLITICS OF POST-INDEPENDENCE
PAKISTAN IN THE MURDER OF AZIZ KHAN

In 1962, when Zulfikar Ghose returned to Pakistan on a sports assignment for The London Observer, he was struck by the many emerging political, social and economic trends in a country which had yet to emerge from the shadows of its colonial past. Watching those paradoxical developments, he imagined the life of an aging Pakistani farmer, gazing through a fence at his land which he had lost to the bulldozers and smoke-emitting chimneys of ‘progress’. Around that single image, Ghose built the framework for his second book wanting to prove "I could write a good, traditional and conventional novel (in Jussawala 1992: 185)

The Murder of Aziz Khan (1967) is Ghose’s second novel. It sheds light on the socio-economic unevenness and sheer exploitation of the working classes and medium-grade land owners of the Pakistani society just in the wake of the creation of Pakistan. It is a well-knit story that remains his most well known work too. Ghose has got a keen eye to observe the changing social and economic patterns. The picture of society portrayed in this novel has valid and strong backing of our social history. Ghose has unleashed bitter criticism on the fraudulence and criminality of Pakistan’s ruling elite who, after the British left, filled their shoes and kept the colonial control over the wealth of the land and did
not return it to the people of Pakistan. In this way, they perpetuated the social injustice and economic inequality resulting into neocolonial oppression. In addition to developing a powerful critique of this ‘neocolonialism’, Ghose has succinctly warned about the damaging and apocalyptic effects of the capitalistic economic system on the conventional agrarian society as existed at that time.

*Murder of Aziz Khan* a novel with strong political leanings, has been written in a realistic narrative though at times Ghose leaves the sequential narrative and adopts modernist techniques like, flashbacks, shifting perspectives and timeline that highlights the confusion and the feeling of being thrown into disarray of the masses who had to continue their struggle against the indignities and humiliations inflicted upon them by the new ruling elite. Shah Brothers are icon of newly emerging industrialist and capitalist class which has blindly resolved to divest the people of their land and other sources of income to satiate their greed. The plot has been constructed to reveal the conflicting interests of the conformists and nonconformists.

Before attempting any detailed critical analysis, it would be appropriate to briefly describe the important events in the novel. Shah Brothers, mighty and commanding, are at the centre-stage of the novel. They have acquired their new wealth through graft and political corruption with the help of their political contacts at the highest echelon. They establish an industrial estate in the suburbs of a city. For this they need to grab land from the poor small farmers and landowners. The story revolves around the tragedy of Aziz Khan and his family who refuse to sell their land to the Shah brothers. They conspire to destroy Aziz Khan
by all means. The novel has got different layers of meanings. On one level, it
depicts a society passing through its transitory phase, the old order giving way to
the new, but only in a cosmetic sense, as no substantial changes are allowed to
take roots by the new rulers. During 1960s, industrialization of economy was
started by the military ruler Ayub Khan. It brought about all the consequent evils
of an industrialized economy and society, which is bureaucratization of the
system, corruption, bribery, and the large-scale destruction of the rural set-up. As
a result, contemporaneity poses a threat to whatever is conventional. Long-lasted
value systems are in a state of disarray on the pretext of economic growth and
industrial progress. Irrationally, the Shah Brothers are considered the icons of
development of industry and bringing prosperity to the under-privileged section
of society.

Contrary to this, Aziz Khan, represents ancient and traditional values: one’s
affiliation with the land, and commitment with the old values. Ghose writes:
“And these seventy acres, this piece of earth, this world of Aziz Khan, did not
appear to him as land, as a property with a market value. It was a sufficiency of
existence. So that nobody could take the land away from him without first taking
away his existence (Ghose 1967: 16). Alamgir Hashmi in Encyclopedia of Post-
Colonial Literatures holds that “Land is a major theme and metaphor in the
novel. The protagonist faces both humiliation and expropriation of his land by the
new industrialist class in post-colonial Pakistan.”(in Benson and Conolly 1994:
580). Land is not only dead earth. Ghose transforms it into life-blood, a vital
source of sustenance. Aziz Khan’s prestige and survival both rest on his land.
The story opens with the emergence of the Shah family - the brothers Ayub and Afaq, led by the eldest, Akram. "Their beginnings had been obscure, but in 1947, when Pakistan was created, Akram, who had made a few thousand rupees as a money-seller in Bombay, had come to Pakistan and for three years he had looked around Karachi and Lahore, buying something here and selling it there...Any society with pretensions to the complexities of civilization swarms with middle-men, narrow-eyed, tight-lipped men who produce nothing and achieve nothing and yet acquire a fortune for themselves." (Ghose: 20)

Due to their political contacts, bureaucratic maneuverings, and lot of arm-twisting of the already suffering peasantry, the Shah brothers soon succeed in establishing an industrial empire for themselves, after purchasing every acre they could grab, except a patch of 70 acres of land which a lone cotton farmer, Aziz Khan, refuses to sell. For the Shahs it became imperative that they should have Khan's land, for two reasons: economically it hampered their expansion, and socially, because to allow one farmer to hold out against them was a thorn in the side of their prestige. How the brothers, through fraud, deception and brutal force, eventually acquire Aziz Khan's land, and the consequent ramifications that affect both families, particularly Aziz Khan’s which is completely destroyed, make up the bulk of the novel.

Afaq, the youngest of Shah brothers, commits the rape of a thirteen years old peasant girl and her senseless murder. As a cover-up, and in a move to break Aziz Khan's will, Ayub and Akram contrive to have Khan's elder son, Rafiq, charged with the crime. Ayub and Akram bribe the police to arrest Rafiq for the
crime. Throughout the trial Aziz Khan remains a bit feckless but mostly helpless in the face of a powerful and corrupt police force and judicial system. "He left the trial in the hands of Allah...The Muslim adage, What had to happen has happened, was constantly on his lips, and he sat in the front yard, a monument to Islam's defeatist fatalism." Rafiq is sentenced and hanged, despite his innocence.

With the help of false witnesses from the peasants whom they had bribed to stand witness against Rafiq, the Shah brothers succeed in destroying Aziz Khan’s family. The false case is so meticulously prepared with the help of crooked lawyers, police officers and the judges that even Aziz Khan’s own son Javed gets confused and begins to think that perhaps his brother is actually guilty of the heinous crime of rape and murder. His intuitive belief in the innocence of his brother is shaken. The speech of the Counsel for the Prosecution is delivered in the manner of a passionate sermon; it is the height of tragic irony:

In my summing up I would like first of all to thank the witnesses who have appeared to testify to the court. They have all been poor people, humble people, filled with a deep sense of duty, a profound love and fear of Allah, people, in short, of complete honesty and impeccable virtue. Some of them have risked their livelihoods in order to hold the torch of truth in this court. Long may it burn and long may such noble citizens abound in our country… Control, human responsibility, these are the very essence of liberty, and this is why the law must be enforced, this is why society must exterminate the person who lacks control, …There is no question of mercy in this case: for such a mercy can only mean a lasting cruelty to all the daughters of Pakistan. (134-35)

Such rhetorical hypocrisy is a common feature of arguments pitched against those in Pakistan who do not have the power to buy justice.
Grief-stricken, Aziz Khan allows his cotton farm to fall apart. Javed, his younger son, takes it upon himself to reclaim the land. While this is going on, Aziz Khan’s wife falls ill and he takes a loan of 2,000 rupees for her treatment. The security for this is Javed’s dowry and, failing that, his land. At the same time, to avenge his elder brother’s wrongful death, Javed also ferrets out information on the Shahs that will bring them to justice. Eventually, however, he is defeated and brutally murdered by the assassins hired by Ayub. Aziz Khan’s wife dies of grief. As the debt is not paid, the Shah Brothers seize Aziz Khan’s land and he is seen walking around the fence which now surrounds it.

However, in a rare poetic justice, Ghose shows the Shah family falling apart, not economically but morally. To avoid the legal implications, in the wake of the cold blooded murder of Rafiq, Shah Brothers immediately send Afaq to England for studies. Razia, the pampered wife of Ayub, also follows him to England in few weeks on the pretext of making arrangements for her children’s education there. In fact she has developed an adulterous attraction with her brother-in-law, Afaq. Now she tries to avail the chance to gratify her desires. Their love-making does not last long because of her discovery that Afaq is also involved with another girl friend, Pamela. Crest-fallen and jealousy-smitten she returns to Pakistan and accuses Afaq of sexual abuse. Ayub, in a fit of anger, immediately declares Afaq an outcast of the family. Resultantly all property goes to his children because Akram, the elder brother, is already issueless. Thus family feuds, treacheries, sexual promiscuities and incestuous relationships destroy them too.
Scattered throughout the book are secondary characters, who play havoc to Pakistani society for personal gains - the affluent who erroneously aspire to the worst in Western manners, the devious moneylenders, the easily corrupted politicians, the backward doctors, and other miscreants.

**Alienation from the Land**

*The Murder of Aziz Khan* manifests a strong motif to launch a vitriolic attack on the vicious malaise gripping the Pakistani society just after its emergence. Commenting on the role of the writer in the society, Ghose does not seem to conform to the general view that a writer’s active role lies in transforming his society. He is of the view that any change in society is only possible when the people desire so. Ghose expressed his opinion during an interview saying that writers are only liable to allude to the wicked practices. He holds that "fiction should embody the aspirations and hopes of the majority—of the peasants and workers.” (in Jussawala 1992: 190). Clearly the main concern in *The Murder of Aziz Khan* is to paint a vivid picture of the plight of the dispossessed people of Pakistan.

The novel shows that after decades of colonial rule, many of the poorer segments of Pakistani society have been alienated from the land, the source of life for centuries. Even after independence, this separation continues. Aziz Khan’s son Javed is forced to work as a laborer in Shah Brothers’ factory which is totally against the sensibility rooted in their land. The villagers are helpless in the face of a drought that threatens their life. The landscape of Kalapur changes forever when
the Shah brothers’ smoke-emitting mills are built, dividing the village into two. With the transformation of Kalapur into an industrial center, peasants are forced to pawn their land to obtain bank loans, which they cannot pay, and their ancestral homelands are seized by financiers. The land of the people becomes just another commodity in the hands of economic rulers as Kalapur is transformed from a bucolic rural village to a polluted industrial zone. In the traditional Punjabi sensibility, one’s land is like one’s mother – a sacred source of life and a womb-like place where one ultimately returns after death. For Aziz Khan, there was nothing to worry about “as long as the land unfailingly continued its cycle of growth, for he himself was part of the cycle and preferred, for the present, to remain as seemingly insensitive as a plant;” (52) And then in symbolic strain Ghose writes about the darkness spreading ominously against the sky: “Darkness was falling on his land. Flights of crows appeared as blobs on the grey of the sky and were soon drawn into the darkness as if a sponge had been wiped across the sky.” (52) When finally Shah Brothers, through sheer trick and treachery, wrest the control of his land, Aziz Khan is dazed utterly by this tortuous turn of events. In the grip of utter despair and with a tearing sense of alienation he looks to his land, which is his no more. Ghose delineates his figure:

He noticed activity in the distance, movement where his land aught to be. … He saw more as he approached and what he saw he thought he should not be seeing for that was not what his land looked like. … It was not his land. The withered plantations were not there. Three bulldozers were going up and down the sloping land, tearing up from the roots whatever grew there. He walked on along the fence. The heat was like a fishbone which had got stuck in his gullet and would not go down, although he swallowed more and more air. Two men stood by an opening in the fence, guarding the drive to the
house. They had been watching him and stood erect now to reassure themselves of their strength. Aziz Khan stood a few years from them and looked at them. He did not care to see what house. There was no one he could see outside the house. Perhaps there was someone inside, he could not tell. The bulldozers were going up and down, up and down. He looked away and began to walk again along the fence. He walked as far as the stream which ran under the road where his land came to an end. The fence turned a corner there and proceeded parallel to the stream, a foot away from the stream’s bank. It was a narrow path, but he continued to walk slowly along the fence, his eyes turned to the land. He walked on, he walked on. There was no other opening in the fence. Even at the farthest end of his land, he could hear the bulldozers going up and down, up and down. He walked on and on, never taking his eyes off the land. The heat was pressing a piston down his gullet. The sun that late summer afternoon seemed to be made of steel, the air of concrete.

(314-15)

On the contrary, for Shah brothers the land offered no such significance and it “produced abundant raw material for their two mills” (28) The contrast between the agrarian and the industrial does not end here. Robert Ross in his seminal essay ‘The Murder of Aziz Khan’ elaborates this contrast further:

In sharp contrast to Aziz Khan and his family, the three Shah brothers and their families represent the new Pakistan: the men arrogant, greedy, dishonest, conniving, violent, blasphemous; the women silly, grasping, frustrated, bored. They violate the sanctity of the land first literally destroying its contours, then symbolically severing the subtle relationship between it and themselves. (Ross 1989:200)

The transformation from agrarian to industrial is always painful irrespective of time and place, but the havoc it wrought to the lives of people like Aziz Khan seems like a Greek tragedy as the system does not provide any protection to those who stand at the lowest rung of the social staircase.
Critique of Capitalism

Related to the theme of the people's alienation from their land is Ghose's critique of capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of producing wealth are privately owned. The novel denounces such a system that has created unequal classes of rich and poor by dramatizing its effects on the common people.

The capitalists in the novel are seen as ruthless men who are unconcerned with the misery that their unsatiable greed creates. They seek to suppress the workers' union and refuse to raise their wages. They drive expensive cars and want for nothing, while the villagers travel on foot to seek help in the face of famine. They take from the people of Kalapur their land and make millions from it, forcing the townspeople to work in the factory under poor conditions. The novel also presents these entrepreneurs as working in collusion with Western corporations that continue to exploit the labour of the uneducated masses. The revolutionary Javed sees that the only way to reconstruct a just society is to do away with the elite who amass riches at the expense of the people. He presents a vision of a socialist system in which the working classes, who create the wealth, have access to the fruits of their labor by owning the means of production and so are no longer exploited and oppressed by corrupt business people.

Ghose has tried to point out that capitalistic industrial progress is based on ruthless exploitation. Akram, the eldest brother, exploits people by tricking them into giving him money to establish his factory. His younger brother Ayub exploits them by smashing the worker’s union so that they cannot get their rights.
And Afaq, who does not produce wealth yet but merely consumes it, exploits women. The common characteristic of the brothers is that they want personal gratification, the satisfaction of their ego, rather than the good of the community.

Akram sees money as a symbol of this gratification and is the archetypical capitalist, the kind of exemplar who is shaping the values of the Pakistani society in the making:

> Akram in the eyes of these people, who admired his ruthless methods, was not only a Pakistani enjoying his freedom creatively; he was the Pakistani in whose type the successful citizens of the country would be moulded (23)

The real motivation of the Shah brothers’ lust for possession is not the profit incentive. That is merely the rationalization of the irrational desire to gratify their egos. But the desire is so irrational that Ayub tells Akram that what they really want is not Aziz Khan’s land but to humiliate him:

> At first we had economic reasons for wanting his land. And then, gradually, we realized we were fighting against the pride of one man. And our own pride, our own honour were in question (283)

**Village versus City**

The contrast drawn between village and city in the novel serves to underscore the damaging effects of capitalism as well as to make clear the difference in values between traditional and modern Pakistani society. In *Aziz Khan*, as in so many other creative works, the city is contrasted with the idyllic innocence of the countryside. The city is a beast with gaping jaws: it swallows youths, it demands
taxes, it sends thugs to demand money for bogus purposes. It hoodwinks Rafiq Khan, Aziz’s son. Whoever goes to the city never returns, except for duplicitous reasons; cynicism abounds.

The village of Kalapur had once been a thriving place until the invention of industries and the capitalists. After independence, it has become a dusty and backward place, but the people still uphold their integrity. The community is close-knit and holds onto its values and beliefs, participating in communal rites and helping each other.

Their values are seen in contrast to those of the urban elite, whose sole interest is money and power. The city is seen as a place of corruption and decay, with tall buildings and gardens as well as shantytowns. As the novel progresses we see that Kalapur is transformed from a rural village to an industrial center, and with it comes a disintegration of its values.

**Oppression and Resistance**

One of the persistent themes of *The Murder of Aziz Khan* is oppression—social, economic, political, racial, and sexual. By oppressing them, or controlling the direction of people's lives, colonial and neocolonial rulers prevent ordinary people from reaching their full potential. The treatment of social, economic, and political oppression is tied in with the novel's critique of capitalism and the alienation of the people from their traditional work. Throughout the novel, peasants and workers are prohibited from prospering because of the oppressive external forces of colonialism and capitalism. In the figures of Aziz Khan and his sons, it is seen
that it is possible for the peasantry to flourish if, like flowers, they are exposed to nourishment and light and not prevented from shaping their own destiny. Self-indulgence and indomitable urge for self-gratification create aggression in Afaq of which his reckless driving is a manifestation. And it is this which makes him a rapist and a murderer: his ego is so monstrously inflated as to make him take his pleasure outside the boundary of not just law but even humanity. He wants the greatest power upon earth – that of taking away life.

*The Murder of Aziz Khan* is an angry novel, written perhaps out of a "socialist motivation," or an idealism which Ghose nourished in himself for the new nation. However, it seems, he has shifted his focus from social concerns to universal truths, since they, in their generalized, impersonal way are less painful. Being removed from the reality of Pakistan has probably also helped him to be less bitter in his later fiction.

Aziz Khan is an everyman of Pakistan as a postcolonial state. His story is the story of a young nation torn apart by all those factors I deliberated upon in the previous chapter. His story encapsulates the tragic story of Pakistani masses who, ever since 1947, have suffered enormously at the hands of successive corrupt and inefficient governments; Pakistan has inherited a vast colonial bureaucracy which has a problem for every solution; the nexus between the corrupt and powerful triangle of feudal-or-industrialist-turned politicians, civil and military bureaucracy, judiciary and an extremely corrupt police force has always worked against the interests of the masses.
During General Ayub’s regime industrialization in certain sectors of economy started. It provided another opportunity to the corrupt and powerful politicians and businessmen to wield more and more power. Masses were deliberately kept uneducated and were used as mere cogs in the machines. A few with some consciousness, like Aziz Khan, were ruthlessly crushed. Ghose satirizes the motley of corrupt officials who suddenly rise to power through crooked means and who help those who are ready to fleece the new nation suffering from many socio-economic and existential problems:

The minister, a charming man of neither education nor ability who had suddenly acquired immense property and influence when the Hindus fled to India in 1947, … was of course a friend; but a friend only of those from whom he received due respect in cash … Karachi swarmed with politicians. .. with men who had no experience of government, who gave no thought to the social amelioration so urgently required in the country, who had neither ideas nor ideals, neither a sense of justice nor a sense of humanity, but who were all aflame with the burning ambition at once to make their fortune, men whose mentality was no different from that of thugs. In this rush of self-aggrandisement, an air of insecurity prevailed in Karachi; so that no minister was averse to consolidating his position by means of transferring money to banks in Switzerland where personal accounts had hastily been opened … In such an atmosphere, fringe adventurers like Akram Shah prospered. (26)

Such situations are not particular to Pakistan alone, for most postcolonial countries suffer from a host of socio-political and economic ills; some of the tragedy befalling these new nations is due to an almost farcical imitation of the former colonial masters by the new “brown sahibs”. According to Ross, “like Naipual in his early work, he [Ghose] appreciates the comedy that arises when these new Pakistanis paly at being Westerners… But Ghose never satirises Aziz Khan and his family” (Ross 1989: 201)
The socio-economic exploitation was so deep-rooted that when a politician like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto raised the slogan of “roti, kapra, aur makaan” (the promise of basic necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter), in the late 1960s, the masses responded to his call in the hope of a better future and a decent living. But odds were pitted against him from the beginning. He rose to power on the promise of establishing a welfare state. Among the founding fathers of Pakistan Peoples Party were many workers and thinkers whose socialist leanings were the driving force behind the new Party’s manifesto. Bhutto also tried to carve out an Islamic version of socialism but failed to gain support of the conservative ulema, who have always acted in collaboration with the military. ² Ironically, however, religion and the fear of a common enemy failed to create a homogenous nation. Provincialism, sectarianism and extremism grew as large scale threats to national unity.

**Collapse of Social Order**

Postcolonial Pakistan is not unlike colonial India; rather, in certain ways, it has deteriorated. Ahmad Ali’s description of a colonial town in ‘Our Lane’ is reminiscent of postcolonial Pakistan where the smell of putrefaction still rises from the gutters full of refuse and offal: “the sky was overcast with dust, the roads deserted… In a gutter lay a dead pigeon, its neck bent to one side, its stiff, blue legs sticking up towards the heavens…” (Ali 1983:11-12). The picture of a social order collapsing during the twilight of the Raj continues after the Independence.
In *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, Ghose has employed a straightforward, traditional, realistic narrative technique to emphasize his social realism and to paint Pakistan’s post-independence socio-political reality and the endless wars the masses have to fight to gain their nominal rights. The writer is imbued with urgency and an uncompromising stand against the betrayal this new nation suffered. The journey of Aziz Khan is the journey of Post-independence Pakistan. The society that has emerged through the journey has given birth to individuals imbued with irrepressible desires which are in total opposition to the ethos of traditional combined family system in Pakistan. Individual self-centeredness is the hallmark of modern society which promotes individual joys and achievements. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* has been knitted around this central theme of the shattering nature of capitalistic individualism. The unruliness it engenders in the apparently coordinating and mutually supportive Shah Brothers is just evident by the end of the novel. They are torn apart owing to the pugnacity engrained in ruthless individualism. It is not only true to the Shah Brothers, the vulturous individualism does not spare even the Aziz Khan family. Khan’s family unit gets disintegrated and ruined because of the treacherous capitalistic approach of Shah Brothers. It is not difficult to deduce that this overarching wickedness has jeopardized the cohesive structure of Pakistani family system. And ultimately the credo of a family has given way to the capitalistic individualism. The end product is the individual worshiping his personal ego and displaying a bizarre behavior free from all the cultural ties and collective moral sense.
According to Tariq Rehman (1991) the cultural disorientation leads to a state of rootlessness. The individual stands cut off from his cultural roots and is dislodged from his environment. This displacement is one of the recurring themes of *The Murder of Aziz Khan*. Kalapur is a homogenous rural society before the arrival of Shah Brothers. Their arrival recreates socio-economic disruption and destroys the fabric of cultural and racial homogeneity of the locals. The Shah’s are aliens to this land and create alienation of the natives to their lands through their capitalistic manoeuvrings. Aziz Khan holds fast ‘belief in a fixed order’. He loves his land and ‘the routine repetition’ associated with agriculture based life cycle round the year. His final defeat and dispossession of land at the hands of Shah Brothers symbolizes that the capitalist economy is bound to devastate the cultural roots of the conventional societies.

The question of land is central to the book; land is presented as salvation, as a soul, as a mother, as a god, the rock bottom of cultural identity. There was nothing people would not do to grab or regain land. (One only has to look at what Nehru-Mountbatten has done to grab land – Kashmir, etc – with no political, legal or moral justifications). The Shah brothers, in their greed for land, act like the Nehrus and Mountbattens of history. They create a perpetual, unending tragedy. They are a clique of thieves and robbers, celebrating theft and robbery on a grand scale; they work to form a land-grabbing cartel and constitute a system of taking people’s land, lives and livelihoods. The political elite, the progeny of colonial masters, replete themselves with wealth accumulated through shameful
maneuverings and arms-twisting while the farmers and labourers face the monstrosities of hunger and incongruities of fate.

_The Murder of Aziz Khan_, among other things, is about identity: the identity of the oppressed, the unsung hero who never managed to get his reward because of an iniquitous system, his desires, his visions, his frustrations, his struggles to the bitter end.

The relationship between worker and employer, politician and the electorate has gone horribly rancid. The money-worshipping capitalists and owners of big businesses and cartels act in criminal collaboration against the public interests. There are no laws to protect their rights. The few laws of the land remain in thick files and dark rooms. Those who raise their voices against a corrupt, inefficient system have to face the brutality of ‘State apparatus’; not only ideological but administrative ‘state apparatuses’ are used against the individuals who go on the way to non-conformity and non-cooperation. In the Shah Brothers’ factory, it is Riaz and Salim who agitate against the exploitation of the labourers as Riaz “had spent his time in reading such diverse political economists as John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx… Riaz’s cold socialist reasoning, which invariably pointed to the injustices of capitalist system, had the effect of gradually engendering a militarist mood in Salim (186). Such ‘dissidents’ are snubbed and subdued by murders, police raids, and an extremely corrupt judicial system.

Every step of the way, both the society and the system act against the majority interests; illegal occupation of land, murders, threats, then police, and at the end
the judicial system – all are pitted against the public interests. The *Murder of Aziz Khan* presents a comprehensive picture of the Pakistani society at a given juncture of its history. The author has faithfully documented the illegal practices of the government functionaries and the idiosyncrasies of all other characters as well. Faridah, the wife of Akram, for instance, cannot boulk the bizarre tendency of acquiring ostentatious jewellery items and clothes.

‘vas there any pink?’Faridah asked. ‘*Begum Sahiba*, I have each and every culler for your sootability, pink saalmun red, turkwise, emmaruld green, purple, midnight blue, dusk grey, baje, pee green, the cumpleet range, *Begum Sahiba*, the cumpleet range. Fiaz and Nassim came hurrying back with rolls of material. (104)

Nor is this all, for Hussain, the money lender who ruins Aziz Khan, displays all the petty cunning of the small businessmen. In the following scene, for instance, he pretends to be ill so as to avoid repaying Rafiq a debt of two thousand rupees:

‘Father was wondering’, Rafiq began, but Hussain hastily interrupted him, ‘Hai, *Amma-ji*, why did I have that cuppa cha, ooooooh!’

He pressed a hand to his stomach and groaned. Oooooh! Three bucks I paid the dahcterr, and he said, drink milk, and hyere I go, so carried off seeing my brother, I go and drink tea. Vhat I doing to myself, *Amma-ji*, throwing good money like that and not taking advice? Oooooh!’ (76)

*The Murder of Aziz Khan*, in addition to portraying the socio-economic dimensions, also provides insight into the philosophical aspects of the personality of its protagonist – Aziz Khan. Tariq Rahman (1991) holds that ‘the integrity of the self and the ability of the ego to be itself despite the external pressure’ are the
two fundamental themes of the novel. The way Aziz Khan survives the pressure of Shah Brothers and does not succumb to it by refusing to surrender his lands to them is a sign of his rock-like personality. Through a brutal use of state machinery and resorting to all sort of trick and treachery the Shahs finally succeed to divest Aziz Khan of his sons and all of his land. At the end of the novel he walks down the boundary-line of once-his land, broken and oppressed. He does not let his ego bow though the circumstances silence him. His ego resists all pressure but does not acquiesce to it.

Aziz Khan belongs to a landowning family, firmly settled into the middle classes. As he battles for survival, one thinks of the precarious role of the intellectual in a neocolonial society. The Shah brothers embody the traits of the middle classes: their vacillation when it comes to commitment to big issues, their entrapment between the ruling class and the peasants, their chauvinism, their mental terror of progressive class politics; they would rather hide behind high-sounding words and wait for the perfect time to choose.

Aziz Khan ends up splashing and gagging in that morass. He, like Pakistan itself, has to fight to stay alive and destruction is never too far away. Ghose uses Aziz Khan to showcase the plight of millions since Independence. India is only a slightly better exception.

Aziz Khan asks questions that seem unanswerable and relentless; like the metaphysical questions ‘who created the universe and why?’, their earthly/mundane queries about ‘the system’, the overriding, over-powering,
overwhelming system that rules the world, the New World Order, and the neocolonial agency of multinational corporations (MNCs).

The Shah Brothers bring the urban cultures of unrelatedness, impersonal, industrial relations, bribery and corruption. Like the colonial settler, and neocolonial ruling class, they hold sway over Kalapur and by analogy the country at large.

Kalapur is transfigured, rather transmogrified by the arrival of capitalism, burning old customs and human relations. The ruling class and its lackeys take over. Loans are given only to result in the seizure of land as schemes fail. The new rich, like the old landlords and estate holders, own everything including the slums in which the workers and pheasants live. The workers form trade unions to fight for their rights but it is an impossible enterprise / task since they have to fight against so many odds. Their leaders are arrested on false charges, entangled in legal battles they can never hope to win. Ultimately their economic and at times literal murder happens. Deception, fraud and foul-play are the common games.

**State Apparatuses**

In Pinter’s *The Caretaker*, Aston, who is active in the trade union and makes speeches against the exploitative system, is arrested not on the charge of creating ‘social disobedience’ but of ‘insanity’. The system is so strong that it collaborates – the industrialist, the police, the doctors, even Aston’s mother is assured of his abnormality – and declares Aston as a mad man. He is subjected to ‘legal’, medical’ and extreme psychological violence. As a result, he becomes slow, loses
his usual spirited social self; he is forced into conformity. Every society or its ‘system’ does not let the non-conformists change it; like truth, falsehood is also created and carefully constructed to subdue those who rebel against the exploitative socio-politico-economic system.4

Javed in *Aziz Khan* is such a figure who wants justice for the wrongful death of his brother who has been implicated in a false case of rape and murder. The power of the whole system is supporting the Shah Brothers to build their industrial empire and crush anyone who resists its establishment. Postcolonial Pakistan is a society where social hierarchies and power politics are fully entrenched.

Essentially, power is unequally distributed in various sections of a society. In power relations, the people maintaining authority over the means of production enjoy an unmatching status in comparison to those who are already under-privileged. One must keep the essential difference between Power and force. The latter acts on the humans bodily. On the other hand, power operates to shape or mould the will of the people. Power can be traced in the relationships of humans at all levels. In Foucauldian terms, for instance, the modern power to punish was established through the control over knowledge in human sciences that makes claims to both knowledge and power. The powerful have a monopoly over the production and dissemination of truth because truth can only be produced by power. The way courts work, and evidences and proofs are manufactured is the supreme example of the interplay of power and knowledge to produce ‘truth’.
Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* essentially charts the reorganization of the power to punish, and the development of various bodies of knowledge that reinforce and interact with that power. The modern power to punish is based on the supervision and organization of various bodies of the state that control social delinquents and non-conformists. People are to be ‘normalized’, first through more acceptable methods, but gradually the noose is tightened around the necks of those who dare challenge the system, through such means as the clinic/lunatic asylum, police and ultimately the secret agencies who make such individuals ‘disappear’ from the social scene. Foucault's point is that power and techniques of punishment depend on knowledge that creates and classifies individuals, and that knowledge derives its authority from certain relationships of power and domination.5

*Aziz Khan* is a deep and detailed history of the class and power politics which began when politicians, military generals and mullahs made a nexus against the people, who are made to believe, through shoddy slogans and rigged elections, that their rulers are the messiahs for them. Again and again Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ becomes relevant to Pakistani socio-political scenario: the rulers, all feudals and industrialists remained armed with the colonizer’s trinity: the Gun, the religion, and the coin, that give them the power to fleece the country, and suppress anyone who opposes them.

Ghose puts religion to rest as a source of expected revolution since it is used to inculcate among the people a criminal fatalism: people are made to believe, in the words of Ahmad Ali, that “the world was fleeting and impermanent, and its lovers
were dogs, that everything was meaningless and vain as the dust and the smoke on the face of the clouds... Ignoring the world we dream inflate dreams of Creation and the End” (Ali 1983:17). It is used to bear passive toleration of oppression in exchange for life after death and the heavenly rewards. Ghose is ruthless with such ideology. For him heaven or hell is here and now. But fatalism is deeply entrenched in the psyche of the masses and they hide behind their inaction.

To make a strong point, Ghose employs various narrative techniques. Mainly, it is a strait realistic narrative, straddling stream of consciousness, interior monologue, reminiscence, dialogue and drama to hammer his message home.

**Ghose’s Prophetic Narrative**

In *Aziz Khan*, Ghose is prophetic: half a century before the onslaught of globalization and a new economic world order – a world where money has been elevated to the status of world religion and where the sanctified domination of the world by rich corporations, is seen as a panacea for all economic problems of the world - Ghose, through the story of Aziz Khan has sent a strong warning to the postcolonial peoples that neocolonialism perpetuates the agenda of colonialism and imperialism.

The novel was published at the height of cold war in the late 1960s (Russian missile crisis, space race, landing on the moon, inter-continental ballistic missiles). Till then, people’s faith in socialist ideology as a clean and fair alternative to the exploitative capitalist ideology was still intact to a large extent.
India, China, Cuba and many other countries were still resisting American capitalism in its sheer form. In Pakistan, the progressive writers, led by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the great revolutionary poet, were actively contributing in the social awakening. Their ideals were embraced by a strong student movement in Pakistani universities (see Ali 1983); It was also a time of the 1968 student protests in Europe, particularly France. The post-war Europe was still reeling under capitalist system which failed to deliver; instead new wars were being waged – the Korean War, Vietnam War etc.

In Pakistan, the ruling elite decided to throw their weight behind the American block as their domestic politics and control over power was in line with the American international power politics driven by Capitalist ideology and right-wing politics. In the 1970, however, some cosmetic change in the socio-political and economic spheres was affected when Bhutto, riding on the socialist, (rather ‘Islamic socialist”) ideology, came to power.

As Ghose also make his point in Aziz Khan, religion of Islam, though rooted in the masses, was also exploited by the ruling elite. First, it was used as a facade to the constitution, giving rise to many conflicts and inherent contradictions in running the affairs of the state and the government. Second, Zia ul Haq exploited it to its maximum ‘utility’ in the political arena. During his eleven years regime, the mulla-military alliance against the interests of the people became entrenched. As it was a political use of religion, strengthened by the Afghan Jihad (a proxy war of America against Russia), it failed to create any welfare state which Islam is actually capable of creating. During Zia regime, regionalism and provincialism
thrived and as a consequence “regional identities took precedence over the Muslim identity” (Silva 2004: 175)

Tariq Ali in his *Can Pakistan Survive* (1983) examines the ethnic and class conflicts being waged in the provinces. These conflicts have come to a head in Balochistan, NWFP and Sindh during General Musharaf’s nine years rule.

The loss of East Pakistan, some critics argue, was a severe blow to the two-nation theory. In united India it would be a valid concept but once Pakistan came into being, ethnic and linguistic divisions resurfaced (see Haque 1988: 50). “In order to reaffirm the integration of Nation and religion, the west wing’s political leaders adopted public policies that were designed to re-establish the ascendancy of Islam in secular and political life” (Silva 2004: 175)

It would not be out of place to compare Ghose’s novel with another postcolonial novelist who has subjected the post-Independence state of affairs to severe criticism in his native Kenya. Ngugi’s *Devil on the Cross* (1982) is a relentless parody of capitalist ideology and its shenanigans in the form of economic imperialism. Here capital is associated with the forces of Evil. Thus, at a ‘Devil’s Feast’, the King of Hell, on behalf of the ‘Organization for Modern Theft and Robbery’, announces:

We who come from the developed world have had many years’ experience of modern theft and robbery. I might also remind you that we are the owners of houses and stores and granaries that contains all the money that has ever been snatched from the peoples of the world. You can see for yourself that even our suits are made of bank notes … (quoted in Hawkes 1996: 140)
Ideology, in the classical sense, may be over as Fukuyama claims in *The End of History*, yet money is the new ideology which rules the world, due mainly to American capitalism. In the classical sense, ideology was the construction of a truth or several truths and was a rhetorical device by which the powerful maintained their dominance. Nietzsche’s famous argument whether we can distinguish between true and false modes of thought is very apt.

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed and embellished politically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people; truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; (quoted in Hawkes 1996: 7)

Nietzsche’s thought on such issues was very well reemployed by Foucault. One of the most exploitative social and political constructs is the western idea of ‘nation’.

**Nation as a Construct**

The conceptualization of the nation as an invention is reiterated in Gellner’s main thesis in his seminal text *Nations and Nationalism* (1983). Here he describes nations as “the artifacts of men’s convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it” (1983: 7). Benedict Anderson illustrates that
Christendom and Islam were communities of this ‘imagined’ type, international groupings whose unity existed in the minds of the believers. And what enabled them to be imagined as unities was the existence of sacred language through which religions could be mediated to many different peoples speaking many different tongues (1983: 12-13).

On the one hand, in its utopian form, nationalism strives towards the liberationist and progressive ideals of the Enlightenment to evolve a collective identity within communities or cultural systems which share certain commonalities. On the other hand, its overwhelming desire to unify a people can lead to such extreme forms of hegemony, xenophobia, ethnic chauvinism and, at the extreme end of the continuum, genocide. The legitimating metanarrative of the ‘Nation’ conflates ethnic, gender, class and caste contours. This legitimation involves the imposition of one over-determining marker, or a dominant set of markers, which renders the Nation tenable at any given historical moment. It may be determined by geographic frontiers, or by an ethnic, linguistic or religious determinant.

In a chapter entitled ‘The Pitfalls of National Consciousness in The Wretched of the Earth,’ Frantz Fanon prefigures Aijaz Ahmad’s ideological position by identifying the repressive potential inherent in national consciousness (1968: 148-205). The tendency towards extremism stems from the Nation’s demand for total commitment and obedience from its subjects. The problematic of nationalism in the post-colonial milieu has been addressed by Edward Said. He felt that the presence of a “carefully nurtured nationalism in the anti-colonial ranks grew to inordinately large proportions and nationalist appeals to ‘pure’ negritude/Islam,
pure race were joined by so many without sufficient consciousness that precisely those ethnicities and spiritual essences would come back to exact a very high price from their successful adherents” (Said 1992: 14).

Nationalism was initially channeled against British imperialism. The nationalist figures in South Asia, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian subcontinent, Dudley Senanayake, Anagarika Dharmapala and George E. De Silva in Ceylon, were exposed to European education and political thought and a Westernised lifestyle, enabling them to act initially as ‘agents’ of the British. This position of power was then transformed to consolidate support among the masses. As Gayatri Spivak (1996) somewhat cynically notes, Mahatma Gandhi ‘strategically’ discarded his ‘Savile Row’ suit to don a loin cloth when he realized what political potential the loin cloth offered.

It is significant that the vocabulary, markings and signifiers of pre-Independence nationalism continue to be enforced in the post-Independence milieu. The ethnic and political strife beleaguering South Asia since Independence suggests that the concept of nation is, in Spivak’s terms, a catachresis – a “metaphor without a literal referent standing in for a concept that is the condition of conceptuality” (1996: 127). The nation is implicitly complex and precarious, as an idea and as a form of social organization. Its precariousness related to the arbitrary and hurried assemblage of disparate states, kingdom’s communities; and the mismatch between a pre-existing system of rule; and an ‘imported’ abstraction co-opted to serve the interests of the departing colonialists and an emergent hegemonic elite.
The hegemonic elite act on the pretext of such abstract concepts as nation and nationalism and is continuing with the exploitation of the masses. The national liberation movements got the colouring of a sweeping and totalizing entity that took over and colonial machine but did not change anything. The scope of various conflicts in *The Murder of Aziz Khan* – between the ancient and the modern, the greedy and the moderate, the colonial legacy of an overriding bureaucratic system and the old social order, the religious and the profane – essentially paint a portrait of postcolonial Pakistan which is divided on ethnic, linguistic, religious, political, economic and social lines. Every stratum of its society is affected, mostly for the worst, and none escape the finer edge of the author's scrutiny.

*Murder of Aziz Khan* is a powerful novel presenting the commitment of Ghose to his political and social ideals. He has painted, in this novel, a faithful and impartial picture of Pakistan in the first phase of its post-independence conditions.

Even after more than forty years of its publication, the novel has lost neither its authority nor its impact. *The Murder of Aziz Khan* is undeniably the best work of fiction to come out of Pakistan in its early life and a very powerful indictment of the neocolonialism which came into action right after Independence in 1947. In the words of Robert Ross, Ghose’s concerns in *The Murder of Aziz Khan* can not be considered popular ones subject to political and social change. For Aziz Khan not only captures a moment in the grand course of human history but examines as well the events in a timeless way, discovering once more that evil has a way of asserting itself.” (Ross 1989:203)
Neocolonialism is now firmly rooted – when the Empire dissolved, the imperial nations, particularly Britain, planned to keep a hold on the emerging nations – many territorial disputes were created; a colonial educated bourgliche class was promoted to rule the ‘independent’ countries on the lines of colonial governments; a corrupt bureaucracy and police force helped them suppress the masses, for whom nothing changed. It dispossessed, dislocated, and destroyed people’s ideas of themselves by trampling on their dreams of liberty. Like Aziz Khan, they stand at the edge of their promised land, the land of the pure/God’s own land, and watch how it is being butchered, looted and plundered by the new global and local forces, riding on the slogans of nationalism and patriotism.
Notes


2. The reasons for such a fateful alliance were not very complex. It has mostly been the ‘India Factor’. India has always played role in the making of Pakistan’s foreign policy, its military/strategic policy and its national psyche. Consequently the Pakistanis as a nation and Pakistan as a state became India-Centric. Both of these actors contributed to shape the national character – this character was based not on strong moral principles but on fear – fear of the other. School and college curricula were full of hatred and fear. The military always inculcated nationalism on the martial drum beat.

3. The phrase “ideological state apparatuses” is that of Louis Althusser. It sums up the oppressive system of social and ideological control for the sake of imposing an exploitative economic order.

4. We are reminded of *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, a 1962 novel by Ken Kesey. In 1975, the novel was adapted for a much celebrated film of the same title.
5. In *Madness and Civilization* and the *Birth of the Clinic*, Michael Foucault exposes the horrors perpetrated by such ‘disciplinary’ power which has three elements: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and examination. Observation and the gaze are key instruments of power. By these processes, and through the human sciences, the notion of the normal and the abnormal are developed.

6. Writing in the wake of the fall of USSR, Fukuyama famously predicted that the old history has come to an end and a new one has started in which American would be the sole super power. Since September 1, 2001, Fukuyama has gone back on many of his positions in his earlier book.
Politics have been a fertile source for literature since ancient times. Because the success or failure of any one political ideology depends so heavily on the ability of its adherents and detractors to promote or defame it, literary pursuits – both fiction and nonfiction – have frequently coincided with political pursuits. The literature of politics has for hundreds of years taken the explicit form of journals, magazines, and newspapers, in which writers openly engage in propaganda or protest. From the early to mid-twentieth century, proponents of socialism and fascism in Europe, the United States, and the newly formed Soviet Union established newspapers in order to spread information about and gain further support for their causes. African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s found that literary journals with a political orientation allowed them an outlet for both protest and creativity, and the number of black political poets quickly grew. Many writers have taken a less direct approach in their political works, often for fear of social or legal repercussions under repressive governments. Political satire first appeared in Greek theater; by the late seventeenth century it had become a sophisticated tool of protest and discontent, employed with much effect by such writers as Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope. Twentieth-century political satirists like George Orwell and Joseph Heller have often turned to black humour to critique what they consider grossly unjust governmental policies. Writers have also used
allegory to voice their dissatisfaction with political regimes and, in Latin American countries in particular, have often added magical realism to their allegorical tales to expose governmental corruption indirectly. The great popularity of novels since the nineteenth century has allowed writers the most versatile medium for promoting their political beliefs. From George Eliot's extended tracts on English law in her novels to the openly racist propaganda of some writers in the American South, novelists have successfully integrated their art and their politics.

Compared in the light of above remarks, the political commitment of writers from Pakistan, especially those writing in English, has been less than equivocal. Mohsin Hamid’s approach to Pakistan’s postcolonial problems is also indirect for which he has employed satirical literary devices, like irony, understatement and an ambivalent/unreliable narrator. His debut novel *Moth Smoke* (2000) is set in the 1990s, a time in Pakistan’s history when its social, political, and economic problems multiplied due to a plethora of reasons:

1. Political instability and internal strife due to the bitter political rivalry between the two mainstream parties, that is, Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League
2. Deepening economic crisis due to the flight of capital and the absence of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), as political stability remained an illusion in Pakistan.
3. Nuclear stand-off with India in 1998 and the resultant economic sanctions by the international community
4. The Kargil conflict with India and its aftermath
5. Dismissal of Sharif government and the imposition of martial law by General Musharaf
6. The military regime of Musharaf and its impact on Pakistan’s society, politics and economics. (It was the third such regime since Independence)
7. September/11 2001 attacks in America, the resultant War on Terror and its impact on Pakistan’s society, politics and economics.
8. Radicalization of Pakistani society

Mohsin Hamid’s novel is a powerful critique of the ruling elite of Pakistan and neo-colonialism which took roots right after the British divided India into two states. In the novel, Hamid portrays that “other Pakistan” which exists at the fringes of Pakistani society but controls its economy and power structures. It is a very candid portrayal of drug use, adultery, betrayals and class relations within the Pakistani elite, ruling Pakistan since independence in 1947. The post-independence society depicted in *Moth Smoke* appears to be ruthless, immoral, and driven by lust for money. Before further discussion about the novel and its contextualization of contemporary Pakistan, it is advisable to sum up the story and important episodes of the novel for the benefit of the reader.

*Moth Smoke* is set in Lahore, Pakistan, and is mainly about Darashikoh or Daru, as he is lovingly called by his friends. It is unfortunate for him that he is poor while his friends Mumtaz and Aurangzeb or Ozi, with whom he grew up, are rich. Mumtaz is Ozi’s unfaithful wife. Daru spent a normal life until he was in college
but then his friends departed for the USA leaving him behind. So, while they were on a dream journey to get higher education in the States, Daru had to do so in Lahore, and this was despite the fact that Daru was cleverer than many of his friends. However, he was destined to study under the local teachers, with their *desi* pedagogical styles, one of them being Professor Julius Superb. He measures the unfair treatment that life meted out to him in strange ways, one being the fact that his rich friends would afford imported bottle of alcohol for Rs. 4000, while he could only get the one for Rs. 800. For him, such comparisons never stop as he can neither change his lot nor his surroundings. Daru’s friend Ozi could afford an American studentship because his father was a corrupt official. When Ozi comes back to Lahore, he starts earning money. Unlike him, Daru has no degree from a developed country so he goes jobless until Ozi’s father helps him to secure a position in a local bank as a small time cashier. In such a state, he was even unable to afford electricity for air-conditioning.

Most of the story is told from Daru’s point of view, chronicling events as he loses his job and gradually slips into a life of poverty and escapism. However, what makes it a modernist narrative is the nature of an unreliable narrator. Therefore we are also privy to the accounts of Ozi, Mumtaz and Murad Badshah, the rickshaw driver who also leads a gang of low criminals and provides Daru drugs. Through these narrators of Daru’s story, Hamid establishes the existence of varied points of view, a sort of polyphony in the course of the story. Gradually Daru’s narrative grows claustrophobic. It gives the reader a fair chance to develop his own judgement. In the final analysis, it becomes clear that no character is
innocent and no character is absolutely honest even with himself/herself. The only character that can be treated with least scepticism is that of Mumtaz who has set up a double life for herself in order to deal with the bad choices she has made. Both Daru and Mumtaz are drawn towards each other inexorably, just as a moth is drawn to its own destruction on a candle flame, in order to drown their failings in sex, drinking and drugs. In fact, the metaphor is much more elaborate and is applicable to all the characters bent upon their own destruction. This is in a clear take-off from the Mughal rulers’ self-destructive propensity in the wars of succession, Hamid's central characters are relentlessly drawn towards such destruction through a spectacular downfall.

The novel is about inordinate ambitions, resentment, betrayal, greed and class conflicts. Daru, who had left the rich circles of Lahore for long, got another chance of joining it again when Ozi returned from the USA along with his wife and a kid. As a matter of fact, the night Osis returns Daru loses his job and becomes reliant on drugs and Ozi’s wife financially as well as emotionally.

She’s drawn to me just as I’m drawn to her. She can’t keep away. She circles, forced to keep her distance, afraid of abandoning her husband and, even more her son, for too long. But she keeps coming like a moth to my candle staying longer than she could, leaving late for dinners and birthday parties, singeing her wings. She is risking her marriage for me, her family, her reputation. And I, the moth, circling her candle, realize that she’s not just a candle. She’s a moth as well, circling me.’(203-204)

Like a good play, the novel allows all the characters to recount their perspective on the story of their lives. An insight into each character has been given very cleverly. Why a rickshaw driver had to become a drug supplier to Daru and
others? Why Ozi takes corruption as inevitable in life? Why Mumtaz feels it important to sleep with her husband’s closest friend? And why Daru had to turn towards selling the drugs eventually? Everyone has some reason to be “bad”, as if inexorably, with a certain determinism upon which they have no control. Hamid’s employment of multiple narrative voices indicates that history is more than a set of events in the past to be told; it is also the feelings and ideas that different people have about the events. However, Hamid has brought out a novel that gives something bigger than just a political metaphor. The non-linear account of Daru has drawn tributes from the other writers. Lahiri writes: “Every other chapter pulls away from Daru and from the linear sequence of the novel, granting Murad Badshah, Mumtaz and Ozi extended soliloquies that both lighten and complicate the scope of Daru's increasingly claustrophobic vision.” (Lahiri 2000).

At the same time, the western readers of Moth Smoke must stand warned that, in spite of the nuanced allegories in the book that undoubtedly strike chords with many Pakistani elite, it must not be taken as a representation of 'Pakistani society', as some reviewers of the book have stated. Hamid is describing the top 0.01% of Pakistan's pretentious elite. In fact much of the cultural attributes that Hamid highlights among Pakistani elite are commonly found in most developing countries’ elite.

The writer expresses his own viewpoint about the people he condemns. However, he uses other characters to do this, often in the form of a monologue. For example, Ozi expresses his personal justification thus:
You have to have money these days. The roads are falling apart, so you need a Pajero or a Land Cruiser. The phone lines are erratic, so you need a mobile ... Thanks to electricity theft there will always be shortages, so you have to have a generator. The police are corrupt and ineffective, so you need private security guards ... You accept that you can't change the system [so you] create lots of little shell companies, and open dollar accounts on sunny islands far, far away."(185)

Daru, meanwhile, has further slipped on the social and economic ladder. As he is unable to pay even his electricity bill, he decides to support himself by selling drugs by teaming up with his dealer, a rebellious rickshaw driver. Commenting on this illicit yet complex relationship, Ira Pande writes in her review article:

A hideous Faustian tale follows as Daru gets sucked into a love affair with the bored Mumtaz. She plays Helen to his Faustian theme of damnation and leaves him a broken criminal. The end, as in all moral tales, has strong overtones of retribution, except that the victim and the villain interchange places. (Pande 2000)

In clear allegorical terms, Hamid has opened his book with a reference from the Imperial history of the Mughals whose relevance to contemporary Pakistan is unmistakable. As Pande also mentions: “No reader can afford to be unmoved by the strong allegorical tones that underlie Hamid's cleverly crafted book. Take the names, Darashikoh, Aurangzeb, Mumtaz -- Mughal names all, associated with the greatest tales of medieval love and tragedy, and redolent with violence and grandeur” (Pande 2000).

If we look at the book from its historical allusions we see Shah Jahan imprisoned in Agra at his own fort. From there he stares at the Taj Mahal that he had built for his wife Mumtaz. There he receives the news of the murder of his eldest son Dara Shikuh by his youngest one i.e. Aurangzeb. He receives this news visually as he is
presented with his son’s head. This was all a power game where the loser had to
give away his head.

Power sharing has been a problem in South Asian history through several
millennia. Particularly the Muslim rulers of India had been plagued by internecine
conflicts and wars of successions. It is against this backdrop that Mohsin Hamid
is able to weave a tale of modern Pakistan.

**Daru’s Characterization**

As most of the action revolves around the figure of Daru, it is important to
understand his point of view about the people and events happening around him.
Daru is depicted as a complex character about whom it is difficult to give a clear
verdict. He is well-educated, with good family connections, but somewhat of a
disaffect Camus’ *Outsider* type. His journey has been traced in *Moth Smoke*
very closely as first he is fired by the local bank where he was doing an ordinary
job, then he indulges in an sexual affair with Ozi’s wife Mumtaz, after which he
starts spending his afternoon and evening times betting around. Then he becomes
an addict of heroine which he names as “hairy”. This makes him a sourpuss and in
this mental state turns quarrelsome and fights all the time with everyone. He
finally fights with Mumtaz too, and is sent to jail under an allegation that he has
killed a boy.

Like most of the other characters in this novel, Daru is a negative character. He
considers himself to be more intelligent than those who have enjoyed better
opportunities in life denying him what he deserved. He blames the system which,
in his view, keeps him poor and underprivileged. The system, in his perception, is pitted against him and favours those with brawn but no brains.

But when we get to know the story from Daru’s point of view, it arises some feelings of sympathy for him. Generalizing his problems and miseries we also feel sorry for many other people like him who were unable to lead a calm life as they had no foreign degrees, no relatives at the key positions and no pajeros and no air-conditioning. Analyzing this complex architecture of the novel and its protagonist, Jhumpa Lahiri writes in a review article in *The New York Times*:

Daru's fatal flaw ... is that while he's contemptuous of the idle rich, he feels nevertheless entitled to join their ranks. Desperate to be what he's not, he's hooked on drugs that relieve him only temporarily from the burden of being who he is. But behind the toxic haze emerges the emotional architecture of this trenchant novel: a lost friendship, a mother's death, a broken marriage, a doomed love affair. (Lahiri 2000)

Daru is dying by the overwhelming hunger – the hunger for some food, drugs and, of course, for Mumtaz. He has a good meal at his uncle’s house and when he is about to leave, the savour of the remaining food maddens him. Thus he speaks to himself and wonders why the aroma of the leftover food is making him hungry when he has just ate it to his fill. This is perhaps the hunger that Daru can never satisfy, that no one of his kind can ever satisfy. The food he ate at his uncle’s and the woman he enjoys at his friend’s are both the luxuries which he cannot afford but still avails of them by fair means or foul.

Perhaps it will be too sweeping to call Daru a tragic hero but tragic he is. His downward rollercoaster flight is marked by a descent into personal chaos coupled
with the socio-political pandemonium going on around him. Hamid is careful to portray him as tragic, and not as a mere villain (in spite of his drug-peddling, an illicit sexual relationship etc.). Hamid’s strategy in this regard is simple: he has created a foil of Daru in Murad Badshah. He too is involved with the underworld, but with total lack of conscience.

Certainly men such as Ozi and his company, including Daru, are corrupt opportunists who deserve little sympathy, but it would be a mistake to see Daru simply as an innocent victim. His potential is wasted and he is exploited, but he also exploits others, most obviously in running his own drug dealing business. His "eat or be eaten" philosophy is an expression of the destructive rivalry of capitalism, and is no more moral than the self-serving greed of the Ozis of this novel and the world at large. However, it is in this loss of innocence and idealism that Daru differs from the other characters. Perhaps for this reason he, in Lahiri’s words, “proceeds to sink into a miasma of anger and alienation” (Lahiri 2000).

David V. Greenwood while reviewing the book writes that Moth Smoke proceeds in a leisurely manner. He is of the view that though the protagonist has been ever stoned yet his compromises make him likable and the mess that he makes in his life adds to his humanly charms. He thinks that the rest of the characters are complex and they give no clear boundaries of good and bad and friend and foe. As far Mumtaz, Greenwood is of the view that she is a obsessive lover to Daru but not a good mother. Ozi, in his opinion, is generous and forgiving (Greenwood 2000).
Apart from the human characters that are powerfully drawn by Hamid, there are other significant presences, for example the city of Lahore, and the moths which come to the light/flame of candles which Daru uses during power failures. P.J. Weise endeavors to give a ranking of the characters of the novel. In his opinion moths are the best as they, unlike human characters, know the purpose of their lives i.e. to immolate themselves in the flame of the candle and to be batted by Daru. The next in his opinion is the character of Mumtaz who is a mother against her will. (Weise 2000)

When the baby is still only six months, Mumtaz urges to return to work. However, Ozi refuses to allow her. Mumtaz reveals that it was a shocking question by Ozi that destroyed their marriage. The question was whether she loved their son at all. She thinks that Ozi found the kid as her weakness, and now he could make her do the things that she would not have done without child. She says this destroys their marriage.

Another character is that of Murad Badshah who is a drug dealer as well as a philosopher in his own right. He philosophizes all his wrong doings and always comes up with a sound justification for his small time crimes. He shines in the novel as a revolutionary figure. He states how he looks at things. He believes that the revolution is imminent as people are now sick of the alms offered by the rich. He says that the tenants and the labourers should revolt against the rich who are armed with Kalashnikovs. He keeps a revolver under his kurta. He robs boutiques because according to him they symbolize the soft underbelly of the
upper crust, and this is the example of the great hypocrisy as the country is facing shortage of flour.

Darashikoh describes Murad Badshah as a person who talks in a well-bred English, and he does so because he tries to deny his origin from a lower class. But the artificial accent and diction reveals what he originally wants to hide from people. Darashikuh’s opinion about him sounds prejudiced as he is his future business partner and a supplier of drugs to him.

*Moth Smoke as a Postcolonial Pakistani Novel*

My aim in this chapter is to develop a critique of *Moth Smoke* as a prototype postcolonial text. Pakistan faces typical socio-political and economic problems that confront many other postcolonial countries. The intriguing question is this: to what extent these problems are due to a colonial hangover and to what extent the new ruling elite is responsible to perpetuate that colonial system to continue the exploitation of the masses. The upper classes – driving around the city in their white BMWs, partying on floodlit lawns, indulging in illicit alcohol and drugs, and dancing to music specially mixed for the occasion by famous London DJs – have acquired this wealth from the corruption of state money which Pakistan gets in the form of loans from the western powers and international banks for playing the role of a satellite state of America. In this regard Pakistan is no different from some other postcolonial countries. However, it is different from some of them in a stark manner, especially India, a county with which this nation always likes to compare and contrast when it comes to being ‘independent’ and ‘progressive’.
Mohsin Hamid, however, has an altogether different view. In one of his interviews, he analyses Pakistan’s postcoloniality thus:

I think the term 'postcolonial' is applicable only in situations where the sources of power are the former colonial structures. If you are a South Asian academic in America, England or Australia, you want to use the term postcolonial to intrigue the former coloniser and you explain everything from the vantage point of that relationship. You can discuss the relationship between Pakistan and the West. By inserting itself in a relationship with the former coloniser, the word 'postcolonial' acquires its current power. Here in Pakistan, you may not want to use the term postcolonial. You may be interested in studying the dynamics within the country... These interactions may describe our literature better than the global academic terms,...  (Hamid 2004, interview with Saeed ur Rehman in TNS)

When the interviewer asked whether the Western powers, particularly America, are responsible for the socio-political mess Pakistan is in, he responded thus:

I think this is very interesting. That is why in my first novel 'Moth Smoke' I don't lay any blame on any actor outside Pakistan. I focused on local day-to-day lives of the people. My second novel ('The Reluctant Fundamentalist'), on the other hand, is much more about the relationship between Pakistan and America. It is situated largely inside America but I would not look at it as a postcolonial novel so much as an American novel. Both my novels are not postcolonial. One is a Pakistani book and the other American. (Hamid 2004)

For this dominant reason, the Muslim enthusiasm for a future free from colonial exploitation (and Hindu majority’s oppression in a democratic set-up) was soon tempered by new issues. Within months of independence, Pakistan went to war with India over Kashmir. The new state struggled to tackle numerous problems, ranging from administrative to psychological. However, more and more people started believing that partition and independence did little for them because they were now being ruled by a different group of people who were also not from
among them. They occupied the power corridors without paying any attention to improving the life standard of common people. The satiric target in *Moth Smoke* is a neo-colonialism that represents economic and intellectual bondage. The economy of Pakistan is controlled by multi-national corporations that provide local directorships to government ministers, their cronies and other capitalists. The education system is just a replica of the Macaulay model in which the rich and the poor, the ruling elite and the common masses, go to separate schools and universities. *Moth Smoke* presents, then, an indictment of "development", multi-national corporations, international finance, and neo-colonial education.

Corruption and governance go hand in hand in the developing countries where democratic process is often tainted by political inheritance, speed money, feudalism, and the omnipresent intervention of neo-imperialist powers that support the corrupt (especially) military regimes. The process becomes more painful when a society is trying to develop in the face of rising security issues due to which it is profiled as ‘high risk investment zones’. Economic package comes with lot of political strings, along with the cultural baggage.

Apparently, Hamid wants, on the one hand, to examine and criticize aspects of these cultural indicators, and on the other to redirect them towards his utopian vision of a socialist/just world. There is, I believe, a latent theory in Hamid’s indictment that cultural expression is bound up with, and can be an index of the quality of social and political life. In a simple form this theory can perhaps be attributed to John Ruskin. In a more complex form, involving the circular or unevenly reciprocal process of "over-determination," it might be attributed to
such theorists of cultural production as Louis Althusser. In this regard, in my analysis, he seems to conform to Ngugi wa Thiongo’s cultural vision. Ngugi once stated, in rather Althusserian terms, that Literature, as part of culture, is really a reflection of the material reality under which we live ... I have come to realise that no people can develop a meaningful national culture under any form of foreign economic domination (Ngugi 1981:3).

Mohsin Hamid is among the young writers who documented their creative response to the two crises which exerted most negative impact on its society, economy and politics, that is, Pakistan’s nuclear tests in May 1998, and radicalization of a significant segment of society due to Pakistan’s role in the war on terror under American bidding. Growing up in Pakistan, Hamid saw for himself how disruptive social upheaval and political instability are and how they affect every facet of a society.

**Class Conflict/Social Stratification and Polarization**

One of the very catalytic conditions that help stimulate the production of literature is class. This has been visible in many works particularly those containing the postcolonial resistance. Here, class configurations are usually typical and most of the conflicts and issues are repeatedly discussed under other names and titles. Much before Hamid, many other postcolonial writers like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his novels *The River Between* and *Matigari* and Zulfikar Ghose in *The Murder of Aziz Khan* have invoked similar conditions to portray the socio-political conditions in their respective countries. All three novels portray decades of
betrayal, and the breaking of promises by the rulers. In a similar fashion, *Moth Smoke* illustrates very well the divide between the rich and the poor of Pakistan. Although Darashikoh "Daru" Shezad himself is not rich, his connections allow him to imitate the lifestyle of the wealthy from time to time. His constant awareness of the wealth around him highlights the gulf between those who have and those have not. “Set against this exotic backdrop of nuclear confrontation and a miasma of corruption, cronyism, and kickbacks, Hamid unfolds an oddly familiar tale that's equal parts hard-boiled fiction and yuppie-descent-into-drugs-and-alcohol.”(Adamthwaite 2000)

Sudip Bose uses ‘nuclear’ metaphors for the fissures that these characters go through their personal lives while the tragedy of a whole nation gradually unfolds: “Like the atoms that must be split for a fission bomb to explode, modern-day Lahore is itself divided: between old and new, rich and poor, conservative and liberal.”(Bose 2000)

**Marxist Reading of *Moth Smoke***

In Marxist terms, socio-economic conflict between various classes is generated due to the unequal distribution of wealth. Commenting on this aspect of *Moth Smoke*, Orin C. Judd writes, “The frustration and anger of the less fortunate in a country whose ruling class is thoroughly corrupt and where the economic divide is so vast that the wealthy can insulate themselves from the rules that bind the rest of the society, and can nearly avoid physical contact with the lower classes” (Judd, 2006).
When in a country the elites go on enjoying all the privileges and still do not care for the laws, when the upper classes indulge in exploitation and maltreatment of the lower ones, when they have all the power and authority to run the state as they want to, they somehow create for themselves hatred among the lower classes. The contrast of extreme affluence and utter poverty, alienation, and deprivation cause anger in the deprived and the less fortunate. Consequently, some of them refuse to live in a state of continuous insult and resort to illegal means of their own to fight injustice and change the well-entrenched socio-economic order.

Daru's critique of Ozi and his corrupt father is accompanied by an obvious longing to enjoy the same social status. This flammable blend of bad tasting contempt and desperate jealousy proves to be the fuel for his implosion and becomes the main metaphor of the novel. Hamid is perhaps writing the story which is larger than individuals and the issues related to them. The rivalry between Ozi and Daru may also stand for the one between Pakistan and India. Daru represents the present day Pakistan that is always in one or the other conflict with India. Pakistan always tries to hold an important position in the modern strategic design. They would compete their neighbours in testing their atomic bombs and would become the atomic power without caring what cost they may have to pay. It is ironical that the poor Pakistanis celebrate their being an atomic power by firing off Kalashnikov rounds in the air while the rich celebrate the same by sitting in their drawing rooms and drinking Black Label. The poor are of course unaware of the fact that the price for the Black Label will also be shunted onto them.
Daru introduces Aurangzeb to the readers as the son of a corrupt father, “…Ozi’s dad, the frequently investigated but as yet unincarcerated Federal Secretary (Retired) Khurram Shah” (11). By virtue of his father’s corruption money, Ozi goes off to the States for higher education while the more promising Daru rots in Pakistan. When Ozi comes back from the United States, Daru comes to see him at his home but he is perturbed to see two big Pajeros that Ozi owns. Ozi’s new and relatively bigger house also causes a sense of economic inferiority in him. He feels nervous because he has the same little house that he already had. Daru narrates a very clear contrast between Ozi’s Pajero and his own Suzuki – even the way the doors of their cars shut compels Daru to underline the difference in status. His small Suzuki car has a nervous cough while Ozi’s Land Cruiser shuts with a deep thud. Ozi’s vehicles supplement his elite social status and a distinctive position which gives him the license to drive rashly and kill a pedestrian for which, later on in the novel, Daru is framed by the police. Daru also narrates the way Ozi drives. Ozi drives his Pajero by putting it on road, giving it a direction and then riding the air, expecting that everyone would leave the way for him. He thinks that: “…bigger cars have the right of way” (25). His upper strata of society gives Ozi and his likes control on the power, literally in terms of air-conditioning and figuratively in every conceivable way. John Freeman writes about Ozi’s social position, in his article, ‘Onward Ruin!’: “Ozi has taken up with Lahore's elite, who wantonly guzzle the city's unstable power supply with their air conditioners as the rest of its denizens bake in the brutal summer heat” (Freeman, 2006). The power distribution in the city is not equal. The lower classes have to
face longer spells of ‘load-shedding’ than the upper class areas. Besides, the lower classes cannot afford airconditioned houses. Murad Badshah’s thinking in this regard is typical of his character. He amuses himself with the idea that the rich too, more or less, have to suffer from the heat of Lahore due to power breakdown occasionally: “It amused him to see the rich people on the grounds of their mansions…fanning themselves in the darkness…Indeed, nothing made Murad Badshah more happy than the distress of the rich”(104). He plays with the idea of rebelling “against the system of hereditary entitlements responsible for cooling only the laziest minority of Pakistan’s population …” (104-105). Daru and Murad Badshah have a similar feeling for the air-conditioning facility that is available for the rich only. Murad Badshah states that he was happier during the days when there was a load-shedding for longer hours. One of the reasons why Daru was desperate is the lack of his ability to avail the air conditioning facility. So his frustration makes him so over-ambitious that he vows to get them all by hook or by crook. He is a man who never likes guns but then to get his aims achieved he would have to use them.

The rich send their sons and daughters to the advanced European countries for high quality education that ultimately helps them control the state apparatuses of power. On the other hand, the poor have to be content with the poor educational system that gives them meagre chances for social mobility. The clear divide becomes even more pronounced after the school age. The rich and the poor students have to part their ways when it comes to joining their colleges. The disparity sends them on two different tracks. This has been shown in the book
through the lives of Daru and Ozi. Ozi is rich and therefore avails the education in a developed country abroad whereas Daru is poor, so is left back to attend the government college. It is natural that he would turn bitter seeing his friend getting a better opportunity than him despite the fact that he always scored better marks in tests than Ozi. The night Ozi left for the States, Daru was apparently angry. He knew that it was money and only money that took the rich to a better place for learning. The novel portrays how social connections built through speed money are necessary for one’s social mobilization. Daru has no such money, so he has not built any connections. Consequently he can find no job once he lost it. He thinks that he is unable to do so because he is not equipped with foreign degrees but Murad Badshah tells him that: “It’s all about connections, old boy”. In his article, ‘Lives of the Rich and Spoiled’, Cameron Stracher comments on Daru’s inability to find a new job in the following words: “Daru can't get another job because jobs are scarce, he tells us, and in a country infested by cronyism, only the cronies, like Ozi, are connected enough to succeed” (Stracher, 2006). However, somehow Daru is finally called for an interview but he has to listen to these disparaging comments from the interviewer: “…the boys we’re hiring have connections worth more than their salaries. We’re just giving them respectability of a job here in exchange for their families’ business…Unless you know some really big fish… no one is going to hire you”(53). All of these circumstances make him disgruntled. He increasingly sounds like a Marxist revolutionary. John Freeman in his article “Onward Ruin,” writes, “As his unemployment stretches into weeks, Shezad becomes increasingly aware of Lahore's divisions between the
poor and the ultra-rich” (Freeman, 2006). Ozi, on the other hand, is well connected in the social hierarchy and reaps many benefits from his father’s connections. Describing his privileged social position, he says, “I’m wealthy, well connected, and successful. My father’s an important person. In all likelihood, I’ll be an important person. Lahore is a tough place if you are not an important person” (184). The conflict between classes is also evident through appropriation and manipulation of the state law by the powerful segments of society who get away with their breaking of common laws. Commenting on the life style of the elite Bradley Winterton writes in his article titled, ‘Sex, Drugs and Abject Poverty in Pakistan’: “They drive around their city in white BMWs, party on floodlit lawns, indulge in illicit alcohol and drugs, and dance to music specially mixed for the occasion by famous London DJs” (Winterton, 2006). Thus, in the novel, the elite are shown to indulge in parties where drugs, extra-marital sex and similar illegal activities are carried out in abundance and remain unquestioned and unscathed by the law. These parties are made possible with the cooperation of the police and Daru witnesses it all: “… a mobile police unit responsible for protecting tonight’s illegal revelry”. It is a bitter irony for Daru that he is arrested by the police for being drunk, and it is the same police that rather protects a party where drinking is quite openly done. Ozi hits a boy with his Pajero and is not accounted for it. This is the most flagrant case of the rich being above the law in the Pakistani society, “a horrific instance of Ozi’s immunity from justice” (Judd, 2006). This aspect is also clear from Daru’s words when he says, “The police don’t stop us on our drive home. We are in a Pajero, after all” (34). Daru is quite
sarcastic about it as he tells Mumtaz: “It’s easy to be an idealist when you drive a Pajero.” He is fired from the bank job because of a rich client who was a landlord and politician. His name is Malik Jiwan. “Malik Jiwan, a rural landlord with half a million U.S. dollars in his account, a seat in the Provincial Assembly…His pastimes include fighting the spread of primary education and stalling the census” (20). The MP Mr Jiwan promises to keep big money (most likely black money) in the bank where Daru is a small-time cashier. The bank manager, accordingly, gives him ‘due’ protocol. As Daru reports, “BM grabs Mr. Jiwan’s hand, in both of his…bows slightly, at the waist and at the neck, a double bend…” Mr. Jiwan behaves badly with Daru who thinks that: “…there is only so much nonsense a self-respecting fellow can be expected to take from these megalomaniacs” (22). He also reflects, “These rich slobs love to treat badly anyone they think depends on them…” Akmal, who is a member of the elite social club, with an “income of a million-plus U.S.” humiliates Daru through his mistreatment. Daru regards Akmal’s manner “slightly condescending, in the way the rich condescend to their hangers-on”(142). Later Akmal makes fun of Daru and says, “You didn’t get fired for trying to sell dope to bank clients, did you?”(143) and he speeds away in his car, bursting with laughter at the same time. Daru’s response is such, “May be he doesn’t think what he said was insulting, or that someone like me can even be insulted, really. But humiliation flushes my face” (143). This theme of social stratification and exploitation of the poor at the hands of the rich in the Pakistani society is elaborated by Hamid with reference to almost all the characters but particularly Daru who, in spite of his own involvement in certain unlawful
practices, is depicted as the victim of the system. Hamid does not spare any sympathetic voices or tone for him in the novel but leaves it to the readers to decide for themselves who is more to be blamed for the social ills and who is more of a victim than a villain. It is a typical dilemma of a society where, as Daru contemplates, “you get no respect unless you have cash. The next time I meet someone who’s heard I’ve been fired and he raises his chin that one extra degree which means he thinks he’s better than me, I’m going to put my fist through his face” (112).

When one day Ozi comes to see Daru at his house, there is no electricity there due to the load-shedding. He feels hot and cannot resist saying to Daru: “You need a generator….How can you survive without one?” Daru tells him the truth: “Ah, Ozi. You just can’t resist; can you? You know I can’t afford a generator” (91). For the people like Ozi, living without generators and air-conditioning is impossible in Pakistan but this luxurious life is impossible for the poor here.

Mumtaz is also unable to comprehend the difficulties and problems of those belonging to the lower social rung. When Daru tells her that he has been fired she casually remarks that to her he doesn’t, “seem like the sort of person who’d enjoy being slave to a faceless business”. Obviously, for the rich employment is a recreational activity and is carried out for “fun”, not survival. Daru’s cynicism exposes this, “This is the very sort of attitude that pisses me off with most of the party crowd. They’re rich enough not to work unless they feel like it, so they think the rest of us are idiots for settling for jobs we don’t love”. The Marxist Professor Julius Superb’s interview by Zulfikar Manto provides an apt occasion to
the novelist to develop a powerful critique of the capitalist system of finance and government. Professor Julius delivers a lecture on air-conditioning that is superb.

"There are two social classes in Pakistan," he says:

The first group, large and sweaty, contains those referred to as the masses. The second group is much smaller, but its members exercises vastly greater control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed the elite. The distinction between members of these two groups is made on the basis of control of an important resource: air-conditioning. You see, the elite have managed to re-create for themselves the living standards of say, Sweden, without leaving the dusty plains of the subcontinent....They wake up in air-conditioned houses, drive air-conditioned cars to air-conditioned offices, grab lunch in air-conditioned restaurants (rights of admission reserved), and at the end of the day go home to their air-conditioned lounges and relax in front of their wide-screen TVs (102-103).

The tool of air-conditioning in a light mood helps Mohsin Hamid reveal the corridors of power and pelf.

How the air-conditioning affects the rich has been described in the following words: "But in the Shah household, in the compound financed by the corrupt millions of Aurangzeb’s father, the hum of the air conditioner was sucking the life out of a marriage. For air-conditioning can be divisive not only in the realm of the political but in the realm of the personal as well"(105). Because Aurangzeb (Ozi) Shah loved AC’s and his wife Mumtaz hates them.

And later in the novel when Daru finds solace in Mumtaz’s arms, the narrator, Daru, muses whether his lack of air-conditioning played a role in attracting her to him. No one will ever know the answer to that question, but it must be said that if air-conditioning doomed her relationship with her husband, it doomed her relationship with his best friend as
The insensitivity of the upper classes is exposed in a discussion between Mumtaz and Ozi when Mumtaz urges Ozi not to use the air-conditioner for such long durations. In her opinion: “The entire country suffers because of the wastefulness of a privileged few.” Ozi’s replies, “I couldn’t care less about the country.” (106) Mumtaz herself also does not bother about the country but she has a “delusional and obsessive fear of pneumonia,” as Ozi points out.

But the most tragic example of the callousness and inhumanity of the elite is the incident where Ozi crushes a teen-age boy to death while driving his Pajero. Ozi has a desire to put some fear into the people who have smaller cars than his. He ignores the red light and thus hits a boy on bicycle. Daru is a witness of the accident. “The boy’s body rolls to a stop by the traffic signal that winks green, unnoticed by the receding Pajero” (96). Elizabeth White comments, “The feckless life of upper-class youth of Pakistan, who talk on cell phones as they speed through congested lanes in their oversized, air-conditioned SUVs, oblivious to traffic lights, regulations, cyclists, beggars, and rickshaws…” (White 2006). Ozi’s inhumanity is further highlighted when Daru tells him that he saw what happened. But “Ozi’s lips stretch. Flatten. Not a smile: a twitch. ‘We’ll take care of his family…I’ll make sure they’re compensated” (97). It makes Daru feel disgusted. Instead of showing his deep remorse and guilt, Ozi still thinks in terms of money alone, that money can buy anything. The masses are not only crushed physically
and economically but also psychologically. This is the case with Daru who loses his self-esteem and respect. His present condition has been described by Murad Badshah in the following words: “…Darashikoh was in rather difficult straits himself: he was in debt, had no job, and was saddled with the heaviest weight of pride and self-delusion I have ever seen one person attempt to carry” (63). Through the course of the reading, we see how Daru’s social position is directly proportional to his economic position. With the passage of time he weakens financially and this expels him from middle class and places him among the lower one. David Valdes Greenwood comments on this aspect in his article, “Hamid’s Debut Burns Brightly” in these words, “The fall from one class to the next is steep, with his (Daru’s) self-esteem and moral balance diminished in the descent” (Greenwood, 2006). With social and financial decline, Daru’s hurt sense of dignity and morality rises and he starts resenting favours from Ozi and his father. When Mumtaz suggests Daru to borrow some money from her husband, Daru replies with clear resentment: “I don’t want any money from Ozi.” Then the readers find him thinking: “I don’t want any of his corrupt cash”. However, with no financer other than Ozi and with no means of earning, Daru could hardly stand tall. So his economic paralysis forces him to go to Ozi’s father to beg for a job. Daru is conscious of losing his dignity: “I was getting by without any more of his hand-outs. And I was quite content not to see him. But tonight I swallow my pride, hold my nose, and arrive at his place promptly at ten” (75). Daru is caught in a dilemma when he thinks of selling hash: “The problem is, selling hash seems sleazy somehow. Lower class. I still like to think of myself as a professional, not
rich but able to stand on my own…” (141). So Money, the new god of capitalism, is the defining agency of an individual’s identity. Daru’s self-respect and ego is again defeated when he overcharges a rich client for hash and does not return him five hundred rupee note: “Pride tells me to give it back, but common sense tells pride to shut up, have a joint, and relax. I shrug and put the note into my wallet” (136).

Murad Badshah is another symbol of the low life in the novel. Hamid gives each character a human face. It is apparent in the relativity with which he shows them treat each other. In the beginning of the novel when Daru is little aware of what lies in store for him, and thus, he is hanging on to the middle class while still looking for some chance of upward mobility, he treats Murad Badshah disparagingly. He does so owing to his relatively higher social status: “I don’t like it when low-class types forget their place and try to become too frank with you” (42). Even though Daru feels bitter at the way the elite class treats him but his own attitude to Manucci is nothing more than scandalous. So it is a vicious social circle of exploitation and counter-exploitation in which the elites drag the middle classes into mud, who in turn treat the lower middle classes scandalously; and the lower middle class people humiliate the poorest of the society. Daru’s bad treatment of Manucci has been described by Ozi who states that Daru would beat Mannucci; he would humiliate him and would not pay him for months. Once when Manucci asks for his salary, Daru prepares to give him some terrible beating but Manucci runs off in time. And Daru thinks “… I did the right thing. Servants have to be kept in line.” This tussle between the master and the servant continues
throughout the novel and it mirrors the larger social divide in Pakistani society. One day, seeing Manucci in cotton white kurta and shalwar, Daru feels upset because he was wearing very ordinary clothes. He says: “I look from myself, in my dirty jeans and T-shirt, to Manucci, in his crisp white cotton, and feel a strange sense of unease” (170). Later, in another episode, Manucci asks Daru not to sell charas, Daru’s choler rises and he slaps Manucci across his face, contemplating at the same time “This will not happen. I won’t permit it. My servant will not tell me what to do” (178).

Another example of the socio-economic exploitation of the lower class by the wealthy classes is the case of Dilaram who runs a brothel in Heera Mandi, the red district of Lahore. Explaining to Mumtaz, who is writing an article on the life of prostitutes, how she got started in the business. Dilaram narrates the story, “I was a pretty girl…The landlord of our area asked me to come to his house. I refused, so he threatened to kill my family. When I went, he raped me”(50). Beginning with this incident she tells Mumtaz about a series of similar events that followed. Ultimately she is sold in the Bazar and becomes a professional herself. This reference to a landlord is deliberate on the part of the novelist who perhaps wishes to make his picture of Pakistani society complete by mentioning this very important part of the society controlled by the feudal lords, and how they control the lives and destinies of the peasants working for them. In the cities where civilized attitude is more expected to prevail, the situation is even worse.

At the opeing of the novel, we find Daru in a prison cell. We are told that he has been facing charges of the murder of boy. The mystery surrounding this makes up
the whole story of Daru and his downward flight from stability to desperation, from salaried banker to low-life addict. In fact it is Ozi who has killed the teenager and gets scot free and, by pulling a few strings in the police department, he implicates Daru in the crime. Aamer Hussain, in his article “Desire, Decadence and Death in Lahore,” comments on Daru’s arrest, “He (Daru) is undone when society, through the machinations of the corrupt plutocrat Aurangzeb, accuses him of the hit-and-run killing of a child for which … Aurangzeb himself is responsible” (Hussain, 2006). Ozi’s bribe money easily shifted the blame of his crime to Daru. It has not only worked wonders to rescue Ozi but also entrapped Daru. Mumtaz is surprised at Ozi’s reaction to the news she broke: “As soon as I heard Daru had been arrested for killing a boy in a car accident, I told Ozi. And Ozi smiled” (242). Ozi’s triumph over Daru is, in fact, the triumph of money over humanity and common decency. Mumtaz later confronts Ozi, “‘You killed the boy, didn’t you?’ Ozi didn’t answer. Which was the answer” (242). However, Mumtaz learns the answer by investigating the matter as a journalist. She writes, “…certain members of the Accountability Commission…pointed out that it would be extremely inconvenient for Khurram Shah, himself under investigation, if his son were to be accused of this crime” (244). In these circumstances Daru is the appropriate bait used by the representatives of the exploitative elitest system (Ozi and his father) to save their own necks and sacrifice the innocent. Thus Daru’s observation about Ozi as “an overgrown child. A child who gets everything. Gets away with everything” (96) is true. At such times, the only thing the lower classes can do against the upper classes is to nourish a deep hatred and malice for them.
and strike them by robbing them as soon as they get the chance. Not all of them sit idle and celebrate their victimhood. Murad Badshah’s words aptly sum up the prevailing sentiment:

You see, it is my passionately held belief that the right to possess property is at best a contingent one. When disparities become too great, a superior right, that to life, outweighs the right to property. Ergo, the very poor have the right to steal from the very rich. Indeed I would go so far as to say that the poor have a duty to do so, for history has shown that the inaction of the working classes perpetuates their subjugation.

Murad Badshah reveals his plan to Daru to rob “high-end, high fashion, exclusive boutiques” and justifies it through a statement that reveals him more like a violent Marxist. He says that rich control the poor masses by using guns, and if guns have such a persuasive power then we can also be persuasive. At this point he shows his revolver very dramatically to Daru. Thus, the lower classes, not always but sometimes definitely, resort to crime in order to satisfy their sense of vengeance and to fulfill their needs. Without saying it in so many words, Hamid seems to explore the reasons of this class conflict, war between social classes and the everyday crimes. It is an acute commentary on the prevailing social disparity and the gradual collapsing of the social order in Pakistan.

Mohsin Hamid has crafted a complex tale of greed, corruption and social oppression that leaves the readers to study his characters, their sense of insecurity, their pride in possessions and their misdeeds. This way he has produced an honest but uncomfortable version of the ‘other’ Pakistan which exists on the fringes of mass Pakistan but which controls its economic life-line through corruption and
power politics. That easy money is acquired through bureaucratic corruption, kick-backs and control over means of production, both agrarian and industrial.

The central metaphor in the title of the story, ‘moth smoke’ has been variously interpreted by the reviewers of the book. However, in my analysis, while concentrating on the self-destructive action of the moths in the novel (Daru, Ozi, Mumtaz), one must not forget the candle and its burning to provide light in the absence of electric power. In this regard, a comparison with Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* would not be out of place. Roy too has used the candle (or Mombatti in Urdu) as one of the metaphors in her novel where the central theme is the confrontation between ‘The Big Man the Laltain and Small Man the Mombatti; in other words, the book shows a maladjustment between ‘The God of Big Things’ –and ‘The God of Small Things’, that is, those who are social rejects or poor and those who wield power and exploit the ‘small things’ or the ‘children of a lesser god’. It is to be noted here that the term ‘Laltain’ and ‘Mombatti’ are highly suggestive. They give us light and burn another light. The Laltain is well fed and well protected. It can bravely face the blowing wind. But on the other hand, the Mombatti has no glass, no protection, no support. It can easily be blown out by the surge of wind. Thus, through these beautiful connotations, the author has aroused our sense of pity and fear for the Mombatties – the down-trodden and have-nots, the marginalized and the defenseless. The ‘Mambatties’ of the novel have to put up with so many trials and tribulations, tyranny and injustice.
Arundhati Roy, whose social politics in her only novel, is much more accentuated than Hamid’s in *Moth Smoke*, is a great champion of the downtrodden and the have-not, the dalit and the deserted. She points out those unnoticed shades of a social problem which generally escape the eyes of the social scientists.

**Significance of a Woman Protagonist**

In a postmodernist sense, Hamid has given counter-narratives in order to accommodate various points of views. One of them is that of Mumtaz, who works as a journalist under a male identity. Commenting on her significance in *Moth Smoke*, Waqas Ahmad Khwaja writes: [she] inserts her voice into the journalistic discourse of her society ... and uncovers the inequities (symbolically, rewriting the history) of the time. She sets herself apart from accepted female roles by refusing to be defined by them – as mother, wife, or mistress – but standing up as an individual in her own right (Khwaja in Sanga 2003: 109).

This brief yet symbolically strong treatment of a female perspective is an important aspect of the book which needs a little bit of elaboration with reference to some other Pakistani writers who have highlighted this simmering problem of the treatment of women in Pakistani law and society particularly since the Zia era.

What is happening in today’s Pakistan, on the social, legal, and political fronts, can be traced back to Zia era when Pakistan first decided to get into the Afghan war and related imbroglios. The United States allowed Zia-ul-Haq to rule with an iron hand and clip the basic rights of the citizens; particularly women’s rights were severely curtailed. The Zia regime was the most explicit and sustained effort...
in Pakistan’s history to impose a hegemonic nationalist project using ‘Islam’ as its articulating principle. Zia’s exploitation of Islam was unique. He secured his power through the propagation of an explicitly misogynist ideology, focusing the perceived immorality of women, as in all religious societies, women are traditionally considered as the source of all moral corruption and social ills. At the same time, Zia gave a singular interpretation to the ideology of Pakistan, articulating a vision of a national culture based on a rigid and orthodox interpretation of Islam. Sadia Toor (1997) has argued that “this period in Pakistani history reflects the growing hegemony of the urban petite bourgeoisie against what it saw as a morally bankrupt national bourgeois class”. The effectiveness of Zia’s discourse of Islamization is evident in its circulation at the level of the everyday or of ‘common sense’ (Gramsci 1988). When a group of upper-middle-class women formed the Women’s Action Forum or WAF and took to the streets to protest against the regime’s discriminatory laws, they were subjected to violence by the indiscriminate use of state power. However, women’s movement and their effective counter-hegemonic activism resulted into growing social and political consciousness about the rights of women in Pakistan. Drama and poetry, in particular, came to constitute an important site of women’s struggle and the contestation of the politics of Islamization. Through its various performances in the streets of Pakistan, Ajoka theatre gave impetus to the growing voices of civil rights. Poets such as Fehmida Riaz and Kishwar Naheed set a long tradition of political poetry in Pakistan to articulate a unique vision of self and society which functioned as a sharp critique of the Pakistani state and its version of Islam. Since
the manner in which they did so is best explicated through their poetry itself, I will quote at length from Riaz’s ‘Chaadar aur Chardiwari’:

Sire! What will I do with this black chaadar?  
Why do you bless me with it?  
I am neither in mourning that I should wear it  
Declare my grief to the world  
Nor am I a Disease, that I should drown, humiliated, in its darkness  
Neither a sinner nor a criminal  
that I should set its black seal  
on my forehead no matter what  
…  
Sir, be kind enough  
don’t give me this black chaadar  
instead, cover with in the shroudless corpse in your chambers  
…  
Listen to her heartrending shrieks  
which raise strange specters  
that remain naked despite their chaadars  
…  
These are the concubines!  
…  
They are the handmaidens  
…  
These are the honourable wives  
who wait, queue upon queue  
to pay the dues of conjugal life  
…  
End this spectacle now  
Cover it up  
The black chaadar has become your necessity, not mine. (Ahmad 1991:54-55)

The importance of this poetry as a mode of protest is illustrated by the fact that Naheed was charged with obscenity and suspended from her government job, while Riaz was forced into exile in order to escape arrest for sedition.
The same poem by Fehmida Riaz ends with the assertion of a new and confident womanhood and rejection of her interpellation by obscurantists as an “always already” sexed being:

“My existence on this earth is not a mere symbol of lust
My intelligence shines brightly on the highway of life
The sweat that shines on the brow of the earth is but my hard work
The decaying corpse is welcome to this chaadar and these four walls
My ship will move full-sailed in the open wind
I am the companion of the new Adam
who has won my confident friendship”. (Ahmad 1991).

In a society with a long history of suppression of the people by dictatorial regimes and a democracy under siege by the corrupt civil and military establishments, predatory capitalism and a heavy debt burden, socio-political and cultural identity become a contentious issue and women’s bodies become sites for cultural politics and the class struggles they embody.⁴

**Corruption in Social, Political and Economic Spheres**

The sickness from which Pakistani society suffers has a number of manifestations. It is not the corruption of the elite alone which is the subject of Hamid’s scathing satire. The corruption of the ruling elite has a trickledown effect. For example, through Murad Badshah’s narration we come to know that the war between the rickshaw-owners and the newly introduced yellow-cabs is waged in which many people lose their lives. The under-privileged and the poor, in some cases, resort to robberies and other crooked practices. It is not only a matter of existence. Over-ambition and the desire to live an easy life are strong motives to entice the less-
privileged like Daru to live a secret and criminal life. Daru has lost all his desire to improve his social status when he loses the job. For Daru the company of Ozi and his wife Mumtaz, proves paralyzing. His fascination with Mumtaz and envy of Ozi eventually pushes him into the vicious circle of corrupt courts. Tehmina Durrani's book, *My Feudal Lord*, set in the '70s and '80s, depicts a Lahore that is disturbing enough. But Hamid's 1990s Lahore shows us to what depths a society can stoop when corruption rules the roost. In fact, to my understanding, the city of Lahore is painted and described as one of the heroes of the book. With unscheduled load-shedding, uneven narrow roads, streets occupied by the criminals and terrorists, air full of gun-powder and tear gas by the police, and the absence of any basic civic amenities, the survival of the city is no less than heroic. The heat, dust, stink, noise and congestion make it one of the most uncontrolled places of the world. (The only other city that stands comparison with it in this regard is Karachi). Daru is infected by the hopelessness of the place: he is reasonably smart, reasonably well-educated – but the job market for young bankers is nil, and the availability of drugs is a tempting self-destruct.

**Nuclearization and Radicalization of Pakistan**

*Moth Smoke* can also be regarded as Pakistan’s post-nuclear text. It is one of the recurring themes of the book. The nuclear competition between Pakistan and India quietly mirrors Daru’s relationship with Ozi while building the tension and discomfort in their environment. Pakistan is a country where the ruling class is corrupt and the economic disparity is so wide that the haves can have immunity
against laws of the country while the have-nots can have frustration and criminal identity. However, in a post-nuclear context a wave of visceral pride runs across all the sections of the society when it is propagated that now the Muslims, particularly Pakistani Muslims also have the bomb just as the Christians, Jews, and Hindus have it. The race and rivalry between India and Pakistan to gain power and to challenge each other has its parallel in the novel where Daru and Ozi are the rivals. In the book, Daru and Ozi discuss the possible apocalyptic scenario after India tested its nuclear capability at the Pokharan site on 11 May 1998. It also satirizes the great outpourings of joy on the part of the members and sympathizers who organized festivities and handed out celebratory sweetmeats on the streets after the successful nuclear tests. Arunthati Roy is her book *The End of Imagination* rightly criticizes the madness that gripped India and Pakistan as they decided to show their nuclear muscles:

May 1998. It'll go down in history books, provided of course we have history books to go down in. Provided, of course, we have a future. There is nothing new or original to be said about nuclear weapons. There can be nothing more humiliating for a writer of fiction to have to do than restate a case that has, over the years, already been made by other people in other parts of the world, and made passionately, eloquently and knowledgeably (Roy 1999: 121-22)

The reaction of saner segments in Pakistani society was no different than that of Roy in India. Eqbal Ahmad wrote, “Nuclearisation of nationalism has further degraded India’s environment. The tests have worsened the xenophobia of Hindutva supporters” (Ahmad 1998). When Pakistan followed India’s nuclear sabre-rattling, Ahmad responded: “I saw on television a picture more awesome
than the familiar mushroom cloud of nuclear explosion. The mountain had turned white. I wondered how much pain had been felt by nature. God’s most wondrous creation”. (Ahmad 1998)

Nationalism which creates war euphoria among the masses to serve the politicians’ agenda is a clear target of Hamid’s criticism. The socio-economic stratification between the haves and the have-nots is minimized by using the military conflict with the eternal enemy across the border. The news of war with India brings the individuals under one flag. Hamid's Pakistan stands for contemporary US, Israel, China, India or any other country. “Hamid's book is just a prologue to a frightening tragedy that will one day emerge from this sibling rivalry that has become an unending war of succession between our two nations” (Ira Pande).

The ghost of the atomic bomb holds the centre stage in the novel. It comes dramatically as an apparition and brings troubles for the poor wretched people. For example after the nuclear explosions a storm comes and sweeps the electricity posts, thus causes prolonged power breakdown across the new nuclear power. So our hero, Daru, is left miserable and powerless against the moths flock around the wax candles only to be destroyed.

**Self-destruction and the Collapse of Social and Moral order**

The propensity to mutual destruction by a potential nuclear war is aptly summed up through the central metaphor of the book, that is, a moth circling a flame. Daru
and Manucci watch a moth: "A few times he seems to touch the flame, but dances off unhurt. Then he ignites like a ball of hair, curling into an oily puff of fumes with a hiss. The candle flame flickers and dims for a moment, then burns as bright as before. Moth smoke lingers"(139). Hamid has made effective use of myth and history in developing the theme of self-destruction in which Pakistan and India are involved. Daru’s ambition to imitate the life style of the ultra-rich is comparable to the ambition of Icarus, the mythical figure that embodies all types of self-destruction. By flying too high and too near the sun, in spite of the warnings of his father Daedelus, the ancient artificer, Icarus met his end in the sea. In a similar way, Daru, the modern-day Icarus, rarely admits his own misdemeanor and immoral behaviour, always trying to shift the blame of his fall to factors external to himself. Whatever be the reason of Daru’s decline, he is ultimately like a moth spiraling around the candle flames like Mumtaz and falls from a respectable position of a banker to the depths of a drug seller. Daru’s downward flight is comparable to yet another tragic hero, that is Milton’s Satan who starts as the rebellious hero and leader of the fallen angels but ends up crawling like a snake, the ‘lowest’ of all animals.

The sacrificial attraction of the moth towards the candle flame is used as a metaphor of disparaging love in Urdu literary traditions. To Hamid, nuclear bomb is also a destructive love and fascination exactly as the use of heroin and the illegitimate affair between Mumtaz and Daru is; and it happens in a which “ plays host to a fundo convention the weekend after the Kamikaze moth’s last flight. The
bearded boys are celebrating our latest firecracker with parades, marches and speeches. The score is 6 to 5 and we’re up"(139).

**Extremism and ‘War on Terror’ in Contemporary Pakistan**

The most significant socio-political trait of the 1990s Pakistan was that it was still reeling from the consequences of Russian occupation of Afghanistan and the resultant influx of millions of Afghan refugees within its borders. As a result, drugs, illegal arms, and the Jehadist madrasahs (religious seminaries) became a norm in the Pakistani social fabric. (Now, Pakistan is again everyone’s favourite frontline state in the war on terror).

*Moth Smoke* was published a year before the September-11 attacks in America and Pakistan’s fateful alliance with the United States in the ‘war on terror’. Though there are clear references to the radicalization of Pakistani society in this novel, but the reasons for this social change are attributed to Russian aggression in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s participation in the proxy war of the United States in Afghanistan. The Zia regime dragged Pakistan into this war from which it is still reeling socially, economically and politically. At the turn of the new century and millennium, a new war, much more devastating in consequences was launched by the United States in which Pakistan once again became its frontline ally to fight an enemy that is unknown. It should be regarded as one of the greatest ironies of history that this time around, too, the United States once again found a more pliable military regime in place in Islamabad to do its bidding. This war is still on but the consequences of this fateful alliance with the United States
are already visible. The Pakistani society has further deteriorated due to a new wave of extremism. A substantial portion of its population has been alienated by the policies of the military government. That part of the society is now waging an endless war against the state. Mohsin Hamid has already published his creative response to this new threat to Pakistan, its polity and existence.⁵
Notes

1. All textual references are from *Moth Smoke*, published in 2000 by Granta Books, Great Britain.

2. In 2004 general elections, for the first time in Pakistan’s history, religious parties won substantial number of seats in the national assembly and formed governments in two provinces. That is an indication of the turning tide in favour of the radical religious parties.

3. The regulation of women and their sexuality becomes the key hegemonic move through which consent across social classes can be secured. The openly Islamophobic nature of Bush regime’s ‘war on terror’ and Pakistan’s position as a frontline state in this war has made matters worse by, among other things, increasing the popularity of religious parties. In fact, in the 2002 elections, a coalition of religious parties was elected by popular vote – something which had never before happened in Pakistani history. This has allowed for even more space for religious groups to flex their muscles, and violence against women – particularly in the form of ‘crimes of honour’ – is on the rise.

4. In 2007, he came up with *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* which captures the consequences of war on terror and Pak-American alliance in this war.
CONCLUSION

At the time of this writing, Pakistan is in the grip of ever new fears and trepidations. Its international borders are being surrounded by Taliban, the US/NATO forces, and a very hostile/conspiratorial presence of its arch-rival India. Internally, it is in the grip of rising extremism and religious fanaticism. Ominous predictions whether it can survive at all are again in the air. The political instability is still the order of the day due to a leadership which lacks moral fibre, and the resolve to fight corruption and extremism. It has lost the trust of its electorate. Economically it is falling apart and there is no chance of immediate improvement as it is suffereing from acute energy crisis. Social order is on the brink of falling apart.

In such scenario, the socio-political responsibilities of its writers, an important part of the civil society, have multiplied. In my introduction, I referred to the general ambivalence of Pakistani literature in English vis-à-vis its social and political conditions. The situation, since I took up this project, has begun to go through a sea change. A new generation of young writers has started heralding their strong responses to what has been happening to the state and society of Pakistan since Independence.

In my introduction, I mentioned five questions that govern my overall research scheme. Keeping in view those issues, I have tried to prove that Pakistan’s post-Independence problems are only partially due to its colonial history and the legacies of Partition. It must be admitted that many, if not all, of its problems have
their roots in the Partition plan devised by Lord Mountbatten and the Congress who dubbed the creation of Pakistan as a secession of a few Muslim-dominated states. Therefore, they refused to give Pakistan its due share in the common industrial, military and monetary assets. It became an untenable state from the very beginning. Having said that, however, one has to admit that during the last sixty-three years it also got tremendous opportunities to emerge as a strong nation like many other postcolonial states in Asia itself, but, somehow, it failed to rise. All those chances were thrown to the winds by its rulers who have been involved in self-aggrandisement. Reading Zulfikar Ghose’s novel The Murder of Aziz Khan (analysed at length in chapter 6) today, one develops the feeling that there is little improvement from what Pakistan was in 1967.

Today, Pakistan and its contemporary ruling elite are no different from those in the 1960s. This is a perpetual national tragedy that has yet to see a denouement. Therefore, the causes of it precarious existence are not far to trace.

The peculiar conditions of Pakistani society among the Postcolonial countries favor the growth of a literature that tends to move from the level of consolation, and guiding awareness, to that of probing and seeking the answers to its myriad problems. The question arises: is this the job of the creative writer/artist to seek those answers that lie in the domain of politics and social change? The postcolonial literature emerging from underdeveloped countries – as Pakistan is today – strives to reflect political and social reality. As the social and political conditions in most postcolonial countries have failed to improve, due to numerous factors, it is the duty of the artist to respond creatively and try to bring about
social change. In this regard, the role that various theatre groups, through their street performances, have been playing should be mentioned. Their awareness campaign to create consciousness among the masses is laudable.

The rigidity of censorship in Pakistan under various regimes had forced novelists to respond to the public's hunger for information by transposing into their works the outline of a reality that is daily projected in the newly liberated media in Pakistan. Thus politics lends its hue to art, and the writer becomes spokesperson for the masses that struggle in silence against the oppression of the ruling social class. The new extremists, prepared under the monopoly of an ideology during the Afghan wars since the Russian invasion in 1979, are as oppressive as the liberal ruling elite. The contemporary Pakistani literature, particularly written in English, is a mirror of the daily struggle of the people for a freedom that they could not find even after sixty-three years of Independence.

Wole Soyinka’s analysis of his native Nigeria can be an apt allegory of contemporary Pakistan as well: “Africans must accuse Africa’s failed leadership for the trail of skeletons along desiccated highways … the lassitude and hopelessness of emaciated survivors crowded into refugee camps … the mounds of corpses. Africa had been betrayed from within” (1996: 57). The Pakistani writers’ new emphasis also underlines the fact that the failure of Pakistani leadership cannot be dismissed, even after so many decades of independence, and keep blaming the colonial misrule and partition injustices. Another postcolonial writer Chinua Achebe has aptly summed up the failure that has been independence so far in these words: the “collusive swindle that was
independence” (1964:45). Pakistan’s leaders have been concerned only with maintaining their hold on power state appratuses created by their colonial masters, so eager to preserve their status as the new kings/brown sahibs that they have never really addressed the problems facing the common people. The artist now takes up the burden of the new struggle to make the masses realize that the end of colonization was not the end of the struggle. Faiz Ahmed Faiz expresses his disillusionment with the failure that was Independence:

This stained light, this night-bitten dawn –
This is not the dawn we yearned for.
This is not the dawn for which we set out
Hoping that in the sky’s wilderness
We should reach the final destination of the stars

The night is as oppressive as ever.
The time for the liberation of heart and mind
Has not come yet.
Continue your arduous journey.
This is not your destination.

(Kamal and Hasan 2006)

Thus, it should not sound surprising that the oppression in the society pushes the masses into the hands of the theocrats who provoke them by igniting their sense of pride in nationalism, identity and resistance against the state systems. Edward Said has rightly pointed out:
Years of … incompetence and corruption at every level bled the life out of our societies, already crippled by an almost total absence of participatory democracy and the hope that goes with it. We must all take the blame for this colonial failure. Blessed with enormous human and natural resources, the third world has declined in production in nearly every sphere: during the last decade the gross national product has shrunk, agricultural output has grown smaller, reserves of money and resources have dwindled, and a whole series of civil wars … have sapped much of the vitality of our societies. … Our best writers, intellectuals, and artists are either silenced and tamed or imprisoned and in exile. Journalism is at an all-time low. Unpopular opinions are rarely expressed, and in nearly every society the media exist basically to further the regime’s own version of reality. (Said 1996, xxvi-ii)

As the citizens of the front-line state, Pakistanis have suffered the “foreign-aid curse” the way other nations suffer “the resource crunch”. The foreign aid, a debt on the fragile existence of its people, ends up in the foreign accounts of its rulers. Extremism flourishes in the absence of legitimate state authority and a just social order.

At the same time, however, one must take the good images into account while drawing a picture of contemporary Pakistan. The widespread publicity given to Pakistan’s 2007 crisis has obscured the important changes which had quietly taken place during the last ten years, with growth approaching 8 percent and what was briefly the fastest-rising stock market in Asia.

Few people have realized how profoundly Pakistani media has changed. Many new TV and radio channels have opened and caused a scandalous openness with their live broadcasts. This has made the masses very cautious about their activities. However, this has not yet been properly reported in the west. Perhaps, that is why the Europeans mostly seem to be ill-informed about Pakistan and just
fear the military stagnation and jihadi terrorism in the country, without deeply exploring the profound impact of the media that is now an important player to change the political and social landscape of Pakistan.

The lawyers’ movement during 2007-2009 has empowered the urban middle classes who have showed their political vision and perseverance while challenging a military ruler and then a newly restored democracy. This helped produce a representation of middle class civil society in the country’s mainstream politics. However, three big question marks still hang on its existence. The first is the power of the extremists for which Pakistan is in the global spotlight. Wedged between its old rival India and the small violence-rocked Afghanistan, Pakistan is seriously threatened by the consequences of war on terror.

The other force that has a decisive role in the reversal of democratic policies or even the fate of democracy is the army. In her recent book, *Military, Inc.*, the political scientist Ayesha Siddiqa has accumulated data that shows how the army controls Pakistan’s economy and politics irrespective of the fact who is in power.

Siddiqa estimated, for example, that the army is now in command and control of the economic assets of a value of about 20 billion dollars. The same force has its control over one third of all the manufacturing of the country. Five of the biggest corporations are army assets which have the most influential role in the market as well as in the politics.
The third issue is that of illiteracy or a sub-standard education. Hamid’s *Moth Smoke* highlights this festering issue when we are told that Ozi, the rich and corrupt father’s son, goes to the States for higher education and thus returns equipped to enlarge and enrich the family coffers. On the other hand, a socially mediocre person like Daru, in spite of his greater intellectual standing and hardwork is left behind on the social ladder only because he cannot go abroad to fetch a prestigious degree. The failure of the Pakistani governments to educate its people casts a gloomy shadow over the future of the country. Pakistan spends only 1.8 percent of its GDP on education. Its literacy rate is only 49 percent which is falling every year, and it is far behind India whose literacy rate is 65 percent and the ratio is increasing there.

Almost to coincide with this world attention for all the wrong reasons, Pakistani writings in English, on the contrary, have won a sudden but visible attention of the international community as a number of writers of Pakistani origin like Mohammad Hanif, Kamila Shamsie, Nadeem Aslam, Aamer Hussain, Shahbano Bilgrami, Azhar Abidi, Musharraf Ali Farooqi, Daniyal Mueenuddin and many others have won praise and made their mark on the global literary stage. It would be in the fitness of my concluding remarks that I should briefly mention the contemporary literary scene and its socio-political contexts.

This new younger generation of writers is addressing the problems and thorny issues confronting Pakistan today. Some of them, like Muhammad Hanif and Danial Mueenuddin, are using even contemporary history of quite political nature
for their artistic responses. For example Muhammad Hanif, in his debut novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), has presented a politico-historical account of Pakistan. There is a ghostly timeliness in it which creeps the way Taliban carry insurgency in Afghanistan; as Pakistan fights Taliban extremists, and a conundrum of Indian and American spy agents, on its own soil; and as Pakistan struggles to resolve yet another mysterious assassination of a popular leader. Dictators have long exercised the literary imagination. It is as a serious novel of Pakistan's difficult recent history that *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* has captured the global literary imagination. In fact the chaos in today’s political scenario is a development of the similar farce that emerged out of the 1988 crash, killing the military dictator Zia ul Haq. The novel spends far more time exposing the stupidity, brutality and hypocrisy of Pakistan's military dictators. It has no favourites when it has to choose its targets for satire. It spares none, and has no sympathy with any one, be it the Saudi Prince or the sycophants surrounding General Zia.

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes* does lift the veil on a period of history that has become a continuing present. It has depicted the politics of convenience with the strokes of dark humour. This turns out to be a refreshing remedy to present today’s ubiquitous idiom of “war on terror”.

If Hanif’s novel is a political satire on a grand scale, Daniyal Mueenuddin’s first collection of short stories, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009) contains snapshots of the human condition as exposed in rural Pakistan’s feudal society. He delves into the intimate moments of Pakistani landed gentry, their corrupt
households and the shattered dreams of their servants. Mueenuddin is relatively better at telling the tales of the low, the distressed and the weak. He succeeds in giving voice to these down-trodden sections of community by exploring the unbalanced structures of Pakistani society.

Mueenuddin, while highlighting the diversity of Pakistan, is not much interested in being political writer. The world created by him is also the same as the worlds of other works of literature. Here again there are hierarchical structures which everyone wants to climb and reach the top most position but it is for a very few to occupy.

There is a war raging in Pakistan between the forces of status-quo and those of change. The ruling elite are ever refusing to acknowledge that economic oppression foments, regionalism, provincialism and extremism. A community’s disenchantment with the prevailing political set-up is linked to the political and economic exploitation, violation of human rights and oppression. A relationship between economic oppression and political victimization and revolutionary politics is established in the literature of resistance. A tragic case in point is the situation in the largest province of Pakistan, Balochistan, and its literature of resistance.

In the foreseeable future some more violence and unrest seems inevitable. But it can be asserted that it is not going to simply fall apart, nor would it implode, nor fall a prey to Islamist insurgency, nor would it welcome a Taliban regime. Taken together with the seismic shift in the thinking of Pakistan’s civil society, the new
scenario offers the best hope for its people who have waited too long for their
dream of Independence to come true. In this regard, the Pakistani writers have
started to realize and assume their socio-political and cultural responsibility as is
evident from my study as well as from the brief survey of recent writings in
English emerging from Pakistan.
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