

CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to question the homogeneous and seamless imaginings of nation through a politically engaged reading of South Asian Anglophone fiction dealing with history. The representative texts taken up for critical appraisal problematise the idea of “nation” and offer scope to address the lacuna in envisioning a western modular form of nation in South Asian context. Anderson’s definition of nation as “an imagined political community” (6) in his influential book *Imagined Communities* dominates academic discussions of nation and nationalism. Though non-western thinkers have delved into the idea of nation and nationalism which developed in the South Asian region, there seems to be a lack of a dominant discourse that conjures up a non-western model of nation and nationalism. So, critical theory seems to valorise Benedict Anderson’s idea of a nation as an imagined, homogeneous and stable community without considering the dynamic interplay between historical specificity and nationalism characterising the South Asian nations. The trajectory of nationalism in the Indian subcontinent is very different from that of European nations owing to its history of colonialism and its legacy of partition into two independent nation states: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. The South Asian region can hardly be characterised as a monolithic entity owing to its multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious identities. Reification of a grand homogeneous narrative of nation in the South Asian context runs the risk of collapsing its numerous fragmented narratives. Though Anderson was thinking of South East Asia and his views have been widely accepted in western academia and in postcolonial theory it remains doubtful whether his modular form of nation can be considered as paradigmatic of South Asian nations. This thesis critically reconstructs the idea of nation through the optics of historical fiction.

Drawing from post-structural schools of thought, the study attempts at partaking of the theoretical paradigms focused on nation, nationalism and history-fiction interface in order to explore the sheer complexity of the trajectory of nationalism in the subcontinent. The principal points of focus are the analysis of historical fiction as a repository of the national imaginary, exploration of the politics of nationalism, unveiling of the lived experience of historical events affecting the subcontinent and an attempt at locating an alternative fluid connotation of nation in the context of South Asia. The texts

taken up for the purpose of the study belong to the post-independence era spanning from mid twentieth to early twenty first century and emanating from three Subcontinental nations namely India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. What is noticeable in the exemplary texts by the South Asian writers is that there is a deliberate attempt to interrogate and provide a revisionary critique of the essential idea of nation. The relevance of New Historicism to this study is apparent in its intervention of the logocentric idea of nation by re-situating of the historical novels in the complex discourses of the period and juxtaposing the texts with contemporary socio-political and cultural contexts.

Nation as an object of scholarly research has been taken up by experts from diverse fields. There has been steady flow of literature on cataclysmic events of partition and civil war affecting the Indian subcontinent. However, little scholarly research has been undertaken in a comparative framework, especially in the context of South Asia. Most of the available literature has been confined to its analysis by individual novelists without a comparative perspective. Mark Stein once claimed that reading literature within a comparative framework assumes great importance as literature transcends national boundaries be it thematically and aesthetically, and in terms of its production and reception. He claims that “writerly affiliations and intertextual connections across culture and ethnicity will remain hidden” (Maxey 19) unless comparative analysis of authors and texts is encouraged. In line with this thought, the present thesis attempts to explore the commonalities and differences in South Asian fiction dealing with history in order to subvert hegemonic narratives and thereby re-imagine the idea of nation. Emerging from different socio-cultural locations, these texts reveal the heterogeneous nature of nationalism innate to multicultural Subcontinental nations.

The thesis seeks to examine how the historical novels taken up for analysis form a part of national narratives within which the discourse of nation is reconstructed. The study reveals how the process of nation building in the context of South Asia follows a multi-dimensional trajectory owing to the long lasting effects of Partition and Civil War such as the traumatic experience of women, repeated instances of mob violence owing to ethnic sentiments, and rise of subnational aspirations across the nation. These factors not only alter the perception of the modular nation but also debunk the glorification of nationalism as a unifying force in the decades after partition. The historical events brought a massive change in conceptualising the nation in relation to politically

demarcated national boundaries. The novels taken up for the study share common contexts and features that re-envision the idea of nation as it evolves in the postcolonial era with the memories of its communal past casting its shadow over its connotation.

Benedict Anderson's proposition of nation as an "imagined political community"(6) paved the way for an essential link between "nation" and "imagination". It dismantled the disciplinary boundaries between politics and aesthetics thereby encouraging critical engagement on the concept of nation. The present research adds to the existing scholarship on nation and imagination by offering fresh perspectives on its feasibility in the context of South Asia. It addresses a range of questions: Is it possible to construe nation as a modular form in a culturally diverse South Asian region? How do historical novelists conceive and contest the idea of nation through the apparatus of imaginative literature? What factors deconstruct the grand narratives of homogeneous nation in South Asia? These and other related issues concerning nation and nationalism are explored in this thesis.

The study shall enter into a discussion of the politics of historical novels through broad reflections on nation and nationalism, but it shall not delve into imperialism *per se*. The thesis shall reflect on some commonalities and peculiarities of nationhood in the context of Indian subcontinent. The approach of this study is textual analysis informed by the historical context of the select South Asian fiction. The discussion of novels has been on the basis of their thematic preoccupation. In case of more than one historical novel by the same author, only the work that has a bearing on the aspect of nationalistic themes discussed in the chapters has been included.

For the purpose of this study, Bangladeshi Literature in English has not been taken up for a specific reason. The dynamic interplay between historical specificity and nationalism in the context of Bangladesh has affected the development of literature in English. Even though Bangladesh is a country with rich literary tradition in Bangla language but there is not much literature available in English, especially novels. Creative writing in Bangladesh has remained confined more or less to the genre of poetry. The genre of fiction is still in its nascent stage of development with no discernible tradition as such. As compared to Bangladeshi literature in English, its Subcontinental counterparts Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan writing in English have much advanced in scholarly research on themes of nation and nationalism. It is only in the recent years that the genre

of fiction has come to limelight with notable contributions from Bangladeshi diasporic writers. Adib Khan, Monica Ali, Tahmima Anam among few other diasporic writers have entered the realm of literary discussions with their novels such as *Seasonal Adjustments* (1994), *Brick Lane* (2003) and *A Golden Age* (2007) drawing scholarly attention and critical acclaim for their pertinent thematic preoccupations.

Kaiser Haq, one of the prominent poets from Bangladesh points out that the absence of “an anglophone literary community” (Tickell 59) that would nurture and promote cultural production in English as well as paucity of publishing houses has affected its creative output in English. He believes that Bangladeshi nationalism which emphasised upon its linguistics specifics in order to distinguish itself from West Pakistan significantly favoured Bangla as a determining factor of its collective identity. The declaration of Bangla as the official language and medium of education at all levels further ensured that English always remain less preferred than Bangla language.

Speaking of South Asia as a whole, another prominent Bangladeshi academic and writer Fakrul Alam states: “in the aftermath of partition [i.e. 1947] there would be a centrifugal tendency [in English-language writing] because of linguistic policy as well as evolution of the nation-states of the region that would enervate and delay the establishment of this category of writing” (qtd in Tickell 63). This is particularly apparent in case of Bangladesh with Bangla language shaping its nationalistic discourse. Emerging Bangladeshi writer Farah Ghuznavi’s characterisation of herself as a “sacrificial lamb” (Tickell 62) to the political climate that plagued Bangladesh post 1971 bears testimony to Alam’s claim where lack of easy access to English affected the creative output of the writers to a great extent.

Though “South Asian Literature in English” has an extensive history with writers from Indian subcontinent and its diaspora contributing to its rich literary tradition, yet it has been relatively undefined as an organisational category. Paul Brians in the introduction to his book *Modern South Asian Literature in English* considers South Asian Literature “as a colourful kaleidoscope of fragmented views, coloured by the perceptions of its authors, reflecting myriad realities- and fantasies” (6). Jaina C. Sanga in the introduction to his edited book *South Asian Novelists in English* states that South Asian novels in English have garnered immense popularity because they represent a body of literature which has great power and relevance in the context of South Asia. The

novelists instead of pandering to the western audiences desire for “nostalgic, idealized imagery” (xii) provide largely alternative views of South Asian reality. They portray a vibrant, chaotic world where religion and politics matter in the day to day life and traditional values and conventions of modernity are in dichotomy. H. Anniah Gowda after assessing South Asian literature in English dismisses comments made against it as “a Matthew Arnold in a sari or a John Cheever in a dhoti” (qtd in Ramraj 3) and states that writers such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao have confirmed its autonomous status with their preoccupation with form, language and perspectives that originate in the Indian soil.

The appellation “South Asian Historical Fiction” may be considered as an umbrella term that bring together texts that document and respond in different ways to social experiences born out of South Asia’s history of colonisation, struggle for independence, its complex internal politics and its transformations in the form of socio-economic and other developments. In the Indian subcontinent, the history of partition and its aftermath, history of military rule in Pakistan, traumatising civil war in Sri Lanka and the nationalist insurgencies have generated fictional representation.

The relationship between history and literature merits critical reflection in any discussion on historical fiction. It is generally seen that professional historians are concerned with the depiction of large events and general trends. Novelists on the other hand analyse the impact of the events on individual lives. They study the importance of ideological, psychological or physical factors on the flow of history. Urvashi Butalia in her book *The Other Side of Silence* (1988) gives primacy to the voices of the people located on the margins of history particularly the women, children, ordinary people, the lower castes and the untouchables in order to capture the human dimensions of Partition. She states that the official history seemed to capture only the political developments that led up to the colossal tragedy of Partition. The emotional experiences of “loss and sharing, friendship and enmity, grief and joy” (7) remain largely under represented in the historians account of the Partition.

Aristotle in *Poetics* draws a clear distinction between the modes employed by the historian and the poet to communicate the past. Aristotle maintains that the function of the historian is to describe what has happened while the poet conveys what might happen in the future. He believes that the poet’s ability to generalise helps them to communicate

something more philosophical and truthful than the historian who remains confined to individual events. Philip Sidney in his *The Defence of Poesie* (1595) too conforms to Aristotle's stance on the poet-historian binary where he too defends poetry's capacity to communicate something more universal and profound than the historian by utilising its creative license in contrast to the chroniclers governed by the constraints imposed upon them in representing reality.

The genre of the historical novel emerged to depict the human values and emotions embedded in any historical event. Critics have approached history from various perspectives. While the traditional historicists regarded history as universal, the new historicists regard it as cultural. Hayden White has brought about a paradigm shift in the way we look at history. Hayden White's *Metahistory* provides new insights into the literary nature of historical writing. He treats historical work as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse" (ix). White argues that a deep narrative structure exists beyond the surface level of historical texts. He undermines the presumed status of history as bedrock of factuality by drawing comparisons between history and literature. He has widely studied the relationship between history and narrative and believes that historiographical and fictional narratives are not only related but that historiographical narratives need literary narratives in order to be understood. He brings forth the idea that history writing is based on certain moral and aesthetic grounds and bound by its use of language. The way history is interpreted depends to a large extent upon the context of the reader. For Hayden White the events themselves are devoid of meaning. The writers impose structure upon a particular collection of past events and vividly portray the impact of the events upon public and private life.

New Historicists believe that a literary text can never be evaluated apart from the socio, cultural and political condition of the society in which it is produced. As a result, no one can be regarded as an authority on a historical subject, as there may be so many interpretations on that subject depending on the context. The historian takes recourse to certain literary techniques thereby comingling fact and fiction in order to give "explanatory affect" (White x) to a set of actual events that happened in the past. During the process of emplotment of historical events into a narrative, the historian also engages in exclusion, stress and subordination of certain elements of the story in the interest of constituting a narrative of a particular kind. That is why White believes that the historian

assumes a particular position based on his ideological inclination. He states “There does, in fact, appear to be an irreducible ideological component in every historical account of reality”(21). In line with continental European thinkers namely Valery, Heidegger, Sartre, Levi Strauss and Michel Foucault, Hayden White too recognises the fictive character of historiography and raises scepticism regarding its claims to objectivity.

According to poststructuralist theorists the relationship between history and fiction is close but problematic too. The problematic relationship manifests itself more clearly in historical novels which are concerned with the borderland space in which history meets fiction. Historical events depicted in fiction no longer remain mere reportage of past events. In the poststructuralist era it has undergone changes in its connotation. According to poststructuralist approach, history not only lacks in “telos” or “end” but it is also trapped in some sort of cyclical pattern which hinders us from attaining the “truth”. History is also based on the postmodern notion of “difference”. The historical novels only have meaning when viewed in light of their difference in relation to other novels dealing with the same event. The way history is interpreted depends to a large extent upon the context of the reader. The potential for ambivalent representation innate to historical novels have been explored by postcolonial writers to challenge grand narratives of nation. William Godwin argues that the very mode of fictionalising the past indicates the subjective engagement with history and at the same time he also admits that the historians too fall back upon on conjecture or invention to convey the past. So he believes that the “reader will be miserably deluded if, while he reads history, he suffers himself to imagine that he is reading facts” (Groot 18). Butalia opines that “exercise of writing contentious histories” (xxiv) is important to unveil the multilayered, multifaceted and open-ended nature of history.

Poststructuralists thinkers like Foucault and Derrida have undermined the “logocentricism” of history by pointing out the warring chain of signification that governs any knowledge of historical truth and reality. Michel Foucault has revolutionised the idea of history by stating that the criteria of “truth” is determined by discourse which is inseparable from institutions of power existing in the society. Foucault believes that real power is exercised through discourse which governs all knowledge of the society. The apparent implication of Derrida’s “deconstruction” is evident in questioning of the “notions of identity, origin, intention and the production of

meaning” (Selden 179) in humanities and other disciplines. His statement “the task of deconstruction” is “to discover ...the other of philosophy” (Selden 179) lends impetus to unravel the contentious nature of historical truth. The poststructuralist school asserts that history is always narrated and is available to us in the form of “representations” rather than in pure form. The idea of stable and single history is a myth propagated by institutions of power to fulfil their own interests. So, it is important to dismantle the assumption of fixed history by delving into the discontinuous, contradictory and fragmented histories. It is here that new historicist’s idea of juxtaposition of text and context comes into play by resituating the historical novels in the complex socio, political and popular discourse of their originating period.

The development of postmodernism, poststructuralism and other related theories from 1960s and 1970s has politicised the relation between history and historical fiction. Poststructuralist views make it clear that history is a text: a discourse which consists of representations. The interplay between historical events and day-to-day life of common man generated a renewed vigour in exploring the porous boundary between history and historicity of life represented by literature. Taking a cue from Saussure’s founding principle of the “arbitrary nature of the sign”, the poststructuralist have discovered “the essentially unstable nature of signification” (Pearson 155) even in the context of history. They consider history as a discourse in language or discursive formation which itself is governed by free play of semantics thereby rendering obsolete the monolithic view of history. Poststructuralists in their critique and subversion of dominant unified truth subtly hint at “a chameleon-like existence” (Pearson 155) of the signifiers which generates different meaning based on the context.

In line with poststructuralists, Nila Shah in her book titled *Novel as History* (2003) points to the possibility of several alternative interpretations of history based on individual and collective experiences. She argues that the postcolonial writers reclaim the alternative and silenced versions of history through their fictional renderings of historical events. Her argument subtly indicates that neither is there a monolithic version of history nor can fiction be regarded as wholly subjective and ahistorical. She says:

A historical narration, thus, becomes a complex construct of adequately and inadequately explained events, which connotes that the historian interprets his material on inferential or speculative grounds. Eventually, subjectivity found its

place into the narration of the facts and historical fiction carved its place amongst the prose writing. (Shah quoted in Chakravarty 14)

Scottish theorist Walter Bryce Gallie sheds light on the close relationship between history and fiction. He is of the opinion that historical fiction bridges the boundary between history and fiction by articulating historical events effectively in narrative form. He also considers fiction as a medium to interrogate the validity of the historical facts.

History does not as such differ from fiction, therefore, in so far as it essentially depends on and develops our skill and subtlety in following stories. History does of course differ from fiction in so far as it is obligated to rest upon evidence of the occurrence in real space and time as what it describes and in so far as it must grow out of a critical assessment of the received materials of history, including the analyses and interpretations of other historians. (quoted in Chakravarty 15)

Hayden White also points to the literary dimension of history when he states that the historian ingeniously configures the historical events in the form a specific narrative structure in order to convey a particular notion of history. Nila Shah, Gallie and Hayden White underscore the possibility of historiographic fiction as “a new expressive axis for history” (Chakravarty 17).

Historical novels are works that in some way lend reasonable fidelity to “historical milieux” (Shaw 20) through their emotionally engaging representation of society, characters and events that in the very fact existed in the past. The modern historical came to prominence with the rise of historicism which foregrounded history as part of the cultural milieu. The historian Herbert Butterfield states that the historical novels attempts to “reconstruct a world, to particularise, to catch a glimpse of human nature” (Shaw 25) thereby rendering vivid the unique atmosphere of any bygone era. Several influential historicists such as Thomas Carlyle, E.M.W. Tillyard and others have traced the interrelations between the literature and general trends of a period. They consider literary history as a mirror of the socio, political and cultural spirit of the age. For instance, Carlyle in one of his essays in *Edinburgh Review* echoes the view when he states that “The history of a nation’s poetry is the essence of its history, political, scientific, religious” (qtd in Pearson 190). Similarly Tillyard’s illuminating book *The*

Elizabethan World Picture (1942) reflects the characteristic spirit of Shakespeare's period.

Another accomplished literary critic Avrom Fleishman attributes importance to the historicist vision by considering "history as a shaping force" (Shaw 25) of all historical novels in general. Avrom Fleishman in his book *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (1971) lays down certain salient features of historical fiction. First, it must be comprised of historical events wherein public sphere (war, politics, economy etc.) is comingled with the private lives in order to portray its effect on the personal development of the characters; second, the settings must be in the distant past, beyond the memory of the present and preceding generations and third, real historical figures must be included along with the fictional characters to lend credibility to the historical world portrayed by the novelists.

Georg Lukacs' book *The Historical Novel* (1955) offers a theoretical framework of the representational features of realist historical novel. Lukacs believes that the historical novel differs from other nonfictional kinds of writing in its faithful portrayal of historical epoch by relating characters to actual events. Lukacs posits that typical representative fictional protagonists in their complex interaction in the society "emerge as dialectical embodiment of vast social forces" (Foley 148) and these figures also reflect the primary role of the populace in mobilising mass consciousness and effecting major historical change. The fate of the typical characters along with the complications and resolutions characterising the plot represent the essential trajectory of historical movement.

The essence of Scott's art lies in his ability to foreground the importance of time and place in historical novels. For him there is a deep connection between a fate suffered by certain groups of people in their personal lives and historical crisis pervading a nation. He interweaves the personal destinies of his characters with concrete historical context to portray the totality of national life. Scott does not place great historical heroes upon a pedestal; rather they are presented as minor characters with virtues as well as petty human qualities. Lukacs states that "Through this manner of human-historical portrayal Scott makes history live" (Lukacs57). Influenced by Scott's inventiveness in characterisation, Pushkin, Tolstoy and Balzac too emphasise upon the importance of popular life by introducing "middle-of-the-road hero" (Lukacs 81) who in their manifold

struggles and interactions represent the intricacies of historical events and its profound impact on everyday life. They consider popular involvement in history as a vital precondition of historical novels.

Georg Lukacs believes that historical novels are a part of tributaries which branch off from the stream of eighteenth-century novels only to discover and enrich in artistic terms the importance of history in the realist fiction. He opines that the genre of historical fiction shares the same vision of reality embodied in European realistic novels. Lukacs' belief that history is a process that can be unfolded by exploring the particularities of everyday life provides the ultimate ground for his pivotal concept that human beings cannot be studied as isolated individuals but only in relation to their spectrum of existence in the society. For Lukacs, realist historical fiction can provide "a different, but no less truthful picture of reality than does natural science" (Shaw 41) with the help of "typical" characters serving as an index of the society.

The plausibility of historical fiction depends to a great extent upon the craftsmanship of the novelist in combining "public historical fact with private historical experience" (Porter 318). The combination of historical evidences and lived experiences of people located in a critical juncture of history provides a human centred meaning of history. Critic Madhumita Adhikari probably affirms this sociological dimension of historical fiction when she states that "The historiographer and the literary historian articulate the past... But it is fictionalized history that is perhaps the most effective tool with which the past can be understood and evaluated, for the distancing achieved by storytelling enables reader and writer alike to revisit history with a new and deeper awareness" (qtd in Chakravarty 30).

Historical fiction as a literary genre as we know it in contemporary times is considered to have originated during the early nineteenth century with the writings of Scottish historian, Sir Walter Scott followed by Honore de Balzac, James Fenimore Cooper and Leo Tolstoy among many others who explored historical events as their subject. Walter Scott's *Waverly* novels are regarded as the first of its kind in the western tradition where he concretises and illuminates the readers in Scottish history. However, it must be noted that Scott himself had many antecedents in this mode of writing, with a long tradition of Greek and Latin literatures mingling history and fiction in the form of mythology and folklore. The significance of Scott's historical fiction lies in his ability to

create recognisable characters within a factual framework which will demonstrate the social milieu that led people to act in a particular way in the past. Georg Lukacs in his influential book *The Historical Novel* takes Scott as exemplary to underscore the social and ideological basis of historical fiction. He believes what supposedly makes Scott different from his forbears is the way he integrates men and manners in historical fiction: “What matters therefore in the historical novel is not the retelling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality”(Lukacs 44).

Lukacs posits that Scott brought a paradigm shift in historical fiction by foregrounding the individuals historically rather than relegating history to the background. Scott’s novels do not remain confined to “mere costumery”; he brings in a sense of human connection by deriving “the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age” (Lukacs 15). Lukacs argues that Scott induces a kind of historical empathy between then and now by portraying authentic characters who are emblematic of “historical-social types”(Lukacs 34) in typically human terms. Herein for Lukacs lies the political importance of the historical fiction.

Lukacs also argues that momentous historical wars, economic and social upheavals create a sense of history among the subjects. For instance, he states that the revolutionary Napoleonic wars and emergence of capitalist economy after the Enlightenment had direct impact on the evolution of realistic fiction. They played an influential role in generating historical consciousness regarding the relationship between spatio-temporal location of characters and their experiences. Prior to that history was often considered as something static, unalterable and reified. The impact of historical events upon their daily lives helped them to comprehend their own existence as something steeped in history. Their day-to-day experiences and consciousness of their historicity often lent impetus to the emergence of nationalism. Lukacs states “The appeal to national independence and national character is necessarily connected with a reawakening of national history...” (Lukacs 23). Lukacs, Alessandro Manzoni and historian Herbert Butterfield consider the historical novel as an important means of furthering nationalism. They acknowledge the role of historical novel in conceiving of national character and nation’s self-definition. Taking cue from them it may be inferred

that historical novel might serve as a crucial site in problematising Anderson's idea of "imagined community" in the context of South Asia.

Nation and Nationalism

Though definitions of nation abound there is a lack of unanimity regarding its conceptualisation as it is often enveloped by ideas of politics, culture, power, ethnicity etc. which are ambivalent by nature. Joseph Stalin defines nation as "a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture" (Meissner 58). Walker F. Connor, who is known for his insistence on ethnic character of nationalism defines nation as "a self-differentiating ethnic group" (Conversi 3). His definition draws a link between ethnicity and nationality and at the same time emphasises on subjective realm of nation by considering it as a self-defining concept. He states that "the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members from all other people in a most vital way" (Hutchinson and Smith 36). Eric Hobsbawm in his much acclaimed work *Nations and Nationalisms Since 1780*, views nation as a changing and evolving construct brought into being by the sentiments of nationalism. He also considers nation building as a prerogative of the educated elites or the ruling class for furthering their political interests. Taking cue from their views of nation as a community of people united by shared territory and memory, ethnicity and nationalistic sentiments attempts have been made in literary narratives to delineate the varied and complex imaginings of nation.

Homi K. Bhabha in his widely influential edited book *Nation and Narration* emphasises on the ambivalence characterising the idea of nation by conceiving it as an imaginary cultural construction. He defines nation "as a system of cultural signification, as representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity" (2,3). Nation and culture are inextricably intertwined as it a common culture or way of life that acts as a catalyst to unite communities who conceive of a shared homeland. Bhabha observes that the concept of nation is fluid as it is based on the idea of culture which itself is unstable and always in a state of flux. According to Bhabha, interactions of contending cultures implode nationalist projection of a stable homogeneous nation. Both Bhabha and Gellner believe that the "temporality" surrounding the discourse of nation arises out of the arbitrary signs and symbols that signify national culture.

In an essay titled “What is a Nation” Ernest Renan attempts to provide somewhat stable idea of a nation. He defines nation as “a soul, a spiritual principle” (Bhabha 19) which is constituted by glorious legacy of memories, common will to live together and perform great deeds in future. He considers violence as a crucial factor in forging unity and creating a nation. Historical enquiry shows that people unite more in their memories of suffering than triumphs as alleviating grief requires common effort by social groups seeking a stable and collective identity. Benedict Anderson considers nationality as well as its multiple significations that is nation-ness, nationalism as “cultural artifacts of a particular kind” (4). He views nation as a modular form comprising of emotional dimension and capable of being transplanted across the world to merge with a wide variety of political ideologies. Anderson defines nation “an imagined political community” (6) which is “inherently limited and sovereign”. It is imagined because it entails a sense of imagined collectivity or communion between fellow-members who will never meet or know or hear of each other. It is limited in the sense that even the largest of nations will have some finite boundaries beyond which exist other nations. Anderson further defined it as sovereign because the nation replaced the traditional kinship realm as the foundation of the state. He conceives of nation as “a deep horizontal comradeship” (7) in which all members are bound together as community and are willing to sacrifice their life for the cause of the imagined community.

Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* paved the way for a constructivist analogy between nation and narration. Anderson considers print-capitalism as a potential revolutionary medium in generating the idea of national consciousness. Print medium made it possible to generate the idea of “simultaneity” as readers could relate themselves to others within the same “calendrical time” without being aware of one another. He states that the novel and the newspaper which first flowered in the eighteenth century in Europe played a pivotal role in “re-presenting” the kind of imagined community that is the nation (25). Through these devices people are linked by narration of their shared location and they conjure up the idea of their imagined community. He asserts that the plot of a novel with its layered structure, diverse acts and characters actually mimic the ramifications of a nation. Homi K. Bhabha too recognises the importance of narratives in exploring the ambivalent discourse of nation. He writes that nation is born out of “political thought and literary language” (1) of any age.

Timothy Brennan and Michel Foucault also view imaginative literature as a potential medium in evoking the idea of nation. Brennan states “Nations, then are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role. And the rise of European nationalism coincides especially with one form of literature- the novel” (Bhabha 49). Foucault regards nation as a “discursive formation” (Bhabha 46) and “a gestative political structure” (Bhabha 47) which the Third world artists are consciously involved in building through their fictional works. He believes that in the context of the postcolonial world, nation is not “simply an allegory or imaginative vision,” (Bhabha 47) but a dynamic and developing political entity reflected in Third world literature.

Partha Chatterjee in his influential book *The Nation and its Fragments* seeks to explore the differential nature of nationalism in colonial and postcolonial societies. He problematises Anderson’s discourse of modular form by highlighting the limitations inherent in such conceptualisation. Anderson argued that the nationalist elites in Asia and Africa choose their modular form of imagined community from certain forms made available to them by western world. Chatterjee on the otherhand defines nation as “most untheorized concept of the modern world” (xi) which may be imagined in accordance with the historical specificities of the society. According to Chatterjee, Western discourses of nationalism refuse to accommodate and acknowledge the fragmentary, plural and local histories of nationalism in postcolonial societies in order to assert their “epistemic privilege” (xi) over non-western world. He believes that the legacy of nationalism as an emancipatory feature of anticolonial struggles in Asia and Africa has been tarnished by ethnic politics and corrupt regimes.

Chatterjee’s perception of nationalism brought a paradigm shift to theoretical ideas on nationalism in the non-western world. He differentiates between material and spiritual domain of nationalism which is generally missed in conventional histories that trace the beginning of nationalism in Asia and Africa to the political battle with the colonisers. The material domain refers to the outer domain comprising of the economy, statecraft, science and technology where the superiority of the West is acknowledged and must be emulated by the East. The spiritual domain, on the other hand, refers to an “inner” domain comprising of essential cultural markers unique to the East. The colonial

state is not allowed to intervene in the inner domain in order to fashion a non-western model of national culture.

Chatterjee sought to underplay the importance of western nations in shaping Indian nationalism by foregrounding the inner domain as the fulcrum of anti-colonial nationalism. He posits that nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are premised on distinctness of its “spiritual culture” (6) in its inner domain. He states that a kind of anti-colonial nationalism had already developed within the inner domain where the imperial powers had hardly been able to assert much influence. After a point, the nationalists started propagating this brand of nationalism embedded in “distinctness of one’s spiritual culture” (6) thereby asserting the superiority and sovereignty of the East already in this domain. Such integration of spirituality and nationalism were further popularised by prominent Indian philosophers like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore. These thinkers staked an early claim to the ideal of national imagination to be modelled on search for higher truth and inner peace. They advocated that all round development of the nation is possible only if the nation advances both materially as well as spiritually.

Partha Chatterjee states that the discourse of nationalism which was steeped in glorification of India’s past and its traditional customs and life-styles succeeded in keeping at bay the women’s question out of their agenda of public debate. The reason lies in their ability to situate the “women’s question in an inner domain of sovereignty, far removed from the arena of political contest with the colonial state” (116). In asserting the ingeniousness of nationalism in the inner domain the nationalists rationalised and sanctioned the oppressive social and ritual practices within the framework of Brahmanism. As a result, typical conservative caste distinctions, gender norms and patriarchal domination continued to pervade Indian society. The colonisers took it as an opportunity to sympathise with the oppressed womanhood by criticising those traditional norms as “degenerate and barbaric” (118) and by projecting their suppressed life as “a sign of the inherently oppressive and unfree nature of the entire cultural tradition of a country” (118).

The nationalists came up with the project of selective appropriation of Western liberalism in the form of the “new woman” in order to emancipate women and resist the colonisers from encroaching upon the inner domain of national life. The idea of “new

woman” whose private domain would be refined and reformed by modern education shall epitomise a balance of tradition and modernity. She can venture into public world as long as it did not threaten her feminine roles of mother, wife, daughter, sister and virtues such as self-sacrifice, devotion and kindness attributed to them. In this way she was integrated into national struggle without jeopardising the dichotomy of inner/outer domain.

Nation and nationalism in South Asia are intricately intertwined with its history of colonisation, independence, partition and other postcolonial developments. The connotation of the terms “nation” and “nationalism” changed in the years leading up to the partition of the Indian subcontinent. During the anti-colonial movements, nation was considered as a central concept as it was necessary to eliminate the imperial power during struggle for freedom. The idea of nationalism was cultivated by the nationalists for achieving unity of all groups irrespective of communal and regional differences. Nationalism was valorised as an ideology which generated positive consciousness of solidarity, homogeneity and national aspiration among the natives. However, within decades after independence, the contours of nationalism changed as internal differences based on religion, language, gender, class and caste stood exposed and nationalism miserably failed to contain the thrust of these divisive factors. Given this situation, it becomes all the more important to ponder upon its reverberation on day-to-day lives of people in this socio-politically volatile region.

In an introduction to an anthology titled *Nation in Imagination* (2007), C Vijayasree one of its editors, foregrounds the contradictory nature of nation and nationalism. He states that both the concepts are cohesive as well as divisive by nature. They are cohesive in the sense they can bring together people living in a particular territory in a bond of solidarity; divisive as they seek to uphold their differences from those they consider as the “other”. He also considers nationalism as primordial and modern at the same time: primordial in the sense that since time immemorial it is expressive of innate human desire for collective existence and modern in that it replaced the older religious or dynastic realm. In line with Anderson’s position, Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in one of her earlier stance on nation defines it as “the product of a collective imagination constructed through remembrance” (Vijayshree et al. xii).

Aijaz Ahmad in one of his keynote address titled “Nationalism and Peculiarities of the Indian” defines nationalism as “a contested, conflictual terrain on which rival power-blocks compete for hegemony” (Vijayshree 40). He states that nationalism might be progressive as well as retrogressive by nature; progressive in its ideology of commitment to anticolonialism in order to build national solidarity and yet retrogressive on questions of ethnicity or gender or modernity as such. He refers to Gandhian nationalism as a case in point: progressive in the sense of Gandhi’s hostility to colonialism, but also retrogressive in his social conservatism as reflected in *Hind Swaraj*. Ahmad expresses concern over the fact that nationalism might emerge as an “ideology of fictive unity in which the exploiter and the exploited, irreconcilable in practice, can be made to appear as equal members of a society or a polity” (40). He insists that different forms of nationalism be it secular nationalism, Gandhian nationalism, religious nationalism tend to oscillate between two modes of thought- one that thinks of nation in terms of common citizenship and equal rights; another inclined towards primordial sense of linguistic, racial and religious unity.

Nation and its Narration in South Asian Context

Some of the critics have lamented that though the pervasive influence of Partition in the subcontinent cannot be denied there is lacuna in case of Indian historiography which tends to focus more on Independence and the unifying force of nationalism rather than the divisive forces that culminated during the Partition of the country in 1947. Alok Bhalla states “when it comes to Partition there is not just a lack of great literature, there is, more seriously, a lack of great history” (qtd in Roy 18). The traditional historians fashioned their discourse on the role of the Congress leaders and their emphasis on national integration in order to create a modern secular vision of India. Even the subaltern history which focused on the diversity which often underlay nationalism failed to address the experiences of women at the time of Partition. It is here that the distinctive feature of historical fiction comes into play to articulate the all-pervasive emotional experience of common man during Partition. Historian Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose in their book on South Asian history validates this role of literature where they opine that: “The colossal human tragedy of the partition and its continuing aftermath has been better conveyed by the more sensitive creative writers and artists for example in Saadat Hasan Manto’s short stories and Ritwik Ghatak’s films than by historians” (Roy 20).

The issues of nation and nationalism emerged as recurrent themes in Indian English novels in 1930's and 1940's to present colonial experiences and the social and political changes brought in by the nationalistic movements for independence. Leela Gandhi in one of her book chapters titled "Novelists of the 1930s and 1940s" states that the novels played an important role "in imagining and embodying the radical visions of anti-colonial nationalism" (Mehrotra 168). These two decades were characterised by nation-centredness of a new generation of Indian novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Bhabhani Bhattacharya, G.V. Desani to name a few, who were instrumental in capturing the momentous history of Indian nationalism. Priyamvada Gopal in the introduction to her book *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History and Narration* argues that Anglophone Indian novel as "a genre has been distinguished from its inception by a preoccupation with both *history* and *nation* as these come together to shape what political scientist, Sunil Khilnani (1997) terms after Nehru, 'the idea of India'"(5). India emerges as a theme of reflection and contestation as these novels engage with the religious, political, familial, emotional, historical and geographical dimensions of the entity known as nation.

Seeds of nationalism in its nascent form may be traced in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* which is often regarded as the first Anglophone Indian novel. Bankim employs the devices of allegory and personification to articulate the idea of nation and nationalism. It forays into the domestic space in order to portray the inextricable relationship between home and the changing political and social milieu in the years leading up to the independence. The plot and characters in the novel symbolically map the struggle for nationhood. One of the protagonists Matangini through her traits of courage, independence and passion against the patriarchal society embody the spirit of the nation struggling for selfhood against the colonisers. Later in his novel *Anandamath*, Bankim draws upon Hindu conception of earth as female and as a goddess to deify the idea of India and popularise the iconic image of Mother India that later became a powerful impetus for Indian nationalism.

The Progressive Writers Association which formally came into being during the volatile period of 1930's also played an influential role in shaping the craftsmanship of South Asian novelists. Their project which was premised on transformation of Indian society by questioning of orthodoxies and existing power relations in the society lent

impetus to South Asian novelists vision of a “a counter-hegemonic project, both to the British and its entourage of ruling collaborators and to India’s emerging ruling national elite” (Ahmed 3). The progressive writers movement which was revolutionary in its outlook inspired the South Asian novelists to provide social commentary on inequalities and injustices pervading the society thereby redirecting the discourse of nation towards realisation of a socialist vision. Influenced by the progressive movement, the trio of Indian English fiction Mulk Raj Anand, R.K Narayan and Raja Rao blended political ideology and social realism in their writings in order to espouse a faithful image of India.

Parallels may be drawn between the salient features of Walter Scott’s treatment of history in his genre-defining historical novel *Waverley* (1814) and the historical novels taken up for the purpose this study. There are structural similarities between them. Scott employs a youthful protagonist Edward Waverly to gain unique perspective on historical events during the Jacobite uprising of 1745. The novel is in the form of a Bildungsroman or “coming of age” novel in which the biography of the character is used to trace a fateful period in Scottish history. Similarly Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Siddhartha Deb’s *The Point of Return* (2002), Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice Candy Man* (1988), Romesh Gunesequera’s *Reef* (1994), Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* (1994) employ youthful protagonists like Laila, Babu, Lenny, Triton and Arjie to map the defining characteristic of Partition history in India and Civil War in Sri Lanka. Both Scott’s novel and the South Asian novels set out to thematise the relationship between individual lives and broader national concerns through the trajectory of the character’s experiences.

In terms of subject matter and political significance also similarities may be traced between Scott’s novels and those by South Asian writers. Scott’s *Waverly* deals with the shifting power relations between Jacobites and Hanoverians and its impact upon common man. South Asian novels taken up for this dissertation too locate itself in the period of transition between Partition and emergence of India and Pakistan as postcolonial nation states. Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Attia Hosain’s *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Salman Rushdie’s *Shame* (1983), Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice Candy Man* (1988) reflect upon the grim realities of communalism unleashed by Partition.

Another commonality is apparent in the figures of their protagonists who are confused regarding their sympathies and allegiances as they are caught between cultural and political confusion afflicting the nation. In Scott's *Waverly*, Edward Waverly has sympathies with the Hanoverian King owing to his father's affiliation with the Hanoverian government and at the same time he has considerable inclination with Stuart loyalists owing to his uncle's conformity to family tradition of being Jacobite loyalists. Similarly in novels such as Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994), *The Burgher Trilogy* the central characters are in a dilemma regarding their allegiance of class, gender and culture in the face of the normative paradigm set by the society.

Relevance of the Novels Taken up for the Study

Though Khushwant Singh's popular novels *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), *Delhi* (1983) are replete with historical facts and the intertwined relationship between history and ordinary people, it is *Train to Pakistan* which has carved a niche for itself in the history of Partition literature. In this novel, Singh effectively blends his gifts as reporter and historian to vividly portray the bestial horror and violence characterising the border regions during the Partition. The fictional village of Mano Majra located on the border of India and Pakistan offers a microcosmic view of Indian society where the erstwhile communal harmony among the villagers is disrupted by the atmosphere of religious fanaticism plaguing the nation. In narrating the crisis, Singh reveals how the invasion of outside forces- a train full of corpses of Hindus and Sikhs, refugees and finally a group of militant Sikhs from the city generate religious sentiments among the apolitical villagers. Singh launches a scathing attack upon nationalists and politicians whose endorsement of nationalism turns out to be purely rhetorical. The bureaucrats who claim to promote unity are actually complicit in creating ethnic rivalry amongst the innocent villagers.

Singh represents characters belonging to different religions and professions such as Juggu, a Sikh peasant; Iqbal Singh, a political worker; Meet Singh, a Sikh priest; Hukum Chand, a Hindu magistrate; Lala Ram Lal, a wealthy Hindu moneylender; Imam Baksh, a Muslim weaver; Hassena, a Muslim girl and so on to reveal the transition in their relationship enforced by the fires of violence and riots ignited by politicians. Amidst the whirlwind of Partition, Singh also redeems his enduring faith in sense of

humanity through the character of Juggu. The novel's impassioned cry for unity and tolerance has powerful resonance even today in the context of socio politically volatile subcontinent. The novel also provides a nuanced understanding of partition by revealing its affective dimension.

Like *Train to Pakistan*, the affective dimension is portrayed in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* by depicting the impact of the catastrophic event of partition on human psyche, individually as well as collectively. Bapsi Sidhwa's major novels *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *Ice Candy Man* (1988) and *American Brat* (1993) are also firmly rooted in historical consciousness and revolve around her own Parsi community and their relationship with the rest of the populace around them, whether in India, in Britain or in the United States. Amongst them, *Ice Candy Man* deserves critical attention as it her seminal novel which marks her response to the traumatic events of Partition. The novel foregrounds the experience of Partition and nation-formation for women and politically naïve young children, neither of whom were active participants in the political processes leading up to Partition. It is an eyewitness account of a physically challenged Parsi child narrator Lenny who attempts to chronicle the changes ushered in by Partition in daily life and social relationship of ordinary people in Lahore. Lenny's Hindu Ayah, Shanta and her group of admirers belonging to different religions and professions: the Muslim, Ice Candy Man; Sher Singh, the Sikh zoo attendant; a Hindu masseur; Hari, the gardener; the Muslim butcher; Sharbat Khan, a Pathan; and many others offer glimpses of a united India characterised by peaceful coexistence among different communities before being jolted by Partition. Sidhwa's unflattering radical stances on the triumvirate of Jinnah, Gandhi and Nehru render it an interesting study.

Whereas Khushwant Singh's novel portrays Partition from an Indian perspective, Sidhwa's vantage position enables her to give us a Pakistani as well as Parsi perspective on unprecedented violence and hatred characterising the Partition. Just like *Train to Pakistan* iconic images of Partition: train full of corpses, sexual violence and wails of suffering women, vengeful fanatic outsiders and gunny sacks filled with chopped-off breasts are reiterated in this novel too. Bapsi Sidhwa novel also presents an alternative version to the male visualisation and depiction of the event of the Partition.

In departure from other Partition fiction dealing with the horrific violence and ethnic genocide, Attia's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* foregrounds the glittering

world of her feudal Taluqdar class being swept away by the tides of changes ushered in by Partition. It is seldom discussed elaborately in a comparative framework with other Partition novels. She deftly balances the nostalgia for the old aristocracy with a sustained critique of their way of life, particularly the gender discrimination perpetuated by the elders in the name of tradition. Set in Lucknow, the novel is an autobiographical account of an orphan girl Laila, who documents the emotional saga of the Muslims as religion and nation jostle with each other on the eve of Partition for legitimacy.

Partition narratives by male writers normally focus on the political aspect within the public sphere which is generally prioritised as masculine space. As opposed to this, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* sheds light on the domestic sphere as a crucial site where one can locate the effects of national history on the lives of its inhabitants specifically women. The family mansion Ashiana serves as a microcosmic reflection of the nation where the changes in the country are mirrored in changing family structure and relationships at home. It begins with a close-knit family that resembles undivided India controlled by British at national level and patriarchs at home, followed by growing tensions between family members and their disintegration that reflect the disparity between Hindus and Muslims at national level and finally ends with Laila's freedom from elders which may be equated with the freedom of the country from the colonisers. Ashiana becomes a politically charged space with a plethora of characters asserting their varied political affiliations. Home is reflected as a claustrophobic place for its female members owing to societal and religious codes imposed upon them by patriarchs. As the first novel by a Muslim woman writer on the Partition of India, the novel partakes in an alternate women centric narrative of nation.

Set in a feudal Mughal society of Old Delhi, Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* offers a telling counterpoint to Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. While Attia presents the social and moral evils of her feudal class without any remorse, Ahmed Ali pines for the waning culture and way of life of Muslim aristocratic and middle class society. In an elegiac tone, Ahmed Ali engages in a realistic portrayal of the downfall of Muslim middle class life of Delhi with the onslaught of colonialism. The tone of lamentation is also supported by the trope of twilight which is used as a metaphor in the title to describe the dwindling grandeur of Old Delhi. Ali anchors the novel around his protagonist Mir Nihal and his extended family members who embody the fading glory

and the bygone life of the Mughals. Ali exposes the ulterior motives behind the civilising mission of the colonisers which ultimately led to the downfall of the Mughal culture. The impact of British cultural hegemony on the younger generation of Mughals is also depicted through Asghar's character in the novel.

Another novel taken up for the study is Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* which is an unusual novel offering a rare glimpse of the subculture of drugs, adultery and vulgarity that lurk beneath the surface reality of affluence and modernity characterising upper strata of Pakistani society. The novel explores the class conflict and the power dynamics between the privileged and the impoverished ones who hover around the wealthy for their favour and sympathy. The novel is set in 1998 against the backdrop of cold war between Pakistan and India, as Pakistan conducts its nuclear detonation in response to nuclear tests conducted by India near the Indo-Pakistan border. Hamid depicts the economic disparity in modern-day Pakistan by employing two childhood friends Aurangzeb and Darashikoh who belong to different economic status. The novel traces the life of a promising young Pakistani man Dara who being fired from his banking job for his perverse behaviour with a wealthy client declines into a life of crime and drug addiction in order to escape poverty. Aurangzeb on the otherhand represents the rich social class who indulge in all forms of luxuries and pleasures and implicate others in their own crimes by taking the law in their own hands. Hamid also departs from the cliché representation of South Asian women as submissive victims of patriarchy in his portrayal of Mumtaz as a strong woman who tries to defy gender-specific identity by pursuing a secret career as an investigative journalist.

Salman Rushdie's politically rooted novels such as *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) are all replete with historical allusions and have received critical acclaim for their treatment of history. In some respects *Shame's* focus on complex political realities of Pakistan makes it a companion text to *Midnight's Children* which reflects the disintegrating realities of modern India. Both may be considered as allegorical texts where the lives of the protagonists Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* and Sufiya Zinobia in *Shame* are inextricably linked to the life of the postcolonial nations. Though parallelism may be drawn between the two novels in multiple aspects, as far as scholarly attention is concerned Rushdie's *Shame* has been less worked upon as compared to his path-breaking novel *Midnight's Children*.

Shame revolves around Rushdie's severe indictment of Pakistani leaders for their political and moral depravations in the form of misuse of religion, violation of civil rights of women, wedding scandals, debauchery and obscenity. As the title of the book suggests, it refers to the importance of the emotion of shame "sharam" as a social concept in the East where it is often perceived as a gendered idea. The emotion of shame manifested through female characters in the novel is pitted against shamelessness of authoritarian politicians. In the novel, Rushdie quite wittingly employs fictional counterparts for historical figures: Iskander Harappa (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto), Raza Hyder (Zia Ul Haq), Shaggy Dog (Yahya Khan), Sheik Bismillah (Sheikh Mujibur Rehman) in order to lambast their political activities that destabilised the newly born nation. Rushdie's portrays the predicament of a culturally displaced mohajir community after their exodus as refugees to newly formed Islamic nation Pakistan following the partition of India in 1947. Bilquis Hyder's plight reflects the fate of the migrants who are stripped of history and subjected to humiliation and shame by strangers in the new land.

It is often seen that the nation-centric narratives by prominent postcolonial writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Amit Chaudhury depict mainland India without drawing attention to the micro stories of the socio-political unrest pervading the Northeast India. It is in this context that Siddhartha Deb's novel *The Point of Return* assumes importance as an authentic portrayal of subnationalism, ethnic conflict and large scale migration pertinent to the region. His novel reveals the need to re-narrate the idea of nationhood and national identity from the margins by foregrounding the subnational tendencies of the tribals of the hilly state generated by large scale migration following the Partition.

The novel explores the nuanced idea of home and belonging for Bengali immigrants displaced by Partition and ethnic violence in the hill state. Deb powerfully articulates the predicament of the migrants through the narrator Babu who recalls his father Dr Dam's precarious life as a government servant in their adopted homeland. Babu's tale mirrors the unprovoked assaults, discrimination and racism that the migrants had to endure in the hilly town which they had considered as their new home. Babu narrates Dr Dam's sense of duty and morality in contrast to the nepotism and corruption pervading government departments. Babu regrets that the legacy of displacement, homelessness, identity crisis continue to haunt the post-partition generation as they

continue to grapple with the politicians, insurgent groups, majority community and the press in the new homeland.

In a departure from the clichéd portrayal of essentialised Sinhala-Tamil binary or the picturesque lens through which Sri Lanka is otherwise perceived, Carl Muller's "The Burgher Trilogy" with its emphasis on racial origin foregrounds the hybrid possibilities of the Sri Lankan national identity. The trilogy comprising of three novels namely *The Jam Fruit Tree* (1993), *Yakada Yaka* (1994) and *Once Upon a Tender Time* (1995) may be read as cultural texts that celebrate the easy going, carefree and often boisterous nature of an essentially apolitical Burgher community. In the trilogy, the plight of Cecilprin Von Bloss' Burgher family and their acquaintances mirrors the struggle of the Burghers in the face of linguistic nationalism plaguing the nation. Their proximity to Europeans bestowed them with certain privileges which perish at the advent of independence. The once vibrant community estranged by the volatile political environment try to perpetuate their distinctive traits in order to be at home within their own "created Burgherhood" (Sarvan 530) in Sri Lanka. The depiction of the Burgher community during the period of heightened civil war offers an alternative reading of Sri Lankan history.

Sivanandan's debut novel *When Memory Dies* (1997) also offers an alternative historiography of nation as it gives primacy to subaltern stance in its treatment of the ethnic conflict pervading the nation. The participation and the struggle of the marginalised working class and women as depicted in the narrative present an alternative reading of history. The novel convincingly charts the history of working class movement in Sri Lanka by relating the tri generational account of a peasant Tamil family from Jaffna. The novel convincingly captures the socio political and other changes in Sri Lanka as it undergoes transformation from a colonised crown colony to independent nation. It recreates the fraught political climate of Sri Lanka through the contrasting perspectives of the colonisers, the Left, Sinhala and Tamil nationalists. The novel's powerful contribution lies in its portrayal of inter-communal amity and history of coexistence amongst the mutually antagonistic and incompatible Sinhala and Tamil communities in the face of social fragmentation afflicting the nation. The novelist devotes considerable attention to ordinary people rather than educated leaders as heroes in outlining the history of the worker's movement. He launches a scathing commentary

on Sinhala and Tamil chauvinists as well as self-seeking politicians for disrupting working class solidarity which transcended ethnic differences. The novel serves as an impassioned plea to recover the forgotten and obliterated history of minority and other marginalised sections. Sivanandan in his critique of varied political tendencies such as labour politics of Goonesinha's party, malicious propagation of Sinhalese nationalism by Sri Lanka Freedom Party, armed uprisings of the communist party turned militant organisation advocates a more accommodative vision of nation.

Shyam Selvadurai's novels *Funny Boy*, *Cinnamon Gardens*, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* thematise racial, social and gender differences with differing degrees of political engagement. Amongst these novels *Funny Boy* has elicited favourable attention as it poignantly articulates a gay discourse of nation against the backdrop of political upheavals and ethnic hostilities affecting Sri Lankan nation. It is in the form of a Bildungsroman which concerns the struggle of its young, gay Tamil narrator Arjie to forge an autonomous identity in a crisis-ridden Sri Lankan nation. The novel sensitively fuses his sexual awakening with the increasing awareness of ethno-nationalism and heteronormative paradigm pervading the nation. Arjie's growing realisation of his homosexual self renders him a pervert in a tradition bound Sri Lankan society where such leanings were little understood. The entrenched politics of patriarchal relationships, racial discrimination and gendered norms are filtered through the consciousness of Arjie. His interaction and experience in the domestic sphere are mingled with that of the public sphere to convey the broad spectrum of Sinhala Tamil conflict.

Literature Review

Among the widely cited reviews on Khushwant Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan*, some of the prominent ones are: Radhika Chopra's analysis of the predicament of the common man resulting from the brutality unleashed by Partition and corruption of bureaucrats and fanaticism of religious leaders to redress the situation, Rituparna Roy's book chapter on the significance of trains and redemptive power of humanity with regard to mayhem arising out of the Partition, Jasprit K. Gill's focus on the subversion of stereotypical representation of Sikhs as violence mongers and terrorists, and Syyrina Ahsan Ali Haque's exploration of the multiple perspectives on partition by the diverse religious communities inhabiting the village of Mano Majra. These scholars dwell on the communal harmony among the villagers in the pre-partition days and its subsequent

disruption by the diabolical bureaucrats and a few fanatics in the post-partition days. They observe a redeeming sense of humanity embodied in a Sikh character Jugga in order to redress the subaltern identity of the Sikhs. In their discussion of the novel they emphasise on the multiple perspectives on partition by exploring the dialogic potential in form of interaction between characters belonging to different religious community.

Most of these available reviews on *Train to Pakistan* tend to focus upon the unprecedented violence of partition rather than engaging in a critical reflection on ideology of nationalism which ultimately led to the partition. The articles do not shed light upon religious nationalism which distorts the villagers' capacity for political judgement and vision of moral righteousness. The complex dynamics between nationalism and politicisation of women's bodies seem to be lacking in their analysis of the novel.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* has been widely lauded for capturing the heart rending realities of the Partition. A number of critical articles have addressed the major thematic preoccupations of the novel. Some of the notable ones are: Kavita Daiya's focus on everyday life as a crucial site for reification of ethnic identities, Kamran Rastegar's emphasis on the gendered nature of violence and the impact of the political and ideological conflict on women, Paromita Deb's focus on certain important dimensions like liminality of the Parsis, intricate link between women and national politics and the novel's plea for humanitarian interest in the midst of crisis, Annie Gagiano's analysis of child narrator Lenny as a witness-commentator in the novel. These scholarly articles reveal how Partition was not only about the cartographic reconfiguration of national borders but also about deployment of religious symbols in the construction of monolithic narratives of nationalism. The reviews draw attention to the naïve perspective of the Parsi child narrator who unravels the silenced voice and predicament of the marginalised sections.

Though the articles have focused on the intersection between gender and nationalism, little scholarly attention has been diverted to inner/outer domain distinction mobilised by nationalist rhetoric to thwart individuality of women. The idea of new woman exhibited by characters such as Lenny's Godmother, mother and aunty who actively participate in nationalist politics has not been discussed in details. A kind of

subnationalist tendency of the Sikh community emerging out of their constant strife with mainstream nationalism remains comparatively unexplored.

Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* has not received the kind of critical attention that male centric novels on emerging nation by Anand, Rao, Narayan and Rushdie have garnered yet a few scholarly articles may be traced that have underscored the relationship between gender and nationalism as manifested in Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. Among them the notable ones are- Sreejata Roy's conscious engagement with women's experiences in order to uncover the narratives subsumed by mainstream nationalism, Arunima Dey's insightful article on the significance of domestic sphere as a microcosm for the socio-political changes taking place in the nation, Anuradha Dingwaney Needham's close attention to the disparate and competing forms of national identity in order to expose the ruptures in homogeneous discourses of nation, Antoinette Burton's situated study of home as a legitimate and irrefutable archive of political violence, anxiety and gendered discrimination characterising the Partition and Alison Jill Didur's critical analysis of elite and patriarchal ideologies that inform hegemonic discourse of nationalism.

These scholarly articles partake in an alternate and nuanced understanding of nation and nationalism by interrogating the false binaries of public / private realm, Western / Eastern and tradition/modernity that inform monolithic discourse of nation. The essays focus on home as a partition archive which is usually neglected in narratives of nation. Their critical evaluation of domestic sphere as a politically charged space informs the analysis of the problematic relationship between nation and gender in South Asian context. What is striking is that the historical significance of home has been foregrounded mostly by women reviewers of the novel.

Most of the scholarly essays on Siddhartha Deb's *The Point of Return* have been particularly influential in situating the novel in the context of migration and identity politics in the North-eastern region that remain suppressed by larger national histories. Among them the noteworthy ones are Vipasha Bhardwaj's article on the existential dilemma of the Bengali immigrants grappling with issues of home, belonging and identity in the newly divided post-colonial nation state, Avantika Dev Ray's focus on the Khasi-subnationalism and the resultant violence that added to the misery of the immigrants and Amit Rahul Baishya's problematisation of the assumed seamless

assimilation of the refugees belonging to majority community into hegemonic national identity. These articles provide crucial insights to the analysis of the trope of memory, subnationalist tendencies and predicament of migrants as echoed in the novel.

Shame is surprisingly one of the most understudied of all of Rushdie's novels and the little available scholarly essays on this novel engage in a critical reflection on treatment of women characters, gendered connotation of shame and metafictional aspects in the novel. Aijaz Ahmad touches upon the misogynistic treatment of women as "erotic, irrational, demented and demonic" (1469) characters who are to be pitied, laughed at and sometimes to be feared rather than being recognised for their capacity to struggle and survive against all odds produced by politics of representation. Ben Yishai engages in a critique of the nuanced and reified concept of shame constructed by social forces to ensure domination of women. Inderpal Grewal claims that Rushdie's *Shame* cannot be considered as feminist project as it fails to erase the Self/Other distinction which patriarchy reifies to continue its subjugation of women. Lotta Strandberg primarily focuses on the characterisation of Sufiya to uncover the intricate relationship between shame, gender and power. These scholars have also drawn attention to repeated interventions on part of the narrator, an alter ego of Rushdie to provide a link between real-life experience of the author and his fictional representation.

Most of the articles have not engaged in a critical analysis of the ideology of religious nationalism underpinning political foundation of the nation. The idea of "New woman" embodied in the defiant nature of Arjumand Harappa, Shakil Sisters, Rani Harappa, Sufiya Zinobia have not been explored. Furthermore, the undeniable link between migrant memory and their predicament in Pakistan have not been touched upon by the reviewers.

Among the existing scholarship on Mohsin Hamid's novel *Moth Smoke*, a few of them deserve to be singled out as they provide crucial insights to the analysis of the novel: Paul Jay's critique of Hamid's failure in drawing a link between colonialism and contemporary forces of economic globalisation in the context of South Asia, Samina Azad's elucidation of the elements of Marxism embedded in the novel, Sabina Rehman's reflection on the character of Mumtaz to reveal the predetermined gender roles that inhibit women's freedom in familial as well as professional sphere and Claudia Perner's description of a secular kind of fundamentalist aggression arising in Daru out of his

failure to govern his life amidst the economic disparity pervading the society. The value of these scholarly articles lie in their ability to unravel the class conflict and corruption in Lahore brought in by forces of western culture and capitalism thereby raising serious concern regarding the sustainability of globalised economy in Pakistan. Though critics have pondered upon the character of Mumtaz to decry the constricting framework of patriarchy, the idea of “new woman” reflected in her unconventional behaviour seems to be relatively understudied.

The critical reception of Ahmed Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* was of a more positive nature as it has evolved over the course of time as an exemplary representation of waning glory of Muslim nobility in Old Delhi. Though some of the critics have questioned the novel’s indifference to the trajectory of Indian nationalist movement and denounced its imagined proto-Muslim nationalism, they have been outnumbered by laudatory views on the novel’s artistic innovations and depiction of the performative dimensions of collective life of the decadent class. Some of the notable scholarly essays are David D. Anderson, Muhammad Hasan Askari and Carlo Coppola’s focus on the symbolic importance of the minute details of everyday life and characterisation in depicting the changing contours of politics and culture of Old Delhi, Khurshid Alam’s emphasis on the Urdu poems incorporated in the novel to resurrect the rich cultural landscape of Muslim identity against the onslaught of imperial culture and Khurshid Alam’s analysis of the private realm comprising of family, language and socio religious practices as crucial sites for anti-colonial nationalism.

In departure from the above mentioned critics, Ulka Anjaria draws attention to certain performative dimensions such as melodramatic gestures, overtly sentimental language and invocation of monumental historical figures in the form of distorted genealogy to expose the ambivalence underlying the nostalgic evocation of the past and thereby suggesting an alternate reading of nation. However after analysing the novel it would be more correct to say that these performative dimensions embody the collective consciousness of the city mourning for its fading glory rather than exposing any ambivalence in such lamentation.

Ambalavaner Sivanandan’s *When Memory Dies* has garnered numerous favourable responses as one of the significant literary articulations of the competing claims of nationalism in Sri Lanka. Some of the scholarly reviews that have been

influential in mapping out Sivanandan's political vision are: Harshana Rambukwella's critical reflection on the novel's futile attempt at tracing an alternate national imaginary of coexistence and inclusivity in the worker's movement and familial sphere, J Edward Mallot's focus on "memory as counternarrative" (Mallot 93) to unearth and interrogate the selective amnesia embedded in nationalist history, Pavithra Tantrigoda's discussion of the topography of Sri Lanka being shaped by forces of colonialism, civil strife and postcolonial development projects, Nagesh Rao's analysis of Sivanandan's plea for a revolutionary socialist vision of nation being dampened by communalism, Minoli Salgado's and Walter Perera's reflection on the subaltern stance adopted by Sivanandan to reveal an alternative reconciliatory pedagogy of nation. These articles offer key insights in framing the analysis of linguistic nationalism, class ideology, trope of polyphony and memory embedded in the text.

Most of the critical reviews on Romesh Gunsekera's *Reef* have tended to focus on the diasporic, ecological, political and culinary contexts that underpin the narrative. Some of the noteworthy ones are: Charu Mathur's analysis of home as an emotional construct for diasporic subjects like Mr Salgado and his houseboy Triton seeking anchorage in memories and desires to construct their idea of nation, Shalini Jain's critique of the educated upper classes who are complicit in development projects and policies that endangers nature, Todd Kuchta's departure from the recurrent analogy drawn between eroding reef and ethnic violence in Sri Lanka by focusing on the dying coral reef as "an ecological referent in its own right" (342), symptomatic of the human induced climate change by injudicious use of natural resources, Walter Perera's critique of expatriate writer's vision of Sri Lanka by foregrounding the exoticised passages, east/west binary and historical slippages in the novel, Sharanya Jayawickrama's description of cooking as a medium of Triton's self-expression and the social situation in which it is relished by consumers as a part of Triton's social knowledge of the life embedded in the coral island, J Edward Mallot's meditation on Triton's recourse to cooking and elaborate preparation as a sort of living memory and alternative domestic counter-histories to the ethnic strife engulfing them in the outer world.

Though Gunsekera's *Reef* has been criticised by notable reviewers like Thiru Kandiah and Ruvani Ranasinha for representing an exoticised account of culinary history in order to meet the demands of Western audiences, the reading of the novel suggests

otherwise. The luminous food narratives in the novel provide the essential connection of the expatriates with their homeland and thereby represent their cultural identity and social milieu of the expatriates. The deeply insightful perspective on class ideology implicated in the text remains relatively unexplored.

Most of the scholarly musings on the novel *Funny Boy* have situated it in the context of queer sexuality that seeks to disorient the patriarchal heteronormative paradigm of Sri Lanka nation. Some of the prominent reviews on the novel are: Rahul K. Gairola's reading of the novel as a counter-bildungsroman that de-centres hegemonic exclusive identity formations by braiding together Radha Aunty and Arjie's re-appropriation of gender and sexual identities against the backdrop of anti-Tamil pogrom in Colombo, Tariq Jazeel's reflection on the everyday life within the family home and the school as crucial sites of heterosexual orthodoxy that underpins the exclusionary contours of nationalism pervading Sri Lankan society, Kaustav Bakshi's sustained focus on the disruption of traditional genre of masculinist British school story by interpolating it with queer narrative to problematise normative heterosexuality and polarised racial identities perpetuated by the postcolonial nation. These articles provide crucial insights to an alternative reading of nation that emerge when complex nexus of ethnic, gender and national matrices encounter queer subjectivity.

Even though Carl Muller's Burgher Trilogy is widely acclaimed as one of the pioneering narratives on trials and tribulations of the Burgher community it has been relatively under researched by the scholarly world. Little available scholarship on the trilogy tends to shed light upon sexual promiscuity and idiosyncrasies of the community. Minoli Salgado in her analysis of the trilogy in a chapter titled "Carl Muller: Genealogical Maps" focuses on sexuality of Burgher women as central to the construction of the genealogy of the Burghers who testify the borderland of ambivalent belonging through their fluid engagement with hegemonic Sri Lankan national identity. Charles P. Sarvan's article offers a brief glimpse of the distinctive ethnic, economic and political identity of the Burgher community. Critics have not diverted their attention to the gender dichotomy perpetuated by patriarchy to ensure subjugation of women. The idea of new woman exhibited by some women characters to shatter the myth of ideal womanhood has not been discussed. A kind of subnationalism underpinning the vibrant and unique culture of the Burgher community remains unexplored.

Chapterisation

The thesis has been divided into six chapters. The opening chapter sets the tone for the study by situating the problem statement, methodological framework, objectives, research questions and literature review in the context of South Asia. To achieve this end, it provides a brief overview of the theoretical postulations on nation, nationalism and history-fiction interface against the background of the development of South Asian historical fiction. It further elucidates the rationale for the selection of the novels taken up for the study. The next chapter titled “Nation, Location and Ideology” examines the ideological underpinnings of the novelists’ discourse on nation and nationalism as explicated in South Asian historical fiction. It shows how religious, linguistic, anti-British and class ideologies render untenable the imagined homogeneity of nation.

The third chapter titled “Nation and Gender” focuses on the inner/outer domain dichotomy to trace the locus of gendered centric discourse of nation. The novels under consideration reveal the paradoxical position of woman in the rhetoric of nation as their bodies become emblematic of community honour as well as site for communal revenge within the framework of national imagination. The following chapter titled “Nation and its Discontents” discusses fragmentary narratives of nation that point towards the discontentment of communities subjected to marginalisation by hegemonic discourse of nation. It shows how subnationalist aspirations, predicament of migrants, constant strife and rampant corruption among politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals problematise seamless imaginings of nation.

In a departure from the previous chapters dealing with thematic aspects of national narratives, the penultimate chapter titled “Nation and Narrative Technique” deals with narrative techniques that augment the understanding of nation. It primarily focuses on four narrative techniques, namely polyphony, memory, national allegory and child narrator to reveal the gaps in official historiography of nation. The concluding chapter summarises the specific findings as well as general observations derived from the comparative analyses of the South Asian historical fiction analysed in the core chapters. The analysis of the representative texts reveal the lacunae in envisioning homogeneous nation and point towards a more nuanced and heterogeneous understanding of nation in the context of South Asia. The chapter also mentions the limitations of the study as well as the scope for further research.