

CHAPTER-5

NATION AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

In the previous chapters thematic analysis of the historical novels was undertaken to explore the ambiguities underlying the homogeneous idea of nation in the South Asian context. The study endeavoured to highlight the ideological underpinnings of the rhetoric of nation by analysing the historical narratives emanating from three Subcontinental nations. In a departure from the preceding ones dealing with the thematic concerns of the narratives of nation, this chapter sets forth to examine how these thematic aspects are reflected in the narrative techniques which form an intrinsic part of the subject matter itself. The analysis assumes that the rich tapestry of historical narratives serve as powerful vehicles that augment our understanding of nation. It focuses upon the underlying significance of four narrative techniques namely polyphony, memory, national allegory and child narrator that mark the craft of the historical novelists taken up for the study. It argues that the literary techniques raise historical consciousness about the gaps in overarching claims of homogeneous nation and encourage the readers to develop a fluid and heterogeneous idea of nation.

The chapter begins by highlighting the existing scholarship on nation and literary narratives, novel and nationalism, stylistics and content put forth by Benedict Anderson, Homi K. Bhabha, Timothy Brennan, Mikhail Bakhtin and a few other theorists. Each of the subsections provides a brief idea of the narrative technique it seeks to explore in the texts taken up for the purpose. Crucial insights on the narrative techniques of polyphony, memory, national allegory and child narrator propagated by Bakhtin, Mallot, Rushdie, Jameson, Lukacs and others inform the analysis of the novels. The subsection titled “Polyphony in Narratives of Nation” delves into the polyphonic potentialities of texts such as *Train to Pakistan*, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, *Shame*, *Ice-Candy Man*, *When Memory Dies* to shed light on the heterogeneity characterising a nation. The next subsection focuses on use of memory as a narrative tool in identity formation in texts such as *The Point of Return*, *Reef and Shame*. The penultimate subsection deals with the technique of national allegory to comment on the interplay between mundane realities of everyday life and national history in novels like *Twilight in Delhi*, *Shame*, *Moth Smoke*, *When Memory Dies*, *Ice-Candy Man*, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. The last subsection engages with child narrators to give expression to the anxieties and social constraints of

children as well as the adult world caught in the upheavals of history in novels such as *Funny Boy*, *The Point of Return*, *Ice-Candy Man* and *Sunlight on a Broken Column*.

Nation and Narratology

Tzvetan Todorov coined the French term *narratologie* to define the “science of narrative” (Phelan and Rabinowitz 19). Taking cue from Saussure’s differentiation of “langue” and “parole”, Todorov laid more emphasis upon the shared structural framework of narratives rather than individual narratives. Scholars have long noted the intricate relationship between nation and literary narratives. J Hillis Miller argues that narratological distinctions or narrative forms are useful only if they facilitate our understanding and teaching of literary works. Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* states that “the novel and the newspaper ...provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation” (2006, 25). The structural paradigm of the literary narratives with its plot and diverse acts and actors along with multiple voices help the readers to conjure up the idea of nation. Homi K. Bhabha in *Nation and Narration* (2005) echoes similar views when he states that:

Nation, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation-or-narration-might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as powerful historical idea in the west. (1)

Bhabha at the same time reflects upon the ambiguity characterising the idea of the nation as well as the ideological leanings of the writers dealing with nation. Timothy Brennan in his essay “The National Longing for Form” also highlights the significant role played by imaginative literature in representing the “composite nature” (51) of nation. He states novels “accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles” (2005, 49). Brennan believes that the frequent comparison drawn between literature and nation evokes the fictive quality of the political concept of nation. Nevertheless, it must be noted that both Bhabha and Brennan largely draw their ideas on nation and narration from Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. Partha Chatterjee in his book *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial*

Histories (1983) traces the correlation between novel and nationalism. He states that “even in case of the novel, that celebrated the artifice of the nationalist imagination in which community is made to live and love in “homogenous time,” the modular forms do not necessarily have an easy passage”(8). He subtly takes a dig at a kind of essentialism characterising the idea of life to promote the ideal of nationhood.

Priyamvada Gopal in *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History and Narration* (2009) argues that certain dominant trends are perceptible in Anglophone novel which “merits *situated* study” (5) [original emphasis]. She also reiterates the familiar link between the novel and national narratives. She observes that novel as a genre has been distinguished in postcolonial India right from its flowering by its thematic preoccupation with history and nation to shape the idea of Indian nation. Citing the context of Latin American nation, she states that “the inextricability of politics from fiction in the history of nation-building’ made the novel the paradigmatic site for the ‘imagining’ of national foundations and futures” (6). Patrick Com Hogan in *Understanding Nationalism: On Narrative, Cognitive Science, and Identity* (2009) emphasises John Breuilly’s view that the narratives of nationalism must be theorised in order to understand the pervasiveness of nation and nationalism. Hogan believes that nationalism and our emotional system are interrelated and narrative prototypes play a crucial role in emplotment of nation: “nationalism cannot be understood in separation from narrative, which itself cannot be understood in separation from our emotion systems” (168).

Mikhail Bakhtin’s collection of essays “The Dialogic Imagination” reveals him as one of the major theoreticians on the stylistics of novel. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century not much importance was laid upon recognition of novel as an independent rhetorical genre. The process of growing scholarship on its composition and thematics began after its emergence as the leading European genre but even then stylistics remained an unexplored territory. It was after 1920’s that the situation changed gradually with a number of books on stylistics of novel. Bakhtin for the first time realised the potential of novel to capture the complexity of the modern world through its stylistics. He defines novel as a genre “multiform in style and variform in speech and voice” (261). He states that the inseparability of form and content motivates the need to study the stylistics of the genre “Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon...” (259). Mark Schorer in his

essay “Technique as Discovery” (1948) emphasises the inextricable relationship between form and content. According to him, technique is the only means that the writer has at his disposal to explore, develop and evaluate his subject matter.

Ann Curthoys and John Docker’s influential book *Is History Fiction* (2006) focuses upon the literary aspects of historical interpretation. In the introductory section they echo Hayden White’s view that narration of history is inescapably linked to its structural paradigm constituted by literary forms. According to them, history inevitably enters into the world of literature by virtue of its description of past events as narratives. They argue that “literary qualities and literary forms and genres are not something decorative or merely added to an account or analysis, but help explain what the historian in the present takes to be the meaning of past events and occurrences”(11). They believe that the doubleness of history that is history as a rigorous enquiry of its sources and history with its literary qualities gives ample room for creativity, interpretation and uncertainty to sweep in. In the postmodern age one witnesses the resurgence of Herodotus’ view of history as literary form with the historical writers increasingly engaging in literary experimentation in order to foreground alternative view of historical events. Peter Burke in his essay “History of Events and the Revival of Narrative” (1991) also encourages the development of various modes of story-telling to “allow an interpretation of conflict in terms of a conflict of interpretations” (Curthoys and Docker 202).

Angsar Nunning in his article titled “Where Historiographic Metafiction and Narratology Meet: Towards an Applied Cultural Narratology” argues that a contextualised study of narratology opens up the scope for dialogic interpretation between novels and the cultural history and brings forth the implications of the narrative techniques employed for the purpose of the study. Mieke Bal echoes the same view with his emphasis on “a narratological analysis of culture” and “a cultural analysis of narratives” (356). Gabriele Helms, a narratologist, propagates the idea that narrative techniques are not just structural features or mere embellishment of a work of art, rather they are “ideologically informed” (358) semantic constructions that enriches our understanding of the text. Helms shares Frederic Jameson’s idea that form cannot be understood in isolation from the content.

What must now be stressed is that at this level “form” is apprehended as content. The study of the ideology of form is no doubt grounded on a technical and formalistic analysis in the narrower sense.....But at the level of analysis in question here, a dialectical reversal has taken place in which it has become possible to grasp such formal processes as sedimented content in their own right, as carrying ideological messages of their own, distinct from the ostensible or manifest content of the works. (Jameson 84)

Elleke Boehmer in the introduction to her book *Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* claims that narratives have “discursive materiality” (11) which makes it feasible for it to embody the idea of nation and to transform historical time into human time in which national history and destiny may be inscribed. Boehmer puts forth Fredric Jameson’s view of narrative as a ‘process of [national] form-giving’, of writing plot into history (11). In parallel with the idea of Bakhtin and Jameson, Henry James in his essay “The Art of Fiction” espoused the view that the content must be left free to determine its typology of form in a work of art and form must be allowed to determine its own content. Monica Fludernik opines that narratological analyses by highlighting the effects the text manages to have upon the readers offers a kind of rationale for a kind of interpretation of the text. She proposes a kind of “symptomatic reading of texts” (Phelan and Rabinowitz 45) in order to unravel the ideology of the narratives.

Polyphony in Narratives of Nation

Mikhail Bakhtin’s book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1963) delves into the unique and innovative artistic form of Dostoevsky and recognises him as one of the earliest exponents of “the multivoicedness of all discourse” (BR 14) which Bakhtin terms as “polyphony”. Bakhtin claims that Dostoevsky’s representation of the dialogic relationship and interaction among the characters in the text culminates in the concept of polyphony and renders social discourse as multi-voiced. Dostoevsky brought a paradigm shift in the understanding of individual consciousness by regarding consciousness itself as dialogic and inconclusive. Dostoevsky heard both the dominant voices and as well as the subdued and the latent ones to unveil the multiple views characterising any discourse. Dostoevsky allowed full freedom of expression to the secondary characters too instead of limiting their consciousness to that of the heroes and the author.

Bakhtin in his essay “Discourse in the Novel” defines novel as “a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (*DI* 262). The unique aspect of Bakhtin’s stylistic analysis lies precisely in his recognition of the multiple ways that the words, the speaking subject and the environment are related. He claims that any utterance acquires meaning only in process of its interaction with the environment. The characters are autonomous subjects with their own belief system which gets manifested in the form of their speech. Bakhtin echoes similar view when he states that the dialogic struggle, contradictions and multiplicity are key concepts which predominate any social discourse. Bakhtin terms “heteroglossia” as the centrifugal force which contests the traditional author-centric monologic approach and lends impetus to multiple views by perceiving language as ideologically construed and layered.

Dostoevsky’s emphasis upon a plurality of consciousness brought in a kind of Copernican revolution to the novelistic genre where “Authorial consciousness is brought on to the same plane as that of the heroes and interacts with them dialogically as autonomous subjects not as objectified images held within the author’s vision”(*BR* 89). The characters do not become the mouthpiece of the author rather they are autonomous subjects with self-consciousness. His polyphonic novel with its coexistence and interaction of multiple voices triumphed over the monologic European novel. Dostoevsky believes that human thought develop only under the condition of being in contact with the thought of others “the realm of its existence is not individual consciousness but dialogic communion *between* consciousnesses” (*BR* 98). In a similar vein, Bakhtin too puts forth his view that even a concept of unified truth might incorporate a plurality of consciousness rather than conceiving the authorial consciousness as the transcendent one (*BR* 97). Different world views and tendencies exhibited by the characters play a determining role in orchestrating the theme of the novel.

Bakhtin argues that the authors seem to rest their vision on a kind of pervasive ideology in order to impose the monologic authoritative discourse. He defines polyphony as “a fact of life” and “the miracle of our dialogical lives together” (*PDP* xxi). He considers novel as the one grand literary form capable of encompassing the polyphonies of life. Bakhtin states “A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and

consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels" (*PDP* 6). Dostoevsky opines that the essence of communication is dialogue and that "the thinking conscious and the dialogic sphere in which this consciousness exists" (*PDP* 271) cannot be explored through monologic artistic form. Thus, the technique of polyphony serves the highest purpose by preserving the autonomy of the characters.

The novels under consideration in this subsection embody different modes of polyphony. Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* charts the dissension within Laila's family and friend circle on the issues of nationalism and partition in order to repudiate the delimiting discourses of nation. Laila deftly captures the nuances of the conflicting voices by engaging with the complex train of thought involved in their fidelity to a particular political party or a community. The snippets of interactions within the family reveal that the mounting politics of communalism and affiliations determine the ideological standpoint of the characters. Mushirul Hasan comments that Hosain's novel supplements the "magisterial generalisations" (Burton 106) of partition history by illuminating the contradictions characterising the struggle for liberation movement.

Scholars such as Antoinette Burton, Jasbir Jain, Radha Chakravarty opine that a kind of liberal humanism is evident in Hosain's critique of the discourses of homogeneous nationalism in the form of her deference to multiple dichotomies characterising the postcolonial nations. In the novel, Laila's progressive thoughts informed by her western liberal education as well as her proximity with the ideologies of communism helps her to register the façade of nationalism and criticise all forms of hegemony. Radha Chakravarty draws a parallel between Dorris Lessing and Attia Hosain to elucidate on the idea of humanism which she perceives as a utopian desire in both the novelists to establish an egalitarian and inclusive society irrespective of the differences prevalent in the society (qtd in M Singh 39). Another scholar Anuradha Dingwaney Needham in her article "Multiple Forms of (National) Belonging: Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*" too notes Laila's liberal philosophy in her openness towards representing the competing views on nationalism in the form of dialogic interaction among the characters in the novel.

Hosain's novel exemplifies the essence of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism by unravelling the alternative narratives of nation in the form of coexistence and interaction

of various competing ideological standpoints. The Shia-Sunni conflict emerges in Zahid's antagonism towards Shia's for disobeying the tenets of religion in the name of Moharram and its associated ritual of collective mourning. Zahid decries their procession as "idolatrous and sinful" (Hosain 55) where they consider the *tazias* as the replica of the tombs of the grandsons of Prophet Muhammad. Zahra reprimands him for pitting both the divisions of the Muslim community against one another. Asad on the contrary blames the British for inducing hatred against each other. Another character Asghar too mocks at the hypocrisy involved in the ritual of mourning. Zahid questions the credulity of such organised grief where tears roll down casually at a public gathering only at the will of a man who performs the song of lamentation. Laila expresses resentment towards Zahid's fanaticism which widens the rift within the same community. These instances subtly hint at the fissures in the narratives of partition which only foregrounds the communal tension between two different communities.

A significant dimension of the novel is Laila's representation of the disparate ideological stances of the characters in the years leading up to the independence. Laila asserts, "Every meal at home had become an ordeal as peaceful as a volcanic eruption" (230). Her statement bears testimony to home as politically charged space where the characters voice out their opinions on discourse of nationalism. Asad, a cousin of Laila embodies Gandhian principles as he considers relentless pursuit of Truth and Non-violence as the only means to drive away the colonisers. Laila decries the religious zealots as well as the cynical leaders for their political manoeuvres to remain in power. The dissenting voices within the Taluqdar family render palpable the divided loyalty of the minority community to the nationalist cause. Their apprehension of selective discrimination of Muslims in postcolonial India stirs a kind of communalism within them. Saleem adheres to agenda of the Muslim League because he believes that the Congress have used the Muslim members as dupes to ensure its secular appearance. Kemal on the otherhand assures that as a government servant, he would forever remain loyal to the cause of Indian nationalism irrespective of his religious affiliations. Laila's loyalty towards Indian nationalism emerges when she derides Saleem for his divisive policy which would hamper the unity of the freedom movement.

The heated political arguments among the younger generation of Hosain's women characters reflect their transition from mute spectators to active participants in

the politics of the nation. Their exposure to English education and manners help them to develop their individual perspectives on the political upheavals. Laila's friend, Nita Chatterjee's nationalist zeal emerges in her firm determination to use her education coupled with her rationalist belief as a means to drive away the colonisers. Nadira, on the otherhand, supports the brand of Muslim nationalism and eulogises the heritage of the Islamic world. Though Nita and Nadira support different forms of nationalism there is a striking parallel in their philosophy of nationalism which is premised upon communalism. For instance, Nita urges Nadira and other Muslims to return to where they came from if they find it difficult to identify with the nationalists agenda. She says, "They can go back to where they came from if they think they're aliens" (126). Laila and Sita's nationalist bent of mind emerges at a very young age when they decide to fight for the freedom of the country by adopting certain non-violent means "We had vowed when we were old enough to fight for our country's freedom as the Satyagrahis did, to lie on the spit-stained pavements in front of treacherous shops that sold foreign cloth, to march in peaceful protest, to defy the might of the arrogant whites" (51).

The premonition of the socio-economic and other disparities to be ushered in by the postcolonial society perturbs the Taluqars. They are torn between their affinity with the centripetal politics of Indian nationalism and the discourse of imagined ideal haven for Muslims propagated by the Muslim League. Saleem decide to leave his country in the hope of a flourishing career prospect in Pakistan. His vision is driven by opportunism instead of emotional attachment which is evident in his statement "if I stay, I have been warned that prospects are not so bright here. I will not have to leave the firm, but cannot hope to get as far as I certainly can- and will-well, I mean to say, in business one has to face facts." (287). He believes that suspicion, prejudice and uncertainty will forever be the predicament of Muslims in India and will be detrimental to the development of their progenies too. Zahra's husband Naseer too opts for Pakistan in order to take charge as a Secretary.

Laila on the otherhand supports Kemal's view to stay back in India as she feels that at such trying times of falsehood and opportunism they owe their loyalty to their country as well as to the innocent Muslims who might not be privileged enough like Saleem, Nadira and others to leave their roots even at the time of the looming civil war in India. Kemal does not want the family to split up as it would mean different

nationalities and other travel restrictions for them in the near future. Kemal's loyalty with the nationalist emerges clearly in his response to Saleem's self-analysis of the options available to Government servants like Kemal to make a choice between the two countries:

Not really. A choice presupposes both sides mean the same to me. They don't. This is my country. I belong to it. I love it. That is all. One does not bargain...But I believe in my country. I have to fight for what I believe in. (287)

I see my future in the past. I was born here, and generations of my ancestors before me. I am content to die here and be buried with them. (288)

The charged atmosphere of the pre-partition days strikes a chord with Ameer who decides to give up his profession as a lecturer in order to join the Army. He believes that there is a higher purpose in teaching the young men the valour of sacrificing one's life for the sake of nation instead of keeping oneself cocooned in one's comfort zone.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* also attempts to reconstruct the partition ambience by deploying multiple voices involved in the epoch-making event. His ultimate endeavour is to mingle the discourse or voices of those in power with that of ordinary people in order to disrupt monologic configuration of nation. The interactions among the administrators expose the duplicity of those occupying positions of power. For instance, when the subinspector lambasts the disciples of Gandhi in Delhi for their pretentious behaviour in the guise of saints and their ignorance regarding the escalating communal rivalry in the border areas of Punjab, Hukum Chand, the Hindu Magistrate warns him not take to any sides and refrain from commenting upon such sensitive issues. He states, "Your principle should be to see everything and say nothing. The world changes so rapidly that if you want to get on you cannot afford to align yourself with any person or point of view. Even if you feel strongly about something, learn to keep silent" (Singh 22). The administrators have some vested interest even in peaceful evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra. Hukum Chand believes that only by preventing bloodshed among the rival communities in these trying times, they can be in the government's good books and escape suspension or transfer orders.

Singh highlights evidence of the instrumental role played by the administrators in orchestrating allegations against the innocent people who are not involved in any offence. The authorities ignite panic among the villagers by arresting people based on their religious faiths. Iqbal, a westernised and educated political activist deputed by the People's Party of India to Manu Majra to organise the peasants, is arrested along with Jugga on the ground of suspicion of murder of Hindu moneylender, Ram Lal. Hukum Chand roars at the subinspector for arresting Iqbal, the stranger, without enquiring about his parentage and religion. Doubting him to be a Muslim agitator, the subinspector orders his policeman to strip him in order to examine whether he has been circumcised or not. Though Iqbal refuses to be identified as a Muslim, the subinspector conjures up a plan to associate his name with the Muslim League so that they might trap or charge him with any mischief in the Sikh dominated border. Through the conversation between the subinspector and the Magistrate, Singh takes a dig at the vested interests of the incumbent administration in arresting Iqbal. For instance the subinspector justifies the arrest stating that "We would have had to arrest him in any case if he was up to mischief so near the border. We can charge him with something or other later" (69). The diabolical practice of Hukum Chand, the Magistrate emerges in his order "Fill in the warrant of arrest correctly. Name: Mohammed Iqbal, son of Mohammed Something-or-other or just father unknown. Caste: Mussulman. Occupation: Muslim League worker". (69)

Singh laments the political game played by the authorities to banish the minority Muslim community from the border area. When the subinspector informs Hukum Chand that the actual criminals Malli and four others villagers from Kapura have been traced and the constables have been deputed to arrest them, Hukum Chand questions him abruptly "Who are Mali and his companions, Sikh or Muslim?" (104). His malicious intent emerges in the way he orders his subinspector to let off Mali and his comrades in crime instead of releasing innocent victims Juggu and Iqbal. He believes that it would have been more convenient to instigate hatred among the Sikh villagers against their Muslim counterparts had the convicts been Muslims. He says, "The knowledge of that and the agitator fellow being a Leaguer would have persuaded Mano Majra Sikhs to let their Muslims go" (104). The statement reflects the hypocrisy of those in power who are complicit in communal rivalries pervading the region. He commands the constable to

bring Iqbal in the limelight by unnecessarily inquiring about any mischief committed by him in Mano Majra masquerading as a Sikh.

Through the character of Iqbal, Singh contemplates upon the socio-economic disparities that continue to plague the Indian society. It is Iqbal who for the first time acquaints the villagers with the ideals of communism and futility of communalism. As a social worker he wants to be the unifying force of oppressed people belonging to different faiths. He believes that freedom could be achieved in the true sense only when the underprivileged section revolt against the exploitation perpetuated by the landlords and capitalists. He identifies “hunger, want and injustice” (45) as the root causes of increase in criminal cases in the province. The cobwebs of colonial rule have distorted the idea of freedom for the ordinary villagers. They have an ingrained perception that their condition will remain the same whether under the English or the educated Indians or the Pakistanis. Iqbal envisions that a proletariat revolution led by the peasants and the workers can overthrow the autocratic reign of the government. He says, “Get rid of the princes and the landlords and freedom will mean for you just what you think it should. More land, more buffaloes, no debts” (52). The statement reflects his desire to guide the needy people to reap the benefits of freedom. He ruminates on the possibility of diverting the instinctual violence of ordinary men from communalism to discrimination perpetrated against them by the oppressive propertied class.

Khushwant Singh presents a medley of instances to weigh the repercussions of the colossal wave of partition upon the villagers in Mano Majra. Meet Singh’s conversation with Iqbal reflects the hospitality of the Sikhs even in trying times. When Iqbal enquires if could stay in the gurdwara for two or three days, Meet Singh assures him that anyone could take refuge comfortably at his place of worship. In an another instance, when the lambardar informs the inhabitants of Mano Majro about the mass scale evacuation of Muslims from the neighbouring villages, they express their bewilderment as to how one could ever betray their loyalty to fellow villagers “What I would like to know is how these people asked their fellow villagers to leave. We could never say anything like that to our tenants, any more than we could tell our sons to get out of our homes” (132). Again when a group of armed Sikh admonishes the villagers for their generosity towards the Muslims, Meet Singh asserts that the Muslims of Mano Majra should not be punished and killed for the crime committed by Muslims elsewhere.

These dialogic interactions hint at the villagers yearning for the existence of a hybrid community.

Analogous to the trope of polyphony characterising most of the partition fiction, Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* also captures the spectrum of varying responses to the epoch-making event of Partition. Manju Jaidka in her article "Hyphenated Perspectives on the Cracking of India: Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*" states that the novel reflects the repercussions of the momentous event at the micro-level. It can be analysed in the light of what Arjun Appadurai's terms as "local reading of a macro event" (qtd in Jaidka 43) where the passing comments and casual conversation on politics at local level generate those structures of sentiments that over time constitutes the distinctive discursive character of momentous historical event. Jill Didur in her thesis states that the metaphor "cracking" perfectly gives an inkling of the divergent experience of independence.

Sidhwa deftly captures the dilemma of the Parsis arising out of their apprehension of being swiped away by the powerful communities. In a discussion among the Parsis at temple hall, Colonel Bharucha expresses his strange premonition of the possibility of three "new nations!" (Sidhwa 37) at the advent of independence. He forewarns them of the political ramifications if they align with the wrong sides "Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!" (36). The colonel apprises them of the need to conduct their lives peacefully without posing threat to anybody. The sense of utter dejection is apparent in the way another Parsi character rules out any chances of living peacefully with other communities. He believes that the Hindus would not allow them to prosper in their business, the Muslims would forcibly convert them and the Sikhs might be a more powerful force to reckon with.

Colonel Bharucha acquaints the gathering regarding the peace-loving nature of their Parsi ancestors by citing the episode of the Grand *Vazir* and their forefathers, where the refugees promised to assimilate with the local populace and abide by the rules of the host country. The growing realisation of the possibilities of being sidelined by the polarised view of post-independent nation aggravates their tension. The history of forced conversion elicits fear among the Parsis with one of them even suggesting if it would not be safer to go to Bombay and live with their own community members if the Muslims rule Lahore. In response, Colonel Bharucha pins hope on the fact that the Parsis have

prospered under the Mughals too. Another man who didn't support his ancestors' idea of settling down in India prefers to go to London as faithful subjects of English kings. Dr Manek Modi sarcastically remarks that just like their ancestors they would assure the English king's *Vazir* that they would sweeten their lives "with a dash of colour" (40). The dialogic interaction implicitly hints at the differential responses of the same religious community to the political upheaval of partition.

The news of partition which created quite a furore in the border areas initially fails to incite hatred among the villagers of Pir Pindo. It is interesting to note that the pervading sense of economic deprivation by the city folks keep them united irrespective of their religious affiliations. The *chaudhry* asserts that the villagers are bound by their hard labour in the field and the city Banyas, who determine the Mandi prices are their common enemy. He subtly hints at the class affinity among the villagers when he says that "To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh?" (56). Imam Din believes that they have nothing to fear as long as they have their Sikh brothers by their sides. The Sikh *granthi* too assures them that they will sacrifice their own lives if need be for their Muslim brothers.

Sidhwa provides keen insights into the multiple perspectives on Gandhi constructed by each communal group. Lenny's description of Gandhi is an eccentric mixture of sublimity and irreverence at the same time. She exalts Gandhi as a "mythic figure" (85) and at the same time she compares him to "a clown and a demon" (87). She reduces the role of Gandhiji to a strange dietician who keeps on deliberating upon enema and clogged alimentary canals instead of illuminating them on political matters. Lenny also perceives certain effeminate attributes of "compassion, tolerance and understanding" (87) in Gandhi which perhaps shaped his philosophy of non-violence as a tool of mass resistance. Masseur on the other hand takes a sly dig at Gandhi and other Hindu politicians Nehru, Patel after hearing the news of Lord Wavell being sacked from the post of viceroyship owing to his lack of compliance with the Hindus. The Masseur retorts at the gardener "but aren't you Hindus expert at just this kind of thing? Twisting tails behind the scene...and getting someone close to slaughter your goats?" (91). The butcher terms Gandhi as "non-violent violence-monger" (91) who incite communal rivalry by manipulating different communities. In a sarcastic note the

Masseur criticises Gandhi for shifting allegiance “He’s a politician, *yaar*,’...’It’s his business to suit his tongue to the moment’ (91).

Minoli Salgado in her widely acclaimed book chapter “Writing Sri Lanka, Reading Resistance: Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* and A. Sivanandan’s *When Memory Dies*” foregrounds the dialectical nature of the texts by revealing the contrasting perspectives of the characters on “ethnicity, gender, sexuality and history” (Salgado 7). She states that these two novels portray history as a site of contention, with two main communities the Sinhalese and the Tamils vying with each other for constructing the discourse of the nation. Taking cue from Chelva Kanaganayakam’s emphasis on the need to evaluate the “heterogeneity and plurality” (Salgado 6) characterising a nation, an analysis of these novels reflect the contradictory and divergent voices which are suppressed to reinforce the homogeneous paradigm of a nation.

In Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy*, the conversations between Arjie and his family members unfold the pervasive normative paradigm in the domains of race and sexuality in Sri Lanka. Arjie is initiated into the world of racial and sexual politics at a tender age by his family members probably to undermine his unconventional thoughts and so called “funny” orientation. For instance, when Arjie anticipates a happy ending to the play *The King and I* culminating into marriage of an English governess and the King of Siam, his Amma calls him mad and apprises him of the normative code of conduct which determines their personal relationships. She states that society does not sanction such a match “Because at that time people didn’t marry outside their race.”...” Because most people marry their own kind” (Selvadurai 54). In another instance when Arjie casually enquires about the possible union of Burghers and Sri Lankans in the form of marital relationship, Daryl Uncle negates such a prospect by stating that their colour distinction impinges upon their decision “Some Sri Lankans people thought Burgher people were too white to marry their children and some Burgher people thought Sri Lankan people were too brown to marry theirs” (116). Arjie’s fascination for cross-dressing as bride is thwarted by his cousin Tanuja stating that that a boy can never be a bride, only a girl can play the role of a bride. Similarly, his mother urges him to only play cricket with the boys to curb his deviant behaviour.

The discourses of nationalism are imbricated in the dynamics of ethnicity which requires the minority community to prove their nationalism time and again in fear of

being forsaken by the majority community. The conversation between Arjie's father and Jegan reflects the predicament of the Tamils in face of brewing communal rivalry. For instance, in the chapter titled "Small Choices", Arjie's father warns Jegan to refrain from indulging in a verbal spat with a Sinhalese staff owing to the politically volatile climate in Sri Lanka. He says that the subnational aspirations of the Tigers as well as their violent methods have further aggravated the bitter relationship between the warring communities. There is a possibility that any grudge against the Sinhalese might take a violent turn in terms of Sinhalese-Tamil thing. So, when Jegan resents that he has been endowed with this position owing to his merits rather than his Tamil origin, Arjie's father cautions him of the need to tread carefully as a minority community: "But we are a minority, and that's a fact of life,...As a Tamil you have to learn how to play the game. Play it right and you can do very well for yourself. The trick is not to make yourself conspicuous. Go around quietly, make your money, and don't step on anyone's toes" (173).

In Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*, difference of opinion among the Tamils regarding the separatist strategy of LTTE emerges in their refusal to seek revenge against the Sri Lankan government. For instance, when one of the revolutionaries and Vijay's companion states that they will carry out a few more robberies in order to raise money for arms and ammunitions, a Colombo Tamil replies that such a step would worsen their condition in the South. Vijay's friend retorts back at him for seeking reconciliation with the Sinhalese and losing their dignity and self-respect in the process. He urges them to develop their own country Eelam instead of living as a second-class citizen of Sinhalese Sri Lanka. On the contrary, the Colombo Tamil expresses his resentment over the division of the island nation into two countries and pleads the revolutionaries to learn to live together with the Sinhalese.

It should be noted that Sivanandan touches upon the vote bank policies in the form of interactions among politically alert citizens. In spite of strong opposition from the Tamil minority and other opposition political parties, the President promotes the referendum in order to capitalise upon his parliamentary majority and ensure the extension of the term of his party in the parliament. The discussion between Dhana and Sarath reveals the same where Dhana apprises Sarath of the communalisation of the whole electorate by the President to guarantee his victory. Dhana bursts out that the

President in his capacity as the leader nominates his preferred candidates in order to fulfil his motives of an elected dictatorship in the guise of parliamentary democracy. Vijay and Damayanthi believe that they must create awareness among the common man about the cons of referendum which would disenfranchise them and make their elected representatives responsible only to their President for their actions.

Lal critiques Fonny and her SLFP party for confusing race and class deliberately to succeed in their “ready-made majority” (Sivanandan 204) vote bank policies. They use race and class interchangeably without considering its adverse impact upon the impoverished lot. When Lal asserts that socialism implies justice for both Sinhalese and the Tamils to use their language for official purpose, Fonny interrupts Lal to inform him that the Tamils hold most of the administrative posts irrespective of their limited numerical strength. Lal retorts back stating that only a handful of English educated upper class Tamil in administrative posts do not constitute the entire Tamil lot. Most of them are ordinary peasants, toddy tappers and plantation workers who are deprived of any kind of privileges by the Sinhalese. Lal states “You are confusing race and class, like your whole bloody party, so that you can keep your class while shouting race” (202). His statement subtly hints at the political game played by the parties to oust the Tamils from Sri Lanka. Another learned Sinhalese character Visvappa argues that it is imperative for them to preserve their Sinhala language because it is spoken only in Ceylon and that too by a handful of people unlike Tamil which is an ancient language spoken all over the world. Saha father on the other hand disapproves his argument and accuses the learned people of inciting communalist sentiments among common man by making such claims.

Memory in Narratives of Nation

Memory forms an inevitable part of narrator’s discourse in case of historical novels. J Edward Mallot in the introduction to his book *Memory, Nationalism, and Narrative in Contemporary South Asia* (2012) quotes Anna Douglass’ and Thomas A. Vogler’s view of memory as a field of “unexamined assumptions and unargued assertions” (2) to foreground the emotional aspect and problem of testimony characterising memory studies. Mallot claims that memory discourses assume all the more importance in South Asian context owing to its traumatic history of Partition and mass migration. The discontentment with the official history’s inability to represent the affective dimension of the events fuelled the growth of memory studies. Memory figures prominently in the

fiction and non-fiction to reclaim and restore the narratives of the communities submerged by the nationalist homogeneous discourse. It seeks to weave the past and the present and articulate alternate views on nationalism. In the context of the Indian subcontinent, the rallying cry for ethnic nationalism and the resultant communal violence lends a kind of political aspect to memory. The book proposes a nuanced view of memory by emphasising upon its dual outcomes: memory as a means to consolidate individual/collective identity and memory as a means to deny others identity and claim to justice, agency and nationhood.

The verbalisation of the lived experience of the victims of history through personal and collective recollection play a crucial role in the process of healing by lending impetus to their claim for justice. Critic Javeed Alam notes that memory has the potential to oppose and replace the fabricated universal narratives of history generally “written with a capital H” (Mallot 5) with alternative accounts. Another critic Kai Erikson believes that shared history of pain and trauma recollected in the form of unified mourning may foster a sense of collective community identity. American sociologist, Jeffrey K. Olick considers memory as “the handmaiden of nationalist zeal” (Mallot 7) which like history may be manipulated to further oppression. Olick observes that memory and nation share a close relationship where memory sometimes function as battleground for conflictual claims of nationhood and at times acts as a catalyst for subnational movements. Olick’s view seems to cohere with Bhabha’s idea of the performative aspect of memory, where community perform certain exclusive episodes of memory to assert and maintain their nationalism. I.A. Richards defines memory as an “apparent revival of past experience to which its richness and complexity is due” (qtd in Connell 31). Maurice Halbwach book *The Collective Memory* (1992) considers memory as one of the means employed by our consciousness to connect experiences and images in the form of language (qtd in Connell 32).

Salman Rushdie in his essay “Imaginary Homelands” points out that “the shards of memory” (12) in the form of fragmented visions challenge the homogeneous view of history and in the process adds value to the mundane realities of the present in relation to the past. Milan Kundera admits the importance of memory in challenging the essentialist version of truth propagated by those in power. His statement “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting” (qtd in Miller 279) subtly

hints at the politics of remembering and deliberate obliteration involved in charting out the history of a nation. T.S. Eliot also recognises the role of memory in literary aesthetics in his essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” where he emphasises on a “train of thought” (Ellis 291) which connects him with his predecessors. French philosopher Henry Bergson echoes similar view in his book *Matter and Memory* where he notes that “there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience” (quoted in Ellis 293).

Urvashi Butalia argues that the momentous event of partition may be better understood as a complex interplay of remembering and forgetting based on the circumstances of a specific community and their political resolution. She highlights the ambivalence involved in memory owing to conflicting interests, where some communities consider remembering their glorious past as a means to assert their supremacy in the present while for others forgetting their past history as oppressed communities is the only way to move forward. Butalia in her analysis of the histories of gendered violence also draws attention to selective amnesia and illumination that underpins the relationship between human beings and their history (350). Memory plays a crucial role in evoking the past and making it discernible to us “through subjective remembering” (Herzberger 35). Fentress and Wickham emphasises that memory involves selective remembering based on the relevance of the individual or group who remember them, for its determining role in identity formation. Dirlík states that “memory may serve different purposes under different circumstances for different groups” (qtd in Rodwell 60). Collective memories bolster the moral force of history for those seeking recognition for their community. Jewish historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi defines memory as one of “the most fragile and capricious of our faculties” (qtd in Stavans 79). Each community tries to bolster its communion with history through a shared cultural memory.

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie contemplates upon the fallibility of memory and the arbitrariness involved in construction of reality. The narrator says “Memory has its own special kind [of truth]. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimises, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality” (qtd in Droogan 211). French historian Patrick Lagrange too registers the distortions involved in memory when

he states that “History is the certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation” (qtd in Kumar 66). Even in the novel *Shame*, Rushdie hints at unreliability of memory when he states that as a migrant and a fantasist, the onus is on him to hold on to certain history which the memory seeks to relinquish.

Rushdie’s *Shame* delves into the undeniable link between memory and the migrants which shape their identity formation in the hostland. Citing the instance of Bilquis, the narrator moves on to reveal the fate of the migrants who are “stripped of history” and left with “treasured mementoes and old photographs” (Rushdie 63) as specimens of memory to re-contextualise and anchor their collective identity in the new ideological space. Recollecting the tales of family horror, suspicion, and betrayal seems to be a way of reliving them and keeping a “grip on its honour and its unswerving moral code” (76). Bariamma, the matriarch urges Bilquis to recount the tale of her dispossession from her own land in order to be initiated into the family. Bariamma eulogises the tales of women in her dormitory and believes that the collective recollection and reiteration of these tales serve as a glue to bind different generations of the clan together. Raza Hyder also apprises Bilquis regarding the sanctified relationship between kinship and recollected catalogue of family tales when he says that, “The recounting of histories... is for us a rite of blood” (77).

In one of the thesis chapter titled “Refugees and the Postcolonial Nation-State” the researcher Amit Rahul Baishya invokes historian Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali’s view that the seamless assumption of the incorporation of partition refugees belonging to majority community into the homogeneous national paradigm actually renders them invisible and silent sufferers in the domain of refugee studies. Taking cue from Jean Francois Lyotard’s idea of *unpresentable* as described in his book *The Differend: The Phrases in Dispute*, Baishya also equates the narratives of the refugees with that of the “unpresentable” where their claims for justice cannot be resolved within the conceptual paradigms of the nation states (Baishya 240). So, in *The Point of Return* the son calls himself “inept archaeologist of memories” (Deb 248) and takes recourse to memory as the only medium to reveal the existential angst of the refugees through the story of his own father, Dr Dam.

In *The Point of Return*, the trope of reminiscence is employed by the second generation migrant represented by Babu in order to negotiate and anchor his sense of identity in the new land. The bitter memories of the trauma of displacement and migration of the forefathers from East Pakistan continue to impinge on the present life of postcolonial Bengalis in the state of Meghalaya. In the novel, the memory of Dr Dam's existential crises coupled with Babu's own sense of alienation triggered by some instances of discrimination helps him to re-evaluate and reconcile with the submissive demeanour of his father that he had visualised during his childhood. The quest for a home and stable identity which governs the imaginations of the second generation is at an impasse due to lack of affinity with their ancestral land back in Bangladesh as well as their systematic marginalisation in the eastern borderland region.

The sombre expression of Dr Dam after the arrival of the telegram impels Babu to conjure up the seriousness of those condensed information. The news of his grandfather's death invariably brings back Babu's memories of his ancestral home in Silchar with its dilapidated garden and weed affected pond. Babu recollects the predicament of his dispossessed ancestors who had to leave their farming land in East Pakistan in anticipation of a new way of life in the host country after the historical upheaval of partition in 1947. His grandfather's reference to the ancestral land as East Pakistan even after its secession from Pakistan subtly hints at the impotence of profound "geopolitical shifts" (35) to obliterate the memories associated with the landscape of the past. Babu's recalls his grandfather's struggle to settle in India and accept the changes wrought by time. The doubts and fears engulfing him coalesce to turn him into a passive agent absorbing the sorrows around him. Perhaps that is why he leads a reclusive life without any kind of communication for years in a room rented by Babu's father in the slum area of Thikarbasti.

Babu's self- introspection as to why rain necessarily forms a part of his memory reflects his attachment to place of resettlement rather than his original ancestral roots beyond the border. Though Babu's parents embark on the journey of ceaseless quest for identity in their new land, a sense of impermanence continues to haunt their prospects of settlement. Babu's recollection of their rented house at Jail Road with its windowless rooms, piled up trunks and suitcases, empty wall except for a calendar indicates the temporariness and the burden of migrancy surrounding the lives of the Bengali

immigrants. Dr Dam believes that his son would never be able to fathom out the mystery behind the sounds of boots reiterating in his father's account of that traumatic night in 1971 in his bungalow but the memory of the "fear and uncertainty" (153) will be continue to plague his son and remind him of their vulnerable position.

Even in Delhi, glimpses of his hometown features regularly in his dreams in the form of "photographs with fading colors", "a dried leaf pressed between the pages of a book", "sound of horses' hooves drumming on the slanted, corrugated tin roof" (207, 208) thereby coordinating the time and place of his adulthood and accentuating his nostalgic yearning for the places and the experiences left behind. During the course of his reveries, Babu's modes of recalling and narrating of the hill state at the same time merges into one and he himself becomes the embodiment of the place he calls his own hometown.

In the chapter titled Memories, the narrator says that he takes recourse to maps, photographs and memory to furnish details that can make sense of his past and reclaim the identity of his homeland in addition to its cliché representation as a place "of remote beauty and even more remote violence" (215). At the same time, he emphasises on the fluidity characterising memory, where the past and the present mingle to reconfigure the landscape and generate a constructed idea of the town. He says, "Each churning in the storehouse of memory that is me displaces something, changing the contours of my hometown, merging that place with people and incidents that came much, much later" (216). His nostalgic dream of walking with a mysterious woman by Wards Lake followed by his questioning of her presence in the city of Delhi leads him to the realisation that the present has the ability to intrude and disrupt his past which he treasures as a "sanctuary" (216) against all his failures since his departure from the homeland.

The tropes of travel and memory and the corresponding sense of physical and psychological journey undertaken by Babu help him to evaluate the exilic condition and perennial feelings of alienation and loneliness experience by subsequent generations of migrants. He says:

Perhaps this is the true return, the completion of a cycle set in motion long ago, and if it seems lonely, maybe it is because migration is a reductive evolutionary

principle where the sprawling, oppressive family gives way to its streamlined nuclear descendant, to be replaced finally by the individual straining at the limits of memory. (221)

Though the hilly state allures him, Babu's recollection of the past is impregnated with xenophobic hatred experienced by him as well as his earlier generation. Several instances of assaults on the non-tribals including his father; insider/outsider distinction created in the form of strikes, demonstrations against the Bengali migrants; increase in taxes for the non-tribals; and the abuses of "Go back, foreign dogs. Go back, Bangadeshis" (249) reverberating in the town surfaces in his later life to unfold the illusory nature of his perceived "homeland". In an article titled "Migrancy and Memory in Siddhartha Deb's Novel *The Point of Return*" the researcher equates Babu's inherited sense of fear and uncertainty to Marianne Hirsch's idea of "postmemory" where traumatic memory cultivates a "living connection" (Sharma 138) between the present and past generation even if the later generations might not have experienced the same historical events. However, in Siddhartha Deb's novel the later generation too is caught in the vortex of insider/outsider discrimination apart from inheriting the trauma in the form of ancestral stories, letters, diaries, songs and other disturbing images.

Babu calls himself an "inept archaeologist of memories" (248) engaged in tracing his roots in the face of cartographic divisions invading the life of common man. Babu's job as an editor of newspaper in Delhi brings him into close proximity with the injustice prevalent in every nook and corners of the world. His physical detachment from his hometown coupled with the objectivity as a journalist probably enables him to shed light upon the fluidity of borders and futility of wars among modern nation states. He states "If we were all to do so, we whose lives are flung around in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, if we were to let loose our song lines, our routes of memory, our pilgrimage paths, we would find them faltering against the documents and borders and guns" (248-49).

In the final section of the novel titled "Travelogue", the narrator Babu in his attempt to endow a coherent shape to his father's otherwise unremarkable and insignificant life contemplates on nuanced idea of memory which has the capacity to change the way we look at the past. He states:

Memory is also about what you decide to remember, so that you can make sense of what has been irrevocably lost...Change a name there, add a street, put in the rain, as if by doing this there was something that could be reached, a way for the waste to be negated. Each group has its own truth, but there is no way of putting them together to form a complete picture” (255).

Just as in *The Point of Return*, in Gunesekera’s *Reef* too the naive protagonist Triton takes recourse to memory in order to evoke his past and anchor his identity in the new land. Susheila Nasta in her analysis of Gunesekera’s *Reef* and *The Sandglass* explores the idea of “home through the migrant frame of memory” (Nasta qtd in Daimari 49). Just like the novelist Gunesekera, Triton’s memories of transformation of Sri Lanka from a lush coral island to a “spoiled paradise” (Jazeel 583) are coloured by his immigrant experience and the ethnic violence that befell the nation. As the narrative unfolds, the encounter between immigrant Triton and a young Tamil refugee at a petrol station in London triggers a sense of affinity between them. In the words of James Clifford a coalition blossoms out of their “diasporic consciousness” (Jazeel 587) of their common experience of alienation and exclusion in their former homeland. Triton’s recollection of his childhood memories of idyllic Sri Lanka as “a sea of pearls” (Gunesekera 2) and a “diver’s paradise” (Gunesekera 2) and its present degeneration unleashed by the confrontation between army camps and the Tigers hints at the entangled relationship between socio-political conflicts and natural ecosystem.

Triton recalls how his trip to the sea coast along with esteemed marine biologist Mr Salgado and Mr Dias brings him into close proximity with the movement of the waves. The relentless onrush of tidal waves generates a kind of fear within him regarding its overpowering nature. He discerns that the waves have the capacity to engulf them and lull them to eternal sleep “each wave just a grain of sand closer to washing the life out of us” (60). Salgado describes the waves of the sea as a repository of human history which absorbs human actions and its repercussions on the passage of time “And every sound made like a stone plopped into it. You see the ripples? History is written just like that” (83). Salgado draws a parallel between stones and human actions, which either sink in the motion of waves or bring changes in the progression of history’s narrative.

J Edward Mallot in his article “*We Are Only What We Remember, Nothing More*” reflects on the inextricable relationship between memory and history in *Reef*.

Though critics have undermined Gunesequera's lengthy discussions on cuisines as "unnecessary and exoticized" (83) passages, Mallot believes that preparation of food and the conversations around the dining table comprises a kind of living memory of the island teeming with marine life and threatened by modernity and political upheavals. Triton believes that a synergy of appearance, aroma and flavour work together to appeal to the sensory experiences of its consumers. He states "Taste is not a product of the mouth; it lies entirely in the mind. I prepare each dish to reach the mind through every possible channel" (Gunesequera 87). Triton recalls how food acts as "a catalyst for remembrance" (Holtzman 362) as the delectable cuisines prepared by him trigger a kind of parallel conversations on political events as well as the dishes. Edward Mallot draws a comparison between Triton's description of boning a half-eaten turkey and the complexities involved in memory formation. Triton states:

Boning in itself is a kind of rest: soothing. An afterhour's affair. One can lose all sense of one's surroundings and become as one with the knife teasing out little scraps of flesh from cartilage and soft bone...It is different from washing-up where there are so many different tasks. You have to think then, make decisions, discriminate: what to throw away, what to soak, what to clean. (94)

It might be inferred that memory is not just a mimetic representation of the past instead it is governed by its own creative process. Deliberate remembering and forgetting take place in order to retain the palatable ones and discard the unnecessary ones. Towards the end of the novel Mr Salgado apprises Triton of the importance of memory which delicately shapes their life "we are only what we remember, nothing more...all we have is the memory of what we have done or not done; whom we might have touched, even for a moment.." (180). Unlike Triton who stays back in Britain to pursue his dream of a restaurateur, his master Mr Salgado decides to return to the island in order to hold on to the memory of his unfulfilled union with his lost lover Nili. Triton's believes that his snack shop with its flavours of Sri Lankan spices and ingredients will not only cater to the taste of the immigrants but will help them to recreate memories of home in foreign land.

In Sivanandan's novel *When Memory Dies*, Rajan, the narrator beautifully captures the distortion of historical memory during colonial times followed by its continued appropriation by Sinhalese politicians in the years following the independence

of the nation. The title of the novel itself alludes to the role of memory in lending a kind of coherence and continuity to the history of a country ruptured by colonial occupation and ethnic wars. In the introductory chapter itself he laments that the colonisers have eroded their history leaving them only with shards of memory that too of the colonisers: “And no story of the country- or, if of the country, not our story but theirs, the *parangis*’. Except that we all bore the imprint of that history, like a stigma, internalized it even, made it our own, against our will, calling to memory the while to lose it by losing memory itself” (Sivanandan 5-6). The title of the novel is extracted from a conversation between Uncle Para and Vijay where Uncle cautions him of the need to retrieve and reclaim their own history instead of holding on to false memories which might worsen their case. His assertion “When memory dies, a people die” (335) reflects the same. In *Twilight in Delhi*, Ahmed Ali situates the aura of the Mughal culture and a way of life in the memories of its characters. Mir Nihal, the protagonist reminiscences the splendour of pre-war Old Delhi and contrasts it with its subsequent degeneration unleashed by the advent of colonialism. Similarly characters such as Begam Jamal, Begam Nihal, Habibuddin, Kambal Shah and others express their resentment at the intrusion of their world of memories by their anglicised progenies.

National Allegory in Narratives of Nation

In the history of scholarly research, American literary critic Fredric Jameson for the first time developed the concept of “national allegory” in his highly debated article “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism' (1986)”. He defines national allegory as a narrative where “the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society (p 69)”. In other words, the mundane reality and predicament of ordinary characters in their day to day life is emblematic of the situations enveloping their outer world too. Frederic Jameson’s view “All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories” (Jameson 69) has been criticised by a number of critics on the ground that it is a reductionist view overlooking the rich literary heritage of South Asia and reducing the writings of the Third World to a one dimensional aesthetics. Even scholars from third-world countries have criticised him for making such essentialist statement about third-world literature. Aijaz Ahmad in his influential essay “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the “National

Allegory” disapproves Jameson’s argument as it overlooks the majority of literary works by vernacular writers whose literary creativity and thematic concerns must be quite different from other writers. Ahmad asserts “there is no such thing as a ‘Third World Literature’ which can be constructed as an internally coherent object of theoretical knowledge” (4).

In the ongoing interplay between “literary texts” and “national tale”, facts become enmeshed with fiction thereby comingling the genres of history and fiction. Linda Hutcheon coined a term “historiographic metafiction” to refer to this postmodernist model of historical fiction which combines the genre of both historiography and fiction. She defines historiographic metafiction as “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (Nunning 360). By blurring the distinctions between fact and fiction, history and literature, the real and the imaginary, the genre of historiographic metafiction attempts to create awareness regarding subjectivity involved in both historiography and fiction. According to Hutcheon, the technique of historiographic metafiction induces the readers to re-evaluate the claims of history and the world of fiction which are often coloured by human interpretations.

Georg Lukacs’ in his book *The Historical Novel* (1962) states that the historical novel should artistically demonstrate historical reality by awakening of characters who figured in those monumental events. He believes that certain episodes which are intricately related to the historical figures must be portrayed to lend authenticity to the events and to re-experience the situations which propelled them to act in that particular manner in historical reality. Lukacs cites Tolstoy’s deft portrayal of Napoleonic wars in the form of certain small significant factual episodes to represent the mood of Russian army and Russian people in general. He also mentions Walter Scott’s depiction of great historical figures as minor characters in the novel to represent their virtues and weaknesses as human beings. Lukacs opines that in doing so the historical novelists furnish certain factual details which form the basis of those monumental events.

Aijaz Ahmad in his article “Rushdie's Shame: Postmodernism, Migrancy and Representation of Women” states that the predominant task of a “Third World” novel is to partake in an allegorical, epic or fairy tale representation of national experience (1461). Both Timothy Brennan and Aijaz Ahmad in their analysis of the novel believe

that the technique of allegory is used to reveal the correspondences between events in Peccavistan and the real historical events that pervaded Pakistan. *Shame*, in Brennan's words "covers a central episode in Pakistan's internal life, which it portrays as a family squabble between Iskander Harappa (Zulfikar Afi Bhutto) and his successor and executioner Raza Hyder (Zia ul- Haq)" (qtd in Finn 14). Ahmad makes a critical comment that the experience of the ruling elite class is presented as the experience of the entire nation thereby confining it to a narrow stratum of the society "Far from being about "the East" or even about "Pakistan," the book is actually about a rather narrow social stratum — so narrow, in fact, that Rushdie himself is able to portray all the major characters as belonging to a single family" (Ahmad 1466). At the same time Ahmad believes the technique of portraying all the antagonists as relatives help to represent the family dictatorship or a kind of monopolistic structure that circulates Pakistan's politics.

There is a repeated intervention on the part of the narrator, an alter ego of Rushdie himself to assert the difference between his fictional "Peccavistan" and the real Pakistan. The narrator addresses the readers in a metanarrative fashion to draw attention to the fact that it is an imaginative territory resembling Pakistan not an actual representation of the nation. The narrator states:

The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centring to be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan. (Rushdie 29)

Though Rushdie claims time and again that the country represented in the story has no name of its own and he terms it as *Peccavistan*, the whole book is replete with historical references of Pakistan such as the Defence Services Officer' Co-Operative Housing Society in Karachi, execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, dictatorship of President Zia ul-Haq, reconstitution of Eastern Province as an autonomous nation, armed movement in Baluchistan, struggle for power between democrats, fundamentalists and the Army. The paradox is that Rushdie in his attempt to dispel the view of his novel being a documentation of the realistic one about Pakistan mentions a number of anecdotes pervading the nation: corruption of the inhabitants of 'Defence', murder of the Deputy Speaker in the National Assembly, President Ayub Khan's Swiss bank account, genocide

in Baluchistan, discrimination in offering scholarships, anti-Semitism, smuggling racket, budget allocation etc. The employment of such facts imparts a kind of realistic effect to the narrative.

Rushdie offers a panoramic view of Pakistani history through his ingenious portrayal of fictional characters Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder modelled on two political personalities of Pakistan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Zia Ul-Haq respectively. With the help of the fictional counterparts, the novelist anchors the readers in a very specific period of post-colonial history of Pakistan to reveal the corruptions and criminalities engaged in by the rulers. Raza Hyder's policies of Islamisation and the resultant widespread religious intolerance, weakening of civil liberties and press censorship during his reign resembles that of General Zia Ul-Haq's period of governance. Similarly, parallels may be drawn between Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Iskander Harappa's formation of Pakistan Peoples Party, limitless ambitions, self-pride and arrogance, promise of a curious syncretism of religious tolerance, democracy and socialism in Pakistan, internationalist agenda and his ultimate execution by Zia Ul-Haq.

In an article titled "Failings of Form in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*" the writer Leonard G Finn draws correspondences between actual historical figures and their fictional equivalents. For instance, Haraun Harappa's character is based upon Zulfiqar Bhutto's son, Mir Murtaza Bhutto who organised one of the largest hijackings in history carried out by the military wing, *al Zulfiqar*. This hijacking episode is overtly represented in the novel by naming the military wing as *al Iskander*. Arjumand Harappa's close relationship with her father and her glorification of her father's government by ignoring his misdeeds and the mass scale genocides in Baluchistan during his regime replicates that of Benazir Bhutto's adoration of her father in her book *Daughters of Destiny* (1989).

Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* is also replete with historical ingredients in order to give fictional continuity to the time and history of the Mughal culture which has been demolished by the British. The novel is not limited to nostalgic evocation of the glory and decadence of the Mughal; it also contains a deliberate fusion of the historical facts with situational experiences filtered through the picture of Old Delhi treasured by its inhabitants. The private experiences of Mir Nihal and his family are meticulously elevated to public consciousness in order to convincingly represent "a pageant of

History” (Intro xxi) that has been engulfed in manipulated politics of its usurpers. Ali claims that the first-hand experience of his grandparents and the poems of Bahadur Shah, the last of the Mughal emperor serve as a repository of authentic facts and help him to bring to light the historical details which have been dropped by British historians.

In the beginning the novelist delves into the mythological origin of Old Delhi and its splendid architecture in order to unearth the history of invasion and destruction that underlay the coveted city. He recalls Raja Yudhishtira, the eldest of five Pandava brothers who developed the magnificent city in 1453 BC after the great battle of Mahabharat. The remnants of Old Delhi in the form of spectacular monuments such as the Qutub Minar, Humayun’s Tomb, the Red Fort and the Jama Mosque bears reflection of the glory of Mughal civilisation. Ali refers to Kauravs, Pandavas, Khilijis, Saiyyeds, Babur, Humayun, Shah Jahan and others to indicate subsequent demolition and rebuilding of the city by various dynastic rulers who descended upon it.

The unparalleled popularity of art and literature under the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar is beautifully represented by interspersing the daily conversation of characters with poetic elements. The fragments of the verses, songs, ghazals, qawaals are integral to the overall design of the novel as they mirror the subjective experience of the Mughal in the face of invasions and massacres enveloping their city. Ahmed Ali’s penchant for Sufism and a passion for Urdu poetry resonates in his abundant use of snippets of poems by Urdu poets like Hafiz, Dard, Ghalib, Saadi and others. The novel’s preoccupation with Urdu poets emerges in the discussion among Mir Nihal and his friends Nawab Puttan and Nawab Sirajuddin Khan Saael regarding the superiority of the language and diction employed by Zauq and Daag and their ingenuity in using their pen-names in the last line of their ghazals. The overarching mood of melancholy for Old Delhi is conveyed in the form of a plaintive poem of Bahadur Shah recited by the character of Gul Bano, his granddaughter in the novel:

Delhi was once a paradise,

Such peace had abided here.

But they have ravished its name and pride,

Remain now only ruins and care...(140)

Again, Mushtari Bai, the former lover of Asghar grieves for the sense of transitoriness and futility engulfing the lives of dancing girls in Chaori Bazar. Her poem of lamentation evokes a sense of guilt in Asghar:

We are but travellers on the road

It matters not if we are dead or live;

Our life is like a candle flame:

You had put us out and we had died;

Now you have lighted us we are alight. (77)

The hustle and bustle entailing the preparations for the coronation of King George V in Delhi in 1911 have been effectively juxtaposed with the preparations gearing up for Asghar's marriage. Mir Nihal's elder sons and other relatives came to attend the family function as well as to witness the ceremonial transfer of power to the British King who aimed to build the eighth and the greatest of the Delhis by supplanting the capital of the Mughals. Mir Nihal, Begum Jamal, Begam Nihal and others characters belonging to the older generation burn with rage from within at the thought of being subjected to a foreign race. Painful thoughts of the duplicities indulged in by the British to overthrow the Mughal rulers in India swarm upon Mir Nihal's mind. He states "By egging on Indian chiefs to fight each other and by giving them secret and open aid, they won concessions for themselves; and established their 'empire'" (144). Mir Nihal even has a flashback of the bloody massacre of Muslims at Jama Masjid by Sir Thomas Metcalf and his British Army. The trauma of the fading grandeur of the Mughals and the violence and plunder of Delhi by the colonisers haunt him. Parallels may be drawn between Mir Nihal's paralytic condition and the gradual decay of Mughal way of life, both smothered by time and fate.

Ali also takes a dig at the civilising mission of the colonisers by exposing the economic hardships and the socio-cultural insecurities experienced by the natives under the British rule. The prices of essential edibles such as sugar, grain and ghee soared up at an exorbitant rate making it difficult for the common man to meet their day to day needs. They were forced into starvation by rising prices and the artificial scarcity of

commodities in the market created by the banias with the support of the Government. The famine like situation led the daily workers such as Mirza, the milk-seller, Kalian, the carpenter and others to the realisation that “The Farangis are cheats and faithless swine” (210). Culture hegemony of the British dismantled the unifying relationship which existed between the society and the great poets of Hindustan in the Mughal era. Mir Nihal regrets that “Time had reversed the order of things, and life had been replaced by a death-in-life” (241). Against the backdrop of colonial domination, Ali also mentions the historic war of independence 1857, Home Rule Movement, and other movements of resistance by the natives against their usurpers.

In *Sunlight on a Broken Column* parallels may be drawn between Laila’s family history and complex political history of north India during the mayhem of Partition. Hosain effectively juxtaposes the private realm with the political realm thereby depicting the inner domain as a microcosm of the outer domain fraught with contradictions on the discourses of nationalism. Hosain’s close proximity with the intellectual circle in London and at the same time her traditional upbringing in the feudal society makes it feasible for her to study the confluence of Indian and Western culture as embodied in the colonial hybridity of characters like Uncle Hamid, Aunt Saira and Zahra. Sarla Parkar observes that Hosain’s critical strategy emerges in her subtle blending of the destiny of the protagonist Laila with the destiny of the emerging nation. G.J.V. Prasad observation reflects the blurred distinction between private and public world in Hosain’s novel. He states:

This book is about growing up, about growing up a woman, during the most exciting years of our national history. The struggle for national independence was also a challenge to feudalism, to all old orders. Empowerment of the masses also called for the empowerment of women. Laila, the protagonist of this novel, learns to take control of her life. Her personal struggle for freedom is fought out against the background of the national struggle for independence. (qtd. in Ghimire 196)

In the novel Hosain uses the strategy of parallel timings in order to blur the distinction between familial and political domain. For instance, Baba Jan’s imminent death and aunt Abida’s moving out of the cocoon of the zenana quarters sets the tone for the transition about to occur in the family as well as the nation during the partition. A kind of universality is lent to Baba Jan impending death by merging the sorrows

engulfing the family members with the rhythmic mourning of the city for the martyred grandchildren of Prophet Muhammad in the first week of Muharram. Again Zahra's return to India coincides with the splendid occasion of the Viceroy's visit to Lucknow in order to attend the reception given by the *Taluqdars* of Oudh in honour of the British Government.

Hosain portrays the growing differences within Ashiana as a microcosm of the disheartening reality of conflicting political ideologies characterising the discourse of nationalism. Divided opinions on the partition of the country generates heated arguments within the members of the close-knit family with some characters like Saleem, his wife Nadira, Zahra and her husband supporting the newly created Islamic nation while others like Asad, Nita and Laila deciding to stay back in India to support the nationalists cause. As a secular Muslim nationalist and a firm believer in feudalism, Uncle Hamid engages in a heated conversation with Saleem for accusing the Congress and taking side with the Muslim League. The rift between the father and the son becomes apparent in their different groups of visitors, Saleem being visited by "fanatic, bearded men and young zealots" (230) and Uncle Hamid being frequented by landlords and their courtiers. Kemal apprises Saleem and Aunt Saira of the bitter consequences of splitting up of the family if they decide to leave for their homeland "Don't you see, we will belong to different countries, have different nationalities? Can you imagine every time we want to see each other we'll have to cross national frontiers?" (287).

In the final section, Laila's visit to her childhood home Ashiana after fourteen years mirrors the changes that have taken place in the house as well as the town in the aftermath of partition. A sense of nostalgia and sadness envelopes her as she perceives the changes brought in by unplanned settlement of refugees in the form of concretisation of open spaces, old palaces and feudal mansions in dilapidated condition, cheap flats replacing the palace and garden of Raja of Bhimnagar, and lawns and gardens of Ashiana lying unkempt and infested by weeds. The disintegrating reality of partition flashes before her eyes when she notices strangers occupying the living rooms which once housed her closed ones her lost father and mother, her grandfather, aunt Abida, Hakim Bua, Zahra among others. The official terms such as "refugees" labelled against the new occupants of the house and "evacuee" as referred to Saleem and other rightful owners of the house subtly hints at the bargaining politics of bureaucrats during

the time of communal turmoil afflicting the nation. Laila's ancestral home emerges as a symbolic representation of a nation ravished by partition. She says, "And now the house was a living symbol. In its decay I saw all the years of our lives as a family; the slow years that had evolved a way of life, the swift short years that had ended it" (273). Antoinette Burton in her analysis of the novel rightly claims home as a "irrefutable partition archive" where plethora of conflicting ideologies in the wake of partition makes it impossible to dwell comfortably at home (106).

In Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*, Sahadevan's peasant family and their experiences serve as a microcosm of the ethnic conflicts pervading the nation. The three generations of Sahadevan's family play a determining role in mapping an alternative history of nation by portraying the working class solidarity and spirit of co-existence among some Sinhalese and Tamils amidst the escalating political violence plaguing the nation. The intertwined relationship between the narrative and the national history is clearly evident in its reference to momentous historical instances such as the Ceylon National Congress' struggle for Sri Lanka's independence, Sinhala Only Act enacted by Bandaranaike and the subsequent civil war it precipitated in the nation, the rail strike of 1912, the Panadura Debate, Suriya Mal movement, the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, Tamil rebels (LTTE) demand for a separate state known as Tamil Eelam in the North, People's Liberation Front movement against Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party and many others.

Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* encapsulates the mounting complexities that came in Lahore in the wake of Partition through the eyes of a naïve child narrator Lenny. Her development in the novel coincides with that of India's struggle for freedom and the subsequent partition of the country along the line of quintessential religious characteristics. Tariq Rahman in his analysis of the novel considers it to be "an imaginative response to the traumatic events of the Partition of India in 1947" (qtd in Jha and Kumar 210). Sidhwa herself admits in an interview with Feroze Jussawalla she has fictionalised biographical elements in the novel through Lenny, her alter ego. She recollects that the kidnapping of Ayah by the goons is based on the vivid experience of her home being attacked in Lahore at the time of partition:

When I was a child living in Lahore at the time of partition, my maiden name was Bhandara, which sounded like a Hindu name. After most of the riots were over, a

gang of looters came in carts into our house thinking it is an abandoned house. They were quite shocked to see us and my mother and everybody there. At that time our Muslim cook came and said, what do you damn people think you are doing? “This is a Parsee household”, and they said, “We thought it was a Hindu household” and they went away. I decided to write a story about partition because this scene was vivid in my mind. (37 qtd in Randhir Pratap Singh’s book)

Lenny’s nightmare of the dismemberment of a child and a sense of loss and horror engulfing her might be merged with the overall atmosphere of the nation to connote its impending fragmentation into two halves. Later, a kind of fear lurks in her as she visualises the havoc unleashed by partition “And the vision of a torn Punjab. Will the earth bleed? And what about the sundered rivers? Won’t their water drain into the jagged cracks? Not satisfied by breaking India, they now want to tear the Punjab.” (116). Sidhwa also refers to the organised violence which erupts in the inner localities like Delhi Gate, Lahori Gate, Mochi Darwaza, Shalmi, Gowalmandi among the rival communal groups to add further resonance to the scenes of carnage.

In the opening section of the novel Sidhwa artistically delineates Ayah’s character as emblematic of multicultural India and her body as a symbol of its land desired by people belonging to diverse religious groups. Critic Nilufer Bharucha in her analysis of the novel regards Ayah as a symbol of Indian earth “Lenny’s ayah, the chocolate brown, desirable, round-cheeked, full-breasted woman, is symbolic of the Indian earth” (Bharucha qtd in Dey 32). The disruption of camaraderie within Ayah’s circle of admirers reveals the fissures within the members of different communities in the years leading up to the partition. The Gurdaspur train incident documented in the novel is of great importance as it determines Ayah’s fate and turns her into a representative of thousand other women who were victims of the barbarism of the warring communities during the upheavals of partition. Apart from using the devices of nightmares and symbolism, Sidhwa blends facts and fiction by quoting lines from popular Urdu poet Iqbal; incorporating elaborate debates on prominent politicians such as Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Mountbatten, Netaji; a detailed account of the origin of Parsis, their culture, prayers and system of funeral; story of abducted and raped women residing in Recovered Women’s Camps and Heera Mandi, the red light district behind the Badshahi mosque in order lend an allegorical structure to the novel.

In the opening pages of the novel *Moth Smoke* the anecdotal evocation of the conversation between Emperor Shah Jahan and a Sufi saint renders a kind of allegorical structure to the novel. During the latter part of his reign, Shah Jahan's chronic stomach ailment coupled with his premonition of the inevitable war of succession for the throne among his sons lead him to question a Sufi saint regarding the future of the Mughal Empire. The saint reveals that his youngest son Aurangzeb rather Dara, the eldest and the heir apparent would ascend the throne after his father. The prophecy of the saint accords with the actual history as Aurangzeb, a shrewd negotiator and steadfast Islamist usurps the throne after imprisoning his father and charging his eldest brother with apostasy before sentencing him to death. Parallels may be drawn between the historical anecdote of the royal family and Hamid's novel in terms of the namesake as well as the fate of the two characters Aurangzeb (Ozi) and Darashikoh Shezad (Dara). However the relationships and the disposition of the characters reveal the discrepancies between the actual facts and the fictionalised version of the same.

Though the two characters Daru and Ozi are named after Shah Jahan's sons, the struggle between the two differs from that of the historical struggle between the liberal and secular Dara and the intolerant religious fundamentalist Aurangzeb. In the historical context they vie with each other to gain power in matters of governance but in Hamid's story the class difference which marks their relationship renders them unequal competitors in economic as well as social field. Aurangzeb triumphs over Dara in both the historical as well as fictional context but their characterisation undergo changes in the fictionalised version. In the novel Aurangzeb represents corrupt secularist belonging to elite class on the other hand Daru's criminal tendencies resembles that of the aggressive practices of Islamic fundamentalism. Hamid states in an interview:

My story posits that Pakistan faces a similar choice today. But my Aurangzeb represents the entrenched elite—an impediment to the country's development. Darashikoh in my story is his opposite, the violent backlash to that system. He's secular, but his angry reaction stands for Pakistan's religious movements, its violent crime. (Quoted in Jay 64)

Khurram, the original name of Shah Jahan was chosen by his grandfather Emperor Akbar to connote a sense of joyousness and in the novel too Ozi's father is endowed with the same name. Another character Murad, Daru's confederate in crime is

actually named after one of his own brothers who was involved with Aurangzeb in defeating Dara Shikoh. Mumtaz, the wife of Ozi gets her namesake from Shah Jahan's wife Mumtaz Mahal, the seventeenth century empress for whom Shah Jahan commissioned one of the architectural masterpieces of the Mughal era. In *Moth Smoke*, Hamid takes liberty in altering the historical relationship by depicting Mumtaz as the wife of Ozi and the paramour of Daru rather than her actual role as a mother of Ozi and Daru. Mumtaz paves her way into the domain of writing by adopting a male pseudonym called Zulfikar Manto in order to encourage wide readership as well as to enjoy freedom of authorship and anonymity at the same time. Probably the writings of the famous Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto on controversial matters involving prostitutes, pimps, sexual slavery of women fascinate Mumtaz and so she draws her name from the famous short story writer to retaliate against gendered specific topics expected of women writers. She states, "I'm interested in things women do that aren't spoken about. Manto's stories let me breathe. They make me feel like less of a monster" (Hamid 167). Apart from the use of historical figures, the novel's focus on Heera Mandi, the rampant corruption and unemployment problem, class difference as evident in the politics of air-conditioning and symbolic battle between owners of Pajero and Suzukis, growing trend of heroin addicts among the younger generation, lure of foreign education is emblematic of "Pakistani urban environments" (Chambers 115).

Child Narrator in Narratives of Nation

Though historical fiction to some extent have always been viewed as adult texts that raise awareness, empathy or even sympathy from readers, it is sometimes perceived that authors employ child narrators to achieve their artistic purpose. A critic Linda Steinmez argues that child narrators and child perspectives play a thought provoking role in shaping adult readers' perception and questioning of established views regarding any historical event (Muthusi 1). Michael Seraphinoff believes that adults are more receptive and tolerant when the child narrators unveil uncomfortable and controversial truths (Muthusi 1). The child's narration subtly hints that the adults are engulfed by ideologically laden social, cultural discourses which results in a biased perspective of the historical events. Child narrators, as a critique of the adult world play a determining role in exposing the distorted versions of history. Another factor that enhances the appeal of child narrators in historical fiction is their ability to attribute a voice to the unheard

faction of the society. Through their unprejudiced views the narrators attempt at reconciliation and co-existence of differing factions involved in fateful events of partition and civil war.

In historical fiction the authors often use child narrators to represent their remembered or lived experiences of the past. The narrators function as a kind of alter ego of the past self of the novelist. The natural inquisitiveness of the child narrators help them to explore their environment and question people and their attitudes towards each other. Likewise, their lack of any point of reference helps them in their objective reportage of the events. Their narratives offer a glimpse of how the adult world compromises the mental peace and security of the children by involving them in the complex politics of power and ethnic rivalry. Growing interest in child narrators also spurred from Jean- Jacques Rousseau's view of childhood as a stage of life to be valued for its capability of unbiased and alternate subjectivity. Several authors began to employ the device of child narrators to generate scepticism towards any realistic representation of reality.

Shyam Selvadurai's debut novel, *Funny Boy* engages with the unconventional formative years of a Tamil boy Arjie Chelvaratnam against the backdrop of mounting political crisis in Sri Lanka during the seven years leading up to the massive outbreak of anti-Tamil pogrom in 1983. The novelist employs Arjie as a narrator to critique the ingrained hypocrisy of the adult world as he crosses the threshold from the simplicity and innocence of childhood to the politicised enigmatic world of adults with its dynamics of gender and ethnicity. It is through Arjie's consciousness that the story unfolds to reveal hegemonic paradigms of the nation generated by socio cultural institutions and discourses. The novel is quite striking as the plot incorporates a bildungsroman to portray the intertwined relationship between sexual awakening of a self and the evolving essentialist view of nation. In the words of Bakhtin "the image of the emerging man begins to surmount its private nature (within certain limits, of course) and enters into a completely new, spatial sphere of historical existence" (qtd in Bell 259).

Ashok Rajamani in his article "The Damned Mother and the Unnamed Other: Uncovering the Unconscious in *Midnight's Children* and *Funny Boy*" points a major lacuna in Partition narratives where idea of "constructed sexualised identity" (162-3) and the repressed and unauthorised sexual desires does not elicit much attention unless it is

related to violence and rape involving female victims. In these two novels the personal and the political are co-mingled to reveal the “constructedness” of sexual identities and at the same time to represent the existence of alternative sexual orientation.

Selvadurai believes that the child narrators are reliable in the sense that they are too naïve to realise the ironies and trappings that exist in the society and that is why they engage in honest reporting and question the “constructedness” of accepted beliefs, prejudices and hierarchies of the adult world. Arjie’s growing awareness of his double marginalisation owing to his queer sexual orientation and Tamil affiliations in a heteronormative Sinhalese majority nation mirrors the deliberate exclusions propagated to sustain the myth of homogeneous national identity. Adults in the family forbid him from asserting identity of his choice and he is scapegoated for deviating from the conventions of the society.

The novel foregrounds the sense of ecstasy and freedom experienced by the narrator in the coveted costume of a bride, as it transports him to a world of fantasy replete with images of goddesses and popular actresses:

I was able to leave the constraints of myself and ascend into another, more brilliant, more beautiful self, a self to whom this day was dedicated, and around whom the world, represented by my cousin putting flowers in my hair, draping the palu, seemed to revolve. It was a self magnified, like the goddesses of the Sinhalese and Tamil cinema, larger than life: and like them, like the Malini Fonsekas and the Geetha Kumarasinghes... (Selvadurai 5)

The statement reveals the innocence and relative incognisance of the child narrator regarding the status quo propagated by the society. Fulfilment of Arjie’s happiness in the realm of childhood game is punctuated by Kanthi Aunty who reprimands him for participating in the game of “bride-bride” and drags him to the presence of his elders to expose him as a laughing stock “See what I found” (13). The children’s unfamiliarity with adult vocabularies and signs emerges in their inability to comprehend the insults “pansy, faggot, sissy” (11) hurled at Arjie by Tanuja to exclude him from the company of girls. Arjie tries to correlate the term “funny” and his subsequent prohibition from entering into Amma’s bedroom while she dresses up for special occasion. Arjie could

sense of a kind of boundary that has crept into his relationship with his Amma after his father's disapproval of his behaviour. Arjie states:

It was clear to me that I had done something wrong, but what it was I couldn't comprehend...The word "funny" as I understood it meant either humorous or strange, as in the expression, "that's funny." Neither of these fitted the sense in which my father had used the word, for there had been a hint of disgust in his tone. (17)

As the novel progresses, the queer subject Arjie develops a strong sense of affiliation with other characters of social subjugation. Their inclination to transgress the norms of gender, ethnicity and sexuality placed by the society links their individual revolt with that of the public life. Arjie's friendship with Radha Aunty helps him to comprehend and decode the societal conventions which subdue romantic love and inter-religion marriage. Arjie even participates in his mother's investigation of Daryl Uncle's murder which reveals to him the manifestation of power exercised by corrupt authorities. Though Arjie realises that his feelings for Shehan will be registered by the society as aberrant behaviour still he actualises his desires by engaging in impermissible sexual encounter in the darkness of the garage.

Arjie's consciousness of the injustices experienced by marginalised characters like Jegan, Radha Aunty and his mother as well as the disapproval of his relationship with Shehan leads him to self-rumination:

How was it that some people got to decide what was correct or not, just or unjust? It had to do with who was in charge; If you were powerful like Black Tie or my father you got to decide what was right or wrong. If you were like Shehan or me you had no choice but to follow what they said. But did we always have to obey? Was it not possible for people like Shehan and me to be powerful too? I thought about this, but no answer presented itself to me. (274)

Black Tie's ingenuity of foresight emerges in his decision to use Arjie in bridging the gap between the colonial past and the future in order to thwart Vice Principal's plans of converting the prestigious Queen Victoria Academy to a Buddhist school. A proponent of a colonial system of education and a supporter of multi-ethnic school Black

Tie, the Principal enlists Arjie to recite two poems valorising the old glories of the school on the annual prize- giving ceremony in front of the Education minister and other audience in order to evoke nostalgia for the past. One of the poems “The Best School of All” goes as follows:

We'll honour yet the school we knew,

The best School of all: (226)

Arjie realises that he might be reprimanded and punished by the teachers and students for eulogising a past that the school wants to annul. So, he conceives of a possibility of engaging in a subtle act of subversion in order to disrupt the ontological paradigm imagined by the Principal. He states: “Instead of trying to get out of reciting the poems, I would do them. But I would do them wrong. Confuse them, jumble lines, take entire stanzas from one poem and place them in the other until the poems were rendered senseless” (277). Further, the unfair treatment meted out to Shehan by Black Tie on Arjie’s failure to memorise the poems exacerbate his feelings of resistance to the authority. Arjie’s act of defiance in the presence of his parents and other dignitaries reflect the strong bond between him and Shehan. He confesses to Shehan “I did it for you...I couldn’t bear to see you suffer any more” (284). The statement hints at his desire to validate their relationship against the restraints imposed upon them by the adult world. Arjie’s mockery of the poems of tribute to the colonial system of education dampens the prospect of continuum of colonial legacy in post-colonial nation. It reminds of Gauri Viswanathan’s statement that colonial poems are often reproduced as a powerful ideological tool in postcolonial nation (Jayawickrama 133). S.W. Perara in his analysis of the novel also notes that in addition to syllabus in schools and colleges or books in libraries, recitations of poems, national anthems and belief system play a determining role in generating ideologies in neo-colonial system of education (Bell 258).

Towards the end of the novel, Arjie realises that expressing his innermost emotions in the form of a diary rather than harbouring them inside might help him to release the stress generated by violence around him. In the concluding chapter titled “Riot Journal: An Epilogue”, Arjie asserts, “The only thing for me to do is write” (287). The statement reflects his determination to preserve and interpret his subjective experiences as he crosses borders between his childhood home in the island fraught with

disturbed memories to the unpredictable adulthood awaiting him in another continent. Using a child's perspective the diary transports us to the realm of disorienting moments experienced by Arjie and his family members owing to their minority status. Paradoxically Arjie's intense longing for geographical migration from his homeland is represented alongside his emotional attachment to little possessions in his own house. Arjie is elated when his Appa apprises them of his plans to shift the entire family to Canada after the violence subsides. Arjie states "I am glad he said that, because I long to be out of this country. I don't feel at home in Sri Lanka any longer, will never feel safe again" (304). His sense of despondency emerges in the way he leaves the gate of his house open at the time of departure from his homeland. He says "I didn't bother to close the gate as I left. There was no reason to protect it against the outside world any more" (312).

In Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* the narrator Laila, an orphaned daughter of an affluent Muslim family narrates in flashback the insights on nationalism propagated by her relatives and friends caught up in politics of freedom struggle. The plethora of specific debates which prefigured in the domestic sphere among her relatives helps the narrator to conjure up the politicisation of religion in the years leading up to the independence. Laila's scathing remarks on Uncle Hamid reflects the diabolical motives of those involved in elections "It was as if he had become involved in a gigantic game of chess, or some mathematical problem of permutations and combinations. There was no political passion, only an implacable wish for power" (Hosain 225). Laila also observes the façade of nationalism maintained by the citizens in the post-independence period "It appeared at times that neo-Indians wore their nationalism like a mask and their Indianness like fancy dress" (276).

Laila's vantage position as a woman privileged by social class and disempowered by gender makes it feasible for her to expose the interconnection between feudalism, patriarchy and gender based discrimination. As a thoughtful child, she realises that Baba Jan, her grandfather had reduced them to "fearing automatons" (31) denying them of their autonomy and subjectivity. Baba Jan's unchallenged authority tempered with a strange arrogance had been kept alive by Uncle Hamid too in spite of his exposure to western liberal ideas. For instance, when Laila regrets that she has no freedom of thought and action to demonstrate her anti-imperialist sentiments, Uncle Hamid admonishes her

for rebelliousness stating that she can exercise her independent mind only when he deems her fit to do so.

Laila questions the very essence of a culture where women are compelled to lead a circumscribed life and systematically denied opportunities to educate themselves. For instance, when Hakiman Bua forbids Laila to read those English classics stating that those books might be counterproductive and might affect her eyes, Laila asserts “These books will be garlands of gold round my neck” (17). Again, when Sita assumes that Laila considers her educational degrees as mere addition to her dowry, Laila retorts back “Rubbish! I believe my education will make me a better human being” (125). Laila rebels against the class prejudices prevalent in her society by falling in love with Ameer, a working class man against the wishes of her family members. She reveals to Ameer how difficult it is for her to acknowledge their relationship as the societal norms and conventions weigh heavily on women and crush their individuality “I have no courage, Ameer. I have never done anything I really believed in. Perhaps I believed in nothing enough. I have never been allowed to make decisions; they are always made for me. In the end not only one’s actions but one’s mind is crippled” (265).

Laila emerges as a chronicler of the history of partition as she effectively records the grandeur of the feudal regalia as well as their fading glory in Lucknow as well as Hasanpur. Her visit to the ancestral home Ashiana after a gap of fourteen years helps her to recount the vagaries of fortune in the post-partition era as new settlements for refugees and cheap flats erupt in places which had once been feudal mansions and garden of the Raja of Bhimnagar. The disintegrating reality of Ashiana is evident in their well-preserved palaces being occupied by refugees from West Pakistan. As Laila drives through the gates of Ashiana she notices that the marble slab on which her uncle’s name was etched lay half-hidden by wooden boards which draw attention to names of occupants belonging to different professions such as doctor, dentist, lawyer and other government employees. Laila realises that the constitutional abolishment of feudalism has affected the erstwhile lavish lifestyle of the feudal families. The dilapidated condition of the conservatory, garden, the garages, the stables and the servants’ quarters reflects the same. Laila states “And now the house was a living symbol. In its decay I saw all the years of our lives as a family; the slow years that had evolved a way of life, the swift short years that had ended it” (273).

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice- Candy Man* employs a child narrator Lenny to offer a glimpse into communal sentiments lurking behind the amiable façade exhibited by Ayah's admirers. The development of the precocious narrator Lenny from childhood to adolescence coincides with the nadir of religious and racial violence erupting in Lahore. Her frequent strolls to Queen's Garden with Ayah make her privy to the conversation relating to the impending division of the country and talk of betrayal amongst the erstwhile friends and admirers of Ayah. The effectiveness of Lenny as an observer and commentator is enhanced by the fact that her own acquaintances and family members are profoundly affected and implicated in the political debates and emotional cross-currents of the time. Along with Lenny, another child narrator Ranna, the great grandson of Imam Din also registers the orchestrated devastation of a Muslim village by the Sikhs during the upheaval of partition.

The ominous sign of the subcontinent descending into ethnically divisive society is filtered through the consciousness of Lenny. She experiences some of the changes in the social atmosphere of Lahore unleashed by partition with people "dwindling into symbols" and "turning into religious zealots" (Sidhwa 93), army trucks disgorging the near and distant cousins of Imam Din from Pir Pindo outside Lenny's house, Muslims monopolising the Queen's garden which previously connoted the existence of multicultural Indian society with visitors belonging to diverse religious community. A kind of persistent dread engulfs Lenny as she registers the complex interplay of nationalism and religious sentiments. She regrets, "India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then?" (92). Her articulation reflects the violation of childhood happiness and innocence by the disturbed environment surrounding them. Annie Gagiano in her analysis of the child narrator as a witness-commentator in an article titled "*Ice-Candy-Man* and *In the Country of Men: The politics of cruelty and the witnessing child*" states that "Young children are only beginning the socialisation process and are necessarily to an extent outsiders; minors without access to political power – hence their feelings and thoughts are unlikely to be (as yet) ideologised" (31).

There is a perceptible emotional ambivalence in the mind of Lenny which is evident in her response to her vicinity going up in flames. Initially she is awed

expression by the sight of chopped bodies tumbling down at Delhi Gate, Lahori Gate, Shalmi and Gowalmandi in a conflagration arising out of communal violence. She says, “I stare at the *tamasha*, mesmerised by the spectacle. It is like a gigantic fire-works display in which stiff figures looking like spread-eagled stick-dolls leap into the air, black against the magenta furnace...Charred limbs and burnt logs are falling from the sky” (137). Without any kind of restraint, Lenny records the atrocities committed by both Hindus and Muslims in the city of Lahore. However, later the terrifying scenes of people splattering each other with blood, a naked child being killed by a mob of Sikhs, an emaciated Banya being knocked down by jeeps and brick buildings tumbling down to ashes intensifies Lenny’s horror and she collapses at the parapet.

As a child Lenny struggles to comprehend the relation between sexual politics and complications of ethnicity. Her exposure to traumatic incidents leaves her perplexed and she engages in a violent act of ripping apart the body of a doll thereby symbolically mimicking the turbulent world around her “I pick up a big, celluloid doll. I turn it upside down and pull its legs apart...Adi and I pull the doll’s legs, stretching it in a fierce tug-of-war, until making a wrenching sound it suddenly splits” (138). Their instinctual act resembles that of reprisal between opposed religious groups in the form of torture, mutilation and other violence which eventually splits the country into two new nations that would rule themselves.

Analogous to Lenny’s narration of the gruesome accounts of Partition, Sidhwa deploys another child narrator Ranna to unfold the atrocities committed by the Sikhs in Pir Pindo against Muslims. Ranna’s account is a poignant reminder of the physical and emotional breakdown experienced by the survivors of Partition. Ranna recollects Dost Mohammad’s address to the villagers apprising them of horrible bloodbath initiated by the Sikhs in villages situated to the east of Pir Pindo. Dost Mohammad’s description of Sikhs moving “like swarms of locusts” and “setting fires, looting, parading the Muslim women naked through the streets- raping and mutilating them in the centre of villages and in mosques” incites fear and shrieks among the assembled. The older women begin to wail “Never mind us...save the young girls! The children! *Hai! Hai!*” (198).

The unprecedented carnage committed by the Sikhs in a frenzy of rage was indelibly imprinted on his mind. Ranna recalls gory scenes of his father, his uncles and his cousins being beheaded by the vengeful Sikhs and his sister Khatija being made to

run naked into their courtyard with “her long hair dishevelled, her boyish body bruised, her lips cut and swollen and a bloody scab where her front teeth were missing” (202). The vicious practices of men copulating with “wailing child”, babies being snatched away from their mothers and smashed against the walls and their wailing mothers being raped and killed by murderous mobs drains him of all his resilience. Apart from witnessing his family members being slaughtered mercilessly, Ranna himself suffers a violent blow at the back of his head and lies drenched in blood amongst a pile of mangled unrecognisable dead bodies.

At a tender age the confrontation with the adult world robs the child narrators of their innocence. The mystifying wails of women at night, the bruises in Lenny mother’s body, scenes of Ice-Candy Man engaging in carnal desires, slogans of mobs reverberating in the air, her visit to Heera Mandi with her Godmother, the mystery surrounding petrol cans in their family car’s dicky and such other everyday demeanour induce feelings of anxieties, helplessness and fear in Lenny. Her description of the pitiable plight of Ranna as he wanders around the burning city in search of food and shelter bear testimony to the vulnerability of the children in the face of unabated struggle between warring communities. Ranna’s bruised naked body and his act of scavenging goes unnoticed by the world engulfed by the horrors of Partition. Lenny states “No one noticed Ranna as he wandered in the burning city. No one cared. There were too many ugly and abandoned children like him scavenging in the looted houses and the rubble of burnt-out buildings” (207). Both Lenny and Ranna’s account seem to cohere with Butalia’s idea that retelling of the horrifying experiences of partition within homes in India and Pakistan by the survivors of the momentous event form an important part of the oral history of Partition narratives.

In *The Point of Return*, Babu as a narrator retraces his father, Dr Dam’s life in order to understand the discontentment generated by rampant corruption pervading across the spectrum of government departments. Babu minutely observes the helplessness of the pensioners who had to spend hours after hours waiting in queue until the inefficient officials begin to disburse the money after lunch. Even then the officials rejected some of the supplicants without valid reasons and only the lucky ones having close relatives among the clerks received their checks in a hassle free manner. Babu recollects his father’s frustration against the treatment meted out to them in pension

office “Worse than cattle. The clerks, officers, they’re always rude and inconsiderate to the pensioners, and they’re inefficient on top of that. I am going to complain to the minister” (Deb 14). Again when his father apprises the officer regarding discrepancy in the pension amount where his dearness allowance has not been added even after being assured by the minister’s assistant, the officer shirks off his responsibilities by blaming the corrupt government for such lapses. He urges Dr Dam to maintain good relationship with the minister of his department in order to reap benefits in future: “He’s switched sides. So maybe he was busy and had other things to do. But I would be hopeful if I were you. Maybe he will be the next chief minister. Then things could get done really fast...Anything’s possible when you have a powerful politician on your side” (29).

Babu examines the collapse of Nehruvian spirit of modernity and progress embodied by Dr Dam under the pressure of bureaucrats. Dr Dam’s attempt at cost-effective production of dairy products by collaborating with the director of the agriculture department is thwarted by Leapingstone. Dam’s vision of ensuing justice to the milkman and farmers by selling dairy and poultry products together at uniform price in every nook and corner of the state is hindered by shrewd policies of Leapingstone. When Dr Dam discloses his plan to replace glass bottles by sealed polythene packets in order to get rid of the pilferage problems and ensure supply of quality milk, Leapingstone demotivates him stating that the young people neither care for his milk nor the petty jobs that his scheme would offer. He warns Dr Dam “The new supply scheme will be scrapped. Do it the way it has been done all along” “Draw up a report totalling the money saved by scrapping this ostentatious scheme. We need it by tomorrow. The report has to be sent to Delhi (94)”.

Babu as a narrator brings to light the continuous neglect of the North Eastern states by mainland India which has turned it into a peripheral zone. The ethnic conflicts in this polyglot region and its fraught relationship with borders which had hindered its growth have not received much attention. The stereotypical notion of perceiving North-East as an exotic other inhabited by people untouched by modernity has further stalled its development. For instance, in the novel Babu expresses his resentment over the indifference of the national media in giving due coverage to incidents plaguing the region “Why does no one in Delhi know what is happening here? Why do the killings and the lootings not appear in the Calcutta paper that now gets here three days late?”

(151). Again Babu apprises Dr Dam of the fact that they have not been taught anything about the state capitals of the Northeast in their geography classes. Their exam questions too remained confined to metropolitan and industrial cities and political centers and trading ports of mainland India. Babu wonders why the trucks plying on National Highways do not mention the North Eastern states on the windscreens unlike other states “All- India permit for Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal....” (196). Babu recollects another childhood experience of indifference when his fellow plainsmen travellers in a crowded train from a mining town in Bihar fail to locate Babu’s hometown and state in a condescending tone “Ah, so you’ll be going home by ship, then?” (214)

Babu realises that uncertainty had gripped the lives of the migrants as their experience of being in the hilly state are punctuated by events that lend impetus to insider/outsider distinction. The leader of the tribal students’ union Adolf unleashes a reign of terror with strikes, demonstrations, outrage against nontribal enveloping the landscape of everyday lives. The immigrants were being perceived as “alien outgrowths on native soil” (234) with the walls of the nontribal residents being scribbled with intimidating words “WE SHALL COME TO THIS HOUSE AS WELL” (235). Doubts about his ancestral origin engulf his mind as he fails to locate the birth place of his forefathers on the map of India which according to him is replete with elisions to avoid any speculation that might defeat its utilitarian purpose. In one such instance, he finds himself in a dilemma while filling up his application form for a passport. He wonders whether to mention his father’s place of birth as “Undivided India?” or “Pre-partition India” (210). The past continues to invade resulting in a lingering sense of identity crisis of never being accepted by his so called “hometown”. The predicament of the migrants emerges in his statement, “I went through periods of completely different emotions, oscillating between a desire to blend with the town and the insiders and a virulent hatred for the place and a desire to leave it forever so that I would never hear that word, *Foreigner*, again” (238).

Conclusion

From the critical analysis of the texts under consideration it emerges that the polyphonic voices recreate the plurality of consciousness characterising the Partition of India subcontinent and Civil War in Sri Lanka. The artistic craft of polyphony in the form of its dialogic dimension lays bare the duplicity of those occupying positions of power and

dissentions within the family during the upheavals of history. This narrative technique reveals the dynamics of ethnicity, class, caste and gender distinctions ingrained in the discourses of nationalism in the subcontinent. The dialogic potentialities of the novels help to conjure up the underlying essentialised and institutionalised discourses which lend impetus to varied form of discriminatory practices in the South Asian nations. An interesting point is that the novels also represent the disparate ideological stances and divided loyalty of the minority community to the nationalist cause.

The technique of memory employed in select texts bring to light alternate history of nation by knitting together the personal lives of the characters with their historical past. It is found that the act of reminiscence often serves as a therapeutic process for migrants as it helps them to restore their sense of self by tracing the historical past of their individual and collective identity. Flashbacks in the form of maps, photographs, cuisines, embroideries help the characters to conjure up the arbitrariness involved in construction of history. The blurring of distinction between family history and national history also reflects the allegorical schema of the historical novels. Anecdotal evocation of historical figures, fictional equivalents of political personalities and characters embedded in a specific historical time and place add further impetus to the allegorical undertone of the novels.

The naivety of the child narrators help them to portray an unvarnished picture of the adult world fettered by social constraints. The analysis reveals that the novelists often utilise the child's point of view to critique the hypocrisy of the adult world caught in the dynamics of gender, ethnicity and class distinctions. The growing awareness of the politicised framework of nation generates discontentment among the child narrators. The violation of their childhood happiness and innocence by the gruesome experiences of Partition and the Civil War in the subcontinent triggers rebelliousness in them. And this tendency often finds expression in the form of resistance and subversion of the status quo upheld by the society. Thus it may be concluded that the technique of polyphony, memory, national allegory and child narrator bear testimony to the ideologically laden connotation of nation.