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techniques enhances the importance of the theme making the works attain the magnitude of a modern epic.

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Warden Road, Kemp's Corner, Breach Candy, Mahalaxmi Temple, Chowpatti Beach, and even some of the common advertisement placards of the period, all melt into a compact image of the city of Bombay:

> Now, looking back through baby eyes, I can see it all perfectly — it's amazing how much you can remember when you try. What I can see: the city, basking like a bloodsucker lizard in the summer heat. Our Bombay: it looks like a hand but it's really a mouth, always open, always hungry, swallowing food and talent from everywhere else in India. A glamorous leech, producing nothing except films bush-shirts fish. (*MC* 146)

In spite of the glamorous greed, Saleem must be in love with this bloodsucker lizard. Even later in the novel, when he tries to describe the atmosphere of Karachi, he is immediately thrown back to Bombay in his thoughts: "I won't deny it: I never forgave Karachi for not being Bombay" (*MC* 368). Thus, the "spiritus loci" of Bombay is one of the supreme features of this book and is responsible for a great deal of warmth in an otherwise cold world.

Concerns of literature include in its purview issues related to history as well. Both Germany (the defeat of Germany) and India (Partition of the Indian subcontinent) had undergone harrowing experiences after the Second World War. The intensity of these traumatic experiences required a novel narrative strategy. Apparently, Magical Realism eschews the patterns of grand narratives, but inherently assumes the structure of one. Magical Realism combines in itself both fact and fantasy, a fantasy devoid of romanticism yet accessible to the ordinary reader. The ethos of the postmodernist situation that is the typical "Catch 22" situation probably required such a strategy for effective narration of the history of the two nations. So, it appears the intermingling of various strands of narrative

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allow for epic dimensions and thus for the serious subjects treated, but it is also highly entertaining. The atmosphere is worthy of a narrative dealing with national history as well as individual biography. The variation in syntax and style does not channel the reader or critic into one particular interpretation of history, but it leaves ample room for conflicting views. Nevertheless, the individual characters and events do not lose anything of their accuracy.

The narratives of both writers, Grass and Rushdie, are replete with details. They have been successful in re-creating the "spiritus loci" of the city they chose to write about. The reader of *The Tin Drum* sees the streets and buildings of old Danzig come to life again, the Stockturm, the Max-Halbe-Platz, the Jeschkental Forest, the Kohlenmarket, the Theatre, the Church of the Sacred Heart, and the Number nine streetcar line past the Saspe Cemetery to Brosen on the Baltic Sea. M*idnight's Children* recreates the "spiritus loci" of Bombay. There are also parts of the novel which give a strong impression of Delhi and even of Karachi. But the flavour of Bombay, the sights and smells of that great city as conveyed by Saleem, is definitely the most detailed. The impression is ingrained through constant repetition of certain names of streets or quarters, the true atmosphere of the place. Saleem gives us a history of Bombay before his parents moved to Methwold's Estate. This estate in many ways represents the history, colonialism and Independence, because the Englishman who had it built, William Methwold, moves out on August 15 1947, when India gains independence. The new owners of Methwold's Estate are Indians, and they leave a number of things unchanged, like for instance, the cocktail hour. Methwold's Estate, although divided up into several apartments, assumes the position of a nucleus from which young Saleem starts to explore the marvels and idiosyncrasies of Bombay. More than once, Saleem cries out: "Our Bombay!"(*MC* 146) Names like Colaba Causeway, Marine Drive,

War moved from crisis to crisis, while in the cobwebbed house Doctor Aziz was also engaged in a total war against his sectioned patient's inexhaustible complaints. And, in all those war years, Naseem never repeated an illness" (*MC* 23). Another example of humour against the canvass of history occurs when Doctor Aziz is rescued from almost certain death in the great massacre of Amritsar just because of his bad sneeze, which appears to be caused by the enormous size of his "Kashmiri nose" (*MC 3*5).

On a closer reading of the novel, the similarities in the narrative mode, makes itself very apparent. There are digressions within digressions which interrupt the main thread. There are flashbacks, reminders of past and future events. Characters' names may be introduced hundreds of pages before they appear themselves and remembered hundreds of pages after their deaths. Very often, the effect is one of simultaneity of past, present, and future. There are constant changes between straightforward narrative, fairy-tale style, newspaper report, court evidence, school essay, public speech, and other variations of the narrative mode. The narrator addresses the reader personally. He confesses that he can be reluctant to tell certain things, he can try to mystify his narrative or to puzzle the reader on purpose, he can make sure after irregular intervals that the reader keeps some memorable events in mind, he can warn the reader, move through space and time, repeat himself endlessly, produce special effects and conjuror's tricks, and he can play the wildest variations on syntactical structures. All these qualities are common to Gunter Grass and Salman Rushdie (or their narrators, respectively). Rushdie's prose has been said to suggest the chant of Indian traditional texts. This may very well be the case, but it also suggests his indebtedness to Grass. In this respect, Rushdie appears as the true mediator between Indian tradition and Western experience. The particular atmosphere created by the narrative mode in both novels does not only

EDITORIAL

It is a pleasure to bring to you the XIV issue of the peer-reviewed research journal, *Pursuits*, published by the Research Centre for Comparative Studies, PG Dept. of English.

This issue is a compilation of research articles focusing on the intersections of history and literature. It is today accepted that dominant historiography is, to a great extent, fragmentary and incomplete. It is also accepted that claims of fiction can be equally legitimate as historical verity. The articles in this volume raise questions of interest regarding historical 'truth,' and analyse how literary texts can be read as alternative histories. The papers examine the ways in which texts become political, inextricably involved with hegemony and ideology.

We are grateful to the members of the faculty from various academic institutions who contributed articles to this issue of *Pursuits*. We also gratefully acknowledge the consistent support and encouragement on the part of our subscribers.

Dr. Sheena John

his parents. Saleem has physical defects: an oversize nose that often causes sinus problems, a banged forehead, part of a finger missing, and a patch of hair torn off, the two latter defects resulting from school experiences. In spite of these handicaps, Oskar Matzerath and Saleem Sinai are both very powerful in their immediate environments. Oskar is not completely innocent in the deaths of his mother and father. Saleem develops his power through knowledge, and is in a way responsible for at least two deaths.

The detachment with which historical events are reported extends to private affairs as well. Both critical narrators spy on their own mothers. Oskar's mother has a constant lover, Jan Bronski, and Oskar calls him "Jan Bronski, who lived by my mother's flesh, who, as to this day I believe and doubt, begot me in Matzerath's name" (*TD* 127). This uncertainty, or rather confusion, about the narrator's parentage is more complicated in the case of Saleem Sinai, who was exchanged for another baby who was also born at midnight. The other baby, called Shiva, grows to be an alter ego of Saleem. In both novels, the seriousness of the historical events is mitigated through the use of humour. In Grass's novel, Oskar spends the night at the Polish post office, sleeping in a laundry basket and ruminating on the various letters in the basket, and in the morning, he is awakened by the sounds of approaching German aggression:

> Consequently I was not awakened by the letter which a certain Lech Milewczyk in Warsaw had written his niece in Danzig-Schidlitz, a letter alarming enough to have awakened a millenarian turtle; what woke me up was either the nearby machine-gun fire or the distant roar of the salvos from the double turrets of the battle ships in the Free Port. (*TD* 216)

In *Midnight's Children,* Saleem's grandfather pays regular visits to his patient, who is veiled by the perforated bedsheet: "Far away the Great

affected by rivalries between two linguistically different groups. His father's friend Dr. Narlikar is killed in a protest march of one such faction. The drama extends to Saleem and his playmates as well. The rivalries between conflicting factions- religious, political, or linguistic, are used by Saleem as a pointer to the implicit dichotomies in history-Indo/British, Hindu/Muslim, rural/urban, non-violence/brutality.

Both novels under discussion are also novels about the phenomenon of war. It is, among other things, an effort to assimilate the oppressive guilt feelings of a whole generation. The novel tries to achieve this through alienation of the historical facts by means of a distorted and distorting perspective. Oskar writes his whole story in a mental hospital after the war. He reports the events from the perspective of a child and does not draw a moral conclusion from the events. At the age of three, he refuses to grow any further and decides to remain a dwarf. On the other hand, he has acquired extraordinary powers of insight from the time when he was an embryo, and this power of insight grows into telepathy. Saleem Sinai's story reports several wars, the most effective description being the Bangladesh War in 1965. Saleem as a spectator of the atrocities of the war remains as detached as that of Oskar's. This becomes evident when the eleven-year-old Saleem stays with his Uncle Zulfikar in Rawalpindi. Saleem witnesses the political decision that eventually incites wars. Though he does not condemn the machinations of power and political ambition, the contrast between his aloofness and his uncle's involvement shows up the problematical nature of such decisions. The report of war narrated through the eyes of a child in Grass's novel is a critique directed against the adult world; criticism of the world's civilization, particularly that of the West. Neither Oskar Matzerath nor Saleem Sinai are ordinary children. They have serious defects. Oskar's refusal to grow after the age of three has already been mentioned. On the whole, Oskar is a most difficult child for

PARTITION MEMORY AS SHARED HISTORY IN THE PICTURE BOOK *MUKAND AND RIAZ*

Ms. Nazneen Marshall

Jean-Francois Lyotard describes postmodernity as an attitude; an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (509). He regards metanarratives as violent and tyrannical in their imposition of a 'totalising' pattern and a false universality on actions, events and things. Instead, all one can do, he avers, is utilize local narratives to explain things. Hence, knowledge can only be partial, fragmented and incomplete (Woods 20-21). Lyotard affirms that postmodernism as an aesthetic practice actively searches out heterogeneity, pluralism and constant innovation (23). Rather than accepting grand narratives as the given, we now look for micronarratives- the little narratives- which do not seek to homogenize the story of everyman, but represent every wo/man's story as one among many incomplete stories. Postmodernists no longer view history as a totalizing discourse, a single "History,"but as a limitless number of incommensurable "histories".

Children's literature in India has been satiated with didactic stories from history, religion, myth and folklore in comic book series like *Amar Chitra Katha* and periodicals like *Target* and *Tinkle*, published from the 1970s onwards so much so that the picture book, a fairly recent sub-genre in India, rarely, if ever, focuses on history and religion. One among the notable exceptions is a picture book published by Tulika titled *Mukand and Riaz*. It is the author-illustrator Nina Sabnani's interpretation of the Partition of India, as gleaned from her memory of the story told by her father focusing on his personal experiences. Narrative, as Peter Brooks has said, is always a perspective on a story rather than a record of every single event (Nicol 27). This paper is an examination of memory as history

in *Mukand and Riaz*; more specifically, of the representation of history as biography seen through the spectacles of memory - of history as an oral account of "his/story" documented and interpreted as "herstory" (Carby 216) by the author, in a picture book for the implied child-reader. It examines, in the process, the author's perspective of history and the importance that she, as a woman, places on certain issues.

Louis Montrose, in his elucidation of the textuality of history, suggests that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by surviving textual traces of the society in question – traces whose survival may be a complex, subtle process of preservation and effacement; and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the "documents" upon which historians ground their own texts, called "histories" (781). It is historiography's explanatory and narrative employments of past *events* that construct what we consider historical facts (Hutcheon 92). As Hayden White succinctly states:

> What we postmodernists are against is a professional historiography, in service to state apparatuses that have turned against their own citizens, with its epistemically pinched, ideologically sterile, and superannuated notions of objectivity—a historiography which, in cutting itself off from the resources of *poiesis* (invention) and artistic writing, also severed its ties to what was most creative in the real sciences it sought halfheartedly to emulate. (152)

The Partition of India as narrative has undergone a process of "sedimentation" (Ahmad 229) subsequent to numerous accounts of it from the British perspective as well as from the Indian and the Pakistani perspectives. Ranajit Guha posits that the historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist

> At last they were able to cry again. After this cataclysm at twelve marks eighty, human beings who have had a good cry open their mouths to speak. Still hesitant, startled by the nakedness of their own words, the weepers poured out their hearts to their neighbours on the uncomfortable, burlap-covered crates, submitted to questioning, let themselves be turned inside-out like overcoats (*TD* 517).

The recent past is not pickled, but turned into an onion, and so there can be a new beginning. This is possible only if people have learned their lesson and let themselves be turned inside-out. In a way, this nightclub finds a corresponding establishment in *Midnight's Children*. When Saleem returns to Bombay after the destruction of the magicians' ghetto in Delhi, he finds that his parents' flat has been replaced by a nightclub, the Midnite-Confidential Club, "that place outside time, that negation of history" (*MC* 541).

Both novels are set in geographical spaces claimed by several ethnic or religious groups. The temporal setting is also significant because the events take place at a time when great changes are about to take place. Whereas the Danzig area and parts of northern Poland in the 1930s were subject to disputes and animosities between Germans, Poles, and Kashubians, the Indian subcontinent of the time before Partition was characterized by power struggles between the English, the Hindus, and the Muslims. The conflicts in the two countries extend to language as well. At the time of the rise of the Nazis in Danzig, Polish was considered an inferior tongue by many Germans. Oskar's mother is married to a true German from the Rhineland, but her lover is a Pole. Oskar himself witnesses the siege of the Polish post office in Danzig by the Germans. He witnesses the event as a German boy, but perceives it as a Pole. Saleem Sinai is no less

status - that of a savior. After having experienced many difficulties, wars, atrocities and similar situations, Saleem acquires a particular sympathy for his own country: "I had already decided to save the country" (*MC* 461). His ultimate motive is to save the present through the preservation of the past. This is portrayed through the metaphor of the pickle jars. As the narrative draws towards the end, he often describes his chapters as pickle jars, in which he hopes to preserve his concept of the past, which in turn finds expression through the metaphor of chutnification. He speaks of "the feasibility of the chutnification of history; the grand hope of the pickling of time" (*MC* 548), and explains, "To pickle is to give immortality, after all" (*MC* 549). "One day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth" (*MC* 550).

In *The Tin Drum*, Grass too employs similar metaphors with a slightly different end in mind. After witnessing a fisherman catching eels out of the Baltic Sea on Good Friday, Oskar Matzerath's mother first refuses to eat fish, but then, after having been reminded of her unhappy marriage by her friend Jan Bronski, starts to devour all sorts of fish, and eventually dies of fish poisoning. The religious undertones are obvious. The fish, as a symbol of early Christianity, signals defiance; and Good Friday, evoking Christ's role as the Redemptor, signals a kind of martyrdom on the part of Agnes Matzerath. Christianity was indeed the only hope for many people in those troubled years in the late 1930s, especially in a city like Danzig. After the war, Oskar draws our attention to a strange nightclub in Dusseldorf, "the Onion Cellar," where the guests perform a ritual preparation and consumption of onions in order to weep and then be free to talk more openly to each other. Thus, they manage to come to terms with their traumatic past. The author points out:

elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism. Both originated as the ideological product of British rule in India, but have survived the transfer of power and been assimilated to neo-colonialist and neo-nationalist forms of discourse in Britain and India respectively (37).

In the picture book, *Mukand and Riaz,* the memory of Sabnani's father's narration metamorphoses the history of an individual into the history of two friends, of a family and subsequently, of two nations during a horrifying period in time. The picture book, *Mukand and Riaz*, was created as a sequel to an animation film of the same name made by Sabnani for the Big Small People Project, Israel, which incidentally won a certificate of merit from the Tokyo Broadcasting System, Japan. The picture book, unlike most other sub-genres in children's literature, remains unique in its incorporation of both the verbal and the visual narrative, echoing techniques used in other media like films and video games that belong to the digital age.

The title of the picture book on the cover page yokes together two names identified with two predominant religions in the region - Hindu and Muslim. The illustration of the tree on the title page, with its branches of varying lengths attached to the trunk, also signifies the same underlying unity among people of various communities. The Partition of 1947 threw people practising these two religions living harmoniously together for centuries into two hastily-formed geographical spaces – India and Pakistan. But, unlike many written records on either side of the border, this picture book does not pit the story of one nation against the other. As the blurb states, *Mukand and Riaz* is a story of shared histories through the shared memories of a daughter and father. It is the shared history of two young boys, now identified as Indian and Pakistani, whose friendship is broken up forever, for no fault of theirs. It is the shared history of the uprooting of families who considered the land they were born in, their home, until then.

The shared memories of Mukand's family interweave with the untraced memories of other families to become representations of the shared histories of a divided nation, woven, significantly, in this picture book through a shared craft-applique work-created by women on both sides of the border- Sindh in Pakistan and Gujarat in India.

The story begins with Riaz's yearning for his best friend Mukand's cricket cap. Mukand does not let him wear it, as he feels that the cap is special; he feels he can do anything when he wears it. One day, while Riaz is chasing him, Mukand falls off his cycle, and breaks his arm. Riaz takes him to a Muslim bonesetter in Karachi, who does not take fees from them. Keemarika Bhaiyya is known to be everybody's friend. The boys slip some money into the donation box instead. Mukand recovers, and continues to play cricket, while his best friend prefers to read. All of a sudden, their lives are interrupted by the emergence of a military van filled with English soldiers, one of whom asks them to go home. The boys rebel, and go to the market instead to buy their favourite buns with biscuits inside them and then on to the library.

On Sundays, Mukand looks after people's shoes outside the *gurudwara* and sells ice-water which he buys from his friend, Ladaram Faludawala. Happy with the help, Ladaram gives Mukand some kulfi to eat and a bucket of water to take home.

At home, Mukand loves to pose with his cricket cap on his head in front of the mirror, dreaming of the future. At school, one day, the teacher doesn't turn up but Riaz comes in a little later, and tells him to hurry home and pack, as the country has been divided into two – India and Pakistan. For the first time, Mukand sees people trying to kill each other. He sees blood on the streets. The illustration on the recto has a picture of Mukand's worried face placed on a background of deep red cloth, with patches depicting people shouting, their red hands bleeding onto the verso. On the

But history, in both novels, starts before the protagonist's birth. Both narratives begin with the story of the narrator's grandparents. The reader is drawn to an understanding of the political and social conditions at the time of the grandparents' marriage. At the same time, the narrative also focuses on the strange and rather unusual personal encounters between their grandfather and grandmother. Oskar's Polish grandmother, Anna Bronski, is sitting in a potato field in autumn, when some Polish soldiers chase poor Joseph Koljaiczek across the field. To save his life, Anna hides Joseph under her voluminous skirts, and the child thus conceived is Oskar's mother. Saleem Sinai, on the other hand, tells of his Kashmiri grandfather Aadam Aziz, a medical doctor. One day, Aadam is called to the house of the landowner Ghani, who wants him to treat his daughter Naseem. But Aadam is not allowed to see the whole body of his charming patient; a bedsheet with a small hole in its center is held up so that he can only see the part of Naseem's body that needs treatment. He falls in love with her piece by piece, and eventually asks for her hand in marriage. In both novels, the grotesque circumstances of the grandparents' mutual sexual attraction signal the absurdity of many of the events to follow in the narrative. And this, in turn, foreshadows the grotesque and absurd situations that become the history of the nation-situations that can only be expressed through surrealism.

Saleem feels himself bound to the important and decisive events in India and Pakistan as well. His birth coincides with the birth of modern India on August 15, 1947. At one point, he tries to analyze the Prime Minister's letter, and asks the crucial question: "How, in what terms, may the career of a single individual be said to impinge on the fate of a nation? I must answer in adverbs and hyphens: I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively" (*MC* 285). He feels that the conjecture of his birth and that of the nation has given him a special

to the collection titled *Danzig Trilogy*. Grass manages to cover everything about Germany, and he employs a narrative technique which must have been one of the models for Rushdie's narrative strategies.

Midnight's Children, like *The Tin Drum*, attempts to retell the nation's history by linking it to the personal story of a family and, more particularly, the story of the birth and growth of a child. This narrative strategy unveils the emerging pattern of history, that is, the author's particular interpretation of the history of his own nation. Saleem Sinai, the young narrator-critical, pedantic, cynical, and sometimes full of irony and wit-makes sure that one is constantly aware of the fact that he is the mirror of India's history. Newspapers celebrate his birth, politicians ratify his position, and public announcements punctuate his life. On the occasion of his birth, he receives a letter from the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru: "Dear Baby Saleem, Mybelated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own" (*MC*143). And, throughout the novel, Saleem reminds us of the close connection of his destiny with that of India's history. Oskar Matzerath, the narrator in Grass's novel-also critical and pedantic, but mostly cynical-does not get public recognition at the time of his birth, but the trajectory of his life becomes a parallel for the history of his nation. Thus, his refusal to grow up and his decision to remain a dwarf until the end of the Second World War mirror Germany's inability to grow up, and his destructive powers draw comparison to the destructive powers of the Nazis. So, the personal history of both the protagonists, Saleem and Oskar, reflect their nations' histories at large.

left side of the text on the verso is an applique work depiction of a hanging man.

Riaz comes to Mukand's home with *kurtas* and Jinnah caps, worn typically by Muslims. Though he is not yet eligible to drive, Riaz drives them down to the harbor, where the S.S. Shirala is waiting to sail to Bombay. Mukand does not want to leave Riaz. He wonders whom he will play with in the future. As the ship moves away, Mukand throws his cherished cricket cap to Riaz. The narrator ends the tale by stating that the two friends never saw each other again, but Mukand always thought of Riaz every time he looked at the Jinnah cap. The story ends with the lines, "This is what Mukand told me. Mukand was my father"(75).

What happened to Sabnani's father, Mukand, echoes is the history of the two nations. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had lived in peace and harmony until then. They were not conscious of their religions having become identity markers on the political stage. These people were evicted, uprooted, raped or killed overnight. The protagonists, Mukand and Riaz, in the picture book, are the best of friends. They do not let religion come in the way of friendship.When the country is split into two, the blood on the streets does not shake Riaz's love for his friend. It only makes him bolder and more courageous, ready to sacrifice his life for his friend and his family. This is what probably makes Mukand finally part with his cherished cricket cap. It does not matter if he plays cricket in future, as long as the cap lets his best friend live his dreams.

Riaz asks Mukand's family to dress up in the clothes worn by people of his community. He becomes aware of how clothes and caps have turned into identity markers. Communal camaraderie is seen in the way Mukand spends his Sundays serving ice-water and looking after people's shoes at the Gurudwara. He also helps increase his friend Faludawala's business in

the bargain. The bone-setter, significantly called "bhaiyya," meaning brother, heals all people free of cost, not just those believing in his God.

Cricket is a shared sport played and enjoyed by the two nations even today. In the picture book, Mukand dreams of becoming a famous cricketer, a dream shared by boys across the two countries.

What the professional historians see as an event that has actually happened in the past is seen by New Historicists as "texts" written by human beings. Emphasizing the same, Linda Hutcheon states that the shift from validation to signification, to the way systems of discourse make sense of the past, is one that implies a pluralist (and perhaps troubling) view of historiography as consisting of different but equally meaningful constructions of past reality — or rather, of the textualized remains (documents, archival evidence, witnesses' testimony) of that past (96). In *Mukand and Riaz*, Sabnani highlights those aspects of history important to her as a woman. Although she focuses on her father's oral narration, the issues foregrounded by her are very different from those of a male writer.

In *Mukand and Riaz*, the fundamental rights of human beings as declared by the United Nations are foregrounded. In any war-torn nation, human rights take a back seat, especially those of women and children. In this picture book, the riven country deprives two children of the right to friendship. It takes away the right of a family to live on the land they consider theirs. It takes away their right to a home and a neighbourhood and a homeland, and throws them into a new geographical space among new people. It doesn't matter they belong to the same religion or speak the same tongue.

While the macrocosmic world has always dominated the pages of history books and historical fiction with its grand narratives of great wars, great kings and great kingdoms, a woman writing history is more likely to

PARALLEL LINES OF HISTORY: A COMPARISON OF SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* AND GUNTER GRASS'S *THE TIN DRUM*

Ms. Chirekkekaran Mary George

The postmodernist approach to history is best represented in the genre of fiction, and arguably the most important postmodern technique is that of Magical Realism. The themes and narrative structures of Magical Realism have been profitably used by many writers like Salman Rushdie and Gunter Grass to represent and critique the political and cultural impasse of their times. This paper is an attempt to examine the treatment of history in Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* and Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum*.

Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* was awarded the Booker Prize in 1981. Ever since, it has received praise from critics for its richness in variety of subject matter and narrative technique. As for subject matter, the book was said "to cover everything about India: a hundred years of British rule, Independence, Partition, the war with and the carnage in Bangladesh, the existence of various minorities on the Indian subcontinent" (Nazareth 169). So far as the narrative technique is concerned, Rushdie is said to have owed a great deal to Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. *Midnight's Children* is a great novel that deals with almost everything about the author's home country, and achieves this end by means of a discursive and varying narrative technique in the tradition of *Tristram Shandy*. It is certainly not the first modern novel to do so. The most obvious forerunner of *Midnight's Children* in the above-mentioned aspects is *The Tin Drum* by the German novelist, Gunter Grass, written in 1959. It belongs

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focus on other histories – the little narratives of the common wo/man. She is more likely to focus on themes closer to her heart – the rights of children, friendship among people of different religions, the courage of children and their sacrifices, the point of view of the child. Nina Sabnani goes further in that she also uses a women's craft to illustrate her work; applique work is the art of stitching together pieces of fabric on a base layer of cloth to form a richly textured, colourful tapestry. This is symbolic of Sabnani's act of sewing together the histories of two nations using patches of memories-her father's and her own. History then becomes (her)story through memory and biography; a representation of history mediated through a woman's memory of her father's narration of Partition.

In the field of children's literature, newer histories for children emphasize the story in history, while fiction, specifically historical fiction for children, paradoxically continues to offer certainty (Watkins 56-57). The only change in historical fiction has been the embrace of relativity, the idea that someone else is going to see a different part of the past, whereas history begins to suggest the possibility of complete subjectivity – that no one is seeing the past quite right and that the stories will not match up (Stevenson 27–28).

While historians now re-negotiate the problematics of history as a construct, writers of children's historical fiction delve into various texts through which the past can be constructed in the present, bringing forth different but equally meaningful constructions of past reality. In doing so, they succeed in representing many voices muted before. The strands of memory, biography and oral narration are all woven, though not seamlessly, into multi-coloured, multi-layered works of multiple histories. In this picture book, illustration and text go hand-in-hand in weaving a historical story, a story from the past constructed through the author's memories in the present. In the process, family history gets transformed into the shared histories of

two nations — a new perception of an old catastrophe; a new acuity to current misfortunes.

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publicized news about Afghanistan's low literacy rate, poverty, and desolation through the memories of Hakim. Hakim shares with Laila and Tariq the richness of Afghanistan's cultural past. When Hakim shows Laila the remnants of a rich culture and retells the story of that glorious past, he shares it with Hosseini's readers also. Description of Kabul and its sophisticated streets with vendors and women loitering around offers a different picture to the image of war - torn Afghanistan.

The representation of Afghan women as passive and powerless in the novel often serves to generate sympathy and a sense of responsibility from the readers. Various studies in the field suggest that Afghan women already have taken initiatives to involve themselves in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and are not as helpless as the novel portrays them. But Hosseini's narrative is not as hopeless as the common stereotypical images projected by the western media. It has its redeeming moments as well. Laila takes a job, and decides to further the attempt to reconstruct Afghanistan. But, what is yet to be known is whether the hope and courage, as represented by Laila, will be enough to wipe away the problems of Afghanistan.

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Laila and Mariam, though they possess a strong sense of justice, fail to resist subjugation for most part of the novel. Mariam silently bears the brunt of polygamy under both Rasheed and Jalil, and does not attempt to free herself at any point of time. It is only towards the end of the novel that Mariam reacts to the ruthless exploitation by killing Rasheed. Laila, though educated, is restrained in the society and is not able to pursue her desires. She fails miserably in her love and again in her life when she marries Rasheed. She forgets the very essence of freedom taught by her father when she abides by the rules of the oppressive household of Rasheed. Mariam's words, "Think like a mother, Laila jo. Think like a mother''(328), is a wakeup call to Laila. From there onwards, Laila make her own decisions and she leaves the country to embrace freedom. When Laila decides to come back and participate in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, it becomes a mild but potential statement on the possibilities of women in Afghanistan.

The picture of Afghanistan as represented in the novel is a sombre one. A major part of the novel unfolds in the backdrop of a war- struck Kabul. Hosseini gives an account of the gradual emergence of Taliban. They are young Pashtun men whose families fled to Pakistan during the war against the Soviets. He narrates how they tear down the country, shut down universities, rip paintings from walls, kick down television screens, burn books, and close down book stores. The various warring parties commit atrocities against each other and on the civilian population, and bombs fall on Kabul. One such bomb blast takes Laila's family and Tariq away from her, and leaves her abandoned.

But the rich culture and the sophisticated cities from Afghanistan's past is brought alive. Hosseini provides some balance to the widely

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HISTORY FROM BELOW: READING MAHASWETA DEVI'S *TITU MIR* AS SUBALTERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Ms. Suja Mathew

Indian nationalism is represented in history mainly as the effort of the national elite. In his attack on elite historiography, Ranajit Guha condemns it for neglecting and obscuring the "politics of the people" (4). Guha states: "The general orientation of the … elitist historiography is to represent Indian nationalism as primarily an idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjugation to freedom" (2). Writers like Mahasweta Devi share this concern, and critiques the practice of considering Indian nationalism as a sort of "spiritual biography of the Indian elite" (Guha 2). According to Guha, the official versions of history "fail to acknowledge … the contribution made by the people *on their own*, that is, *independently of the elite* to the making and development of this nationalism" (3). Literature written from below helps in understanding the modes of resistance adopted by people to counter imperialist attitudes; it shows how the common man fought against the power of the empire with his life. The glorious role played by these legendary heroes is conveniently forgotten by the national elite historiographers.

Mahasweta Devi is a Bengali writer and activist who has devoted her life entirely to the cause of the oppressed and the marginalized. She discusses the question of bonded labour, feudalism, state negligence and forceful acquisition of agricultural land in her works. She portrays the pervasive tyranny and injustice in the society and how the state apparatuses also collude with the system to commit violence against vulnerable people. In a conversation with Amar Mitra and Sabyasachi Deb, Devi recounts:

what they saw as corrupt practices, drawing on Islam as a justification for their intervention. Seizing power, the Taliban implemented four central policies regarding women. First, women were forbidden to hold jobs, and their sole responsibility was to bring up the next generation of Muslims. Second, they could not attend schools until the Taliban had come up with a curriculum in accordance with the basics of Islam. Third, women were forced to wear *burqas.* Although women were obliged to wear *chadors* during the Mujahidin period, the Taliban implemented the policy that women must wear *burqas* that cover their faces as well and observe the practice of wearing the *hejab* as recommended by *Shariat.* Finally, women were denied freedom of movement. They could leave their homes only if they were escorted by male relatives, and had to avoid contact with male strangers (Marsden 63). Laila's and Mariam's inability to escape from Rasheed illustrates this aspect of the history of Afghanistan. Laila cannot secure a job. When they attempted to escape, they were caught and tortured.

These impositions on women did not go unchallenged. There were moments of strong resistance against these changes in Afghanistan from educated women. But the lack of interest of western media prior to 9/11 attack and the deliberate attempt to quell the strong sense of resistance among women silenced these incidents effectively. Studies on western media's response towards Afghan women movements also point to the same. Women are seldom portrayed as agents who can actively shape their own lives and futures. In the representation of politically active women, the readers are more curious about their personal background and circumstances than their political opinions.

The resistance of women characters to the oppression of patriarchal society is only mildly delineated in the novel. Characters like

traditions. They resent the Soviet's advice as to how to treat their women. Some of them flee to Pakistan and they cite the use of force to have women attend literacy classes as the main reason (Skaine 13). Rasheed shares this view of the orthodox Afghan Muslim, when he speaks about Hakim in contemptuous terms. The way orthodox and patriarchal figures like Jalil and Rasheed dominate the narrative with their oppressive strategies sometimes shadows the otherwise sophisticated and developed side of Afghanistan. In certain sections of the novel, one can see characters like Mariam who are denied education and good living by the ruthless system of the society. Loyal hands of patriarchal Afghan society like Rasheed and Jalil insist that they wear *burqas*. They look down upon anyone who supports the cause of women's education or freedom. One even wonders whether the author also approves of the notion of Afghan women as innocent victims waiting for the west to redeem them.

The oppressive strategies of the orthodox Afghan society took a new turn with the retreat of the Soviet Union. The country was plunged in horror, when Mujahidin groups battled for control of the country. Eventually, an unstable government called the Mujahidin Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan emerge as a coalition of seven Mujahidin parties (Marsden 38-39). Its president, Burhannudin Rabbani, suspended the Constitution, and issued religious decrees that imposed a number of restrictions on women's freedom and mobility. They declared that women should not use perfumes, wear clothes similar to that of men's, wear makeup, and have western-styled hair. They should be completely covered, educated only at home by fathers, brothers, or other relatives, and only learn the basics of Islam (Ellis 42). Eventually, in 1996, the Taliban, who felt outraged at the behaviour of the Mujahidin leaders, decided to take action. They were determined to put an end to

"It's necessary for a writer to have a social responsibility. Yes, he has an obligation to the society. He must write from his sense of responsibility" (168). It is her social responsibility towards the marginalized and oppressed classes that has prompted her to work for them and be their voice. She is a writer who deals with history time and time again as in *Aranyer Adhikar*, *Chhotti Munda and His Arrows*, *Jhansi Rani* and so on. She concentrates on bringing to light "the important but disregarded events in the novels, [try] to speak of the degraded people" (164).

Mahasweta Devi uses literature to illuminate those episodes which were hitherto in shadow. Her vision of history is similar to that of the pragmatists. "History is not merely a chronicle of the past, but rather a pragmatic weapon for explaining the present and controlling the future" (Veeser 11). Devi writes on the hitherto ignored category of the subaltern resistance to imperialism. In this regard, Guha observes:

> … parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups, constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country – that is, the people. (4)

Devi digs out the incidents of brave struggle of the people against the British from the oral history and memory of people and gives expression to them.

Titu Mir is a historical fiction in which Devi explores the legendary life of a Bengali peasant leader of the same name. He led a revolt against the British in 1830-31, and was killed in the struggle. Though the national history did not do much to remember Titu Mir, he has remained a great hero in the popular imagination. During the nineteenth century, agricultural

Bengal was undergoing transition and the effects of which were beginning to be experienced by the rural people. Titu, a born leader of the poor, found himself resisting the landlords and the British. Devi brings alive the charismatic personality of Titu Mir against the backdrop of the socio-economic milieu of the times. Titu's growth from a young, energetic boy to a brave and dynamic young man is foregrounded against the main historical events of the period.

The country witnessed many an uprising in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. These were aimed at challenging the superiority of the East India Company and resisting the changes brought about by them in the country. The discontent these reforms raised in the traditional landholders and the peasantry led to many a revolt in various parts of the country, mainly, agricultural areas. Devi concentrates on the uprising from the perspective of the common man who fought against the territorial invasion by the British. At this point in time, most of the *zamindars* and planters were in connivance with the Company. The major events of historical importance dealt with in the text are movements against the indigo plantation, The Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis, the Wahabi movement etc.

The Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis was a blow to the peasants, but it ensured the support of the landowners. The strange agricultural changes in Bengal due to the Permanent Settlement pushed the farmers into a miserable condition:

> … Cornwallis had introduced the Permanent Settlement and it had already had the desired effect on zamindars. Now the Company had a goodly band of landowners, who were ever ready to say 'Yes, Huzoor' should the sahibs choose to say 'The sky is green' or 'It is pitch dark on a full moon night.' They gave the government ten rupees for every twenty they could squeeze out of the people. (20)

does not turn his face to the relevance of education for women. He and Mullah want Mariam to study but it is Nana who rejects this idea by saying that women like Mariam require only one skill: "Only one skill. And it's this: *tahamul.* Endure"(17). All of Jalil's girl children were studying when Mariam reached the house. The same outlook towards education can be seen in the sophisticated parts of Kabul. But Hosseini also points out the influence of western ideologies especially communism in bringing about this change in Afghanistan. Many historical records project Soviet Union - controlled Afghanistan with its liberal views as a haven for women. After April 1978, when the Soviet Union came to power in Afghanistan, women's situation was all the more enhanced. Seizing power, the Soviet Union introduced rapid reforms to change the political and social structure of Afghan society. Women's rights to education, employment, mobility, and choice of spouse were considered the foremost among their objectives (Moghadam 37). People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) intended to impose female education throughout the country in an effort to combat the high level of illiteracy. This resulted in bringing about vast changes in the predicament of Afghan women and thus points to the kind of enlightenment that women characters like Faridha and Laila have.

Laila's father, Babi (or Hakim), as she calls him, is a teacher, but he is dismissed by the Soviets, and is forced to work in the local bakery. He is very loving to Laila, and is concerned about her education and future. He points out the advantages that women have had under the Soviet rule. He points out that two-thirds of the students at Kabul University are women, and advises her to tap this freedom to her benefit: "It's a good time to be a woman in Afghanistan. And you can take advantage of that, Laila" (121). But, the new laws providing equal opportunity to women anger those in the rural areas who are bound by

repressive patriarchal society, which tries to overpower her at every turn of life.

A Thousand Splendid Suns both asserts and thwarts this image of Afghan woman as a helpless and naïve victim. Hosseini's female characters are victims of a system which tries to circumscribe their life, but they are not guileless when it comes to resistance. Khaled Hosseini portrays a picture contrary to that of the west .This is illustrated in Mariam's visit to the sophisticated streets of Kabul with her husband Rasheed. She sees women wandering around the streets freely without wearing *burqas*. Rasheed's comments on his lady customers who are daring enough to wear short skirts and make up also suggest a change in the perceptions of Afghan women even before the intervention of America or west. Reforms of King Amanullah from 1919 to 1929 largely improved the position of women and girls in the cities. To illustrate, Marsden cites reformative measures, which includes banning child marriage, outlawing polygamy among civil servants, and permitting women to discard veils. A growing number of girls in this period benefited from secondary and higher education. In 1953, when Sardar Mohammed Daoud Khan became prime minister, women were encouraged to take part in the government and the workforce. They took up jobs as secretaries, nurses, receptionists, and air hostesses. A minority became doctors, lawyers, engineers, and journalists. By the end of 1950s, new government policies allowed women to hold greater roles in education and the workforce, to voluntarily remove the veil, and to have a future beyond the walls of their homes (Ellis xvii).

This development of a sophisticated class of people with a broader outlook on women and their rights can be gauged from the views of characters like Hakim. Even Jalil, with all his hypocrisy and selfishness,

Devi presents how tax became unbearable for the people, and how they found it difficult to live by farming. As they lament, "The zamindar pays the government a fixed sum, but we bear the cost of his revels, his charity and his every little whim. This is a double burden for us" (20). She portrays how, seeing their plight, Titu Mir rose to the position of the leader of the peasants and the downtrodden farmers. He made it his cause to fight for the farmers who were looted by both the *zamindars* and the plantation mangers alike. She also describes how the Company slowly grabbed the paddy fields of the farmers by hook or crook.

Titu was a man of principles. The manager of the indigo plantation always wanted to hire him, but he "would not join the plantation and fleece the farmer. Never" (21). The indigo plantation was ruining the lives of the people. Bhudeb Choudhury, the representative of the traditional landlords, laments the implementation of the new system at the cost of the old: "That's the kind of the landlord they want now: the kind who won't even care to visit occasionally. No more pond-digging or tree-planting in the country. The village schools are closing for want of patronage. And now these indigo sahibs have come to gobble up what's left"(23).The absent landlords, different from the earlier practice, were actually doing harm to the villages and the people. With the landlords living in towns leaving everything to the managers, they found it very convenient to do whatever they wanted: "With such a man you can pace out his land, plant indigo on it, do what you like, he'll never come nosing around. All he wants is his revenue" (32). The Company tried everything in their means to get rid of honest landowners like Bhudeb Choudhury.

The people who depended on agriculture for survival faced the threat of losing their livelihood. The Company was adamant on spreading the indigo plantation in the place of paddy fields. The profit that the British offered was so high that the managers of the *zamindars* even leased the

land without their masters' consent or awareness. They even scattered indigo seeds stealthily in ploughed fields ready to be sown with rice: "Now we've planted the seeds, and our men are going to guard this land day and night. Do what you want"(38). The people were left with no choice other than to comply.

The Land Settlement Process was one of the strategies used by the Company to take control of the land. Tax which was once fixed by the traditional *zamindars* came to be fixed by the Company. They formulated rules which enabled them to auction the land of revenue defaulters in the permanent settlement areas. This led to the rise of a new class of landowners who had no attachment to the land or to the people. They were keen to gain profit and did not have any genuine interest in farming or cultivation.

Titu reacted against such injustices and atrocities committed on the poor peasants. He became the strength of those who were suppressed. He along with his friends was always there to protect the poor and the needy. Guha comments: "Elite mobilization tended to be relatively more legalistic and constitutionalist in orientation, subaltern mobilization relatively more violent" (4).The peasant uprisings were more spontaneous. Devi seems to believe in retaliatory violence wherever necessary. The father-in-law of Bhudeb Choudhury comments on his son-in-law's inaction: "Son, such non-violence will get you nowhere" (42).

Mahasweta Devi comments on the Sanyasi Revolt, which saw even the *sanyasis* and *fakirs* on the streets against the British. The Sanyasi Rebellion in East Bengal and other similar revolts fought against the oppressive colonial policies of the *zamindars* and landowners who favoured the company. Devi refers to these rebellions, which were legendary in nature: "Yes, yes, the fakirs and the sanyasis were out with their sticks, and the white sahibs were shooting with their guns … First there was the famine, and we were hardly out of that when there was war" (5). She

She bears the brunt of polygamy. She is a *harami* unwanted by both Jalil and society as she is born out of wedlock and of her social class. Though Jalil has his moments of kindness and concern, his hypocrisy does not permit him to accept her into the family.

But one of the redeeming factors is that the women seem to have no compulsion to wear *burqas* in the rural areas of Afghanistan. The picture of Mariam and Nana walking around Gul Daman without wearing *burqas* clearly challenges some of the popular notions about Afghan women. Various historical records clearly point out that *burqa* system was not insisted upon during the pre-Taliban era at least in the rural areas. They seldom wore *burqas* as it interfered with their work in the agricultural sector. When compared to the women of southern province, the women of the nomadic society in Afghanistan were an exception. Here *burqa* was imposed on women. In spite of wearing the *burqa*, nomadic women were inevitably highly mobile. They were not encumbered by strict taboos on coming in to contact with strangers (Marsden). But the world outside Afghanistan seems to be reluctant to view Afghan women as anything but a *burqa* - clad repressed self.

In exploring the *Time.com* photo essays, D. L.Cloud (2004) argues that images of the essay encourage the Western viewers to lament the status of Afghan women, and indirectly support U.S. intervention. She argues that these sequences of images try to project Afghan women as helpless victims waiting for emancipation from the west. Their *burqas* suggest their invisibility and subservience. This view of western media clearly ignores the fact that Afghan women may have a different view in this matter. This possibility is mildly suggested in the novel, when Mariam looks upon *purdah* as something which shields her from the uninvited scrutiny of men. It offers her a respite in the otherwise

AFGHANISTAN AND ITS WOMEN: FANTASY AND REALITY AS DEPICTED IN *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

Ms. Rakhi N. P.

The history of Afghanistan is marked by political instability. During the last thirty years, the country has been marred by prolonged war, collapse of infrastructure, and restrictive political regimes. The situation of women in Afghanistan has been dismal during this period. Their status which was first undermined during the Soviet occupation, came to be so under the subsequent regimes as well. Women's rights were further eroded when the Taliban came into power in 1996. Yet, the plight of Afghan women was not a matter of concern in the mainstream media of the west until the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September, 2001 drew strategic interest toward Afghanistan (Kumar 25). In the weeks following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, *burqa*-clad women were featured on the cover of the New York Times, Business Week, News Week, Time, and other magazines of general interest (Kumar 25). Subsequently, the anonymous veiled women gained high visibility. It is quite interesting to see how these images of Afghanistan and its women propagated by western world are handled in the works of Khalid Hosseini.

The condition of women in Afghanistan is mostly characterized by subservience to patriarchal structure of the society. Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* portrays a vivid picture of the plight of women as it gets transformed with the varying power structures that came to rule Afghanistan. The novel starts with the times of King Zahir Shah when Mariam, the protagonist of the novel, is a small child.

points out the real reason for the famine of 1770; it was because of the *sahibs* hoarding all the rice. She comments on the famine by referring to the suffering of the common man. Though fifteen million people died in the famine, the Company did not waive that year's tax. The Company and the *zamindars* plotted against the people. The national bourgeoisie stood against the country and the people. They helped the Company conquer the nation, and the people were left without anyone to protect their rights.

The conditions of exploitation that subaltern classes were subjected to made their revolt distinct in approach. The people say: "The *zamindar*'s men want their bit, and the people want theirs, how can we keep them all happy?" (11). Experiences of exploitation and labour made their politics different. This gap was filled by the peasant leaders like Titu who stood for the people and was ready to fight against anyone for their cause.

The commercialization of agriculture and the introduction of cash crops become the backdrop against which Mahasweta Devi recounts the story of Titu Mir's resistance against the foreign invaders. As indigo cultivation became necessary to satisfy the needs of the English cloth market (1780-1802), the Company forcefully placed India amongst the foremost indigo-producing nations of the world.

Wahabi movement is also featured in the novel because Titu Mir embraced Wahabism under the influence of the leader Syed Ahmed. It was a cult which stood for Hindu-Muslim unity, and resisted the attacks on the poor. Titu Mir, as a Wahabi peasant leader, organized a massive revolt against the indigo planters and their *zamindars*. He provided leadership to peasants of both Muslim and Hindu lower caste peasants. The mainstream historiographers have picturised these movements as having communal overtones. Mahasweta Devi makes it clear that, other than religious beliefs, what united the people was the exploitation by the authorities. Soon, Titu Mir rose to the stature of a protector and saviour in the eyes of the people.

The *zamindar* even introduced a new tax on Wahabis and Titu forbade his people from paying it.

Titu gradually rose to be a crusader against all kinds of injustices. He and his followers constructed a bamboo fort in Narkelberia, and almost ruled the place. He proclaimed himself the king, and demanded tax from the surrounding *zamindars* and planters. The landlords sought the help of the Company and after two unsuccessful attempts. Titu was killed by the Company army. The peasant leaders like Titu Mir were defeated by his own countrymen who looted the common man and showed allegiance to the British. They were vile and greedy: "The English were now our masters; and we showed our loyalty in ways that dogs could not" (89). But Titu stood for the people's cause: "We … want to walk the banks of the Ichhamoti as far as we can, along the canals, streams and rivers, and not see a single indigo plantation anywhere. We want to travel afar and never see the zamindar's elephants trampling the villagers' huts or eating their grain. That is what we, too, want" (96). All his dreams for his country were shattered by Governor General William Bentinck who took drastic measures to deal with Titu Mir. He fought till his last breath for his country and was shot dead on 19 November 1831.

Mahasweta Devi explores the subaltern history of the common peasants through the novel *Titu Mir*. She delves deep into the oral history of the common people, and comes up with the story of the peasant leader, the titular hero, who fought against the British. His supporters and followers were common men. Their social history merges with the history of the nation. Memory and history are intertwined in oral literature, and they are storehouses of knowledge and wisdom. Devi rewrites the elite historiography of the colonial past, and in doing so she seems to be reiterating the premise of Ranajit Guha and the subaltern historians who uphold the importance of a peasant historiography in the national struggle. The elite nationalists forgot

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the sacrifices of thousands of people like Titu Mir, and they were conveniently thrust into the shadow of oblivion. By focusing on the life of Titu Mir, the author explores the cultural, political and social milieu of the times, and comments upon it. History becomes the text and the context, and merges into one to commemorate the thrilling saga of brave leaders of the past.

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FAMILY (HI)STORY AS A SECULAR AND COMMUNAL NARRATIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF *BLOOD BROTHERS*: *A FAMILY SAGA*

Mr. Muhammedali P.

M. J. Akbar's *Blood Brothers*: *A Family Saga* narrativises the anti-colonial nationalism in India and the interference of communal politics in pre-and post-independent India through a massive narrative recreation of the intricate social patterns and political machinations of the period. The novel centres around the family of the narrator by recreating the story of three generations with occasional references to the history of the subcontinent. It deals with the (hi)story of the nation coming into being with a vast array of historical figures, events and episodes which shaped the destiny of modern India. The novel becomes a secular narrative of the nation, its multicultural fabric and the challenges posed by communalism and communal politics. Communal politics poses a serious threat to the secular nature of India, and M. J .Akbar, as a sensitive writer, attempts to reveal the various dimensions of communalism.

Mobasher Jawed Akbar, popularly known as M. J. Akbar set new standards as an editor, journalist and columnist in the media circle of India and abroad. He has many non-fictional works to his credit and it is these non-fictional literary works that have given him voice and stature among the readers in India and the world. He has entered into the world of fiction with his latest book *Blood Brothers: A Family Saga* (2006). It is an amazing family saga which tells the story of three generation of a Muslim family in Bengal. The narrative is based on the experiences of his own family. The autobiographical work is packed with information about events in the country and the world, and the main concern of the novel is the complex Hindu-

To conclude, though individual freedom for women is espoused by the authors, there is an invisible limit and the women characters do not seem to transgress these limits. There are two conspicuous absences in this paper. The paper hasn't considered the impact of colonial modernity on Muslim women. Secondly, only the works of male writers have been taken for consideration. Except for scant references to Muslim men, Muslim women do not figure predominantly in the works written during this period. Malayalam novels by Muslim novelists have not come to the fore either. The content of this paper discusses only novels. Though there were many women writers writing during this period, many chose the medium of poetry and plays. Traces of feminism can be discerned in Thottakkatt Ikkavamma's play *Subhadrarjunam* , which made its appearance at the same time as that of the novels. It was widely appreciated. As noted in the play, "In the ancient days, didn't Bhama wage war? /And didn't Subhadra drive the chariot? Isn't Queen Victoria ruling over this land? /if there are such changes in womenwhy should it be that /Women could not just write poetry" (qtd. in Chandrika 55 translation nine)? These lines from a woman writer capture the frustration of a woman attempting to carve a niche on her own. Perhaps we need to look for impact of colonial modernity and women's responses in genres used by women other than the novel.

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moral values, instilling habits of hygiene in the family and avoiding unnecessary quarrels (92-94). This sentiment is very similar to that of Manu's who says: "The production of children, the nurture of those born, and the daily life of men, of these matters the wife is visibly the cause." (qtd in Chakravarti 71-72) .Though in theory woman's assent in public sphere was considered important, here the identity of a woman is tailor made to suit certain roles. She was assigned roles that did not demand an entry into the public sphere. Thus, in certain respects, colonial modernity led to the repetition of European Renaissance in Kerala.

Coercive power, as opposed to disciplinary power, is very violent. Violations of patriarchal norms led to severe punishments- cutting off breasts, ears, stripping women's clothes and lynching of upper caste widows who attempted re-marriage. Dilip Menon, in his article ,"No. Not the Nation: Lower Caste Malayalam Novels of the Nineteenth Century," observes: "In the lower caste novels it is the constitution of a family that is the issue. For untouchables and lower castes the notion of "family" is nebulous when they themselves were "things" rather than individuals who could be bought, sold and separated at the will of the master"(66).Yet rather than "constitution" it could be argued that stability of a family was the core of desire. A stable family is what was hoped for. Economic subservience was not an issue as both men and women worked. Dileep Menon cites examples from early novels like *Sukumari* and *Saraswathi Vijayam* to prove his point. In *Saraswathi Vijayam*, Yesudasan (a Dalit before his conversion) marries Kuberan Namboothiri's granddaughter Saraswathi. What was impossible while remaining a Dalit was achieved through conversion. In a sense the *smarthavicharam* and the excommunication of Subadra and her children including Sarswathi, is a prerequisite for this marriage. Dalit women scarcely appear in the works as women with individual identity. They remain only as *cherumi* or as a part of a group who come to perform the *oppari* or funeral song.

Muslim relations in the subcontinent. The book is actually a blend of fact and fiction, history and family memoir.

Akbar has used a wide canvas to portray Telinipara, the village where he was born. *Blood Brothers* starts with the story of the narrator's grandfather, Prayaag, and Prayaag's change to Rahmatullah, and his gradual ascendency from poverty to prosperity. The novel is a multi-dimensional work, because it runs across three planes with equal felicity. On the one hand, it is an account of the family that gave birth to the narrator; on the other hand, it is a telling and insightful story of India's multicultural fabric and finally, it is an account of India's history from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s with major historical events as the backdrop. History, past and present, has always been a recurring theme in Indian English fiction right from the origin of the genre. Like many other Indian English novelists, M. J. Akbar is also fascinated by the history, politics and culture of the subcontinent and the major historical events of pre- and post-independent India.

Like other post colonial literary works, especially novels, many Indian English novels belong to the category of national narratives. Many Indian English novels deal with the story of the nation coming into being and developing into a modern nation state. Critic Frederick Jameson holds the view that "all Third World texts are to be read as national allegories" (65). This is due to the fact that majority of the post colonial writers want to glorify their nation and promote in their readers a sense of nationalism. So the contours of the nation – geographical, economic, political and cultural - have been a continuing theme in post colonial writing. *Blood Brothers*, at macro level, deals with the story of India coming into being and its development into a modern secular nation state. It explores the diverse aspects of the subcontinent through the family story of the narrator and the village Telinipara.

The glue of imagination is one of the basic ingredients required for the setting up of a nation. The first inevitable linking of nation with imagination was done by Benedict Anderson in his famous work *Imagined Communities; Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. He defines nation as "as imagined political community," and the so formed communities are to be distinguished by "the style in which they are imagined" (15). But imagination has limitations, and the nation so formed has its own restricted boundary. But a nation cannot be imagined without history and each nation has a distinct imaginative space because of its distinctive history. So, it can be said that imagination and history play a vital role in defining a nation and fiction, broadly literature, plays a vital role in the shaping of this imagination.

Ernest Renan, one of the prominent scholars on nations and nationalism, defines nation as:

> … a soul or spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lives in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories, the other is present day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an in individual form.(19)

Seen from this angle, it can be said that India has one soul, but different spiritual forces, since it has been invaded by many warriors and rulers in the past; and the present day variegated cultures, languages and histories have siphoned their way through these subsequent layers of previous conquests deposited on India's soul.

History does provide a sense of belonging to the denizens of a nation, and history is inevitable in the imagination of a nation because to imagine a nation without history would be to imagine history without wars. Modern India is the result of variegated historical incidents and movements, and the

As if drive home this point, in the novel *Indulekha* by Chandu Menon, Madhavan argues that Nair women "don't practise the virtue of fidelity so strictly as do the women of other countries" (40) to which Indulekha is quick to defend matriliny.In contrast to Kalyanikutty, Indulekha makes a conscious choice of her partner. Though the choice seems be the result of a woman's agency, the truth is that it is the community's agency that makes the choice. A parallel to the same can be noted in the shift from matrilineal families to nuclear families. The *karanavar* who was the important male figure in the matrilineal system came to be replaced by the husband in the "modern, nuclear, virilocal" family (Menon 66). "One of the vision in his [Chandu Menon's] works is that the Keralite society has to achieve what he thought as the liberated state of the Western society" (Vijayan 77). Though the modern educated women were desirable wives, their education was to only benefit the family and home and was never meant to be a mean to economic independence or even self-fulfilment. In his memorandum as a member of Malabar Marriage Commission, Chandu Menon seems apprehensive of the fact that "individual acquisition should hereafter go to the wife and children of the person acquiring it"(qtd. in Irumbayam 226).Thus as Dilip Menon has argued, marriage for Nairs during this period was merely a "reconstitution" (Menon 66). Restructured marriages gave women an apparent control over their bodies. But at the same time, an increased economic dependency led to almost slavish subservience. In fact all the novels written by upper caste men culminate in marriage and the narrative comes to a conclusion at that point. The story is not taken forward.

The first novel by a Latin Christian, Vaaryath Chori Peter, *Parishkaara Vijayam* traces the advantages of having an educated wife, namely that of looking after the husband faithfully, managing the expenses of the house according to the husband's income, keeping a record of those expenses, effectively looking after children, teaching them to read, inculcate

gaining the complicity of women by disciplining them along certain lines,"… disciplinary power does not destroy the body, but reconstructs it. Individuals literally incorporate the objectives of power, which become part of their own being, actions, aims and habits" (Taylor 88). Disciplinary power is internal, and through indoctrination, education and reforms women learned to discipline their bodies.

The marriage system was not revolutionized completely, and alliances between individuals remained endogamous. In fact, in the case of Nair women, endogamy was sought to be strengthened. Even in a work like *Parangodi Parinayam*, which was a burlesque on *Indulekha* , the author (in the preface) justifies the choice of names like Parangaodi and Parangodan only to convey "pure" pre-Aryan Nair blood. But, there were other changes in customs like the focus on companionate marriage. The individual consent of the woman came to be sought before fixing marriages. The matrilineal system of the Nair community where the uncle instead of the father was more important was viewed by the British as unnatural. One aspect of colonialism is to look at homologous European practices in colonized nations. This served to emphasise the "natural" relationship between father and child. One important aspect is the development of love marriage. This, in itself was very revolutionary because two educated individuals are shown to be mature enough to choose their partners in life. Thus, we have Indulekha-Madhavan,Meenakshy- Kunhisankaran, Thankamma- Kuriachan, Monika- Lonankunhu pairs in the novel. This was the time when "intelligent assent" (Chakravarti133) of the woman was being discussed. Act 3 of 1872 established the concept of civil marriage which allowed people to marry across castes (Chakravarti127). As educated men, the authors must have been aware of the act. The potential "dangers" of crossing the limits of endogamy unconsciously works in the novels and though the men and women choose their own partners, it is within the strict limits of endogamy.

narration of history is central to the narration of a nation like India. M. J. Akbar's family saga explores these variegated factors which shaped the consciousness of Indian nationals. While fictionalizing his own family history, Akbar flavours the work with many historical and political events of the last one and half century that shaped the destiny of modern India. It takes the readers to the famine of 1870s, spreading of epidemics, Jalianwala Bagh Massacre, Khilafat Movement, Quit India Movement, the role of leaders like Gandhi and Nehru in the freedom struggle, partition of the subcontinent, subsequent communal riots and India's war with China and Pakistan. The narration of these events make *Blood Brothers* the narrative of the country called India.

In writing the history of his family and India, Akbar resorts to fiction, and he belongs to those writers who believe that fiction helps convey the truth with more clarity and effect. He says: "anyone who writes knows the truth is untidy" and fiction, in providing a clearer narration of events, "becomes a more important form of truth" (Rajan 9). The beginning of the text sets the dramatic texture of the novel as the narrator says, "My grandfather died while I was playing on his chest. That was my first stroke of luck" (1), and the narrator is about a year old at the time of his grandfather's death. Then, the narrator recounts the life of his grandfather and talks about the famine in Bihar in the 1870s, which emptied the village in five years. Prayaag, the narrator's grandfather, born in a Kshatriya family, somehow survives the blight of the famine which took the lives of his parents. He escapes from the jaws of death because of his determination to live. Fate takes him to Telinipara, a village near Calcutta, because he had heard about a bunch of Jute mills in and around Telinipara owned by the British. In the early hours of the morning, the famished boy collapses near a tea shop owned by Wali Mohammed. Wali Mohammed and his wife were childless; they adopt him as their son, and give him shelter and food. Cholera takes Wali Mohammed's life and Prayaag takes charge of the

business, converts to Islam, and receives the name Rahmatullah. *Blood Brothers* is divided into nineteen chapters, and the first chapter itself shows the novel's pre- occupation with history. Along with the story of the famine of 1870 in Bihar, the novelist sheds light on the growing predominance of East India Company and the declining Muslim dynasties.

The colonial rule in India gradually led to the evolution of national consciousness among the people of the subcontinent, and the anti-colonial movement gradually reached the various corners of India. The author does say that "the British were individually more honest than the Mughals, but collectively more greedy" (3). Along with showing the reverberations of growing nationalism in his native village, Telinipara, the author recounts the socio-political and cultural aspects of the people of Telinipara and the surrounding areas. Telinipara becomes the microcosm of the macrocosm, i.e., India. The narrator's family becomes the centre of his narrative. The role of public events in controlling and shaping individual lives are shown through the family and neighbourhood. M. J. Akbar briefly alludes to the First World War and the war between England and Germany which favoured Bengal and the jute mills.

The rise of political and national consciousness in India took many years and many movements to turn into a nation based movement. The repressive policies of the colonial Raj gave way to many regenerative processes aimed at over throwing the British from the Indian subcontinent. It was only after the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi into the political arena that it became a mass movement with reverberations all over the subcontinent. The novelist delineates the reverberation of the growing national consciousness in Telinipara and the surrounding areas.

The religious sentiments of the people in the subcontinent often transcended the political consciousness, and revivalist movement like AryaSamaj and Tablighi Jamaat prepared the ground for that. Telinipara

wore the breast cloth belonged to the " lower" castes, other women belonging to Dalit communities had to wait for nearly a century to achieve their right to dignified clothing. Chentharassery, in his biography on Ayyankali, records how Dalits had to blacken their new clothes with soot so as to appear unclean and inoffensive to the upper castes. Women, in addition, had to wear the "*kallumaala*" which was a caste marker. In 1915, on the behest of the call given by Ayyankali, women cast off their stone necklaces and wore *mundu* and blouse.

A similar situation existed among the *antarjanams* or the Namboothiri women who were considered to be the "highest" caste. Due to certain practices within the community combined with a reluctance to reform, the women suffered a lot at the hands of men. Though within the house they did not cover the upper parts of their bodies, they were allowed to do so outside. While stepping out, they had to be accompanied by a chaperone and carry the *marakkuda* or the umbrella. They also had to lengthen their ear lobes by wearing heavy rings. If, for the Dalit women, the struggle was to cover their bodies with clean white clothes, for the *antarjanams* white was a patriarchal imposition. Their efforts to dignity by casting off the *marakkuda* and the bleached white cloth can be interpreted as a sort of unveiling. Once again, it is during the period termed renaissance in Kerala that women boycotted the *ghosha*. Ample instances for these can be found in the writings of Lalithambika Antarjanam and also in the interview with Aryadevi, one of first widows to remarry from the community (in Geetha 107-126). It can be claimed that the breast cloth controversies had an indirect influence on the namboothiri women.

With English education, enlightenment ideals such as "rationalism, right to equality, right for equal opportunity, and the concept of freedom" (Nisar and Kandasamy 55) created great impact on young minds of that generation. Thus, there was a need to redefine identity. This was done by

its affairs. Giving up prostitution, she can only remain an asexual being for the rest of her life.

The novelist Chathu Nair deals at length on the role of parental guidance in bringing up children. Meenakshi's mother Lakshmi Amma and Uncle Gopala Menon are strong forces in shaping Meenakshi's character. Her father also, though often absent, is a strong influence in her life. Kochammalu also has a mother who lives with her. But, she is a "poor" parent who teaches her daughter to make use of her beauty and be a *mohini* to men. It is to be noted that there is no father figure in the life of Kochammalu. The two brothers conveniently absent themselves for the sake of their sister. At an age when matriliny was being replaced in Nair households, the fact of the absent father in the novel cannot be accidental. The novelist clearly hints that the problem of Kochammalu was due to the lack of a father. The presence of the father would have made ensured that she remained an obedient, docile and well behaved woman. Kochammalu herself seems to believe this as is evident from her lament: "If my father were alive, I would never have had to commit such grave sins" (Nair170 translation mine).

A pertinent enquiry may be made about the status of the Dalit women in the nineteenth century. Slavery was officially abolished in the year 1843. Yet, slavery was alive in the minds and life of the community. The very same communities that were vociferous about reformation within their own communities were blind to the unjust conditions that existed among the Dalits. Thus,"though the colonial modernity created a liberal space that fostered reformist ideas, the Dalits had no place" (Nisar and Kandasamy 74). One of the ways in which classificatory differences were maintained was through clothes. Though it is a matter of pride that Nangeli who cut off her breasts to protest against *mulakkaram* (or breast tax) and Saava Channati and Issaki Channati(Geetha 296), the women converts who first

was known for its religious fraternity and brotherhood, but communalization of the society by irrational leaders and revivalist movements becomes an impending danger for the peaceful existence of the village. The history of Indian nationalism is also the history of the slow but steady communalization of Indian society due to the inclusion of religious nationalism into the main stream politics. The theories of nation and nationalism fail in the Indian subcontinent because of the multiplicity of languages, religions and cultures. There were many movements in the subcontinent parallel to main stream nationalism and these movements were always in conflict with the main stream independence movement. Two Nation Theory was one among them and this later led to the division of the subcontinent. These movements and developments find expression in the novel. The novelist hints at the movement led by Periyar. E. V. Ramaswami Naicker and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The narrator's father and his friends are shown enjoying the war of words between the leaders of the Muslin League and the Congress. People like Syed Shah Bukhari and Govardhan Ahir believe in the necessity of two separate nations for Muslims and Hindus. Thakur Bhagwan Singh says: "…the crafty Govardhan Ahir has been arguing at the tea shop that the age of Hindus has finally dawned, that India will become an Akhand Bharat once the British go… some of the Mullahs wandering around are frightening Muslims with the same thought. They are saying Islam is in danger! Do you think there is a conspiracy between the two?" (206). Sensible people like Syed Ashfaque show the meaninglessness of Pakistan from the Quranic and Islamic point of view. He reflects; "Muslims are a Brotherhood, not a nation. I wish someone would persuade Jinnah Sahib to read the Quran" (208). The pamphlet of the Muslim League seeking the support of the Muslims for the Direct Action Day reached Telinipara and Syed Ashfaque responded with farsightedness: "Allah pronounces doom and no one can reverse it" (209). Calcutta burned with communal riots on that day, and thousands of people from both communities were killed. But

in Telinipara, the Britishers, Hindus and Muslims together ensured peace and harmony. At last the inevitable came, the British decided to divide the subcontinent into a Hindu Majority India and Muslim majority Pakistan with the agreement of both the Muslim League and the Congress. When it was formally announced that India would be partitioned to create a divided Pakistan (West Pakistan and East Pakistan), grandfather Sheik Rahmatullah questioned the logic of a separate country for Muslims: "Pakistan has been formed for the Punjabi Muslims in the West and the Bengali Muslims in the East. No Pakistan has been offered to Bihari Muslims" (211). The independence of the two nations was marred by communal riots on both sides of the border and constant flow of people between the borders. People of Telinipara clustered around the radio to hear the speech of Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, and while listening to Nehru's speech Girija Maharaj asks; "why isn't Gandhi talking to us?" The novelist gives the answer: "Gandhi was not in Delhi. His struggle for freedom had killed the India he knew. While Nehru celebrated freedom in Delhi on 15 August, Gandhi was protecting life in Calcutta" (212).

The main difference between history and fiction is that history talks about what has happened where as fiction recounts the effects of what happened to the lives of people. *Blood Brothers* delineates the impact of the partition and the subsequent communal riots on individual lives by focusing on the family of the narrator and the village Telinipara. During that turbulent period, people were forced to leave their native places for new areas causing displacement and rootlessness. The assassination of Gandhiji on January 30, 1948, clearly proved the extent to which the people of India were communalized. People like Akbar Ali became numb on hearing the news, but persons like Ram Chatterjee rejoiced over the tragic death, and he asked himself: "who will save these Muslim bastards now" ?(217). The peaceful atmosphere of Telinipara was soon disturbed by the well planed communal riots led by Ram Chatterjee and PulluckSanyal. Ram

(1892) and *Parishkaara Vijayam* (1906), Christian women are portrayed in perfect attire to convey their untarnished image .It is also here that the concept of stitched clothing takes strong hold. For instance, the heroine of *Parishkkara Vijayam* is offered a sewing machine as the first gift by her fiancée. In this work, there is also an aversion for body- hugging clothes (95), and the reform suggested is of wearing an extra "inner bodice" (96). From merely covering the bodies, women sought to discipline their bodies to avert male gaze.

In matters of clothing, the elite middle caste women with access to western education didn't have to struggle as much as women of the other castes. Thus, heroines like Indulekha, Meenakshi or even Parangodi (*Parangodi Parinayam* being a parody of *Indulekha*and *Meenakshi*) are portrayed in rich attire: "However, Indulekha took particular interest in her clothes. *Onnara* and *melmundu* with special weave and gold border had to be kept ready, white, clean, every morning and evening when she bathed. She was always seen with a white *melmundu* with gold border covering her breasts" (38).Though the bodies are covered,(in the novels written by upper caste men), there is the unwavering male gaze at the spectacle of the heavy breasts or slender waists of the women described. In contrast the eyes of the Christian women are always downcast in the novels written by Kochuthomman Apothecary or Variath Chori Peter.

In *Meenakshi* (1890) by Cheruvalath Chathu Nair, the reformation is taken to female art forms like Mohiniyattam also. The author succeeds in denigrating this art form as a performance to satisfy the lust of men. George Irumbayam notes, "It is the novelist's aim to engender hatred in the minds of the readers towards [*mohiniyattom*] and to expose the moral degradation of the dancers" (144).But, with reformation in characters like Kochammalu who is a sex worker, the author is at a *cul-de-sac*. She turns into a sanyasi which means that there is no return to the material world and

constituted a part of that middle class which was instrumental in creating significant changes in the consciousness of the social milieu. The novel is also important for another reason - it was considered a "harmless means of entertainment for women who were struggling to fritter away time especially as they didn't have gruelling work to do" (from the Preface of *Kundalatha* xix, translation mine).

It is a matter of difficulty to fix the beginning of (or even the end of) colonial modernity. In the case of women in Kerala, the year 1859 was important because of the breast cloth struggles and what ensued after that. But this year needs to be treated as only symbolic because the demands for covering the body had begun even before that and the struggle continued several decades after 1859 as well. It extended even into the period which has been termed the renaissance of Kerala. The spurt in economic growth that was achieved by the "lower"castes didn't allow a corresponding change in the lifestyles of people and much less in women due to the peculiar caste configurations that existed in Kerala..But that did not deter women from claiming the right to dignified clothing. As P. Geetha notes in her book *Penn Kaalangal* (2010), "… the right to wear clothes of her own choice was never achieved by woman easily….Clothes aren't merely clothes. They are sexual and casteist symbols of power" (translation mine 299).

In Kerala, the white *mundu* was invariably associated with the identity of a Malayali. But, as is known, it did not connote identical or similar meanings to all sections of the society. One could identify the caste and religion by taking a look at the length of the clothes or the manner in which it was draped. Identities of women in the nineteenth century were re-imagined as ideal women by male reformists. From traditional role models, the new identities recast them into enlightened women and wives. One of the ways to achieve this was through the adoption of spotless clothes. Thus in reformist works like *Ghatakavadham* (1877), *Parishkarapathi*

Chatterjee and Pulluck Sanyal convened together, and decided to create problems during the holy procession. The communal riot in Telinipara started with the killing of the poet-teacher Syed Ashfaque, and Rahmatullah's family reached Calcutta safely only because of the timely intervention of Simon, the British Sahib. After Independence, the loyalty of Muslims towards India was increasingly questioned by communalist forces and this tendency of treating the minorities as anti-nationals finds expression in the novel. Altaf Gauhar was arrested, and Akbar Ali was imprisoned in preventive detention because Ram Chatterjee implicated him in the letter he wrote to the Home Minister. The letter says that Akbar Ali was in constant contact with the enemy through his Pakistani wife and was passing highly dangerous secret information to a member of the Pakistan army. The irony of this detention is that Akbar Ali was the person who replied "there were too many Muslims in Pakistan" (235), when his son, the narrator asked why he returned to India in 1948. Meanwhile, a Calcutta business family purchased the Victoria Jute Mill and the new owners started using religious sentiments of the workers to check the trade union activities in the Mill. The activities were led by the young communist, Mohammed Ismail, who later succumbed to religious sentiments at the time of communal tension.

The novel brings out boldly and objectively the innate strength of the subcontinent's common heritage. The novel does not talk about one culture, one language and one religion but it projects an India with myriad cultures and languages. Telinipara was known for its Hindu-Muslim unity for about one and half century because of the open mindedness of both Hindus and Muslims and the place becomes a telling example for the multicultural fabric of Indian society. The novel looks at how Hindu and Muslim identities in India weave into each other because they are essentially part of the same stock. In crisis, the people of Telinipara help each other without considering their religious differences. The novelist's Telinipara represents the dream of an integrated India where Hindus and Muslims live in harmony. But this

community is, also repeatedly wounded by the outbursts of communal violence, though people try to check the infiltration of communal forces with all their might. Rahmatullah, the author's grandfather, not only seamlessly integrates himself into the new religion helped by the poet-teacher, Syed Ashfaque and the smiling Sufi, Burha Deewana; he also nurtures a community to life around the jute mill that holds the promise of a secular India. The novelist shows the sense of accommodation and value of understanding religion in the right sense through a series of incidents that take place in Telinipara.

The novelist tries to show that lack of proper understanding of religions is the main reason for communal violence. He quotes constantly from religious scriptures to show the similarities between Hinduism and Islam. Akbar draws the attention of the readers to the ways in which mutual understanding can be fostered in a place like India. The narrator's grandfather converted to Islam not because of compulsion but out of love towards the family who provided shelter and compassion, when he was in trouble. He becomes the quintessential Indian who combines the best teaching of Islam and Hinduism. Girija Maharaj, though an ardent Brahmin, has no problem becoming the friend of Rahmatullah. Burha Deewana, the smiling mendicant, and his teachings to the people of Telinipara show the role of Sufism in maintaining harmony in India. Burha Deweena, the sufi, becomes the mouth piece of the author and he warns the people of Telinipara to be cautious of the religious fanatics: "There is no evil more malignant than a poisoned hear t… God does not divide man. Men divide God. God is one: alone, eternal, indivisible. The Jews call Allah Elohim, the Hindus know him as Brahma. Let men kill each other over wealth, women, property, prejudice and power, but … never God" (62).

There are certain religious leaders in both communities who become very sensitive to certain issues, and trifle with the religious emotions of the

COLONIAL MODERNITY AND NEW WOMEN IN NINETEENTH CENTURY MALAYALAM NOVELS

Dr.Nisha M.

With the collusion of reforms in several spheres during colonial rule, Kerala witnessed a change or at least a rupture of the existing norms of the society. But the ways in which this change was effected depended upon factors such as religion, caste and sex. In the case of women, J. Devika observes: "[The male,] conceived as the active subject of reforming society by virtue of his earlier exposure to modernity, the reformer has always claimed authority to 'improve and direct' women's minds ,interpret their speech and mediate between them andmodernity" (1676).This paper is an attempt to study the influence of colonial modernity as depicted in the lives of the women characters in nineteenth - century Malayalam novels. It seeks to understand the influence of colonial modernity on the young generation (men) of that era, and how it helped to shaped the identity of women along the newly imbibed ideas of gender identity. The focus is on the female body, clothing, family and home.

The novel as a genre was directly linked to modernity and several writers attempted writing novels during the last part of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth -century novels focussed on how a new self may be shaped. It sought to challenge the old order of the society .It projected differences in gender relations as fundamental to a changing progressive society. In this regard Dileep Menon notes that "… the nineteenth century novels are utopian in intent and project the completion of projects of reform, whether they are of the self or of community" (77). Most of the novels were written by men who were vehement in voicing change in gender relations. Hence, the choice here is that of the genre of novel. Most western educated writers

by the course of history. He then enumerates the effects of the "games played by people in power" (75):

> … That means you left before the Emergency ended – before the elections. Of course, for ordinary people, nothing has changed. Government still keeps breaking poor people's homes and *jhopadpattis*. In villages, they say they will dig wells only if so many sterilizations are done. They tell farmers they will get fertilizer only after *nussbandhi* is performed. Living each day is to face one emergency or another. (581)

The Sikh driver's observation aptly sums up the perspective of the common man and more so for the Dalit and the people living on the margins of society. The "Hydra-like occurrence" is an everyday experience. It is this quotidian that evokes the helplessness.

What Mistry has achieved in *A Fine Balance* is the conflation of public history and private (hi)stories. To a reader uninitiated into Indian history, the text is indeed a rich pedagogic text. It does not claim to be accurate, yet the discerning reader can fill in the gaps to glean the larger perspective. *A Fine Balance* does not specify that the city it portrays is Bombay, but critics and readers seem to identify it as Bombay. The achievement of Rohinton Mistry lies in the fact that the text seems to have blended history and fiction seamlessly and made it accessible to ordinary readers.

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people. They are not the real models of Islam and Hinduism and to poke fun at them, Burha Deweena says: "a donkey with a load of holy books is still a donkey" (65). Burha Deewena's presence in Telinipara becomes a sort of consolation for the people of that area. Both Hindus and Muslims seek his advice at the time of tension between the two communities.

Burha Deweena attracts a large number of women in Telinipara and they become his ardent devotees. He plays a major role in cementing the friendship of Hindus and Muslims in Telinipara, and he advises Rahmatullah and Girija Maharaj: "Do not provoke the enmity of one honest man for the support of a thousand. Honesty is always evident: the trees will tell you if it rained last night. Remain friends and there will be harmony in Telinipara" (125). According to the advice of the Sufi, Hindus and Muslims together started commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. The narrator's grandfather and Girija Maharaj took equal ownership of the Muharram procession and the custom continued for many years till both communities stand poles apart because of suspicion and hatred.

The novelist reiterates the spirit of friendship and brotherhood in maintaining religious tolerance in a country like India. Akbar does not harangue or lecture to drive home the point about the accommodation required to maintain communal harmony. Rahmatullah and his Mai set an example for accommodation through the party organized in connection with his marriage: "Dinner was placed before the guests: biriyani for Muslims, and dishfuls of savouries for the Hindus purchased from a Hindu sweetmeat shop. It was the best available" (33). The hold of religion on almost all characters is strong. But their religious feelings do not overpower their friendship and brotherhood. In fact, they resist the attempt of outsiders to poison the atmosphere of the town. Akbar shows the supreme value of dialogue and understanding of another religion in maintaining social harmony. He does show that there are differences between Hinduism and Islam but

still harmonious existence is possible and India's culture is the sum total of many cultures. Their bonding helps Telinipara to remain calm for many years even when the neighbouring areas burn. Together, they thwarted the attempts of communal forces and their plans to disintegrate the community.

Outside forces try to disrupt the tranquility and peace of Telinipara and they get supporters at times. Govardhan Ahir, who hails from Patna, is an emissary of communalism, and he tries to incite the flames of religious fanaticism. As a Hindu youth, he was very much attracted to the revivalist movement of Arya Samaj, and he believed in the holy war against Muslims. He carries a distorted concept of religion, and wants to make the impotent Hindus potent and courageous by creating stereotypes of Muslims. When the people of Telinipara come to know about his arrival, Rahmatullah and Girija Maharaj summon him to Rahmatullah's house to get an idea about his plans. His interaction with them becomes a stark revelation to Rahmatullah and his friends, and it proves how venomous Govardhan Ahir is. He believes that Muslims are just the opposite of Hindus, and that their extermination will purify India: "Do you know that for Muslims the day begins at night… What else can you expect of a people who are the opposite of all that is right? We face the east in prayer; they face the west. We begin our day by worshipping the rising sun; they begin their day by sighting the moon" (117). He is highly critical of Mahatma Gandhi who preached Hindu-Muslim unity during the independence movement and he believes that Hindu-Muslim unity during the Khilafat movement was just an illusion. M. J. Akbar explores the role of revivalist movements in Hinduism and Islam in the gradual communalization of the society. Both Arya Samaj and Tablighi Jamaat, aimed at the purification of Hinduism and Islam and to bring back the pristine glory of the respective religions. Maulana Jauhar Kanpuri comes to Telinipara as a missionary of Tablighi Jamaat and he forms a committee in Telinipara to reform the "imperfect Muslims of

by the posters "extolling the virtues of Emergency. The obligatory Prime Ministerial visage was prominent. Small print explained why fundamental rights had been temporally suspended" (191).

As the Prime Minister addresses the crowd, extolling the government's declaration of Emergency, enumerating the benefits of the new law, Om and Rajaram are engaged in a card game knowing little how the Prime Minister's declaration would eventually mar their lives. Mistry's success lies in creating a myriad of stories through the personal stories of many characters. These myriad strands are intricately interconnected forming an integrated whole - the public history of India.

Mistry's appropriation of history makes it more accessible to the reader. The text is detailed and full of remarks hinting at the larger historical events which interminably deter the characters from living a peaceful life. Maneck wonders in exasperation and dismay:

> …What sense did the world make? Where was God, the Bloody Fool? Did He have no notion of fair and unfair? Couldn't He read a simple balance sheet? He would have been sacked long ago if He was managing a corporation, the things He allowed to happen . . . to the maid servant and the thousands of Sikhs killed in the capital, and my poor taxi driver with a kara that wouldn't come off. (595)

But no god comes to the rescue. *A Fine Balance* may seem to be a series of unfortunate accidents or coincidence but, a close reading of the text reveals the larger implications. Beverly Schneller remarks that the State of Emergency can be read as a "Hydra-like occurrence, in which the tentacles of government reached across the entire subcontinent, destroying lives in its wake" (243). The Sikh taxi driver who informs Maneck about the assassination of the Prime Minister and the riots that followed once again reiterates the belief held by the common man that their lives are not affected

> between his mother and father, filled the gaps in his knowledge of the world. (96)

Events in political history become a character, often intruding into the lives of ordinary men. History is personalized in Mistry's text i.e. the political history is portrayed through the experience of the characters. The movement started by the Indian National Congress to eradicate the caste system is juxtaposed with the day-to-day harsh lives led by Dukhi and the other Dalits in his village. The irony is not lost on the reader. Even the events of the Partition are brought to us through the characters' firsthand experience of it: "Disturbing things were happening around them. Strangers belonging to a Hindu organization that wore shirts and khaki pants, and trained their members to march about like soldiers, had been visiting the district" (122). Thus, the documentation of public history unfurls through personal history.

Mistry also manages to portray the history of the Kashmir riots through the character of Rajaram, the hair-collector (174). Ishwar and Om live on the fringes of society and for this reason the narration of their story seems richer. By detailing their lives elaborately, Mistry draws a bleak picture of the "City by the Sea" which critics have identified as Bombay and the 'Village by the River'. Mistry, in his realist historical fiction, narrates the myriad lives of the slum-dwellers, the bureaucrats who are corrupt, the Family Planning measures etc. This and other events are the true reminders of the political atmosphere of the country.

In Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the characters who try to lead their lives in the comfort of their own small worlds also get entangled in the political affairs of the times. Their world is constantly shadowed and haunted by the political, corrupt, autocratic world. In one instance, Om sneaks off to have some time alone in the beach. Even in that serene afternoon, he is encountered by the statue of the 'Guardian of Democracy' and ironically

Telinipara" (131). They draft a reform pamphlet and common minimum programme for the Muslims of Telinipara to bring them into the religious fold. The irony of the pamphlet is that they printed the pamphlet "before any one realized that the target audience could not read" (132). Both groups began to convene secret meetings for an impending clash, and a distorted version of religion is taught in the meetings. Communal ideologues and leaders in India usually resort to history and religion to incite communal violence and animosity between Hindus and Muslims; and to that purpose, they make use of distorted versions of history and religion to attract the innocent believers into their fold. Govardhan Ahir in the meeting convinces his friends that Muslims go to the mosque for military training and not for prayer: "Have you seen how they pray? They stand in straight limes, like soldiers. They do not allow any gaps. They bend and kneel and touch the floor with their heads; these are military exercises" (133). Another popular stratagem of the communalists is the exploitation of population ratio and creation of the paranoia that one community is going to outnumber the other one: "There used to be 600 million Hindus before the Muslims came. Today we are only 200 million! And I don't have to tell you how many Muslims there are today! There are more Muslims than Hindus in Bengal!" (134).

The last chapter of the novel ends with the sacrifice of Kamala, the narrator's friend. He was killed with a knife meant for the narrator, and the tragic death of Kamala shows that communal riot has no religion. The communal riot was planned and executed by the new owner of Victoria Jute Mill, Ram Chatterjee and Kanhaiyalal, the RSS Pracharak, in Telinipara. The immediate reason was posters pasted by the communalists of Telinipara to hurt the sentiments of Muslims. There was a protest march in Telinipara against the posters which insulted the Prophet, and it was attended by both Hindus and Muslims. But it failed to alleviate the communal tension because of the rumours which had spread all over the town. People were reluctant

to carry out Muharram procession as usual but Mohammed Ismail, the Marxist trade union leader in Telinipara, became the leader of Muslims, and he took the initiative to carry out the procession. There were no Hindus at the shrine of Burha Deewana from where the Muharram procession starts, and a sense of real combat fill the air instead of mock combat. The Muharram procession was attacked, and people began to kill each other disturbing the tranquility of the place. The novelist says: "Anonymous Hindus were searching for Muslim blood; anonymous Muslims were thirsty for Hindu blood" (342). And this thirst for blood ended in the tragic death of Kamala. Kamala and the narrator are the "blood brothers" of the title. Every generation of the narrator's family enjoyed such brotherhood. Kamala's funeral was attended by both Hindus and Muslims. Maulvi Ejaz was the only Muslim in Telinipara who refused to attend the funeral and he was thrashed by Muslims, and asked to get out of Telinipara. As in other Indian English novels, memory becomes an effective tool in the hands of the writer while he presents the amazing (hi)story of his family and India.

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member of the foursome best equipped to succeed economically should kill himself is heavy with irony" (243).

The story of Ishwar and Omprakash is, perhaps, the most elaborate one in the narrative. Beginning with Ishwar's father Dukhi, the text gives a vivid description and profound insight into the caste-system in India. The caste-system pervades the lives of the Dalit family where Dukhi pretends not to know of the ignominies his wife endures to feed her children. Their story documents the atrocities lashed out at the lower castes by the upper caste Hindus. Punishments (read tortures) like chopping of fingers and wrists (96), tonsuring a woman and forcing her to walk naked in public (97), molestation and rape (99), were meted out at even the slightest errors perceived or imagined.

> The news was of the same type that Dukhi had heard evening after evening during his childhood; only names were different. For walking on the upper-caste side of the street, Sita was stoned, though not to death – the stones had ceased at first sight of blood. Gambhir was less fortunate; he had molten lead poured into his ears because he ventured within hearing range of the temple while prayers were in progress… (108)

Mistry in his portrayal of these atrocities, sharply criticizes the caste-system in India. These acts of injustice, cruelty and dehumanization are so common that the Dalit child very early in his life picks up the codes that he has to follow:

> Besides tanning and leather-working, Dukhi learned what it was to be a Chamaar, an untouchable in village society. No special instruction was necessary for this part of his education. Like filth of dead animals which covered him and his fathers as they worked, the ethos of the caste system was smeared everywhere. And if that was not enough, the talks of adults, the conversations

> threatened by internal disturbances, and declared a State ofEmergency. (245)

The short, almost staccato sentences indicate Avinash's attempts to stir Maneck into action. Eager to evoke a reaction from Maneck, Avinash adds that the fundamental rights have been suspended and leaders and students are being arrested. However, bored and indifferent, Maneck is clearly disappointed with Avinash. Later, though he moves out of the college hostel to Dina Aunty's dilapidated little flat; he is constantly haunted by his thoughts about Avinash. In the end, after his returnfrom the mountains, he stumbles upon a newspaper article which reports the suicide of Avinash's sisters. Avinash, himself is found dead on the railway tracks under suspicious circumstances. One would not be wrong in assuming that his death had everything to do with the Emergency and his involvement in student politics. Towards the end of the text, Avinash's chess set that had fallen into Maneck's possession and forgotten at Dina Aunty's flat returns to Maneck. This chess set remains as a symbol for Avinash's memory and Maneck's sense of guilt about his indifference. Many a time, Maneck tries to get rid of the chess set, but it always seemed to return to him. He hugs that chess set and everything it symbolizes — Avinash, Om (Maneck had tried to teach the game to Om), and "the game of life" (501), and hurls himself before an oncoming express train. The Emergency period which murdered Avinash and later forced his sisters to commit suicide; the vengeful power hungry Thakur; the evil of casteism and the corrupt bureaucrats who left Ishwar a cripple and Om a eunuch, and forced the pair to resort to beggary; the unrelenting landlord who evicted Dina out of the little flat, thus reducing her to the status of an unpaid drudge at her brother's home; the 'development' which changed the idyllic mountains into something crass; and the loss of everything he knew eventually unhinges Maneck. Robert L. Ross, commenting on the irony of the situation, says: "That the one

HISTORY AND MYTH IN K. J. BABY'S *NADUGADHIKA*

Ms. Rose Mary K. R.

Literature and history are inseparable; written texts being products of social, cultural and political forces. They engage with the prevailing values and ideologies of their own times. The concept of ideological apparatus was introduced by Louis Althusser, the French Marxist theoretician. According to him, ideology is "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (295). A small group of people always try to dominate or control the majority of people through the "false representation of the world which they have imagined to enslave other minds by dominating their imaginations" (295). He thinks of ideology as the main instrument of domination. Ideology discusses individuals in terms of ideological subjects within capitalist societies. Ideology controls individuals through a careful action of interpellation, by which people are made to feel that they have agency which, in reality, is being denied to them. As Peter Barry opines, "Interpellation is Althusser's term for the way the individual is encouraged to see himself or herself as an entity free and independent of social forces" (165). Althusser uses two terms which are the ways or methods by which the dominant community keeps control over the marginalized community. This is achieved by two institutions, which he terms "Repressive State Apparatus" and "Ideological State Apparatus." While "Repressive State Apparatuses" represent the societal institutions, "Ideological State Apparatus" represents the institutions which are the repository of ideas in any society. The fundamental purpose of both these "Apparatuses" is to endorse and perpetuate the dominance of certain privileged classes in society. Marxist writers and critics try to liberate the story of the oppressed from being lost in history. K. J. Baby, the writer-

activist, tries to do this in his play, *Nadugadhika*. This paper attempts to find out how history is presented in the play, and how myths, legends and stories of historical figures act as ideological apparatuses, silencing the voice of the marginalized.

In the play *Nadugadhika*, K.J.Baby retraces the history of subjugation and exploitation of two tribes in Wayanad and reconstructs their history. The play focuses on two indigenous tribes, *Paniyas* and *Adiyas*. As the name suggests, *Paniyas* see themselves as the men of labour and *Adiyas* consider themselves as the lowest of the lot. The two important characters in the play are Tamburan, representative of the dominant world and Gadhikakaran who performs *gadhika*, a ritual of exorcing evil spirits. Gadhikakaran, in the play is the voice of the tribe. He reminds his people about the injustices of historiography. History has depicted them as useless traitors and unworthy of existence. He unravels two centuries of Kerala history from the view point of the First Nation's people. During the time of imperialism, the East India Company joined hands with feudalist lords to reinstate new modes of discrimination and power. In a bid to exploit the nation, they tried to re-empower the feudal system. In the play, the British make their entry through an announcement. They have come in search of Pazhassi Raja, who has been branded a traitor of the esteemed British Company. They offer rewards for those who give information about Pazhassi and three men from the tribal community provide the same. In *The Social and Cultural History of Kerala*, the historian P .K. Gopalakrishnan writes, "Thus Baber made all necessary moves to trap Pazhassi in his hide out and to destroy him like a rat smoked out of its hole. He had won over many Paniyas with bribes to inform him of the enemy's move. On 30th November1805, three Paniyas informed Baber of Pazhassi's hide out" (395). The men are presented as betrayers, but the playwright brings out the innocence of these men. He says they might have innocently obeyed the orders of their masters. So, he feels he has to recreate a history for them.

statement. Mistry's novel reiterates the fact that "games played by the people in power" are inextricably linked to the lives of common men. It is capable of affecting and altering their lives permanently.

Maneck's story portrays nostalgia for the united country as it was before: "[A] foreigner drew a magic line on a map and called it the new border; it became a river of blood upon the earth" (205). With this simple statement, Mistry alludes to the bloody history of the Indian Partition during 1947. It shows how ordinary lives are sometimes irrevocably altered, and as a result, personal history as well. Impersonal and objective as it may seem in historiography, the "cartographic changes" have far reaching implications. People whose lives are affected by such changes and decisions are caught in a tide of events over which they seem to have no control. "Ten years later, when Maneck was born, FarokhKohlah, trapped by history, was still travelling regularly to courthouses in the capital, files were shuffled and diplomats shuttled from this country to the other" (205) .

Maneck is slow to realize that the decisions made by the State and the consequent turmoil in the country are too close to his own life. He is indifferent to everything around him and turned to the memories of an idyllic past - the mountains. His friend Avinash's attempts to educate Maneck about the Emergency and its repercussions on the common man is lost on the latter. Avinash is a pedagogue whom Mistry uses to educate the reader on the Indian Emergency. Avinash says:

> Three weeks ago the High Court found the Prime Minister guilty of cheating in the last elections. Which meant she had to step down. But she began stalling. So the opposition parties, student organizations, trade unions – they started mass demonstrations across the country. All calling for her resignation. Then, to hold on to power, she claimed that the country's security was

goes back in time (in history), and thus history is appropriated by the (hi)stories of the characters in the text. For instance, Dina's recollection of the Partition is highly personal - she was forced to be "cooped up inside the flat with Nusswan" her brother (25). The end of the curfew marks a very important day in Dina's life, because Nusswan jubilantly agrees to throw away the plaits she had chopped off. The choice of not naming the most powerful character of the story — the Prime Minister and the city in question has further implications. It indicates that these (hi)stories are not particular to any time or place and warns that these (his)stories are most likely to repeat in the future. One can then read Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* not only as a bitter lesson in history but also as a warning issued to the citizens of the world.

With a history behind each character, the text tries to portray the lives of people belonging to the different stratas of Indian society. To say that the four major characters are representatives of their strata would not be far-fetched. But Mistry's success lies in the way he personalizes and individualizes the stories. Dina Dalal is a young Parsi woman, independent and strong-headed. Her story narrates the travails of the wealthy Parsi community, the middle-classes, and how their lives are shaped by the political affairs of the state. For instance, Mrs. Gupta, the export manager of Au Revoir Exports, is glad when the "minor irritants" in her way are disposed of :"the Prime Minister's declaration yesterday of the Internal Emergency had incarcerated most of the parliamentary opposition, along with the thousands of trade unionists, students, and social workers. 'Isn't that good news?' she sparkled with joy" (73). But for Dina, it brings in new worries; she wonders if the tailors, Ishwar and Om, whom she had recruited, would turn up. Her livelihood hinges upon the tailor's arrival and their work. When the tailors ask her what the Emergency is about, Dina replies "government problems – games played by people in power. It doesn't affect ordinary people like us" (75). The entire text is a testament of the inaccuracy of this

In the play, Tamburan orders his men: "And when you go into the forest don't forget to look out for Pazhassi and his people. If you find them, come and report to me at once" (345). The writer thus fills certain gaps in history, and gives voice to the voiceless.

The period from 1940 to 1960 was the time of migration of Travancore Christians to Malabar. The members of the tribes are told horror stories about Travancore Christians, the flesh -eaters. The feudal lords give them the impression that the migrants are man-eaters. Tamburan says: "They are Christians, from Travancore. They devour even the sacred cow! Will such infidels hesitate to bite into human flesh? I tell you, beware. No dealings with those man eaters" (420-22). Tamburan does not want his people to join the migrants. He thinks that this will ultimately lead to the loss of power and control over them. The innocent natives believe all the stories given by their masters.

The indigenous peoples lived without any knowledge of the outside world. The period from 1940 to 1950 was a significant period in Indian history. Indians were politically active. The freedom movement pervaded all walks of life, but this fervour seems to have eluded the members of the tribes. They only knew the version given by their masters. They witnessed their masters changing their loyalty from one party to the other. In the play, Tamburan,changes his opinion from time to time. He asks "Who is this Gandhi to challenge the mighty British? ... Gandhi is nothing but anti - Christ" (455).The very next time he appears in khadi dress shouting, "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" (540). He gives the example of Gandhi's simplicity to deny them food and clothing. He says, "Do you know what our Mahatma Gandhi eats one day? A single plantain-just that. Then why cannot you be satisfied with the fruits and roots from forests?" (540). Gadhikakaran, who is positioned against the master, tries to create awareness amongst the members of the tribe. He says: "A few real patriots who could see all as

real children of God were labelled as traitors. And their words of love, fraternity and equality never reached us. And their ways of life, liberated beyond race, caste and class, never touched us. We knew no good news from outside" (485-88).Tamburan himself is confused about the changes happening in the political world. His strategy is to support the group or person who is in power. He gives the impression that he is also part of the power structure. He tells stories about historical figures, and the natives easily believe these stories. Thus, their innocence is made use of by the master to exploit them psychologically.

The rise of communism is another significant change in the history of Kerala. Tamburan threatens the natives: "Did you know that the communists have risen to power? They just kill of the old stock like you!"(700).The communist workers reached the tribal colonies, and they begin to hear matters spoken in Malayalam language in favour of them. This, of course, was a new experience for them, because till that time, Malayalam was the language of their masters, and therefore the language of abuse and power. Influence of the communist workers brings some changes in their outlook. They attend party meetings and begin thinking differently. The ideas propagated by the party workers help them dream a world without class and caste differences. They begin to question and demand their rights. They realize that they too have equal right to live. In the play, Tamburan tries to be part of the communist party and he appears with a red flag in his hand. The natives rightly understand the fickle-minded Tamburan, and take the flag away from him. The play ends with the demand of the people to change the bamboo vessel of measurement to standard litre. Thus, their resistance becomes another phase in history.

The playwright incorporates myths and legends of tribal people to interpret their life and traces the beginning and the course of their slavery. The play was first performed as a street play for the members of the tribe.

PUBLIC/ PRIVATE (HI)STORIES: READING ROHINTONMISTRY'S*A FINE BALANCE*

Ms. Mabel Susan

Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995) is a critique of the darkest period in the history of independent'modern' India-The Emergency. Mistry in this realist historical novel brings four ordinary people -Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow who fiercely holds on to her independence, Maneck, a sensitive, young college student; Ishwar, a Dalit born into the Chamaar caste and trained to be a tailor; and Omprakash (Om), Ishwar's young and fiery nephew - to weave a horrifying picture of the Emergency period (1975-77). It is a realist text on account of it being a vivid and detailed depiction of the lives of the characters and their respective surroundings. It is a contemporary historical text because it portrays the material conditions of the Indian society and politics during the Emergency period and the pre-independence period, to a certain extent. The portrayal of caste, corruption and autocracy accentuates the sense of helplessness and desperation of the characters to survive all odds. It is a sharp critique of a system which renders the people mere spectators of their own lives. Mistry's novel can be read as a fictional documentation of that period, for the novel becomes a site for the confluence of history and fiction. This aim of this paper is to analyze o how stories of ordinary lives can be woven together to portray a larger picture – that of an ugly history.

Though *A Fine Balance*'s primary focus is on the lives of the four major characters during the Emergency it does not merely stop at that. The text never mentions the name of the city or that of the village in question; it does not name the Prime Minister in question; it does not give precise dates for the events mentioned. The narration seamlessly progresses and

new white *dhoti* and *kurta* and, to the chanting of *mantras,* given a sacred thread. He was also made to chant the name "Pali" five times.

Both these narratives seem to question the appropriateness of women and children getting restored to their home and their original families. The mainstream narratives of India or Pakistan do not voice the agony of these women and children. There are no national memorials commemorating their losses. It is through these fictional works that their fragmented psyche is laid bare.

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In the Preface, K. J. Baby explains the purpose behind writing this play: "It deals with the history of Wayanad since some two hundred years back. Here was a people who had completely forgotten their past. I wanted to provoke their memories – from vague legends repeated so unconcernedly at their rituals, through different stages of history, up to the dreary present" (Introduction 34). The playwright's search for the beginning of their slavery brings him to the myths and legends which are repeated in their songs and rituals. The *Paniyas* and *Adiyas* were enslaved at two different stages in history. *Adiyas,* who lost their Maveli, were enslaved by their masters, and *Paniyas* were enslaved during their wanderings through woods to collect fruits and edible roots. The story of their great ancestors Uthappan and Uthamma, who went to Ippimalai in search of fruits and edible roots is a story/myth that gets transferred from one generation to the other. When Uthappan and Uthamma tried to escape, they were caught by the Ippimalai Tamburan using net and made slaves. They stand as a symbol of the native's quest for freedom. Their days of hunger begin with this enslavement. They worked like animals to satisfy their hunger, and also to realize the dreams of their masters. The dramatist thus unravels the history behind the legend. The myth of Melorachen and Keeyoruthi also explains how the indigenous people became slaves of landlords. The legend of Mavelimanavatheyyam says how people were spiritually enslaved. In the quarrel that ensued between Maveli and the lords, Maveli was defeated. The people didn't obey the lords immediately. The lords sent Mali, the fierce mother goddess, to arouse fear among the people. They ran in fear. The people were grouped according to the manner they reacted to Mali. Those who questioned Mali became the masters, and those who cried in fear became the *Adiyas* and *Paniyas*. The story of Mali was imprinted on their minds. Therefore they never protest against their masters, because they live in fear of Mali's wrath. These myths and legends uphold a glorious vision of their past, a life connected to nature devoid of exploitation. Through these myths and

legends, the playwright tries to reclaim the past of tribal people, a time when they enjoyed complete freedom, and uses these to exhort the people to free themselves from their bondage. After years of subjugation, the natives realize, “Those who stole us from our times enslaved us with their gods” (930).

The play analyses the different modes of exploitation employed by the landlords. Tamburan, the landlord in the play, represents the ruling class. He devises strategies to perpetuate the power structure and denies the natives all opportunities for freedom. The literal meaning of the word “Tamburan” is God. He presents himself as the agent of God. He says: “Guess who was in my bed last night? The Kavilamma herself!” (705). The workers then obey the orders of the Tamburan. They hope for better luck in the next world, the world of their ancestors. But the words of Tamburan dismiss even this hope. He says: “You are bound for Keeyuloka, the nether world. And it belongs to us. Here or there, obey us and you may get along. Kalakankoranan is the task master there” (314-15).The master manipulates the psychology of the people by threatening them with consequences even after death. The men think, “When we are dead, we reach Keeyuloka, the nether world. It is a replica of this world with the same lords, and same slaves. And we remain the slaves, immortal slaves” (362).

The workers are made complicit allies in their own exploitation. A ritual of Kambalam is conducted every year. On this day the tribals work the whole day without any break. They are offered extra wages and alcohol. This is a day of celebration for them. They dance and sing while doing their work. The work becomes a ritual. The worker becomes a free spirit and works like a maniac. This is another carefully designed plot of the masters to make the slaves work. The workers are thus interpellated and (inAlthusser’s terms)they feel that they are freely doing the work, which in reality, has been imposed on them.

in Shakur’s house. As dim memories of the past revives in the child’s mind, he becomes more and more confused. A celebration is going on in Manohar Lal’s house, and the passage reads :

> Pali did something very strange. He had been sitting by the side of his mother, listening to the women playing the *dholak* and singing, when he got up abruptly and fetched a mat from inside. He spread it on the floor, sat down on it folding his legs under his thighs, and started saying his *namaz*. The people sitting in the courtyard watched Pali with curiosity. But their curiosity soon changed into dismay. (Sahni 247)

A man who was regarded as the *chaudhri* of the *mohalla* announced loudly that the nasty habit should be got rid of. According to him the muslims had planted the poison of fanaticism in his mind. He threatened to pull out his tongue the next time he said his name was Altaf. A barber and a *pandit* were immediately called in.

> The boy was again made to sit on a mat. The barber sharpened the razor on his palm and according to the directions given by the *Pandit*, started shaving the boy’s head. As long as the ceremony lasted the boy kept sobbing with bowed head. Once he got up in fright and crying ‘Ammi, Ammi, Abbaji!’ ran towards the wall of the courtyard. Standing with his back against the wall, he looked at the *chaudhri* like a deer at bay watching a hunter. (Sahni 249)

The pain of losing his loving foster parents, Shakur and Zenab, shattered him as much as the trauma of not getting accepted into his own community. He was bewildered all the time, not able to understand the intentions of the *maulvi* or the *Pandit.* To be accepted in Hindustan, into his own community, his head is tonsured, leaving a tuft of hair in the middle, bathed, and given

he stood in the street crying for his father. He took the boy home to his wife Zenab, who was full of affection for him. The *maulvi* of the neighbouring mosque came to know that Shakur was giving refuge to a *kafir* child and insisted that the boy be circumcised, made to read the *kalma* to become a proper *mussalman*. Pali was circumcised; a red rumi cap was placed on his head. He is given a white kurta, and renamed Altaf. The *maulvi* handed the child to his new Muslim parents saying, "Take him. He's your own child, not a *kafir*'s. He belongs to the whole community"(Sahni 233). Sweets were distributed in the *mohalla* and the people around came to felicitate the couple. The child gradually adapts to the new life, his Hindu parents becoming a blurred memory in his mind.

The forced transformation of identity takes place a second time after seven years. Manohar Lal and Kaushalya had lost the baby girl in the riots in the border, and Manohar Lal was determined to find Pali, knowing well that his wife would lose her sanity without their two children. Since the government had set up a big establishment to trace abducted women and lost children, he visits these offices and influential people to get his lost son back. Pali is confused and flustered to see his father, whom he no longer remembers. Manohar Lal, along with important officials and policemen, take the child back. Pali is confused when he is made to identify his father Sunder Lal, who is a blurred memory in the child's mind. The frightened child sits on Zenab's lap with his arms around her neck as the issue is turned into a question of Hindu- Muslim identity. Then the boy was made to stand before the magistrate. The passage reads: "Seeing the crowd in the courtyard, he became nervous and clung to Shakur's legs. Putting his finger in his mouth, he looked around at the people as if stupefied" (244). He is taken back to India by Sunder Lal and others. On the way, the lady social worker who had accompanied them whisks off the rumi cap from the boy's head, which upsets the boy. On being restored to his home, the boy starts whimpering just as he had done many years ago in the first days

Lakshmanan is the educated character in the play. His education makes him disown his tribal past. Gadhikakaran warns others: "His school days are over. It has been revealed to him that all his miseries arise from the existence of his tribe, his people. If he remains there, he is sure to absorb those renderings of history depicting his people as useless, as traitors, as unworthy of existence" (99-101). Formal education reiterates the stories of Kings and the adventures of the master, and therefore his own race seem out of place in history. The deliberate distortion of history does not arouse in them anger or protest. They accept what they are given. The same ideology gets repeated in the film they get to watch. They complacently accept the standards of the master and it is expressed in their voluntary imitations of the master's heroes. They forget about their culture, traditions and value systems and even become reluctant to identify themselves as members of their tribe. The educational system and media act as ideological apparatuses to keep them inferior to the dominant class.

In the play, there is no mention of physical torture meted out to the workers. There is no apparent repressive apparatus in function. The masters need workers to maintain the social set up. According to the changes in history, they use different modes of exploitation. They use the figure of Mali, the fierce mother goddess; Kalakankoranan or Yama, the master of dead world; the British who use weapons and Travancore Christians, the man-eaters or "cannibals"(420) to keep the labourers under their control. Myths, legends, rituals, education system and stories of historical figures act as ideological apparatuses through which the natives are interpellated to a marginalised position and these account for the operation of control structures for the perpetuation of a social set up which concentrates power and wealth in the hands of few.

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circumstances, to be treated as a human being with flesh and blood who has endured a lot but will not wither when touched, and above all to be embraced as a human being who is physically alive and longs for the generosity of love" (Bhalla 8).

Bhisham Sahni's *Pali* tells the story of Pali, a four year Hindu old boy, who was forced to go back to his parents after seven years. The little boy was first converted to Islam, and then purified, before he was accepted back in Hinduism. Religious observances like the circumcision and the tonsuring of the head become diabolic rituals which disturbs the psyche of the young boy. In the narrative, religion serves only communal interests, and is numb to the psychological trauma of the characters. The *pandit* and the *maulvi* are narrow minded in their attitudes and insensitive to the feelings of not only the boy but also the parents and others. In contrast, the two sets of parents are portrayed as simple and affectionate, capable of understanding the pain of other human beings. The narrative begins like this: "Life goes on and on. Its ends never meet. Neither in the mundane world of realities, nor in fiction. We drag on drearily in the hope that someday these ends may meet. And sometimes we have the illusion that the ends have really joined" (Sahni 67). The family of Manohar Lal, consisting of his wife Kaushalya, son Pali and a baby girl is uprooted in the Partition and they are forced to leave their hometown along with others. As they head for India, the author notes that the journey is "Like a big river forming into many channels on its inward sweep towards the sea, this vast concourse of unfortunate humanity also proceeded towards the boundary line demarcating the two countries" (Sahni 67). As they trudged along towards the convoy of lorries which would carry them to the border, they had heavy bundles on their heads and were anxious about their uncertain future. Suddenly, Manohar Lal realized that their little boy was not holding onto his finger any longer. It was this moment that changed the fate of Pali. He was lost in the crowd of refugees, and was later discovered by Shakur as

these sluts, left over by the Muslims" (Bedi 76). Sunder Lal fails to understand the emotional trauma that she went through. He does not understand her relief on coming back home. The Punjabi folk song seems to refer to the consequences of having a woman's honour defiled; "This is the plant of touch-me-not; it shrivels up at a mere touch" (Bedi 74). Most of the people in the community reject the women when they returned:

> For a long moment the abducted women and their relatives stared at each other like strangers. Then, heads bent low, they walked back together to tackle the task of bringing new life to ruined homes… But there were some amongst these abducted women whom their husbands, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters refused to recognize. On the contrary, they would curse them: why did they not die? Why did they not take poison to save their chastity? Why didn't they jump into the well to save their honour? They were cowards who basely and desperately clung to life. Why, thousands of women had killed themselves before they could be forced to yield their honour and chastity. (Bedi 71)

Lajwanti was not only silenced but also had to appropriate an identity completely different from what she was familiar with. She was rehabilitated but not accepted. Her identity was structured around the domestic space with Sunder Lal's beatings and his endearing call of 'Lajo' which gave stability to her existence. Her psyche becomes fragmented by this loss of a sense of belonging so much so that she seems to represent the divided country and become symbolic of a divided India. She becomes a disembodied presence because her body :"… since the Partition, become the body of a goddess. It no longer belonged to her" (Bedi 78). Her husband made her feel fragile like a glass which would shatter at the slightest touch. In his introduction to *Partition Stories*, Alok Bhalla writes: "Lajwanti longs to cease lamenting for the past, to be accepted as a victim of historical

INTERPLAY OF HISTORY AND LITERATURE IN SALMAN RUSDHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* AND AMITAV GHOSH'S *SHADOW LINES.*

Dr. Kamayani Kumar

The year 1947 entailed a major cartographic realignment – the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. Partition altered the social, cultural and political dynamics of South Asia, dislocated millions, and caused intensive trauma. Historiographical as well as literary discourses have attempted to narrate the experience of Partition; however both forms of discourses are rife with shortcomings. Although each tries to document the same event, the accounts not only leave a lot unsaid and are strikingly disparate. Dominant historiography was content with highlighting the event of Independence, while all the time it ignored the violence that accompanied Partition, treating it either as a limit case, or an aberration. The dark stories of terror and violence that accompanied Partition were "reinterpreted as either necessary steps towards liberation or incidents of no consequence to the unfolding of the main plot (Rushdie 188). Thus, in documenting the "systemized truth" of Partition, history ended up marginalizing the lived reality of survivors (Bande 89).Pointing out the limitations of historical accounts, Mushirul Hasan says, "…the historians history of Partition is not a history of the lives and experiences of the people who lived through that time, of the way in which the events of the 1940s were constructed in their minds, of the identities and uncertainties that Partition created or reinforced"(Hasan 41). Literature, on the other hand focused on the trauma that Partition engendered. However, even this version was far from complete, for silence became the dominant mode of expression. Commenting on the numbness or the silence that defined the literary tradition in context of Partition

literature, Arjun Mahey says that, "For number of years after the event, no writer of any renown on either side of the new border rescued an adequate sense of lucidity to approach the issue. Something had been permanently lost and the inadequacy of mere words was discerned… (as) an understood code of silent mourning (Mahey 138).

Besides historiography and literature, survivor testimony is yet another way of reading Partition. However, till date, it remains an unexplored and unassimilated source. These drawbacks coupled with a cultivated aphasia and lack of public memory, have resulted in leaving the narration of Partition experience full of gaps and silences. Further complicating it is the fact that the official or the historical truth of Partition stands, starkly at variance with remembered truth.

With these limitations in view, the question arises as to how the generations born after Partition have come to perceive it, understand it and come to terms with it. This paper uses Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" (Hirsch 692) as a conceptual tool to examine how Salman Rushdie's *Midnights Children* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* use the interplay of memory and historical fact to reveal the impossibility of laying claim to a singular and absolute truth about Partition of Indian Subcontinent. The two texts examine how the 1.5 generation (Suleiman 284) and the hinge-generation experience the Partition of the Indian subcontinent? The above mentioned terms have been borrowed from Holocaust Studies. The two events- Partition and Holocaust are extremely different. Holocaust was a state - sponsored annihilation of the Jews while the state intervention in Partition was marked by state inactivity. However, in each instance there was a major cultural trauma and countertransference of that trauma. Hence Holocaust studies can be used as a very suitable paradigm to gain insight into Partition studies.

(Bedi 75). The argument led to both parties threatening to take back their "goods." Jill Didur notes that *Lajwanti* is a particularly interesting partition narrative in that it is one of the earliest literary accounts to focus on the social stigma facing abducted women , who returned to their families and community through the activities of the Recovery Operation. She observes: "By addressing a socially taboo subject from a hybrid cultural perspective at a time when identities were being reified along national and communal lines, Bedi's story represents a truly unique reflection of the Partition" (59).

Sunder Lal's concept of ideal *ramrajya* consisted of Rama accepting the abducted Sita and taking her back to the palace as his queen. He identifies himself as Rama as he proceeded home with Lajo by his side. The people of Mulla Shakoor welcomed them with lighted lamps and loud slogans. On reaching home Lajwanti yearned to pour out her heart's sorrow to her husband and "by her tears wash away her sins" (Bedi 74). But he only asked her the name of the man she was with and whether he was good to her. Lajwanti now faces a second exile when her husband calls her "Devi," and worships her: "The queen of his heart was back home; his once silent temple now resounded with laughter; he had installed a living idol in his innermost sanctum and sat outside the gate like a sentry" (Bedi 77). It is evident that Sunder Lal is unsure of himself even as he goes to the police station to receive her. When he set his eyes on her, he is upset to see that she had wrapped her duppatta around her head in the way a Muslim does. He fails to notice that, "she was scared and shook like a peepul leaf in the wind" (Bedi 76). Instead, he is disturbed that, "she looked healthier than before; her complexion was clearer and she had put on weight. He had sworn to say nothing to his wife but he could not understand why, if she was happy, had she come away! Had the government compelled her to come against her will?" (Bedi 76). Most of the men who had come to the police station refused to take back their women saying, "we will not take

endearingly as "Lajo" and remembered her slender figure and mercurial grace as she ran about the lanes in her village. He was aware that he had behaved badly towards her. He got irritated with everything she did and thrashed her at every pretext he could find. But she took everything in her stride, enduring the beatings since "all men beat their wives"(Bedi 69). But he made up his mind that if he ever got another chance, he would rehabilitate her in his heart and set an example to the people of Mulla Shakoor. He became more involved in the campaign for rehabilitation of abducted women so that they were given due respect as wife, mother, daughter and sister in their homes.

The governments of India and Pakistan arranged for the exchange of abducted women between the two countries, thus bringing a truck load of Hindu women from Pakistan to be exchanged with Muslim women abducted by Indians. Lajwanti was one among them. Among those who opposed rehabilitation of women was Narain Bawa. He offers examples from mythology. He cites the story of Ram rejecting Sita when she was abducted by Ravana. He stressed on the high standards of morality and the sense of equality in the kingdom of Rama where even the remark of a poor washerman was given consideration. He preached that this was true *Ramrajya*, the kingdom of God. Sunder Lal pointed out to him the injustice of accepting the word of a washerman and refusing to accept the word of so great a *maharani* as Sita. Lajwanti faced extreme humiliation at the border at Wagah, where the abducted Hindu and Muslim women were exchanged. There is an argument at the border when some men remark that the women they were handing over were old or middle aged and "of little use" (Bedi 75). There is a heated argument with large crowds gathering to witness the hassle. One of the men made Lajwanti stand up on the truck. He snatched away her dupatta, shouting and asking the men gathered there whether she was an old woman. "Take a good look at her …is there one amongst those you have given us who could measure up to her mark?"

Although the post- partition generations do not have any experiential recollection of the division, they continue to experience its aftermath through vicarious traumatization (Herman 140). They experience it through cultural memory, official records, literature, t films, memories of grandparents, riots that mimic partition violence. Primarily, they experience it through "parents, relatives', or community's psychic conflicts, traumata... " (Hirsch 694). For instance, in *The Shadow Lines* it is through Thamma's reminiscisings about her childhood in Dhaka, about the upside-down house, its division, and how she could never return after the borders were drawn, that the narrator "dominated by narratives that preceded (his) birth (Hirsch 22) learns about the Partition. Transmission of trauma through such means constitutes Postmemory – Hirsch defines postmemory as:

> ... distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection: it is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated, not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation... Postmemory characterises the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (Hirsch 14)

For generations born after 1947 Partition has emerged as an enigma – it is history yet contemporary, because of the continuing hostilities engendered by the arbitrary division. For them, the truth about Partition is shaped by stories of the previous generation and historical accounts, which differ in almost all aspects. Such discrepancies inevitably communicate a

discordant truth. As Suketu Mehta points out, any telling of Partition is beset with contradictions:

> But there are two competing forces in the telling: the grandparents and the governments. The governments have their own ideas of the story, and they have the power of the state to spread their version, through textbooks. School textbooks on both sides…gloss quickly over Partition, preferring to concentrate on the struggle for independence... When Partition is dealt with at all, it is portrayed as a massacre of our people by their people… So the child growing up in Lahore or Delhi or Dhaka shuttles between two tellings: what he is instructed at school, which he will have to learn by rote and regurgitate in the examinations, and what his old grandmother tells him in the last room of the house about the days of the junoon.(Suketu)

Such differences in the two tellings… arise from the contradictions between history's truth and memory's truth. A close exegesis of the chosen texts unveils the gaps and silences which punctuate the historical truth of Partition and cause it to be at variance with memory's truth. This difference is enhanced by the disagreement between the multiple plurality of each individuals memory's truth for, as Saleem Sinai, the unreliable narrator in *Midnights Children* points out, each individual trusts his version more than someone else's, "Memorys truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone elses version more than his own" (Rushdie 211).

It is through the errors in Saleem Sinai's account and the chance discovery by the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* of the link between Tridib's

portray the political anxiety and social insecurity shared by the people during the days of Partition. Women suffered violence in the form of abduction, rape, forced marriage and honour killings. The male members of both communities took revenge by committing excess on the womenfolk of the opposite community. Jill Didur, in *Unsettling Partition,* explains how:

> A gendered understanding of the Partition necessitates a shift in the scholar's attention from the public to the private, from the high political story to the local, everyday account. To be more specific, reading and writing about literature representing women's lives involves straddling both these spheres, making visible the binary construction of the public and private implicated in nationalist discourse, patriarchal power relations, and the way in which women's bodies were singled out as privileged sites of violence at the time of Partition. (7)

Both *Lajwanti* and *Pali* try to recover the marginal voices and memories, forgotten dreams and signs of resistance, which lie submerged in the celebratory account of nationalist narrative.

In Rajinder Singh Bedi's *Lajwanti*, Sunder Lal is the secretary of the "Rehabilitation of Hearts Committee" started by the residents of Mulla Shakoor, with the aim of upholding the dignity of women who were stigmatized by abduction during Partition. He was a devoted crusader who worked zealously. Among the women abducted and lost during the riots was Sunder Lal's wife, Lajwanti. The committee took out a procession through the streets in the early hours of the morning singing an old Punjabi folk song: "the leaves of lajwanti wither with the touch of human hands" (24). The song filled Sunder Lal with sorrow, and he thought of the touch-me-not plant and the fragility of human heart. He likens it to the plant, *lajwanti ,* whose leaves curl up at the touch of a finger. He called his wife

DIVIDED HOMELAND, FRAGMENTED PSYCHE: RAJINDER SINGH BEDI'S *LAJWANTI* AND BHISHAM SAHNI'S *PALI* AS NARRATIVES OF LOSS

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The history of Indian independence celebrates nationalism and nationalistic movements and the glorious moment when power was transferred from the British Raj to Indians after 350 years of colonial rule. Unfortunately, this was also accompanied by the partition of India into two independent nations, India and Pakistan, leading to the evacuation of the Hindus from Pakistan and the Muslims from India. The refugees crossed the border leaving behind their ancestral homes, material possessions and even family members who had opted to stay back. The mass exodus, where ten million people were in flight is the largest forced migration of population in human history. The struggles of these people to gain new identities have not found expression in the mainstream narrative of Indian history. The voice of the subaltern has been silenced which necessitates a revision of elitist and nationalist historiography.

Partition scholars Jill Didur and Nandi Bhatia point out how literature has the power to upturn historical narratives which otherwise silences alternative narratives. Literary representations of the "everyday" experience of Partition include Rajinder Singh Bedi's *Lajwanti* (1951), Attia Hossain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Jyotirmoyee Devi's *The River Churning* (1966), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1988) and collections of partition stories like *Orphans in the Storm*. These works describe the grim and harrowing tales of partition days, when the lofty ideal of nationalism was suddenly bartered for communalism, which resulted in unprecedented devastation, political absurdities and deranged social sensibilities. They

death and the riots he had witnessed as a child that Rushdie and Ghosh elicit the incongruence between historical truth and memory's truth. While Rushdie deliberately calls attention to Saleem's error -ridden narration, Ghosh uses the narrator's failure to find any report in newspapers about riots in Calcutta to show how history and memory is subject to reconstruction. Both texts play with the notion of memory and history. Saleem in *Midnights Children* is a self professed unreliable narrator, whose fallible memory leads him to commit grave errors as he relates his(story) which is also the nation's history since independence. While Saleem justifies these errors as being his memory's truth which thus may be at variance with the official record of events, the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* questions the monologic truth status of public chronicles by highlighting the tension between public memory shaped by the received version of history and private memory.

In *Midnight's Children* what is even more incredible is the nature of the errors - they are too obvious, and often it is Saleem himself who draws the reader's attention to it while at the same time claiming that lying does not come easily to him. He claims that what he has put down is absolutely true and that his incredibly fantastic, fabulistic account is "the literal, by- the-hairs-of-my mother's head truth. (Rushdie 211). The question then is that what this ambiguity in the narration serves? This paradoxical self reflexive narration which claims to be a mirror to the nation's growth from its genesis until the imposition of Emergency is an attempt at a critique of the notion of history as impersonal and objective. Saleem's account abounds in errors which are not intentional yet so because "…he is writing down events in the manner in which he remembers them…" (Rushdie 211).As Rushdie himself comments, the mistakes were, for a large part, deliberately introduced, because he wanted to write something that did not have journalistic truth but rather something that had a kind of remembered

truth. To quote Jung Su, "Rushdie makes Saleem's unreliable, fragmentary narration a counter narrative that contests the linear national narrative and "den[ies] the official, politicians version of the truth" (*Homelands* 14), thereby destabilizing the authority of the national narrative." In fact, as Rushdie comments in *Imaginary Homelands*, "I went to some trouble to get things wrong….had the taint of inaccuracy introduced (23). Rushdie does this deliberately, to communicate the fallible nature of memory for as he further states the "simplest truth about any set of memories is that many of them will be false" (23). Rushdie asserts that "History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of giving many meanings…The reading of Saleem's unreliable narration might be, I believed, a useful analogy for the way in which we all, every day, attempt to read the world (25). Thus Saleem's narration often leans towards exaggeration, and its erroneous nature serves to emphasize on the "pickled nature" of official historical records as well as the fallibility of memory.

A memory novel, *The Shadow Lines* also explores the authenticity of the received version and of official records, as Meenakshi Mukherjee states,

> The public chronicles of nations are interrogated in this novel by highlighting on the one hand the reality of the fictions people create around their lives (stories are all there are to live in, it was just a question of which one you chose) and on the other hand by recording the verifiable and graphic details of individual memories that do not necessarily tally with the received version of history. (255)

While the narrators friends recall the Indo-China war of 1962 as the most prominent event of their childhood, for the narrator the riots, in Calcutta in

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1964 is a far more tenuous memory. Fifteen years after the riots the narrator is challenged to prove that they did happen in Calcutta. He seeks to substantiate his claim, by verifying it through newspaper accounts. But, instead of carrying details of Calcutta riots, the newspaper carries reports of a riot which occurred across the border in Khulna, Bangladesh. The truth that the same riot had claimed Tridib's life, dawns upon the narrator years later. This is so because he had unquestioningly accepted what his father had told him that Tridib's accident. Apart from being told a deliberate lie, the narrator is taken to the Kali temple and sworn to silence. He had to promise that he will never mention Tridib's death in future. This faslehood highlights the state's agency in manipulating the truth about Tridib's death. The indirect manner in which the narrator discovers that the riots in Calcutta and Khulna were seismic offshoots of the same incident in Srinagar and the cause of Tridib's death is deliberately used by Ghosh to bring into focus the contestation between historical truth and memory's truth and the narrators struggle to distinguish his version of the remembered truth from history truth. Using paratexts (symbolic of official truth) the narrator tries to validate his memory of the riots that he had witnessed as a child. However, instead of relevant news about the riots, the narrator finds that trivia about politics claims most of the space in the newspapers. This shows, as Hind Wassef says "… the separation that exists between official history and the more personal history the narrator is engaged in writing (Wassef 78). For the narrator this "seamless silence" leads to a lack of words and he is unable to give an account of Tridib's death. He says he "…can only describe second hand the manner of Tridib's death: I do not have the words to give it meaning. I do not have the words…"(Ghosh 122). Arguably, the madness that attended Partition too defied a "telling" and got incorporated into the "seamless silence". The text reveals the gap that exists between history and collective memory and how the "victims tale" (Peter 186) gets

suppressed and eventually lost in the grand narrative of historiography. In this elitist and nationalist narrative, elicited from several "versions of what happened, only one version gets an official status, becomes a part of the state's archive. That version is often plotted along the lines of a master narrative "(Peter 189). In such a scenario the victim's tale and the survivor's memory can only exist as what Nora terms as "Lieux de Memoire" (Nora 7). As the text illustrates Tridib's death is never mentioned by Thamma. The narrator is lied to about the cause of Tridib's death, it is at best unwillingly discussed by May and Robi. The narrator can only discover or rather reconstruct the truth about Tridib's death through the "fragmented, archival remains that are allowed to stay within the historical narrative" (Peter 7).

As Meenakshi Mukherjee says

> In the final section of the novel the narrator's desperate search in the archives to recover lost events has to be seen also as another example of insisting upon one's own story, a resistance to being swallowed up by narratives made up by others. The riots of 1964 which are indelibly engraved in his memory had, by 1979 vanished without a trace in the histories and bookshelves. They had dropped out of memory into a crater of a volcano of silence. The narrator needs to dismantle the public chronicle of the nation because it threatens to erase his private story. (257)

Thus these two texts reveal the anomalies that attend any official record of Partition. The existing discourses on Partition have subsumed the multiple voices in the public chronicle. Lack of women's perspectives on what they suffered, the complete absence of childrens voices, the absence of accounts speaking of the trauma of the minority community that chose to stay back highlight the gaps and silences that mark the official records on Partition. To conclude, in the words of Ashis Nandy,

> …millions of people still live outside "history." They *do* have theories of the past; they *do* believe that the past is important and shapes the present and the future, but they also recognize, confront, and live with a past different from that constructed by historians and historical consciousness. They even have a different way of arriving at that past. (29)

As long as this difference continues to dictate the reconstruction of history of Partition, and the past continues to be "profoundly distorted or denied, or fixed in time. Covered over or twisted around either way, the wound itself …" (Greenberg 89) will refuse to heal. The resolution lies in lifting societal repression and restoring memory. This can be achieved through public acts of commemoration and cultural representation. Commemoration helps by lending collective trauma an "objective reality" by insulating the event from the unconscious distortions of memoir. As Jeffery Alexander says, "Monument, museums and memorials are attempt (to create) a materiality with a political, collective, public meaning (and) a physical reminder of a conflictive political past." This in turn generates "some collective means for undoing repression and allowing the pent up emotions of loss and mourning to be expressed" (Alexander 31).

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