CREATING SPACE FOR THE 'OTHERS': BENGAL PARTITION IN LITERATURE

A thesis submitted towards partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

M.Phil. in English
Course affiliated to Faculty Arts
Jadavpur University

Submitted by

PALI SARKAR
EXAMINATION ROLL NO. MPEN194019
REGISTRATION N0. 142385 of 2018

Under the guidance of

DR. SONIA SAHOO
Professor
Department of English,
Jadavpur University

Department of English
Jadavpur University
Kolkata-700032
India
2019

CERTIFICATE

This is to Certify that the dissertation entitled, "**Creating Space for the 'Others': Bengal Partition in Literature**" submitted by me towards the partial fulfilment of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (Arts) in English** of Jadavpur University, Kolkata is based upon my own original work carried out under the supervision of **Dr. Sonia Sahoo**, Professor, Department of English and there is no plagiarism. This is also to certify that the work has not been submitted by me in part or in whole for the award of any other degree/diploma of the same Institution where the work is being carried out, or to any other Institution. A paper out of this dissertation has also been presented by me at a seminar/conference at the Department of English, Jadavpur University, thereby fulfilling the criteria for submission, as per the M.Phil. Regulation (2017) of Jadavpur University.

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Date: Pali Sarkar

Roll number -MPEN194019

Registration number-142385 of 2017-18

On the basis of academic merit and satisfying all the criteria as declared above, the dissertation work of **Pali Sarkar** entitled "**Creating Space for the 'Others': Bengal Partition in Literature**" is now ready for submission towards the partial fulfillment of the Degree of **Master of Philosophy (Arts) in English** of Jadavpur University.

Head Department of	Supervisor & Convener of RAC	Member of RAC

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would, first of all, like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Sonia Sahoo, for her infinite support and for having faith in me, right from the time when this dissertation was vague, and I was not sure of its future. In fact, her suggestions helped me think deeper on each of my ideas in selecting the subject and thanks to her for painstakingly correcting my drafts countless times, it has taken its desired shape today as it would have been impossible for me to complete the dissertation in a proper way.

I express my sense of gratitude to Dr. Dripta Piplai, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities in IIT Kharagpur who gave me useful suggestions as well as information about the source materials for the research.

I would especially like to thank Dr. Anurima Chanda, Dr. Bornini Lahiri, Dr. Arup Majumder and Dr. Bidisha Bhattacharya for encouraging me throughout this experience.

My sincere thanks also go to my brothers Sujoy Sarkar, Rajesh Mandal, Tamal Sarkar and dearest friend Dr. Sanjiban Mandal for their help support and attention.

I am most grateful to my parents whose firm determination and continuous encouragement helped to complete my dissertation.

I am deeply indebted to the librarians of Central and Departmental library of our university for their kind co-operation and good behavior.

Date: 15th May, 2019
Place: Jadavpur University,
Kolkata

PALI SARKAR
(Roll No.- MPEN194019)

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Introduction

It is not any secret that Bengal Partition Literature has played a significant role in scholarship with its enormously rich components of memories related to migration, holocaust and violation. The Partition left a considerable impact all over South Asia and its repercussion are still to be felt in its politics and societal attitudes. The Partition is considered to be a meta-narrative because the anguish is mediated not just through the body but also through the mind and soul that describes the birth of the newly independent nations of India, Pakistan (1947) and Bangladesh (1971). India's independence in August 1947 and the creation of Bangladesh cannot be conceived in its full sense without mentioning the two main epicenters Punjab and Bengal. However, in Bengal there are dual histories of Partition: i) 1905 and ii) 1947 and both carried questions of identity mediated especially through literature[1].

Partition as an event of dreadful consequences deeply affected the lives and minds of hundreds and thousands of people who came directly and indirectly under its shadow. Millions were rendered homeless. Its pain was inflected through the trope of literature maybe because the reality was so harsh. We have a vast literary canon of Partition Literature about the division of Punjab, but we can hardly count the texts written on the Partition of Bengal.

With time the Bengal Partition discourse has evolved through various stages, each having a different area of focus. History tells us that when the British left undivided India they separated it into two new countries India and Pakistan on the basis of the two-nation theory. This division caused massive religious identity-based mass exodus in different parts of the sub-continent. This decision gripped the subcontinent with communal tension and riots immediately

after the creation of these two new states. Communal violence led to killings of thousands of people and millions were displaced in search of a new home away from home. Partition made their homeland hostile as they moved to the other side of the border in search of peace and security. The Partition was traumatic, and people were compelled to leave their homeland to sustain themselves bearing physical violence, humiliation and sexual assaults in an unknown land.

[1]In 1947 Bengal was divided into East and West Bengal. West Bengal remained a part of India even as East Bengal got incorporated into Pakistan as a Muslim majority land. Finally, in 1971 after years of fighting to make Bengali the national language, East Bengal eventually emerged as an independent country.

After the Partition in 1947 and the Liberation War, the Indian sub-continent has witnessed many political changes and mass migration. The creation of a new country was greeted with joy but nonetheless Bengalis all over the world and in India, Bangladesh and elsewhere carried a sense of loss because Partition does not only mean an added line to draw on the map, it also symbolizes a person's alienation from his family, society, culture and most importantly from himself. Therefore, the question whether people can be defined by borders, languages and religions due to dual migration histories in Eastern India no longer remains an unanswered question today. But what is important is that this leads to the issue of critical identity formation for the Bengalis with the creation of Bangladesh after the War of Liberation in 1971 that led to the greatest population displacements in the history of the world. The consequence of migration was the massive exodus of Hindus from East Pakistan but nonetheless a smaller yet significant migration of Muslims from West Bengal to East Pakistan also took place.

However, the reason behind the mutual migration between the two countries from East Pakistan to West Bengal and vice-versa was because of the closeness of the two communities and their shared language. The intimacy of 'epar' Bangla 'opar' Bangla always made them a common linguistic and cultural unit. The relationship between the two religious communities however, started to change in the aftermath of the declaration of Partition when the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement resulted in a rift between the Hindu zamindars and Muslim peasants in 1905, especially in East Bengal. Later, in 1947 during the second Partition this relationship between the Hindus and Muslims further deepened the division between the two countries[2].

This momentous event of the Partition has however different meanings to different people. Scholars have even considered that the Partition happened differently in Punjab and Bengal. Western Partition focuses on the violent frenetic massacre and sudden and urgent migration in the state Punjab in contrast to the eastern side migration which was more episodic starting from the time of the Calcutta and Noakhali riots in 1946 dealt with issues of identity crisis and settlement rather than frenzied massacres. However, it is also for this reason that Punjab has drawn more research interest due to its acute experience of violence and trauma that have become characteristic emblems of the Partition (Mahbub and Anika Saba, 110).

[2]Sengupta, Debjani. *Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals*. Amaryllis, 2011.

Partition was a human tragedy of epic proportions and moreover these momentous events had different meanings for different people as categorization can be done according to various criteria such as the time of arrival, causes of dislocation, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, language or the course of post-arrival life. Therefore, history alone is insufficient to understand this event's complexity and consequences and artists have recorded history and represented it in literature. Thus, whereas, the earlier writings focused on the question why and how the Partition happened, recent studies focus on the underlining meaning of the event for the people who were affected by it.

Ashis Nandi further emphasizes why we must assess the Partition in the context of South Asian history with critical insight[3]. He notes the multiplicity of voices and the silences which coexist in the Partition discourse and writes in his foreward to the book *Mapmaking* by Debjani Sengupta:

'The Great Partition riot were one instance when our society, culture and the very basis of civilized life tottered. Though they had included elements of organization and planning, the riot did reach the interstices of our society. That is why to look at them is to explore the derecognized, contraband selves we live with and to re-examine one's cherished ideological and ethical moorings' (Sengupta, XVIII).

However, for a little over a decade now that the Partition discourse has been evolving there have been some effort to rewrite the history of the Partition which is often opposed to state-centric or conventional historiography. Therefore, researchers have also emphasized that there is much difference between conventional history and 'new' histories. On one hand conventional historiography narrates the history of the transition of the colonial rule and the partition of the country and on the other hand, 'new' histories show how the dominant or popular memory of 1947 fails to keep communities and the country together in the process of nation-formation. Unlike Nationalist history or state history, 'new' histories focus on the backward strata of society such as the lower classes and marginalized groups that remain disregarded topics.

In the period between 1946 and 1971 the Indian subcontinent went through a series of divisions and as a result million were displaced from East Bengal to West Bengal and

[3]Sengupta, Debjani. *Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals*. Amaryllis, 2011.

particularly to Calcutta. In the years following the Partition people continued to migrate even after six decades of Independence. Thus, after much deliberation the West Bengal Government agreed to divide the migrants into categories. The exodus of people who came to India in 1947 took place in different directions[4]. Few crossed into the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys due to its proximity to East Bengal; another wave of people went to Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur. The displaced Bengalis who came to India tried to settle in the border districts to because the geographical features were similar. From the starting of the Noakhali riots in 1946 and the communal upheaval of 1950 in Barisal, there resulted a long stream of refugees. By the first decade of the Partition almost 1.25 million people had crossed over to West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and other states in the North East and eventually in the 25 years after Independence the number had reached five million (Sengupta 185).

Sealdah station was the first public space in Calcutta where the early wave of refugees arrived from East Bengal towards an uncertain future. The huge number of refugees crowded the city pavements and the railway platforms and created unprecedented social, economic and cultural problems in the state. The relatively well-off people could reconstruct their lives with comparatively less struggle in the new land, but the middle classes and lower classes had to spend years in the refugee camps and many of them could not even return to their original occupations and therefore felt alienated and suffered irreparable damage even after partial rehabilitation.

Archit Basu Guha-Chaudhury further writes that between 1946 and 1971 the Indian subcontinent went through a series of divisions and as a result million were displaced from East Bengal to West Bengal and particularly to Calcutta. Migration between October 1946 and March 1958 was termed as 'old migration' and migrants who came between April 1958 and December 1963 were termed as 'in-between migrants'. The increasing number of migrants who infiltrated the state after 1963 until the late 1970s were called 'new migrants'[5]. The exodus of people who came to India in 1947 took place in different directions and refugees were left only with memories of their past or 'desh' and the unbearable agony of losing friends and relatives during communal tension and riots. The writers of the selected primary texts in this research show how

[4]Guha-Chaudhury, Archit Basu. "Engendered Freedom: Partition and East Bengali Migrant Women." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 44, no. 49, 2009, pp. 66–69.
[5]Ibid.

the Partition functions as a metanarrative portraying incidents of physical, sexual as well as psychological violence and mourn the condition that people had experienced.

Likewise Anasua Basu Raychaudhury, a well-known critic on the Partition discourse in her article 'Nostalgia of "Desh", Memories of Partition' writes that each individual refugee story is a tale of individual loss, of escape and survival in a new land; a narrative rendered especially poignant by the sudden whiff of nostalgia for a lost homeland or 'desh'. Thus, memories play a unique role in Partition Literature and Dipesh Chakrabarty argues in the essay "Remembered Villages: Representation of Hindu Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition", that memory is far more complicated than what the historian can actually recover and therefore it can throw challenges to the investigator-historian who approaches the past from one single perspective[6]. Likewise, Semanti Ghosh in her e-paper article "Silence: a deliberate choice?" discusses how the trope that is used by refugees in Bengal Partition Literature to suppress the nostalgia of the homeland also becomes a deliberate choice for the refugees[7].

The issue of the 'refugee' problem and how Partition impacted differently on different people remains an overlooked area. However, while talking about the Partition Literature of Bengal which focuses on many of the issues that grew out of the Partition the writers tried to create an alternative history of the Partition through novels, short stories, poems, memoirs and non-fictional prose writing with the intention of bringing out the feeling that Partition affected people mentally and they in turn suppressed it with the trope of silence, a denial of what had happened.

From 1947 to 1964 data estimates suggest that almost 1.5 million Muslims migrated from West Bengal to East Pakistan but nonetheless not much has been said about them. The Partition in the eastern part of the subcontinent has been a neglected area of study, especially its literature, although some works have drawn our attention to the region. In recent times, a few studies such as those by Joya Chatterjee have tried to focus on the Bengal Partition but even though the attention was on Bengal, most of such works concentrated only on Hindu migration from East to West Bengal and never the other way around.[8] In this context, Mahbubar Rahman

[6]Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Remembered Villages: Representation of Hindu-Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 31, no. 32, 1996, pp. 2143–2151.
[7]Ghosh, Semanti *Silence: a Deliberate Choice?*, www.india seminar.com/2013/645/645_semanti_ghosh.htm.
[8]*The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India 1947-1967* by Joya Chatterji has expertly acknowledged and assessed the social, economic and political consequences of the Partition of Bengal. It shows how and why the borders were redrawn, how the creation of new nation states led to unprecedented upheavals, massive shifts in population and

and Willem Van Schendel in the essay "'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration" notes that there has been very little said about Muslim migration to East Bengal than Hindu migration to West Bengal and the reason behind the absence of writings on the substantial reverse flow of refugees to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh is far from easy to answer but factors such as the tradition of literacy and higher education of the group of early refugees to India, Pakistan's focus on refugees to West Pakistan and a disinterest in the refugee problem in post-1971 Bangladesh definitely played a role in it[9].

Sarbani Banerjee in her book *More or Less Refugee?: Bengal Partition in Literature and Cinema* expands the knowledge of Bengali refugee identity in India beyond the fixed *bhadralok* immigrant stereotypes, towards a more egalitarian and complex understanding of the Partition[10]. Banerjee argues that the main opponents of the sentimentalist dimension of "The Refugee Experience" are the elite Hindu male refugees and this had obscured the possibility of counternarratives that are, for instance, recounted from the position of the unconventional refugee woman or Dalit refugee male (Banerjee 1). Banerjee finely writes why 'the non-*bhadralok*'s gender, class and caste experiences need to be documented in considering a multi-dimensional view of Partition' (Banerjee 3). She further uses Bidyut Chakrabarty[11]'s comments to 'elucidate(s) that it is not enough to know the popular upper and middle-class narratives on Partition because many of these stories are situated against the background of the high politics of Partition' (Banerjee 2).

Moreover, Asish Nandi has also discussed in his foreword to Debjani Sengupta's *Mapmaking* on why there is a need to re-examine the Partition stories from the two Bengals from a fresh perspective[12]. Therefore, my research will aim to look at the human aspect of this event which has been largely an overlooked area and through the selected primary texts I will argue how the writers by recording unheard marginalized histories have created a counternarrative to challenge conventional history.

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wholly unexpected transformations in the political landscape of the subcontinent but primarily focuses on the Partition of Bengal.

[9]Rahman, Mahbubar, and Willem Van Schendel. "'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2003, pp. 551–584.

[10]Banerjee, Sarbani, and Techno India University. "Beyond Sentimentality: 'Tale' of an Alternate *Bhadramahila* Refugee." *Postcolonial Text*, 2018. www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/2214/2186.

[11]Chakrabarty, Bidyut. *Indian Politics and Society since Independence: Events, Processes and Ideology*. Routledge, 2008.

[12] Sengupta, Debjani. Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals. Amaryllis, 2011.

Furthermore, historians have also failed to tell us how women must have felt while being abducted by men of the other community and therefore it is not only communalism or hatred towards each other but rather the feeling of obscurity that made most of the common people choose either India or Pakistan. Historical accounts do not reflect the identity crisis that innocent people faced at the time of the Partition during which identity was in a flux and could be easily changed. Therefore, this research would focus on the silent suffering of the marginalized which has strangely remained unspoken.

Archit Basu Guha-Choudhury in his article "Engendered Freedom: Partition and East Bengali Migrant women" mentions how the feminist history of the Bengal Partition could be stretched as the impact of Partition on Bengali migrant women was complex yet positive[13]. The economic adversity on the women during the period was significant but they proved that they could stand in the public sphere in times of necessity. In this case Jyotirmoyee Devi's sexually assaulted female protagonist Sutara in *The River Churning* could be an apt example of such a woman who became more than just a mere conquest of men in a 'man-made' Partition. But unfortunately, women still remain the marginalized section of society even as they chart their own path to freedom.

Jasodhara Bagchi in her e-article "Freedom in an idiom of loss" writes that the resistance that grew out of the Swadeshi or anti-colonial movement in the first phase of the Bengal Partition in 1905 attempted by Lord Curzon represented Bengal or India in a feminine form[14]. She was considered as both the avenging and the affectionate reassuring mother. Bagchi also assesses the event from a feminist perspective and supports how the woman's body became a pawn in the game of nation building.

Therefore, this present research would concentrate on the 'new' histories that are based on post-modern or post-structuralist theory, breaking free from earlier histories and binaries of conventional historical thinking and will be more concerned with the Partition as a subjective, experimental and memory-based event. Thus, the narrative will bring forth the trauma that women, children and lower classes suffered during the Partition.

[13]Basu Guha- Chaudhury, Archit. "Engendered Freedom: Partition and East Bengali Migrant Women." Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 44, no. 49, 2009, pp. 66–69.
[14]Bagchi, Jasodhara. Freedom in an Idiom of Los, www.india-seminar.com/2002/510/510 jasodhara bagchi.htm.

Various studies have also given much importance to the role of memory, displacement, and the identity question which are common themes in the Bengal Partition discourse. The impact of the Partition is however best felt in the short stories and memoirs in Bengali literature. Both memoirs and short stories profoundly capture the essence of the event. Thus, now the emphasis is upon the theme of the refugees and their survival stories. However, in my opinion we should not lose out on the bigger picture, especially the study of the mutual migration that followed the Noakhali riots till the period of the Bangladesh Liberation War, the experiences of the marginalized including women, Muslims, lower classes and lower castes during the migration represented by the writers from the two Bengals are a much needed perspective. There is a need to concentrate on the spectrum of social memory of the minorities, subaltern groups or otherwise marginalized individuals who may not able to share their stories.

Literature always represents local life and society and therefore is invested with motifs, genres, metaphors, symbols, plots to deal with the cultural boundaries of the characters. Partition Literature uniquely reconstructs the Partition by giving importance to these various themes represented through literary, auto-biographical, oral, historical and fragmented material for a better understanding of the event. For years after the Partition, the politicians and historians have produced hundreds of volumes on this discourse but none on the long-term consequences of the violence. These memoirs therefore are an effective means of delving into the past life of the writers in the pages of biographical fictions. It is because of this reason that I interpret the selected narrative *Dayamoyeer Kotha* which will read the Partition as underscoring the futility of our lived experience.

I will be looking at these texts with the aim of opening up spaces for the marginalized histories which is yet to be noticed by scholars. My work focuses on the selected memoirs which have recorded the unheard stories of the marginalized people to help enhance the history of the Partition in myriad yet ambivalent ways. By bringing in issues such as nationality, women's subjectivity, migration, emotional bonding, motherhood as well as hatred based on religion, class and caste it hopes to reach a more nuanced understanding of the Partition and generate new modes of thinking about that event.

By analyzing primary texts this research will seek to address the question of how new shifts have been taking place in the Bengal Partition discourse and the difference between the common and mainstream narrative in fiction and the collective memories of 1947 and its

aftermath. Bengal Partition Studies of the subcontinent have not received adequate attention and therefore often throws up faulty perspectives. Therefore, Ashis Nandi in his foreword to *Mapmaking* writes why there is a need to re-examine the Partition stories from the two Bengals with fresh perspective. Debjani Sengupta also mentions 'although ordinary people suffered these traumas of displacement, murder and mayhem, the dominant hegemonic structures of public memory of the Partition, issued by these states and the majoritarian Nationalistic discourses, have paid very little attention to these voices' (Sengupta, 4).

I look at available literature based on the Partition between the years 1947 and 1971 which have been published in India as well as in Bangladesh. These books have made a conscious effort at critiquing homogenization and essentialization by including marginal voices that have so far been neglected. The first chapter of the dissertation will start with a brief introduction on the history of the Partition and the evaluation of the Bengal Partition discourse as represented in history and literature. This chapter will also analyze how the earlier works have not been inclusive enough with reference to the marginalized voices including lower classes, lower castes and women from both East Pakistan and West Bengal and will try to concentrate on the research delineate the objectives that this study will emphasize on.

The second chapter will analyze and review one of the latest memoirs on Bengal Partition Literature *Dayamoyeer Kotha*[15] written by Sunanda Sikdar based on the indigenous voices of personal memory published in 2008 and translated by Achinta Ghatak as *A Life Long Ago.* This study will therefore discuss how literature on Partition is a creative way of expressing or sharing the memories of displacement and helps a writer to grapple with the past. Sohini Sen in her essay "Recollections: Role of Memory in Sunanda Sikder's *Dayamoyeer Katha*" writes that memoirs, recollections, etc., as a genre in itself is defined by a very personal tone as well as logic, and the worldview is so intensely individualistic that they almost appropriate the status of ultimate truth and the sense of nostalgia only adds to it[16]. This chapter will further expand the knowledge of Bengali refugee identity in India beyond fixed *bhadralok* immigrant stereotypes, in the interest of a more egalitarian and complex understanding and also alludes to issues related

[15]Sikdar, Sunanda. *Doyamoyeer Katha*. Gangchil, 2008.
[16]Sen, Sohini. "Recollections: Role of Memory in Sunanda Sikder's *Dayamoyeer Katha*." *Academia.edu-Share Research*,
www.academia.edu/19873168/Recollections_Role_of_Memory_in_Sunanda_Sikders_Dayamoyeer_Katha.

to identity, women's subjectivity, nationhood, migration as well as communality between Hindus and Muslims during both pre- and post-Partition period.

The third chapter will analyze selected short stories from the book *Mapmaking* edited by Debjani Sengupta and try to defend the research question of as to how stories from the two Bengals have both similar and dissimilar approaches by focusing on the identical issues faced by marginalized Muslims, lower class-castes and women after their migration.

The fourth chapter will further discuss Partition related themes and compare how these selected works are applicable to different theoretical aspects of dominant ideology of communalism which subverted other identities of the people and gave the rise of religious fundamentalism that led to an antagonistic attitude against other religious communities best represented in the short story "The Infidel" by Ateen Bandopadhyay from the collection of Partition short stories of *Mapmaking*.

This chapter will further contextualize the women context in Bengal Partition discourse and discuss how it had brought about a number of changes in the lives of women refugees. The chapter will also discuss the politics of memory, silence and nation building are thematically represented in this narratives and have challenged conventional mainstream narratives on the Partition and analyze the issue of the "other" by recording the history of the silenced, of ordinary people including those marginalized by class, caste or religion.

Finally, the concluding chapter will contextualize the study by discussing the accomplishment of the research objectives, limitations of the study and the scope for further studies.

In this research my chosen narratives from both West Bengal and Bangladesh explore fresh perspectives and adopt new approaches and have marked a significant break from an exclusive concentration on high politics and thereby question the homogeneity of nationalist discourses. These narratives rather document and recognize the importance of personal memory to demonstrate the plurality of how we remember the Partition mediated through the tropes of gender, caste and class variations within the same community. Recently, few studies have begun to pay serious attention to literary representation of the Partition and documented the experiences of the common people constructed through oral narratives. Here memory is considered to be implicated with imagination and therefore enables us to read the hidden and the silenced narratives of the Partition with a new critical sensitivity.

This present research is an attempt to explore and analyze the Partition from a very different perspective focusing on issues such as identity, gendered violence, politics, belonging and suffering of the marginalized people by destabilizing the mainstream narratives centered on the catastrophic event of the Partition. I argue that in these works of fiction silence and suppressed histories have been recorded using different voices unlike that of the dominant narratives which have narrated only the story of the powerful. The articulation of collective memory by the marginalized enables us to become aware of and attentive towards their account. These selective stories will therefore explore the history which moves beyond the stereotype of a dominant shared past.

This research primarily focuses on Bengal Partition Literature and the Bangladeshi narrative of Partition, an area that has largely been ignored by scholars in the growing area of Partition Studies. It will further expand on the topic of the constant struggles between "Bengali" and "Bangladeshi" identities which led to identity crises as represented in the short stories written by the writers from the two Bengals. It will argue how the collective memories in both Indian and Bangladeshi literature creates a counter narrative on the Partition of 1947. The aim is to not only to look at the political history but on the human aspect of this event which forms an important aspect of the selected memoirs. However, this would also explore how the experience of being a part of the Partition diaspora is much different for the first-generation immigrant as compared to the latter generation. The story "An Evening of Prayer" by Selina Hossain will effectively how 'home' has a different meaning for a member of different generation who is twice removed from his "roots". Thus, there is a stark difference as to how the post-independence diaspora relate themselves to 'home' or 'desh' differently from different generations. Also, the research will develop on the issue of what the Partition meant not for the majority but for the marginalized and forgotten.

I also argue that in these works of fiction silence and suppressed histories have been recorded through the use of different voices and unlike other writings these unique memoirs do not only document communal violence, a nostalgic past or incidents of sexual harassment and degradation of women that typically constitute the subject matter of Partition narratives but rather focuses on presenting the authenticity of the subjective experience keeping away all political ideologies of nation-making. Thus, this research will attempt a detailed analysis of the history of the Bengal Partition and its consequences and explore possibilities that lie beyond the

conventional perspectives of nostalgia or nationalism that are usually traced through literature and history.

The work will be primarily textual, proceeding through a close reading of the texts (in Bengali, English or translations into English). Moving into the texts, the study will proceed by situating the texts in their social and historical contexts and arranging them into various thematic clusters. Looking closely at the narrative style, the work will try to look at the pattern of correspondence, the cultural "embeddedness" of the text, the underlying tensions, the missing gaps within the texts, their inherent contradictions, the choice of imagery and symbols that have been used by the author.

Through these narratives the Partition has been examined from several vantage positions. The themes of community, gender, economic determination, caste identity have also been interpreted by the writers and scholars. However, the thematic frameworks inside the selected memoirs and emotionally charged short stories are very important as they try to bring forth the issues of anger and repulsion of the common people suppressed by the dominant discourses and rarely been acknowledged before. Memoirs and contemporary fiction on the Partition therefore do not only explore the representation of the event or its history but rather gives an alternative study of the pattern and characteristics of Partition event.

Chapter I

Partition and the twofold meaning of 'other': *A Life Long Ago*

It was in the 1940s that India had been partitioned and these years constitute a different set of criteria altogether. The Partition is considered to be a meta-narrative because the hurt is not in terms of the body but also the mind. This meta-narrative describes the birth of the newly independent nations of India, Pakistan (1947) and Bangladesh (1971). However, in Bengal there are dual partition histories: the first in 1905 and the second in 1947 and both were implicated in questions of identity that were mediated especially through literature.[17] The creation of a new country was greeted with joy but nonetheless, Bengalis all over the world in India, Bangladesh and elsewhere carried a sense of loss with because Partition does not only mean an added line to be drawn on the map, it also implies a person's separation from his family, society, culture and most importantly from himself. Therefore, the question whether people can be defined by borders, languages and religions due to the dual migration histories in Eastern India no longer remains unanswered today but what is important is that it leads to the issue of critical identity formation for the Bengalis. The creation of Bangladesh after the War of Liberation in 1971 led to the greatest population displacements in the history of the world. Before Partition, the daily life of people was richly interwoven together, and common customs, the common linguistic and cultural unit played a significant role in to maintain the closeness of the two religious communities. The identity of the Bengali people, whether Hindus or Muslims rested on the linguistic and cultural unit rather than on religion. But after Partition, the linguistic as well as cultural identities jostled with each other in the context of the postcolonial identity attributed by the independence of the nations.[18]

India's independence in August 1947 and the creation of Bangladesh cannot be conceived in its full sense without mentioning the two main epicentres of Punjab and Bengal. Historians have deliberated on the ultimate reason behind the Partition and have shown how the two-nation theory backed by political ideology led to internal disharmony among the two dominant religious communities thus generating the horror of nationalized subjectivity. The

[17]In 1905 when Bengal was first divided by then Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon Western Bengal, Bihar and Orissa came to be called West Bengal and Eastern Bengal included the northern part of Bengal and Assam. However, in 1947 following the Radcliffe Line, West Bengal was mainly populated by Hindu Bengalis and in of Muslim Bengalis, in East Pakistan.

[18]In this context please see Debjani Sengupta's Afterword to her book *Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals*. Amaryllis, 2011

nationalist movement prompted the use of this ideological weapon by the British to convince the masses in favour of their cause to divide the nations. That it would unleash unforeseen consequences whereby thousands of people were uprooted and forced to leave their homes for unknown destinations could never be predicted. However, historians have also argued that this migration continued even after the birth of India and Pakistan till the Liberation War in 1971 that resulted in the birth of Bangladesh and sometimes even after that. Thus, the memoirs that talk about the trauma of continuous displacements deal with living histories and therefore must be viewed from fresh perspectives to get multi-dimensional views about Partition.

In this context, Urvashi Butalia argues that we do not understand what Partition is unless we look at how people remember it[19] and thus, we see how this process helps us to analyse Partition from multiple perspectives and intermingled with people's real-life experiences. Literature on Partition is therefore a creative way to share memories or express awareness about displacement and helps a writer to grapple with the past. Sohini Sen in her essay "Recollections: Role of Memory in Sunanda Sikdar's *Dayamoyeer Katha*" writes that memoirs or recollections as a generic category is defined by a very personal tone as well as logic, and the world view is so intensely individualistic that they almost appropriate the status of the ultimate truth, with the sense of nostalgia only adding to it. Sikdar's *A Life Long Ago* translated by Anchita Ghatak is one of many such narratives that looks at the sensitive mappings of the inner terrain of the female psyche, that brings out her unspoken pains from the past (Mehra 1394).

Memories play a unique and important role in relation to migration and Sikdar's autobiography describes how her separation from her own place makes her life suffocating in the city where she has spent her last forty years. She writes 'I have lived, and been deeply in a small town in West Bengal for more than forty years now, yet I feel like an interloper here…I rushed to become part of the city and its life, so that people around me thought I was normal and comfortable' (Sikdar 43).Therefore, even if she moved away, she still carried the memories of the Partition within her. Rustic Dayamoyee still continues to live within her and she feels a sense of loss that recalls her past even after she tries hard to suppress it. In Sikdar's *A Life Long Ago* the fictional portrayal of Partition allows us not only to empathise with the suffering and trauma of leaving one's homeland but also to understand a subjective reality which is difficult to access from conventional historical accounts.

[19]Butalia, Urvashi. "Community, State and Gender: On Women's Agency during Partition." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 28, no. 17, 1993, pp. WS12–WS24.

Historiography and literature are conceived as complementary disciplines, since both go hand in hand in dealing with or reconstructing the past. Yet as Dipesh Chakrabarty argues in his essay "Remembered Villages: Representation of Hindu Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition", memory is far more complicated than what historians can recover and therefore it can throw challenges to the investigator-historian who approaches the past with one single agenda. In the memoir we see that the tragedy of the Partition that caused mass migration was not limited to Hindu and Muslim dialectics only but rather it involved other binaries such as Zamindars and landless peasants, widows and married women, the Brahmins and the Kayasthas, local Bengalis and the Bengalis located outside West Bengal.

A Life Long Ago therefore can also be read as an alternative version of history as it can be analysed with respect to its use of different voices through the novelist's emphasis on how history is merely a human construct and how literature brings light to silenced histories by portraying the polyphony of colourful characters. This beautiful autobiography first published in January 2008 narrates the story of ten-year-old Dayamoyee who was raised in a remote village named Dighpait, in Jamalpur, East Pakistan (now in modern Bangladesh) with her paternal widowed aunt who was in charge of looking after the family property there. Dayamoyee's parents lived in West Bengal due to their occupational reasons. She grew up in close affinity to and under the guardianship of the trusted family servant, a Muslim, whom she lovingly called 'Majam Dada'. She watches with bewilderment the transformation of her village Dighpait which has become part of a new country, East Pakistan and people she knows and loves prepare to leave for India. People from both sides were mutually exchanging and selling land, cattle, homes and moving to the country of their religious affiliation. Soon, Dayamoyee's aunt decides to move out for Hindustan after selling the land and property at a good price and the novel then continues to narrate Dayamoyee's struggles to make sense of the chaos around her as life carried on.

However, it is when the news of her most loving Majam Dada's death reached her much later after it happened that prompted her to put down her memories into words even though she tried her best to deny her own existence between the years 1951 to 1960. Moving to India in 1961, to join her family in Calcutta, where she had to acquire the new identity of Sunanda and leave behind the past enshrined in the name Daya, poignantly symbolizes how she denies the past in order to prevent her present self from visiting and revisiting the pains of separation and exile. Therefore, the tragedy of this inheritance that was decided a few years her birth left her being an inheritance of uprootedness, a nostalgia and angst for the homeland and a performance

of an imagined, constructed identity imposed upon het by force[20]. The otherness even works in her own identities as Sohini Sen asserts 'Overnight, as her surroundings change, she literally metamorphoses into another human being with another name and another land to call her home.'[21] She continues to suffer from a sense of being lost, of being trapped in a borrowed identity that will never be hers completely because the dispossession of the land from where she carries her earliest memories of belonging, also ironically enough dislocates the identity with which she grew up.

However, the problem of identity does not only end here but rather the contradictions are even present in relation to her choosing of mother figures as well as between homelands. Whom will she accept, her biological parents or her foster parent? Vice-versa only to satisfy the religious ego of the two religious community. Thus, the result of two nation theory metaphorically ends as the offspring of the same mother, one a harbinger of joy of independence, the other as a source of suffering with her eventual return to the parents from the windowed aunt, one who raised her and therefore being trapped under the borrowed identity, accepting the self-subjection and rejection of past. Thus, Sikdar's literary representation of a child's life suddenly torn down may not be historically authentic or politically correct by maintaining the time and space continuum continuously but the social and political vignettes seen from a mature point of view further problematised in relation to her conflicting identical ideologies of selfhood in the novel. Sikdar's autobiography therefore does not fail to question what about the feelings of the girl that are injured brutally in this process of nation making?

The society in Dighpait, Dayamoyee's native village was still a feudal one and the story revolves around her family memories.[22] The autobiography describes the pre-migration life in East Bengal even after the declaration of the Partition. Dighpait was going through a disturbing transition but one mostly untouched by any sort of communal violence. The consequence of the migration was massive the migration of Hindus from East Pakistan, but also a smaller yet significant movement of Muslims from West Bengal to East Pakistan. People were leaving for India forever quietly wiping their tears, while others claimed that they were parting for good and there was hardly any chance that they would meet each other again. People had to face eventual eviction of the Hindu families as their number was decreasing day by day. Sikdar writes, 'When

[20]Sohini Sen's essay gives a detailed analysis of Daya's conflicting identity of selfhood after she arrives in West Bengal.
[21]http://www.academia.edu/19873168/Recollections_Role_of_Memory_in_Sunanda_Sikders_Dayamoyeer_Katha
[22]India existed in the form of a conglomeration of states governed by the *subhedars* from the era of the Mughals and later during the British Empire.

Kanai and Balai, who lived in the house behind us, left. And people would be howling and weeping…All of those who were leaving needed to take the road in front of their house...standing by the road I would see such things, almost every day (Sikdar 12). Thus, the everyday eviction of the Hindu families and the arrival of the migrant refugees at their village helped others in similar positions to ease out the feelings of the pain of displacement in terms of mutually comforting dislocation and dispossession.

From 1947 to 1964 data estimates suggest that almost 1.5 million Muslims migrated from West Bengal to East Pakistan but nonetheless not much has been said about them. In recent times, a few studies have come out as when writer Joya Chatterjee tried to focus on the Partition of Bengal[23] but even though the attention was on Bengal, most of the works concentrated on Hindus migrating from East to West Bengal and never the other way around. Critics such as Mahbubar Rahman and Willem Van Schendel said that the reason behind the absence of writings on the large reverse flow of refugees to East Pakistan is far from easy but the higher literacy rates and sound educational background among the group of early refugees to India, Pakistan's focus on refugees to West Pakistan and a general disinterest in the refugee problem in post-1971 Bangladesh definitely played a role into it. Moreover, it was not until 1952 that passports and visas were introduced and as a result much cross-border travel including settler migration, completely escaped the notice of the new state and was never systematically recorded.[24]

Unlike other writings this particular novel describes the incidents of mutual migration according to religious affiliation and Sikdar effectively shows the circumstances of the refugees who were doubly discriminated and considered solely as 'others' and had to migrate forcefully because of their religious identity. Migration therefore is not only a process of cross-cultural integrations but also, a site of negotiation of differences, conflicts and contests. Sohini Sen rightly points out Robin Cohen's argument on how migration can be both deliberate as well as forced. In this case however, if migration was not certainly forced, but rendered ideologically

[23]The book *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India 1947-1967* by Joya Chatterji has acknowledged expert subject assesses the social, economic and political consequences of partition of Bengal. It shows how and why the borders were redrawn, how the creation of new nation states led to unprecedented upheavals, massive shifts in population and wholly unexpected transformations of the political landscape of the subcontinent but primarily focuses the partition of Bengal.

[24]In this context please see Mahbubar Rahman and Willem van Schendel, "'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration", 2003, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 31st Dec. 2018

compulsory, thereby increasing the tragedy of the situation.[25] In the novel after Satish Kaka and Kanai's family leave for Hindustan, Samser Chacha's and Ajgar Chacha's family come from a village on the banks of the River Torsa in West Bengal to live in Dighpait. They had mutually exchanged their homes and lands in India and East Pakistan. However, even though Samser Chacha and Ajgar Chacha were Muslims but they were regarded as *ripuchi*, a derogatory reference to refugee, to imply the low status of these Muslims in comparison to the original Muslim inhabitants of the land. These *ripuchis* had a hard life and no one ever offered any job to them and 'had not managed any sharecropping rights. Those giving out rights preferred to give them to the locals. Jahar and his brother would have an easier life if they had sharecropping rights and if they were not ripuchis' (Sikdar 57).

There was a difference between the son-of-the-soil Muslims and the outsider refugees, and the layered sense of community life was rather cleared from Sikdar's writing. She writes "I Had no idea then What refugee meant. However, I had arrived at a meaning of *ripuchi*. After all, 'ripu' was a Bengali ward for enemy. In the Ramayana, they told us that Rama and Ravana were enemies or 'ripu'. I had figured out that Samsher Chacha was Ma's enemy' (Sikdar 12). In the novel we see that it was much easier for the local people to get the sharecropping rights but being refugees Jahar Chacha and Chhaincha Chacha had not received any sharecropping rights. Thus, the tragedy of the situation leads to critical conflicting and contradictory issues in identity formation where the displaced communities are not welcomed by the nation they belong to by faith and neither can they go back to the roots of their lost identity.

Sikdar writes not only about the Hindus or Muslims but about the other minority community who also had to face displacements because of Partition. She writes in her autobiography 'The visitors were mainly women. They had flat noses and were dressed differently from us. They were sarongs which were tied tightly across their chest. Many have children tied to their backs with cloth slings. They carried spade-like large spoons. They were harmless people who spoke little and picked yams and potatoes from the forest. Everyone said that they came from the Garo hills, were very poor and had been driven to the plains by hunger' (Sikdar 61). Debjani Sengupta in writing to an Afterword to the book *Mapmaking* notes that the migration pattern in the two regions were varied and complex and ranged from communal persecution and especially economic reasons. These displaced minority people could be the

[25]http://www.academia.edu/19873168/Recollections_Role_of_Memory_in_Sunanda_Sikders_Dayamoyeer_Katha

tribal people from Chittagong Hill Tracts, from Mymensing and Rangpur who crossed into Assam and Tripura for a variety of reasons.

Likewise, Sikdar maintains the brilliance in her narrative by keeping away from any sort of gender bias, instead she depicts the strong sense of dislocation and displacement in the aftermath of the Partition resulting from migration from one land to another experienced not only by men but also women which constitutes a unique and integral part of this autobiography. Sikdar problematizes the process of mutual migration by mediating it through female subjectivity. She portrayed characters like Rahima Bibi who tied a handful of soil into the loose end of her daughter-in-law's saree to mix it with the soil from their new homeland. Nobody knew that 'she was carrying these fistfuls of earth. As she tied a handful of soil into the ends of her daughter-in-law's saree' (Sikdar 53). Furthermore, like any other refugee Achhar Bhai also got involved in life at Dighpait with every passing day but nonetheless he would often remember and talk about the home he had left behind in the village by Torsa and weep.

Thus, Sikdar's autobiographical piece concentrates more on the personal trauma of losing one's home rather than of losing one's nation. The bonds of love, emotion and affection that people share in society with each other is prioritized over political or economic concerns. The author tries to show how the migrants yearn for an affective space rather than an ideological space.[26] The abrupt changes in their surroundings and the need to accept another land as their home left the people in a state of despair and uprootedness. Hence, the greater part of the novel focuses on the literary representation of Partition and steers clear from the narrow limitations imposed by social, political, historical and communal representations and the whole story is filtered through the eyes of little Dayamoyee who could not comprehend much but still people's separation from their land and its effect upon them deeply influenced her mind. Throughout the novel she carries the memories of the displacements and dispossessions and the suffering of people whether they are men, women, Muslims or Hindus.

Dayamoyee grows up and she learns to make sense of her incidental surroundings. So, she had to be careful while playing with her friend Achia, Samsher Chacha's daughter from the village but not to touch her because she was a Muslim. Daya's childhood memory harps on the

[26]Rifat Mahbub and Anika Saba, in their essay "Homed, Unhomed and Rehomed in Partition Stories of East Bengal/East Pakistan" have also interpreted "home" as a symbol of uprooting for the people crossing from West to East within a volatile world of insecurity, loss and fear in 1947, Partition of Bengal. Taking three short stories from writers they have analysed the relation between materiality and memory of post-memory or post-amnesia to shape the intergenerational identities of the Bangladeshis.

mutual dislike and internal disharmony between the two religious' communities in her own terms. She was even warned not to drink water touched by the Muslims because 'It's a sin to drink water touched by Muslims. Eating dry stuff is fine' (Sikdar 55). But nonetheless, she could not always follow it and she never considered the Muslims as 'others' despite her aunt's resentment towards newly infiltrating Muslims or the *ripuchis* from India. For her there was no absolute sense of binary of self and the other between Hindu and Muslims, upper caste and lower caste, as well as natives and immigrants. Sarbani Banerjee also writes 'In Sikdar's memoir, there is no absolute sense of Self and Other, as they emerge in relative terms and comparative degrees of dissimilarity and sameness. For example, while Hindus and Muslims, Dalits and upper-castes, or natives and immigrants are the starting points of the social binaries, complexity arises when refugees, a necessarily heterogeneous group, make new connections and groupings in the migrated land.' (Banerjee 7). Although Muslims and Hindus are neighbors who are held together by strong bonds of affection in the village yet, there are lines that may not be crossed. Moreover, the novel shows how Hindu sentiments were hurt when they realized that they would be ruled by Muslims.

Sikdar undermines religious stereotypes by revealing Suresh's father Ganesh Lahiri's case; he said 'All the ministers will be Muslim. We can't stay as the subjects of Muslims, to be ruled by them' (Sikdar 83). Partha Chatterjee in his essay "Historicizing Caste in Bengal Politics", states that the Partition was demanded in 1947 by majority Hindus who could not imagine a future under permanent Muslim domination (Chatterjee 69). In the village, when Sadi Kaka paid for the goat at Ranu di's wedding the bridegroom's family members were enraged. The bride's father, Pacha Kaka was condemned for allowing this because many people in the village found it sacrilegious that a Brahmin was living on the charity of a Muslim. Thus, these incidents of mutual disharmony made the destructive incident of history obligatory, the country was divided, and Hindustan and Pakistan were created. This incident impacted countless people's lives and its terrible blow drove people like Modi Bhabi to madness since she could not accept her separation from Suresh whom she secretly loved who had to leave for Hindustan. Sikdar writes, "This was a terrible blow for Modi. It drove her mad," said people in the village, 'she could never have imagined that Suresh would leave the village" (Sikdar 83). This novel thus narrates the suffering and the pangs of separation experienced by women which history has been silent about. Further, critics like Anuparna Mukherjee writes how 'This sudden upturning of the spatio-temporal neighborhood at the lunatic epicentre of violence particularly saturated

the minds of the women whose everyday world revolving around the domesticity of the home and the hearth were burned down like fragile *papier-mâché* in the flames of fratricidal warfare'[27] (Mukherjee 96).

However, the discrimination was not only based on religious affiliation, but it was also based on class and caste. Sikdar's novel therefore does not only speak about the torment that Hindus experienced during the time of Partition rather it has spoken about the unavoidable torments that were inflicted on the lower castes and the Muslims. As a reader we notice when Dayamoyee and her mother travelled together with Nitai Da to visit the Kali temple, she writes 'We would travel together, see the sights and were even allowed to touch each other. But we could not eat any food that they had cooked because they were of low caste and they had to be on separate boats. They could not even eat any food that Nitai Da had cooked because he belonged to a lower caste and that is why we were on separate boats' (Sikdar 38). Later in the novel Sikdar mentioned how Raatkandu was a thief but he would never enter into their special room meant for ritual cooking even if it meant a good haul. Sikdar writes, 'Thief, he might be, but he knew that he was a kandumali, of low caste, and it would never do for him to enter the kitchen of high caste *Kayet* or *Kayastha*' (Sikdar 69).

Caste and class-based discrimination again emerges in the chapter "The Last Feast" when *Barokorta* deliberately leaves out the refugee poor Muslims like Ajgar *Chacha* from the invitation, teaming up rather with the rich Muslims. In the wedding ceremony the relatives of the bride and groom along with the Brahmins and Kayasthas of the village were served with the best quality food and seated in the inner courtyard. The middle courtyard accommodated other castes like the Kaivartas, the weavers, the washermen and the barbers. The Muslims were however seated in the outer courtyard. Thus, this story shows Hindu's discriminatory behaviour based on cultural and economic status and their qualitative distinction in hospitality towards the refugees, lower class, lower caste and poor Muslims.

In Dighpait very few actually dared to challenge the powerful, landed Hindu Zamindars and Muslims served as tenants on that land or as servants hired and employed by the landlords. In this autobiography, we see people like Naresh Karmakar and Ramesh Karmakar were involved in the business of transferring money to and from Hindustan and became rich. In the

[27]For more see Anuparna Mukherjee, "Reading Women's Journey through the Debris of Indian Partition in the "Charnel Ground of History", 2012.

novel we also see that Majams and his brother Ajam work hard to feed their family members. However, apart from the Zamindar families, there were few who also made good money from farming. Being able to host lavish pujas or feasts was a sign of prestige for them but nonetheless the division between the people who could manage the cost of two square meals daily against the people who could not was clearly visible and most of the people in the village led a very hard life under the powerful might of these few wealthy people. Sikdar writes 'They somehow managed to live on the leavings of these rich folk. They saw themselves as wretched 'soil lickers', who did not even own the soil that they licked' (Sikdar 41). The writer further recalls the seasons which are full of the different smells of the grains that grew in Dighpait. However, only during the harvest season in July and August were many poor people able to afford two decent meals because they had been paid something after working hard at winnowing and pounding the rice.

Moreover, similar issues can also be seen in Ailakeshi's case as her parent arranged her marriage with a groom who had been married before but despite this Ailakeshi's guardians were happy because she would have enough to eat. In an e-paper article "Touch of the Past", Kankana Basu writes that young Dayamoyee's perspective in flitting from one-character driven story unconsciously constructs the geographical, social and economic mosaic of her entire neighborhood, with its fragmented lives and fragile economy. Moreover, Sikdar's account is a clear-cut reflection of Ranajit Guha's distinction between subaltern and elite as the economically downtrodden were the worst victims and were the last ones to depart as they could not immediately leave the country because of their low cultural capital unlike the educated and rich Hindus who were the first East Bengali immigrants. However, even though the village was full of powerful landed Hindu Zamindars yet there were hardly any facilities for education in the village. It is only Dayamoyee's father who would hold some classes and Bhuli Pisima was a rarity in those days since she had learnt to read and write with great difficulty and had a huge influence on Dayamoyee's life because of her fresh way of looking at the world. Girls in the village, suffered from lack of education. Only few women knew how to read but none could write and guardians in their families did not make any effort to educate the women. The lives of widows were extremely restricted and widow remarriage was hardly admired. Their hair had to be shaved off, they could not touch fish and preparations for wedding ceremonies were handled and supervised by married women.

Sikdar's autobiography is thus filled with rich blend of realities keeping away from any bias towards religious affiliation. She does accept that Muslims had tortured, terrorized and humiliated Hindu women but she also stresses that one should not forget that for years before that the Hindus were also making the mistake of treating Muslims with contempt and disregard. Feelings about caste and religion ran high in Dighpait and religious tolerance was hardly practiced but nonetheless acts like Majam's prayer to Allah to keep everyone well and happy, give people food when they are hungry was much appreciated and thus the novel celebrates the spirit of humanism. Majam has to answer Daya's innocent questions on what Allah had decreed for the Hindus, who worshipped the Goddesses Kali and Lakshmi, whether Allah and Durga or Lakshmi lived in a harmonious existence in heaven? Even during the month of Ramzan Dayamoyee's keeping fast with Majam Dada, a Muslim ritual and Dayamoyee's mother would make rice cereal called *khoi* and leave it in a basket by the roadside along with a large jar of water for the fast keepers. This gives a hope of peaceful coordination among the village people belonging to different castes and religions that Dayamoyee has imagined of, that helps to alleviate the deep sense of loss and displacement.

The true essence of Islam is also expressed in the novel through Yadali Kaka's definition of the faith as 'Islam signified peace and those who were not peaceful could not claim to be Muslims. Also, you could not claim to be Muslim if you did not believe that all human beings were equal, if you did not give women the rights to their money and property' (Sikdar 109). Yadali Kaka's reassurance about men came first, religion later. That religion, caste and class all are manmade gives Dayamoyee's little innocent soul hope for the peaceful existence of the two different religious communities in future. But, unfortunately the advice of love and peace was not listened to by people and rigorous religious sentiments led to the formation of two new countries demarcated only by constructed borders based on imagined difference.

Sikdar's story undermines both the official history as well as other mainstream narratives that bear the nostalgia of nationalistic history. There is a distinct difference in perspective between the upper caste early migrant memoirs with Dayamoyee's story telling which unlike other middle-class Partition narratives is not contextualized against the high politics of the Partition. Sarbani Banerjee argues in her essay "Beyond Sentimentality: 'Tale' of an Alternative *Bhadramahila* Refugee" that Dayamoyee's narrative deconstructs any kind of sharp dichotomous binary formations or representation of clear-cut position (Banerjee 6). Rather it elucidates more multifaceted perspectives on the pre and post-Partition situation and

concentrates on everyday ordinary life where fellow villagers are shown to share a bonding of love and mutual affection for each other naturally. Thus, this autobiography further brings out the value of self and mutual relationships keeping away the high politics of Partition. Little Dayamoyee unthinkingly passes unpartisan judgement and treatment to all her neighbors regardless of their class, caste or their status as refugees.

Unlike other writings this unique memoir does not describe communal violence or incidents of sexual harassment and degradation of women that stereotypically comprises the bulk of Partition tragedies and its aftermath. Rather Sikdar puts in much effort to successfully present the authenticity of the subjective experience keeping away all political ideologies of nation making. Even though viewed from a distance from the shadow of the direct violence of Partition this completely depoliticized, almost pastoral piece of memoir does not fail to metaphorically represent and bring forth the ambivalent nature of the Partition to the reader with its underlying themes of nationality, women's subjectivity, migration, emotional bonding, motherhood as well as disharmony and hatred based on religion, class and caste of people.

Chapter II

Narration from that Side and this Side: An Uncanny World-in-Transition after Partition

Partition events have different meanings for different people as categorization can be done according to various criteria such as time of arrival, causes of dislocation, class, gender, religion, ethnic or language group or the course of post-arrival life. But, Bengal Partition Studies in the subcontinent has not received adequate attention and therefore throws up faulty perspectives as Asish Nandi writes in his foreword to *Mapmaking*[28] on why there is a need to re-examine the Bengal Partition stories from the two Bengals with fresh perspective.

Therefore, in this chapter my chosen narratives from both West Bengal and Bangladesh explore fresh views and adopt new approaches marking a significant break from an exclusive concentration on high politics and therefore question the homogeneity of nationalist discourses. These narratives document and recognize the importance of personal memory to demonstrate the plurality of how we remember the Partition inflected through themes of gender, caste and class variation.

Therefore, this chapter will deal with six translated short stories with specific focus on the Partition by writers from West Bengal namely Ritwik Ghatak's "The Road", Manik Bandopadhyay's "The Final Solution", Pratibha Basu's "Flotsam and Jetsam", Dibyendu Palit's "Alam's Own House", Ateen Bandopadhyay's "The Infidel", Sunanda Bhattacharya's "The Narrative of Kerech Buri" and six stories by writers from Bangladesh namely Syed Waliullah's "The Tale of a Tulsi Plant", Hasan Hafijur Rehman's "Two More Deaths", Akhtaruzzaman Elias's "Another Room, Another Voice", Selina Hossain's "An Evening of Prayer", Imdadul Haq Milan's "The Ballads of Sonadas Baul", Hasan Azizul Haq's "The Cage" from the book *Mapmaking* (2011) edited by Debjani Sengupta. The chapter will attempt to bring forth both the enduring memory of the Partition of Bengal and its erasure.

However, even if these Partition short stories share the emotional reaction of the event but they also bear historical significance as they reflect the reality of the times and celebrate

[28]Sengupta, Debjani. *Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals*. Amaryllis, 2011.

human values despite all odds. This book does not refer to the Partition or directly encounter the conventional accounts of the 1947 riots rather these stories have been chosen because of their allusive, nostalgic qualities. They question the finality and resolution of the Partition and give an idea of the range of narratives available in Bangla with indirect, ironical stories, subtly submerging the horror and the terror under the everyday lives of ordinary people.

These stories also explore some of the very important themes of the 1947 Partition - the fragility of borders in the construction of identities and the continuities and disruptions of memory. At the same time these stories destabilize the settled discourse of nationhood that focuses on the moment of its birth and is defined by man-made borders (Sengupta 193). Therefore, as we engage more with these stories, they open up spaces for the readers by using different forms of documentary fictional representations and helps us to learn about changing social and political values[29].

The huge migration that took place during 1947 and Liberation War of 1971 was a mutual one, although comparatively a low number of people had migrated from East to West, but this remained a silent area for scholars for a long period. Multiple researches have focused on the Eastern Hindu migration from Bangladesh to Bengal and to the other parts of the subcontinent but never the other way around. Quite surprisingly, the Muslim migrants who have migrated from West to East have remained an overlooked area though it is an inseparable part of the larger story of the Partition in the East and yet studies do not cover this even in academic research. What actually happened to the Muslims migrants after Partition? What did Partition mean to them and how did it affect their life and way of thinking? All these questions are still awaiting to be answered. Recently, few exceptional studies have begun to pay serious attention to literary representations of the Partition and documented the experiences of the common people constructed through oral narratives where memory is considered to be implicated with imagination and therefore leads to a new and critical sensitivity to enter into the hidden and the silenced narratives of the Partition Literature.

The literary canons dealing with the Partition in Bengal are comparatively larger than its historiography, but its effect has still remained unknown for the readers outside Bengal. In

[29]"The Partition of Memory." Google Books, books.google.com/books/about/The_Partitions_of_Memory.html?id=YRZBdLkfA8sC.

recent times, a few studies have come out like Debjani Sengupta's *Mapmaking*, Willem Van Schendel's *'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration*, Jaya Chatterjee's *The Spoils Of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1966*, Jashodhara Bagchi and Subharanjan Dasgupta's edited book the *Trauma and The Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India* contains interesting and few rarely known material.

These short stories are however, filled with long history set after 1947 and indirectly narrativizes and describe ordinary people's daily struggle for existence, their pain and loss through the lives of the refugees who came to inhabit these colonies are in a large way a comment on the partition and what it meant for hundreds of human lives. We learn how the marginalized stories are way different from the mainstream and their fight for the social and economic equality.

These short stories give a remarkable exploration of the effect of Partition on a minority community, a community that was forced to abandon their homes for a more certain future. These stories depict how the victims were only the ordinary men and women who were more like puppets in the hands of political parties. Therefore, the reflection of Partition expressed in the stories reveal why it is not for the majority but the marginalized ordinary people foregrounding the 'other' by looking at their angst and forgotten lives. These stories further give a detailed analytical view and ironic and indirect criticism of the violence suffered by ordinary people that came with the Partition thus creating a testimony to plurality or collective memory which has been neglected by the dominant accounts of the powerful.

Some of the short stories also often share common themes of partition/loss of homeland and interpret how 'home' is a problematic symbol for the uprooted refugees as eventually Muslims migrants try to start a new life after crossing into East Bengal or Bangladesh and similarly Hindus cross into West Bengal. This displacement leads to the question of 'identity'. This chapter will be an attempt to fill these gaps with a detailed study of the post-Partition period in East Pakistan/East Bengal and West Bengal by analyzing various issues such as identity, struggle of the displacements associated with the search of 'home' experienced by both Hindus and Muslim migrants during and in the aftermath of Partition within an explosive world of insecurity, loss and fear.

Sengupta mentions in her book *Mapmaking* why and how 'madness is not a trope in the Bangla stories, rather, it is nostalgia and a constant dazed search to know how, why and

wherefore. Instead of a pathological experience Partition is seen as a cosmological occurrence, a loss of a world rather than a loss related to prestige. Hence, Partition narratives from the two Bengals are less violent, less pathological than the narratives from West Pakistan' (Sengupta 195). Therefore, even though Bengal Partition was less dramatic than the Western Partition of Punjab the impact of the psychological effect was no less profound.

The daily life of the people was richly interwoven together, and common customs and practices gave a sense of living together in harmony. Furthermore, the common linguistic and cultural unit played a significant role in maintaining the closeness of the two communities (Urdu was only spoken by the elite Muslims and not the ordinary people). Sengupta further writes 'the intimacy of 'epar' Bangla and 'opar' Bangla was manifested in the rivers, the languages, the ties of the clan and shared memory, customs and rituals' (Sengupta 194). Therefore, the identity of the Bengali people be it Hindus or Muslims rested on these factors rather than on religion. Therefore, in the aftermath of the Partition, the response left both the Hindus and Muslims in bafflement, an inability to understand the horror of it all.

One of the primary focus of the Partition stories of East Bengal is that these stories are more about the socio-economic expectations and realities of finding a new home and resettlements in a new country and less about violence. Therefore, Partition as represented in these memoirs and in the short stories continue to shape socio-cultural contours and engagements with the context of the subcontinents in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh even years after this seminal event. In the collection of Partition stories from Bengal lesser attention was paid to the violence in eastern India. Also, one of the reasons behind this is that with very few expectations, everyone including victims, perpetrators and witnesses tried to wipe out the experience of the period, in the West as much as in the East. However, in eastern India in dealing with Partition it has been a case of cultivated aphasia, not negligence (Sengupta xiv).

All the short stories represent either the themes of communal violence, pain and suffering or harmony and humility. All these Partition stories also deal with various sub-themes and the impact of Partition and the turbulent times of the ordinary people in all its totality. These stories present the tragedy of the marginalized through different angles and reflect them in different ways and provide ruptured experiences. For example, in a story like Ateen Bandopadhyay's "The Infidel" we see how violent communal killings erupted during the Partition. Furthermore, in Pratibha Basu's "Flotsam and Jetsam" and Manik Bandopadhyay's

“The Final Solution” depicts the displacement as well as abduction of women, rape and so on. Thus, the Partition stories are vital towards understanding the complexity of human life and reflects comprehensively in all its totality with reality and variety.

Manik Bandopadhyay’s “The Final Solution” is also a story of the suffering of a displaced and uprooted refugee family but with a difference. In this story Mallika, her husband Bhushan, their two-and-a-half-year-old son Khokon and her widowed sister-in-law somehow survive and reach India. They take shelter on the railway station and spend a few days and nights in an unhealthy and overcrowded environment. Such scenes were common when hundreds of people migrated from East Pakistan to India and huddled together like herds of cattle in the railway stations.

Many men from the different ‘Help Societies’ or organizations visit and express their concern over the migrants’ difficulties but none the less many people like Pramatha accompanied by Ramlochan try to use such needy people like Mallika for their own profit. They promised a job to Mallika and fulfil the primary needs of her family. However, very soon Mallika could sense the nature of the job she has been appointed to after seeing a married woman, a few years older than herself, wearing a nice saree, get into a car alone. Mallika understands the villainous look on Pramatha’s face who has nefarious intentions in offering jobs to women. He is the offender in guise of sincerity, and Mallika accepted the fact that Pramatha was going to engage her in prostitution.

The pathetic condition of the family and the hunger of the child forced Asha, the sister-in-law, who was not ready to get into prostitution even if it meant her death to go to Pramatha when he sends for Mallika. But, Mallika is the one wanted. The story thus, depicts the critical condition of the women who were the most exploited class during and after the Partition.

However, Mallika couldn’t tolerate the thought that Pramatha has planned to seduce her first, before inducting her into prostitution. Pramatha who had given shelter to many refugee families and used their womenfolk to get into the flesh trade thereby earning commission. Mallika, being the exceptionally bold one caught the bottle with both her hands and brought it down on Pramatha’s head with fierce strength. The bottle splintered and Pramatha went limp and finally she strangled him to death thus accomplishing her final solution. Thus, this short story reveals how suffering made the women bold to save themselves and their family from being dishonored.

Pratibha Basu's "Flotsam and Jetsam" is also a story about the suffering of women survivors after and during Partition. The country was in the grip of terror and the protagonist of the story, Bindubasini had to migrate to India with her widowed daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. She had plenty of property but leaving all of it to Jamir, her Muslim tenant she left the country wearing whatever gold and carrying as little as possible. The story depicted the horror of the situation as 'millions forced their way through the gap, squashing small children and trampling over pregnant women. Heavy cases piled on heads, slid and bashed in the heads of the other people. Taking advantage of the circumstances, some men slyly stroke the bodies of girls and women or sneaked away rippling off the daily sustenance that people carried in the folds of cloths tied round their waist' (Basu 36).

However, after two whole days of untold misery, struggling against all such odds, Bindubasini with her daughter-in-law and two grandchildren set foot on Indian soil in a state almost bereft of life with other destitute families. They took shelter in a soldier's camp. They hope that all their troubles would surely come to an end once they entered the borders of Hindustan where so many volunteers, social workers and charitable institutions abounded providing milk to the children and flattened rice and molasses to the grown-ups. But even after all these the condition of the refugees was deteriorating day by day. On an average, 'forty-eight children… of four to each of the twelve families, remained stuck to their mothers, faces buried in their breast. Babies sucked the nipples dry. The starved and exhausted men and women, collapsed on the ground, one after the other like felled wood' (Basu 38). Men search for work and women look for service as domestic helps. Small children started begging and unfortunately, to add to her difficulties Bindubasini's ten-year-old granddaughter Bulu suffers from high fever and dies. Keshabananda, from the society of 'Friends of the Orphan' comes to help her. He takes them to his *Ashram* in an isolated and unfamiliar part of Calcutta and provides her twenty rupees and tempts her widowed daughter-in-law Uttara with a job offer to get rid of their destitution.

We saw a similar incident in Manik Bandopadhyay's "The Final Solution" and here too Keshbananda sacrifices Uttara at the altar of Rajiblochan's lust. Rajiblochan, the kingpin of the black market and Keshabananda his trusted ally was involved in all sorts of dubious professions like prostitution. Pratibha Basu ironically comments how people like Keshabananda made the great use of the needy refugees by getting hold of girls for prostitution. Basu's example of Uttara remains the fate of many women's collective history. Uttara for example, a grown-up

woman of thirty-eight years with a firm body hadn't hesitated to come to an unknown place with a man who was a stranger to her. She had clung to his hand and had addressed him as Babu, while she wiped away copious tears. And he, Keshabananda, the "saviour" of refugees, had sacrificed her at the altar of Rajiblochan's lust without the slightest compunction.

However, Keshabananda also sacrifices the rosy-cheeked young girl Milu, Bindubasini's granddaughter to Sashisekhar, a lusty producer, who has been in the habit of seducing chaste and virtuous girls. Finally, Bindubasini is taken in a vehicle on the pretext of meeting with her daughter-in-law and then Keshabananda shoves Bindubasini's limp body and throws her out violently while she is taking a nap, on the outskirts of the city where there is no human habitation. Bindubasini falls on a big piece of rock and loses her consciousness vaguely remembering her loved ones.

This story thus focuses on the difference between the experience of Partition for women and men belonging to the same religious community. The sacrifices and the sufferings of the women during Partition is depicted in both Pratibha Basu's and Manik Bandopadhyay's short stories. These writers effectively brought out the suffering of women. The suffering that Partition caused for women was double as they do not only face displacements and violence but also rape, abduction and prostitution. Thus, unlike the initial literature where the women were always considered as the embodiment of honor but here the stories are a little different as these stories mourn the suffering and humiliation that they had experienced.

The story "The Final Solution" by Manik Bandopadhyay and the story "Flotsam and Jetsam" by Pratibha Basu have also captured how the Sealdah station in Calcutta became the home for teeming millions that arrived from East Bengal, and the insecurity of their life. The stories frame how in those riotous times, the profit motif of the city people like Keshabananda and Pramatha have lost all morality and humanity and take advantage of the all-round collapse of norms and either settled old scores or beggared their own relatives and friends.

These two exceptional stories also stretch the idea of 'new women' deeply concerned about their family's survival and who were forced to take up small jobs. Women were seen for the first time taking on the financial weight of the family on their shoulders and actively stepping into the professional world, participating in Labor Movements and demanding their rights. This was a completely new phenomenon. In the book, *Trauma and the Triumph,* Jasodhara Bagchi and Subharanjan Dasgupta write how refugee women like Mallika and Uttara

have moved beyond the stereotype of "victims" and emerged triumphant in their ability to combine determination and grit as a survival strategy to transcend their encumbrances. Therefore, even though the decades of 1950s and 1960s highlighted women's exploitation but at the same time female protagonists like Mallika had succeeded and her courage served as an inspiration for the confident 'new woman' (Mukherjee 100).

Sunanda Bhattacharya's "The Narrative of Kerech Buri" revolve around Hemantabala, who was a dark-skinned poor old woman with a large bone underneath, nose broad and flat, and dull eyes. She was left alone in East Bengal when her nephews and relatives crossed into India. However, she was a skilled cook and could work like a horse. She began selling *Kerech oil* (kerosene oil) and eventually becomes popular as 'kerech buri'. However, one day after having heavy lunch she fell sick and died due to acute dehydration. Probodh, a far relative of Hemantabala performed the funeral rites and everybody sat watching attentively. If only Hemantabala had commanded so much attention while she was alive.

In Imdadul Haq Milan's "The Ballads of Sonadas Baul"**,** Sonadas Baul used to sing in the market and beg, so people called him a *Baul*. He later works in Gagan Babu's paddy godown. Gagan Babu was one of the well-to-do Hindus who still lived in East Bengal and refused to leave his old ancestral business. But, Gagan Babu hoped to join his family in Calcutta eventually. However, this made Sonadas think of his unsustainable future, but he never spoke about it to anyone. Gagan Babu would also help the traders to fulfil their lust for women. At last, Gagan Babu sold his godown and prepares to leave for Calcutta to join his family. When he left Sonadas Baul felt an uneasy pain in his chest. He was left alone in this world and there were very few places for him to go to.

Similarly, Ritwik Ghatak's "The Road" portrays the agony and pain of a young Bengali man, Emdad who is forced to flee his home to escape the riot. His house has been occupied by a refugee old woman and her grandson from East Bengal. He takes shelter in a refugee camp but loses his son to violence there. "The Road" elucidates the unanswered question 'who is the enemy?' (Ghatak 7). The story depicts people like Emdad who are only left with the nostalgic memory of his native soil and the shock of the migration. This short story is concerned with the sorrows of the migration, metaphorically represented by the child's nostalgic song about the beauty of their homeland that they had to leave.

This migration made them feel uprooted and they had nowhere to go. All the characters in these stories are in exile and become homeless. They are in exile not only physically but also metaphorically. The Partition caused the loss of social status and economical downslide for the characters like *Kerech Buri,* who had a lonely end and Sonadas Baul who are in exile from home, a small restricted space where the characters live or work away from their loved ones. All these characters embody a trope of silence, an emptiness that signifies that their individual destinations are forever at one remove and their journey is perpetually in search for a 'home'.

Dibyendu Palit's "Alam's Own House" is a beautiful story about Alam who was born in Calcutta, Park Circus but had to exchange their home with a Hindu family of East Bengal, Dhaka after Bangladesh became an independence nation state. Ananta Shekhar Sanyal and Alam's family exchanged their property with each other. Later, Alam also had to leave for Dhaka after the sudden news of his father's death. However, he remained in touch with Raka, Ananta Shekhar's daughter through letters and Alam never forgot that he was rooted in Calcutta. Three years later, Alam was in India for a seminar but he was more excited to have finally got the chance to meet his friend Raka, whom he secretly loved. While coming with his friend Feroz in the flight he had an argument with Feroz who believed that the cultural identities of the two countries were separate. The fact of rootedness and uprootedness from the birthplace because of religious affiliation made Alam's rational mind keep on looking for answers to questions like Did traditions get wiped out the moment one gained independence? And Alam would answer himself being the mouthpiece of the writer 'Religion is imposed as a fad, it is blind and therefore, easy to believe in. We have never understood the relation between the rich and the poor, or between the exploited and the exploiter, but we do seem to understand the binds of religion. It is irresponsible and makes it easy to escape reality. But he further reflected,' was there point to all this? Some questions were unanswerable, and often, one was too tired to argue' (Palit 54).

Identity crisis is very much prevalent in the Bengal Partition discourse. For the Bengalis whether Hindus or Muslims the external elements such as food style and language are common and thus the cultural identity is common in both cases and therefore cannot be separated as oil or water even after the sudden shift of location. Alam suffers from a dilemma of identity as he was born in Calcutta and therefore, he could submerge himself in his own identity as it were. Therefore, the questions arise in his mind as to whether the land of one's birth also one's native land? This question often made him feel homeless.

However, once Alam is back in his old house he saw that the *kanthalichampa* tree that his father had planted was not there anymore. He also sees other changes that have been made after they moved to Bangladesh and becomes nostalgic about his past when his father was alive. The irony was that Alam became a stranger in his own home. He later metaphorically addresses how India his country of birth became the host country. Alam knew every nook and cranny of this house better than the present inhabitants Sneha Masi or Ananta Shekhar. Ownership is something else for the families whether Hindus or Muslims as Alam was aware about the soul of the house.

Alam replies to Ananta Shekhar's question whether water and oil can ever mix by saying that they can mix because for years they have been taught to speak and think in that manner. But do we know which is water and which is oil? Perhaps we will find that both are water, or both are oils. Thus, in many stories we learn through characters like Alam that in Bengal, because of 'the communality of language and culture the identities of Muslims and Hindus are blurred, fluid and open' (Sengupta 195). We observe how the writer shows that the boundaries between the two countries appear to be well-defined but are in reality fluid. Therefore, for characters like Alam, for whom home always remained at Park Circus, Calcutta just as it remained identified with Dhaka for Thamma in the *Shadow lines* by Amitav Ghosh.

Finally, Raka's resentment towards Alam's love and her letter stating that she had no intention of being uprooted once more and was not prepared for it. She was afraid of leaving a country again by engaging in love with a person from another religion, country and hence, cannot go on to continue with the unspoken love that they shared. Thus, even though Alam and Raka are both young, well-educated and hailing from cultured Bengali backgrounds but the difference of religion eventually proves to be an insoluble gap between the two lovers. Raka, cannot overcome her intrinsic hesitation about marrying Alam, a Muslim despite her intense emotional involvement with him.

The Kolkata killing and the communal tension in 1946 in West Bengal and Bihar after the repeated attacks on Muslims just before and after the Independence and Partition displaced a large number of Muslims from West Bengal to East Bengal. This story "An Evening of Prayer" by Selina Hossain is also an example of how the attacks uprooted many Muslims and forced them to leave West Bengal in an overwhelming atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

Selina Hossain captures the suffering of a few Muslim survivors who are on their way to a new nation, East Pakistan. Hossain writes how Pushpita suffers from labor pain during her long journey to Rajshahi, East Pakistan. This story again depicts the deep sense of displacement and loss that the Partition caused ordinary Muslims. Every passenger from the boat escaped by different routes, they all lost everything and became refugees. *Khala*, the elder woman from the boat lost sixteen members of her family few days back before the turmoil. 'They were hacked to death, their home looted…burnt down' (Sengupta 147).

The story primarily revolves around Pushpita and her family. Her husband Ahmed is a liberal Muslim who still believes in humanity and harmony. Ahmed's wife's and son's name (Pradipto) are common Hindu names that hint at his attitude towards Hindu-Muslim unity. But their Muslim identity was enough to make them lose their home and their land. From now on, the new nation Pakistan was their real abode, where they would be sheltered (Sengupta 197).

Her husband Ali Ahmed's conversation with a fellow Mafizul bring forth a deeper sense of the meaninglessness of Partition. The agony and suffering of displacement are further expressed through Ahmed and Mafizul's conversation who could not accept the fact of running away from one's land. He questions Ali Ahmed about why were they leaving? Was it only because of their religion? If the country was divided on the lines of religion, why could they not be free to decide which is their homeland?

Pushpita was in labour and her husband asked her to be patient but how can the to-be-born baby be asked to hold back? Her unborn baby did not know that the country was being partitioned as its parents knew because they were Muslims and a few hours later the baby would see the light of the day claiming East Pakistan as its birthplace. The birth of a nation is followed by the birth of a child. Selina Hossain questions 'would that new country be a haven for the unborn child and give it the security of a motherland?' as thirty-one years ago Ali Ahmed had himself been born in another country from where he was now being evicted. Likewise, would his child one day, face the same fate?

Finally, after extreme struggle Pushpita does manage to give birth to a male child named Prateek. In Bangla language Prateek represents a symbol of humanity and harmony which Ahmed himself relied upon as Hossain writes

‘That ribbon of man’s existence must be torn asunder for him to live. He must live. Ali Ahmed spoke to himself, ‘My son, born to a new life in this country with a new name. Image of my heart let me call you Prateek. Prateek Ahmad’ (Hossain 156).

For both Alam, the male protagonist from the story “Alam’s own House” and for Pushpita their religious identity has caused them to pursue new national identities and new homes. However, even after all this for the first-generation migrants ‘home’ or ‘Desh’ remains the older nation that they were born in. But, with passing time the newer generation as symbolized in the story by Prateek would start accepting their new home and their new identity even though the lands remained the same. Their identity as refugees would haunt them for their entire life as even in Pakistan all of them would be considered as ‘others’. Similarly, in this story everyone would know that all of them had to flee India in the aftermath of Independence. Hossain does not fail to describe the pathetic condition of the women during the migration.

Syed Waliullah’s “The Tale of a Tulsi Plant” is a remarkable story set when the entire country was convulsing under the impact of the Partition. The story begins with a description of a large desolate house in East Bengal where a few Muslim refugees from Calcutta had found asylum inside it. The empty house also symbolizes the untold story of uprootedness of the original inhabitants and becomes the new home for the refugees at they start settling in. However, soon the Muslim refugees become worried by the discovery of a Tulsi plant in the yard since it is associated with Hindus who perform their morning and evening prayers around it. But the men in the house gradually accept the Tulsi plant as one of them and start nurturing it even when it seemed to have laid bare the secret soul of a Hindu family. The Tulsi plant remained unharmed even though it was the ultimate marker of domesticity in a Bengali Hindu household. But, ultimately after the government had requisitioned the house the group of men became homeless once again. Hence, the Tulsi plant in the courtyard languishes once more as the refugees who had been forced to leave their homes in West Bengal and make a new home in a different country.

In the subplot of this story Waliullah has associated emotional loss to the women caused by the Partition but only through Matin’s consciousness who thinks of the absent present women who had left behind the home and the Tulsi plant. Partition discourse being a meta-narrative focuses on psychological trauma that lives through thousand minds in the subcontinent. Matin, who had once worked for the railways imagines ‘Did the woman go and seek shelter in the

house of one of her relatives, in Baidyabati, Liluah or at the Howrah railway colony? Was the red-bordered glossy black sari, hung out to dry in the sun, her's? How sadly the sari had fluttered in the mild breeze! Was she, perhaps, the woman who sat beside the window in the speeding train – her gaze turned outside in search of something beyond the horizon – the journey nowhere near conclusion… her eyes must grow moist, at the thought of the Tulsi plant, when the outline of the sky grew hazy in the gathering darkness of the evening' (Waliullah 109).

This story also focuses on how ethnic cleansing caused displacements from both the countries be it Hindus or Muslims and memory is intrinsically associated with the Partition discourse by giving simplest description with implication with metaphor and images. When people move away from one place to another, they carry memories with them to survive. Thus, this story with Matin's 'remembrance' of his job in Calcutta and the thoughts of the home and the Tulsi planted by the woman through his imagination conveys the collective story of Partition.

Critics like Rifat Mahbub and Anika Saba have criticized Waliullah for the woman appears only in Matin's imagination and not in reality. The depiction of the woman with tearful eyes shows how emotional loss which is divided by gender is associated with women and not with men. Thus, the absent presence of the women in the story shows how women's narratives did not gain importance until recently when few scholars like Urvashi Butalia paid attention towards women's experience during the Partition of the West. Butalia' book *The Other Side of Silence* is an investigation of what lies beneath the silence about Partition. She had interviewed people and documented their stories, experienced especially by women, children and Dalits during the chaos of 1947.

However, Waliullah's "The Story of a Tulsi Plant" and other stories by Hasan Azizul Haq's "The Cage", Akhtaruzzaman Elias's "Another Room, Another Voice" as well as Dibyendu Palit's 'Alam's Own House' demonstrate how 'home' which is more of a psychological space rather than physical space is associated with the land and therefore the uprooted people try to find and build new homes on the other side of the border (Mahbub and Saba 111). Akhtaruzzaman Elias's (1943-1997) "Another Room, Another Voice", is about a journey made by the protagonist Pradeep who goes to his ancestral house in Bangladesh to visit a branch of his family who had opted to stay back after the Partition. Pradeep now lives in Calcutta, but he is always restless and unable to settle down in one place. His work takes him

all-over North-East India and he often crosses over to Bangladesh. Through nostalgic impulse, they try to adjust to the crisis of the Partition, of separation and exile, to make meaning of their lives and identities in the present. Pradeep's past pain of uprootedness made him a wanderer forever. But, for him Bangladesh remains 'home' where he keeps coming back to.

These stories thus examine the struggles of the displacement associated with the 'search for a home in the context of East Bengal/East Pakistan show how the displacements are more concerned with home and not with nations for the characters like Alam and Pradeep who suffer from 'uprootedness' throughout their lives. In this context, we see how the notion of Bhaba's theory could be applicable as it describes how the idea of being 'Homeless' is different from 'unhomeliness'. Being homeless is simply being without a shelter but being unhomely is to be in one's home and yet feel alienated or threatened by its surroundings (Mahbub and Anika Saba 111).

Similarly, Hasan Azizul Haq's "The Cage" gives a glimpse of the minority Hindus who are left behind in East Bengal even after the Partition. Ambujakhyo and Sharojini would often indulge in arguments about living in East Bengal even after the country is partitioned. They suffer from the dilemma to leave or to die amidst the cloudy sky, cool rooms, the pond, white paths around it, the sweet smell of creepers, Jamir Sheikh, Padma *pishi* to die within all this and then find life again. This story reveals that the refugees always tried to move somewhere that bore similarity to their country. But as they could not decide given the many loopholes of leaving the country they ultimately decide not to move. For people like Ambujakhyo it was nice to think about leaving homeland and cross over after man-made Partition but was not easy to do so.

Hasan Hafijur Rehman's "Two More Deaths", explores the theme of silence in Partition literature. Rehman's is a remarkable tale of flight and death. The narrator, a middle-aged Muslim doctor, is travelling by train from Narayanganj to Bahadurabad when he notices a Hindu man entering the compartment with a woman and a child, obviously fleeing to a safer place. Being a doctor, he notices the woman is pregnant and in labor. Every jerk of the train convulses her body. The narrator waits with breathless anxiety, unable to do anything, made impotent by guilt. Agonizing moments pass till the woman crawls to the toilet. The narrator waits to hear the wail of a newborn, but a deathly silence greets his ears. A significant motif in many stories of the Partition written in the years after 1971 is again the trope of the exile journey.

Sucharita Sarkar in an e-article 'Part(ur)ition Pains: Representations of Maternal Trauma in Partition Discourse' writes how the birth of a new nation caused immense suffering to real mothers[30]. She has juxtaposed the maternal trauma and loss during the Partition and how women were victims of male gaze during and in the aftermath of the Partition and remained a silent theme in most Partition narratives. In the story "Two More Deaths" by Hasan Hafizur Rehman and "An Evening of Prayer" by Selina Hossain signify how the pregnant maternal body is further problematized as the embodiment of trauma and violence is suffered by both mother and child. The majoritarian nation building narrative celebrates Partition as a new national identity, but the stories represent and mourn the pain and suffering of women. This anthology of Partition stories *Mapmaking* addresses a silence regarding the Partition in the East and foregrounds the forgotten histories of the people that have been pushed out of a centralized narrative.

Ateen Bandopadhyay's "The Infidel" begins when the entire population was in flight, making an escape into the darkness of the night when Paran was looking for his wife Kironi. Paran is being helped by Hashim and his wife Zubeda. This story dealt with a cordial relationship enjoyed by the two dominant communities of Muslims and Hindus before Partition. It was a dark time for humanity. Religion held tenets. Intense hatred overran the entire area but Hashim's humanity was celebrated as he tried hard to save Paran or lose his self-respect, his humanity. This story further states how in certain regions not directly involved in the violence, killings and ethnic cleansing was endorsed to clear the minority population in the intensity of genocide.

Memory and nostalgia play a significant principle in these short stories. All characters in the stories long for the past and therefore respond to conditions in the present. Palit's male protagonist Alam's journey to Calcutta from Dhaka metaphorically represents relief from exile and the element of hope of returning to a city that was his home once, to a house he had been born in. Palit's story in many ways is a typical story of Partition set many years after the destructive event in 1947. It engages with the motif of the journey both in the literal and the metaphorical sense because he can always come back but he cannot return.

[30]Sarkar, Sucharita. "Part(Ur)Ition Pains: Representations of Maternal Trauma in Partition Discourse." *Cenacle: A Peer Reviewed Annual Journal of English,* Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 60-72.

Sengupta in the afterword to this Partition anthology comments that the authors from the region take up the Partition not simply as an event, but as a metaphor, or a trauma, or a site of enunciation for the problems of rehabilitation and resettlement. Therefore, she juxtaposes this with the literature emanating from Punjab that viewed Partition as an event of pain and madness as represented by writers like Sadat Hasan Manto. Many did not ever want to think of the trauma of the Partition in the West and therefore tried to suppress it by being completely forgetful. There was a feeling that Partition must be forgotten as an aberration and that one had to move on. And in the East, it was not a different story either as it took years for authors to look back and put their experiences into words.

Short stories like "The Story of a Tulsi Plant" by Syed Waliullah and Selina Hossain's "An Evening of Prayer" focus on the Muslim migrants who had moved to East Pakistan. These stories share a common note of disillusionment with the new country, combined with a sense of disruption of their placid lives and reminiscence for their native homes. However, a possible explanation may be found in the fact that the Muslim characters in most of these stories were not the aggressive set who vociferously supported the Pakistan cause in the run-up to the Independence and had enthusiastically left Hindu India for the Islamic wings of the two Pakistans. However, on the contrary, most of them had to leave their home and hearth under pressure, either in the face of death or loss of their familiar socio-cultural milieu due to the migration of most of their co-religionists. In this respect they complement the experience of Hindus and Sikhs who came over to India and provide a nuanced perspective on the issue of refugees in the wider context of the subcontinent.[31]

Syed Waliullah, Hasan Azizul Haq, Pratibha Basu, Dibyendu Palit, Sunanda Bhattacharya, Hasan Hafizur Rehman, Akhtaruzzaman Elias, Imdadul Haq Milan gives a more sombre and more analytical response to the event of Partition with new awareness of the economic and political reality of the country and is marked by realism. Like for example, Hasan Azizul Haq's story is about a Hindu dysfunctional family living in a small village in East Bengal and reflects the dysfunctional times. The members of the family dream of an exchange of property that will one day enable them to leave and move to West Bengal. The patriarch of the family lies ill, while the grandsons live as village goons. The metaphoric cage that the family

[31] http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/156734/10/10_conclusion.pdf

inhabits is the cage of helplessness, of anxiety and failing to understand the forces of history that so remorselessly shapes their lives.[32]

The stories by Dibyendu Palit, Hasan Hafizur and another by Akhtaruzzaman Elias written in the late 1970s, and separated by a national boundary, have remarkable similarities of theme and are an ironic and indirect condemnation of the violence that Partition caused to the minority communities who were forced to abandon their homes for an uncertain future. Palit's protagonist is a Muslim in Calcutta while Elias's is a Hindu in Bangladesh, yet they represent the plurality of existence, a negation of Partition along religious and communal lines.

These short stories from both the Bengals thus testify that different people experienced the Partition in different ways. All the narratives encompass different themes of identity, home, nationhood, motherhood, women, the evocation of memory or nostalgia, silence about the complexities of the Partition and give a glimpse of new political realities of the state through significant analytical representations.

[32] http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/18707/10/10_chapter%205.pdf

Chapter III

Bengal Partition in Literature: A Thematic Interpretation

Ashis Nandi has already discussed in his foreword to the anthology of Partition short stories *Mapmaking* (2011) by Debjani Sengupta as to why there is a need to re-examine the Bengal Partition stories from the two Bengals from a fresh perspective. Authors being politically conscious had written short stories or novels about riots, the famine, about important historical event or the nationalist movements but the output of these selected literary works (memoirs and the short stories) has been varied and offer multi dimension of Partition in Bengal with uneven thematic and artistic content.

Therefore, this chapter will try to bring into focus the literature from the years 1947 and 1970 and move away from the focus on the implications of the large influx of refugees in West Bengal and try to explore the thematic similarities and dissimilarities in relation to the two Bengals. The birth of Bangladesh gave an impetus to a different aesthetic impulse that tries to go back to the issues of geography and nationality as the fallouts of the Partition that would otherwise have remained unspoken of. But memoirs and short stories articulate the expansion of a particular time and space, a pre-partition universe that takes shape under the aura of Bangladesh as represented in Sunanda Shikdar's *Dayamoyeer Kotha* and in other short stories from the collection *Mapmaking*. These narratives also discuss the change in relationship between Hindus and Muslims that took place in the aftermath of the declaration of Partition in 1905 and the second Partition in 1947 that further deepened the divide between an otherwise linguistic and culturally homogeneous unit along sectarian and religious lines (Sengupta 194).

Official historiography tells us that when the British left India they divided it into two new countries India and Pakistan on the basis of two nation theory. This decision gripped the subcontinent with communal tension and riots immediately after the creation of these two new states. The communal violence led to killings of thousands of people and millions were displaced in search of a new home away from home. Partition made their homeland hostile and they moved to the other side of the border in search of peace and security. The Partition was traumatic, and people were compelled to leave their homeland to sustain themselves withstanding violence, humiliation and sexual assaults in an unknown land. However, though

the relatively well-off people could reconstruct their lives with comparatively less struggle in the new land, but the middle classes and lower classes had to spend years in the refugee camps and many of them could not even return to their original occupations and therefore felt alienated even after partial rehabilitation. The refugees were left with memories of their past or 'desh' and the unbearable agony of losing their friends and relatives during communal tension and riots.[33]

In the period between 1946 and 1971 the Indian subcontinent went through a series of divisions and as a result million people were displaced from East Bengal to West Bengal and particularly to Calcutta. In the years following the Partition people continued to migrate even after six decades of Independence. However, after much deliberation West Bengal government agreed upon a plan of dividing migrants into categories. Migration between October 1946 and March 1958 was termed as "old migration" and migrants who came between April 1958 and December 1963 were termed as "in-between migrants". The increasing number of migrants who infiltrated into the state after 1963 till the late 1970s were called "new migrants"[34]

The exodus of people who came to India in 1947 took place in different directions. Few crossed into the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys due to its proximity to East Bengal another wave went to Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur. The displaced Bengalis who came into India tried to settle in the border districts due to the similarity in geographical features. From the starting of the Noakhali riots in 1946 and the communal upheaval of 1950 in Barisal there resulted a long stream of refugees. By the first decade of Partition almost 1.25 million people crossed over to West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and other states in North East and eventually in the 25 years after Independence the number had reached five million. The public spaces of the Sealdah station, where the first waves of refugees arrived from East Bengal were faced with an uncertain future. The huge number of refugees crowded the city pavements and the railway platforms and created unprecedented social, economic and cultural problems in the state (Sengupta 185).

However, the initial causes for this large-scale migration were several. Moreover, East Bengal's deteriorating economic situation was another factor and the high price of food and grains, intermittent communal clashes, social harassment also created an atmosphere of distrust

[33]Basu Raychaudhury, Anasua. "Nostalgia of 'Desh', Memories of Partition." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 52, 2004, pp. 5653–5660.
[34]Guha-Chaudhury, Archit Basu. "Engendered Freedom: Partition and East Bengali Migrant Women." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 44, no. 49, 2009, pp. 66–69.

and strengthened the perception among many Hindus that that East Pakistan could no longer be called their home (Sengupta 184).

A historical narrative concentrate on the broad details of the event explaining its causes, its timing but perhaps can never explain the subtext of 'marginalized history' and therefore memory takes over where the role of history ends. The literary works chosen for this research refuses to fit into any particular genre; while some stories are works of fiction, another might be an autobiographical account that represents the burdens that Hindus or Muslims bore during the Partition. A number of Partition authors have skillfully intermixed subjective memory with collective memory through their works and we can analyze these works in literature in the context of social, political and cultural history, and regard literary history as a part of a larger cultural history.

Anasua Basu Raychaudhury, a well-known critic on Partition discourse in her article **"**Nostalgia of 'Desh', Memories of Partition" writes that 'each individual refugee story is a tale of individual loss, of escape and survival in a new land; a narrative rendered especially poignant by the sudden whiff of nostalgia for a lost homeland or 'desh'. In the more jingoistic present, 'desh' has taken on a connotation like patriotic fervor. However, for refugees, as the personal narratives in this article reveal, 'desh' will forever remain as one's homeland, now only sustained by memories' (Basu Ray Chaudhury 5653). The migrants therefore left with only memories become the objects that links the present with the past but their 'desh' is nowhere in sight. Therefore, although the memories of these refugees are subjective in nature, but they can also act as a rich archive on the experience of displacement of millions. For these refugee migrants the concept of 'desh' remains associated with a particular cultural and spatial specificity even after years of 'exile'. Having been exiled from their foundations the word 'desh' carries a special significance. The notion of a lost home generates nostalgia and memories while searching for a new home away from home.

In this context Chandrima Karmakar writes in her article "The Conundrum of 'Home' in the Literature of the Indian Diaspora" how the concept of 'home' emerges as problematic space for the diasporic community and how being in the diaspora question one's sense of belonging which a continuum of one's past and present. She questions how one identifies home as it involves both consistence and imagination. This argument goes back to the theory of Homi Bhaba's *The Location of Culture* (1994) where he states that between the two nations that the

migrants left behind and the nation where they reside, is an 'interstitial space' occupied by the immigrants that consistently give rise to narratives that erase the defining boundaries of the nation. Karmakar further traces Roger Kennedy who states that having a home implies both having a physical entity, the materiality of dwelling in the house, but also something that goes beyond mere physicality into a subjective area that lies in the soul and therefore if exiled, we may be able to carry the sense of home with us though there is often a poignant yearning for the original home.[35]

Likewise, in this context Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined community' can be used to understand how the 'desh' was not an imaginary concept rather it existed in the past and currently exists in memory and nostalgia. Anderson's theory of imagined communities demonstrates subtlety and originality, showing how nations are not the determinate products of sociological conditions such as language, race or religion and that they have been imagined into existence. The writers of Partition literature emphasize on this 'imaginary' nature of the newly created nation through their writings. Therefore, when a nation is 'desh' it remains an 'imagined community' as Anderson would argue, an entity imagined into existence. According to him, nation is an 'imagined community' because the members of the smallest nation feel the communion in their minds even if they will never know others belonging to that community or meet them in life. This essence of nation inheres in a psychological bond which joins the people in one community and is not simply racial or tribal in nature but a historically constituted community of the people.[36]

Karmakar writes that we must not overlook the fact that there are several other governing factors that determine the immigrant's perception of 'home'. The experience of being a part of the Partition diaspora is much different for the first-generation immigrant as compared to the latter generation. This is effectively shown in the short story "An Evening of Prayer" by Selina Hossain. Hossain shows how for a character like Ahmed India will always be 'home' and not East Pakistan but in turn, it also creates a different meaning of 'home' for a member of different generation like Prateek whose birth in the newly created country Bangladesh make him twice-removed from his "roots". Thus, there is a stark difference as to how the post-independence diaspora relate themselves to 'home' or 'desh' differently from different generations.

[35]Karmakar, Chandrima. "The Conundrum of 'Home' in the Literature of the Indian Diaspora: An Interpretive Analysis." *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2015, pp. 77–90.
[36]Basu Raychaudhury, Anasua. "Nostalgia of 'Desh', Memories of Partition." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 52, 2004, pp. 5653–5660.

In this context the feminist history of Bengal Partition could be stretched as the impact of Partition on the Bengali migrant women was complex yet positive. Archit Basu Guha-Choudhury in his article "Engendered Freedom: Partition and East Bengali Migrant women" mentions Rachel Weber, a feminist geographer who feels that 'with the crumbling of the many walls that separated their existence from the outside world in East Bengal, the houses in Calcutta became susceptible to the mobilization of women into the political, economic, social and communal spheres' (Basu Guha-Choudhury 67). The economic impact on the women during the period was significant but they proved that they could move into the public sphere to tide over their necessity. Jyotirmoyee Devi's sexually assaulted female protagonist Sutara in *The River Churning* is one example of such a woman who became more than just a mere patriarchal conquest in a 'man-made' Partition. But unfortunately, women are still a marginalized section of society even though they have the capacity to create their own path to freedom.

In this context the Partition of Bengal brought about a number of changes in the lives of women refugees. Working opportunities outside the home increased manifold as they travelled from camp to camp or built lives in the refugee colonies in the metropolis of Calcutta or elsewhere in West Bengal. However, when economic hardship and destitution pushed them outside their homes to constitute a substantial percentage of West Bengal's workforce it meant that the shortage of employment in the state made the unemployed take up odd jobs, pushing up the numbers of the homeless in the city (Sengupta 188).

Jasodhara Bagchi in a very perceptive article "Freedom in an idiom of loss" writes that the resistance produced during the Swadeshi or anti-colonial movement in the first phase of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 attempted by Lord Curzon represented Bengal or India in a feminine form. Nation as a feminine form was considered as both the avenging and the affectionate reassuring mother. Further this identification of chastity with honor went on to make women 'potential victims' of communal conflicts, defining nationhood through wifehood and motherhood.[37]

Bagchi also assesses the event from a feminist perspective and supports how 'the woman's body is a pawn even in the game of nation building.' Jyotirmoyee Devi's "Epar Ganga Opar Ganga" (The River Churning) written in 1967 is rare example of a Partition story in

[37]For details study see Jasbir Jain. "Daughters of Mother India in Search of a Nation: Women's Narratives about the Nation." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no. 17, 2006, pp. 1654–1660.

Bengali written by a woman. It focuses on violence or possibly rape of a Hindu girl in East Bengal who surprisingly faced marginalization by her own community which keeps alive the class-caste entity of the hegemonic group in post-Partition secular India.[38]

Jasbir Jain effectively explores Partition narratives, more specifically those written by women across the border and the dominant perception of women's writing. She mentions that among 12 short stories in Debjani Sengupta's collection *Mapmaking*, only three are by women. However, very likely women may not have written in such abundance or their treatment of the Partition may have been too personal though a large number of stories about the Partition are about women and children, yet they do not represent the women's perspective.[39]

Jain further argued that even though the women-centric stories move away from power politics, but they explore a sense of belonging: how does one belong? Therefore, the memories of the past crowd the mind, memories of home, a childhood full of freedom all come to rest in a new land for the characters like that of the old women in Ritwik Ghatak's short story "The Road". Dayamoyee is Sikdar's autobiography. However, even though the journey from an exploration of violence to guilt has been a long one, but there is need to imagine the nation outside the limits of patriarchal control or the notion of a universal concept applicable to all. The iconic figure of the mother goddess looms so large, as to render the woman herself invisible or reduce her to a sacrificial object. The refugee syndrome imprisons women more than the men as we see in Manik Bandopadhay's "The Final Solution" and Pratibha Basu's "Flotsam and Jetsam" that centralize prostitution as a possible way of surviving. Bandopadhaya uses the woman's agency to assassinate the exploiter (who is in political terms an Indian and a Hindu), while Pratibha Basu juxtaposes the gentleness of the Muslim neighbor with the hypocrisy of the Hindu 'savior'. The old woman is pushed to her death from a driving vehicle. The first, a male writer's perception, uses the Kali image and the second projects a woman duped into the final sacrifice. We see that both the writers present a conflict-laden surrender on the part of men and therefore the question that arises is whether the national construct of morality is a single-sex affair?

Similar issues can also be seen in the cross-border relationship handled differently in Dibyendu Palit's short story "Alam's Own House". Alam's journey to Kolkata from across the

[38]Bagchi, Jasodhara. *Freedom in an Idiom of Los*, www.india-seminar.com/2002/510/510 jasodhara bagchi.htm.
[39]Jasbir Jain. "Daughters of Mother India in Search of a Nation: Women's Narratives about the Nation." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no. 17, 2006, pp. 1654–1660.

border is full of uncertain expectations and memories. For some time Raka, the woman he loves, daughter of a former family friend, has learnt to hide behind words. His letters go unanswered. Perhaps Alam has missed that moment, perhaps there is no going back to the past now that borders had separated them, now that it is 'us' and 'them'. The country of birth, motherland and nation may not coincide. Alam is unable to come to terms with his conflicting moods of celebration and uncertainty as he no longer was a member of a community or recognized for his own worth but branded by his religious identity. Alam notices that his mother's favorite tree is no longer outside the entrance of his former house and eventually realizes there is no room for him in Raka's life as well. She opted out of the relationship accusing him of wanting to uproot her after being uprooted once by the shift to Kolkata from Dhaka and therefore she is not ready for another dislocation. Thus, even though in "Alam's Own House" not only men get hurt but women too feel the pain[40] here again we see that the consciousness of Raka is explored through Alam's own consciousness.

The major difference between narratives of East and West lies in their treatment of time. The Bengal Partition stories do not treat Partition as a historical event or as an event from the past that ended in 1947 but rather gives a very indirect allusive, nostalgic tale which is connected to present time for the people of the two Bengals. These stories from the two Bengals often share same literary expressions, images, myths because of its sameness of language, heritage and culture. Many of these stories also stand testimony to plurality and represent contra-history in a way that questions and sometimes overturns the cruel lesson of history.

The Partition as a sub-genre in Bengali fiction and cinema may be called 'colony fiction'.[41] The stories of this genre indirectly are mediated through the lives of the refugees, their struggle for existence, pain and loss who came to inhabit the colonies. Some stories in the collection of *Mapmaking* are set in the years 1946-48 when families left their homes, trudged through hostile territories to reach starving and in a half-dead condition. Pratibha Basu and Manik Bandopadhyay's stories captured how the Sealdah station in Calcutta became home for millions that arrived from East Bengal. Dibyendu Palit's story "Alam's Own House" is based on two families from the two Bengals who exchanged property during the Partition and the effect of memories on our sense of belonging and identity.

[40]For detailed study please see Jasbir Jain. "Daughters of Mother India in Search of a Nation: Women's Narratives about the Nation." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no. 17, 2006, pp. 1654–1660.
[41]For detail study please read Debjani Sengupta's afterword to the anthology of Bengal Partition stories *Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals*.

The stories of Akhtaruzzaman Elias and Imdadul Haq Milan are about the minority Hindus left behind in East Bengal, whom economic reasons held back from going across the border. Selina Hossain's and Ateen Bandopadhyay's stories capture vividly the horror of flight, of desperate attempts by ordinary people to save human lives and Hasan Hafizur Rehman's stories depicts the futility of it all. Similarly, Syed Waliullah's story "The Story of a Tulsi Plant" is a sad comment on the helplessness of ordinary people and their failure to understand the forces of history that so remorselessly shaped their lives. These stories looked at life with a realism and acquired a new awareness of the economic and political reality of the country and tried to fill the gap as discussed by William Van Schendel in his article "Working Through Partition: Making a Living in the Bengal Borderlands" on how the Partition has always been considered as the break-up of colonial India in 1947 and has been the subject of considerable serious historical research, but almost exclusively from two distinctive perspectives: as a macropolitical event or as a cultural and personal disaster. Remarkably, very little is known about the socioeconomic impact of Partition on different localities and individuals and how ordinary people experienced the macropolitical event of state fragmentation are still mired in shadows.[42] Likewise, Joya Chatterjee also maintains that we are yet to grasp the full impact of the Partition on gender relations, household structures, and caste practices, let alone religious behavior. More demanding work needs to be done before we can be sure how the Partition affected the economy, demography, and processes of urbanization across South Asia.[43] These Partition stories effectively attempt to open a window to see and understand the impact of Partition on both sides of the border with fresh perspectives.

In this context, Selina Hossain's story is a unique one from various aspects because not much has been said about the Muslim migrant women's suffering during and in the aftermath of the Partition. "An Evening of Prayer" is about a birth in transit and metaphorically the birth of a nation is followed by the birth of the child. The story revolves around the strengthening of Bengali nationalism and questions about borderland to show unresolved issues of nation, identity and home that reflects the long-lasting impact of the Partition by portraying characters like Ali Ahmad and his family who leave India for Bangladesh only to realize that they do not have a motherland of their own. Thus, the story highlights the unresolved issues of Partition and the crisis it put people through.

[42]Van Schendel, Willem. "Working Through Partition: Making a Living in the Bengal Borderlands." *International Review of Social History*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2001, pp. 393–421.
[43]Chatterji, Joya. "Partition Studies: Prospects and Pitfalls." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 2, 2014, pp. 309.

Few of these stories were written after 1971 and the writers have shared experiences and their personal memories of the Partition on the basis of political belief that have shaped their narrative and, in some cases, they have skillfully intertwined the past and present, the individual and the communal. The autobiographic elements are seen in Hasan Azizul Haq's story who was forced to move to East Pakistan. In these stories the writers critically address and question the issue of identity in post-Independence Bengal from the personal to the national level. The formation of East Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971 motivated the writers to seek through their writing the cultural identity of Bengal amidst new political divisions and physical boundaries.

After the 1947 Partition, the immense brutality suffered by the people along the western frontier of Punjab during 'the transfer of population' was a singular episode but the eastern frontier in Bengal, on the other hand, experienced a protracted process of border-crossing that continued (and still does) through the decades. In the anxiety prone atmosphere that prevailed in Bengal in the late 1940s as a result of the political posturing of the British, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, Calcutta was the most affected by a sudden and vast influx of people.[44]

However, the writers from Bangladesh and West Bengal also tried to avoid violence because unlike the Western Partition 'trouble' on the Eastern front was less dramatically bloody and dragged on for several years. Semanti Ghosh also writes that almost without exception, these writers from the two Bengals tended to deal more with the subtle and sensitive aspects of the Partition and not with the terror and trauma of the event as if the mindless violence was not a theme worthy of literary attention and literary expression. Therefore, the author preoccupied themselves with the emotional journey and practical hardships after Partition and by doing so they deliberately avoided the subject of harsher realities of revenge, bloodlust or ethnic cleansing. They would rather focus on the gradual unfolding of psychological drama resulting from the untold violence.[45]

[44]Mukherjee, Tutun. "Metaphor, Memory, Myth: Recasting Partition as in Salil Choudhury, Manas Ray, Helene Cixous." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 19, 2008, pp. 72–79.
[45]Ghosh, Semanti. *Silence: a Deliberate Choice?* www.india-seminar.com/2013/645/645_semanti_ghosh.htm.

The writers have also depicted the clash of "Bengali" identity with the political use of Islam or Hinduism. Bengali identity highlights the secularist tradition that was present in pre-Partition period. The Language Movement arose in 1950s that eventually led to the creation of Bangladesh. But this identity failed to resolve historical and political anxieties that were created with the use of religious identity. This religion-based division of the country further anticipated many questions like communalism and the rise of religious fundamentalism. Communalism refers to the politics of building one's community around a religious identity and defines this community identity as fundamental and fixed. This politics of communalism however also suppresses distinction within the community and emphasizes the essential unity of the community against other communities which promote conflict, hatred and violence. Therefore, such attempt to see a religious community as a nation led to an antagonistic attitude against other religious communities best represented in the short story "The Infidel" by Ateen Bandopadhyay from the collection of short stories of *Mapmaking*.

The mainstream nationalist history of the Partition of Bengal lays stress on the division of the two parts of the subcontinent, India and Bangladesh in terms of patriotism. However, later narratives have been written about the rape and abduction of women but neglect the effect of Partition that cause fragmented and painful memories especially for women, economically downtrodden, religious minorities and Dalits and privileges the narratives of a specific class, gender and community.

Sarbani Banerjee argues that the main opponents of the sentimentalist dimension of "The Refugee Experience" are the Hindu elite male refugees and who therefore had obscured the possibility of counternarratives that are, for instance, recounted from the position of the unconventional refugee woman or Dalit refugee man. Banerjee finely writes why the non-*bhadralok*'s gender, class and caste experiences need to be documented in considering a multi-dimensional view of Partition.[46] She further uses Bidyut Chakrabarty's comments who elucidates that 'it is not enough to know the popular upper and middle-class narratives on Partition because many of these stories are situated against the background of the high politics of Partition' (Banerjee 2). In this case, "A Life Long Ago" by Sunanda Sikdar, is an exceptional memoir of an East Bengali immigrant woman's perception that lies outside the purview of

[46]Banerjee, Sarbani, and Techno India University. "Beyond Sentimentality: 'Tale' of an Alternate *Bhadramahila* Refugee." *Postcolonial Text*, 2018. <www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/2214/2186.>

conventional history. This story associates the multifarious categories of the Partition tale that does not conform to official accounts. The narrative filled with realities of East Bengali rural everyday life goes beyond the mainstream accounts consisting of political allegiance and political factions such as the Congress and the Muslim League.

The historical events of the Partition from both West and East however have certain traits in common. One is that the victims often concealed their experiences even from their families, unable to express these horrors, unable to communicate. As a result, this silence is used as a trope in Partition Literature as Ashis Nandy in his foreword to the book *Mapmaking* writes that the victims of Partition in West and East India were unable to transform their experiences into literature. In fact, Nandy is so forceful in justifying this position that it appears almost odd to read his essay as a foreword to a book which proves just the opposite that there is a literature on Partition, even in the Eastern part of India.

Tutun Mukhejee further adds "The terrifying knowledge of the violent events that preceded and followed the Partition of India stunned the people of the two countries into a silence that lasted several decades. Only in the 1980s did the pall of silence that had stifled the recounting of the experiences of the Partition seem to break. Different types of recollections and articulations began to appear in different media along with debates and discussions about them" (Mukherjee 72).

Why the victims have remained silent and why Bengal Partition remains an overlooked area for a long period of time remains a difficult question to answer. However, Asish Nandy writes 'one answer would be the violence of 1947-1948 brought out the worst in us' (Sengupta x) and South Asians were left in bafflement by the division of the two new countries and the birth of a new state and tried to wipe out the memories of the Partition and thus silence became their psychological defense. Sunanda Sikdar's "A Life Long Ago" captures the same silence that Dayamoyee had remained in for years to suppress her painful past. And according to Nandy the political scientist and historian of the first two post-Independence generations have never confronted this issue of the long-term consequences of violence (Sengupta xii). Likewise, in the case of Dayamoyee's remembrance about her village, Digpait in East Bengal and in Ritwik Ghatak's "The Road" the little boy's nostalgic song about the idyllic pastoral utopias that are invoked by the refugees from East Bengal to talk about their past is also a way of burying a painful past.

However, this silence was also a way through which the South Asians could start a new life and contain bitterness, a way of repairing community life, interpersonal trust and the known moral World. Therefore, even Dayamoyee feels suffocated at her new homeland, Kolkata even after spending a long forty years here but still she tries to adjust in the new environments just to fail again and again. Similarly, in Hasan Hafizur Rehman's "Two More Deaths" speaks of a pervasive melancholia that comes from a cramping sense of guilt of the moral inheritance and the silence that could be the other side of it (Sengupta xvii). Thus, Partition brings in its wake a postcolonial modernity as the nation state marks its citizen within a new territoriality, yet the tropes of modernity are unable to encapsulates the refugee's experience as he/she negotiates the alien metropolis thereby, the contingencies of refugee-hood re-inscribe the imaginary of Partition (Sengupta 189).

In this context, refugee or one who seeks refuge; the term suggests a sense of 'refugeeness' that is rooted not only in flight but also in the displacement of individuals or groups of people through the decades of rehabilitation. However, one must not forget that the refugees from East Pakistan into West Bengal did not come into a totally unfamiliar or 'alien' sociocultural set-up. The existing cultural and linguistic affinities must have been reassuring, although the 'refugees' from the 'other Bangla' (East Bengal) did retain a 'difference' by their fond use of dialectal variations of 'Bangal bhasha'.[47]

Debjani Sengupta prefers to see this kind of literature narrating the hardships of the refugees, as a sub-genre of the Bangla Partition narratives from India. According to Sengupta; 'Films, short stories, novels, plays belonging to this genre explore the life of people living in refugee colonies that grew like mushrooms in around the urban centers in West Bengal' (Sengupta 196). In these narratives the Partition of 1947 appears as a not as 'the past' but is like a continuous struggle. The lives of the refugees, their daily fight for existence, their pain and loss are in a large way a comment on the Partition.

As a form of subaltern intervention, these narratives represent the pain and violence that attended the lives of the ordinary people which is far more important than the political fact of Partition. This research attempts to use Ranajit Guha's theory of the subaltern and focus on the experience of subordinated classes or the 'other' and locates Partition historiography within the larger framework of colonialist and nationalist historical writings. From the beginning itself the

[47]For more information see Mukherjee, Tutun. "Metaphor, Memory, Myth: Recasting Partition as in Salil Choudhury, Manas Ray, Helene Cixous." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 19, 2008, pp. 72–79.

school of subaltern historiography has resulted in a major theoretical transition and posed a vigorous challenge to South Asian historiography. According to Gramsci subaltern is referred to the inferior class' subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language and culture.[48] Therefore, this study is an effort to see and rethink history from the perspective of the subaltern and to give them their due in the historical event of the Partition. This new contribution ended up giving form and substance to the Partition by bringing forth marginalized histories. 'Elitist' historiography was unable to manifest the condition of the ordinary as it could not go beyond the limitations of their elitism.

These narratives however showed why there is an essential need to represent the 'other'? The authors of the autobiography *Dayamoyeer Kotha* and other writers from *Mapmaking* therefore follow Marxian dialectical materialism by recounting the event directly and realistically. All these writers represent the indigent class who lived beyond the frontiers of genteel life and thus raised several questions regarding social reality. These narratives therefore consciously or unconsciously take up the picture of the struggle that ordinary people go through and express it in their works. Moreover, their social existence conditions the consciousness of the writers like Manik Bandopadhyay, who writes how economic necessity made Mallika and her sister-in-law give into prostitution in "The Final Solution". Thus, contemporary social reality shaped Bandopadhyaya's orientation in representing the victimization of the poor, illiterate laboring classes during Partition and its aftermath.

The stories in the anthology *Mapmaking* and in *Dayamoyeer Kotha* depict the responses and emotions of ordinary people caught in the tragedy of Partition when tolerance, respect and compassion broke down. Written by some of the region's finest authors in Bangla and translated from Bangla to English – these works make us aware of the possible responses to ethnic, religious and national divisiveness. Reading the literature of Partition is bound to arouse comparisons with situations in other parts of the world, where sectarian violence seems unstoppable and solution intractable. Where will we find the wisdom to create a new future? *Mapmaking* suggestions some answers and the probable consequences if we fail.

These writers from Bangladesh and Bengal have a simple and unquestioned faith in the power of literature to portray reality, no matter how terrible it is. Curiously, the most moving

[48]Biswas, Amrita. "Research Note on Subaltern Studies | Scinapse | Academic Search Engine for Paper." *Scinapse, Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*, 25 Mar. 2010, scinapse.io/papers/1938459122.

story is "The Story of a Tulsi Plant" by Syed Waliullah which centers on an innocuous Tulsi tree, beloved in Hindu households, but left to wilt by the illegal Muslim occupants of a house. This becomes the symbol of the antagonism ruling the human world. Similarly, the description of the refugee marches from East to West Bengal or vice-versa during those dreadful times in overcrowded trains is represented in two short stories. Women give birth on a train, heightening the drama, arrive at their destination with nothing but the clothes they wear and end up joining prostitution. This is the case in Pratibha Basu's "Flotsam and Jetsam" and Manik Bandopadhyay's "The Final Solution". However, there are also stories where Hindus help their Muslim neighbors and vice-versa as in Ateen Bandopadhyay's "The Infidel". Thus, these stories by the six writers from West Bengal and the other six from Bangladesh proves that there has been a literary preoccupation with the Partition in the East on both sides of the border. Although these writers belong to different communities and write for different audiences, their concerns and literary styles are ultimately similar.[49]

Mapmaking thus consists of stories that represent the Partition as a fact of history that in turn leads us to the human saga of loss of country and family, of homelessness and of the search for a promised land in both Indian and Bangladeshi Partition literature. These writers have put down their own experiences or fictionalized the barbarity of the events, and were aimed at relieving painful memories and emotions, and at communicating grief such that similar atrocities may never recur in the future. Moreover, Sikdar's autobiography also does not fail to portray bitter truths about human nature and reveals the ugly distortion of the human mind and the futility of perpetuating division among people on the basis or religion and creed. It is a reminder that while the memory of the Partition persists in mind, the breaches in the society can never be healed.

[49]Kämpchen, Martin. *Indian Literature*, vol. 47, no. 6 (218), 2003, pp. 217–220.

Conclusion

During the last few years, renewed attention has been given to what is called Partition Literature. Partition Literature in the form of fictional works and memoirs describe and explore the events that occurred when the British colonial government departed from South Asia, and the nation of Pakistan was created by hastily drawing borders that carved out portions of eastern and western India to create new countries. Authors writing about the enormity of the social violence and the complexity of individual experience of the Partition were, and continue to be, challenged by a difficult task. The shock of incomprehensible barbaric acts drove many into silence, denial, rage, guilt, lamentation and despair.

However, the Partition narratives that I have explored in this study are implicitly concerned with the realization of agency or identity even in the wake of the enormous upheavals, social, economic and political that the Partition brought with it. These narratives offer the possibility of action, of coping with the loss of a homeland, of livelihood and exile. The question of identity which was in flux after the Partition in 1947 and in 1972 became a crucial theme in Bengal Partition Literature. These exceptional narratives remarkably address identity problems experienced by both women and men belonging to both sides of the border and do not only recount the prominent stories of Hindu migration from East Bengal to West Bengal.

Debjani Sengupta's anthology *Mapmaking* comprises of stories from two South Asian countries – India and Bangladesh. The works here focus on the cataclysmic experiences of Partition in 1947 and its aftermath, including the Bangladesh War of Independence in 1971 written by the writers from the two Bengals. Many of these works have never before appeared in English translations or have not been readily accessible to English-speaking readers. It serves as a sample of a rich and vast body of literature produced in the South Asian subcontinent. These stories in *Mapmaking* depict the responses and emotions of ordinary people caught in a tragic turning point in history, when tolerance, respect, and compassion broke down irretrievably.

This study on Bengal Partition Literature seeks an unbiased understanding of inter-community and inter-national relationships in an age when fanaticism, communal strife, and the politics of identity and 'otherness' are represented in literature. The narrative of Sikdar's autobiography *Dayamoyeer Kotha* and other short stories from the anthology *Mapmaking* show how the politics of divisiveness produce only tragic results along with various other underlying themes such as nationhood, victimization of women, class-caste structure, economic issues and

sectarian migrations that enrich our understanding of the Partition. In the powerful literary works of these authors the multifarious colours of the Partition are revealed and depicts that there was no singular experience about the Partition and how it affected individuals and groups depended upon one's location in the post-colonial polity and on factors such as religious affiliation, gendered identities, class and caste status, occupation and region.[50]

In the first wave of scholarship surrounding this event historians had concentrated on its political dimension. However, eventually the focus shifted towards examining experiences and memories of the Partition and these narratives are never simple 'retellings' but contain gaps and silences as if what they speak of cannot ever be fully known. The lower class or gendered experience of Partition violence that Ateen Bandopadhyay in "The Infidel" and Pratibha Basu in "Floatsam and Jetsam" explore show what is at stake in the practices of agency and self through the lives of women, lower caste characters and marginalized refugees.

Partition has been of deep concern to the authors in *Mapmaking* and in *Dayamoyeer Kotha.* Their subject was and continues to be the working of the human mind and heart at the collective, as well as at the individual level. Their approach rather subtly reveals essential human values such as social justice, compassion, and love through an impartial narration of life's experience. The Stories by the Writers from two Bengal in *Mapmaking* and Sikdar's memoirs represent humaneness and compassion that knits together the stories of shared, cross-border tragedies by both Indian and Bangladeshi writers[51]. However, some of them like "The Infidel", "Flotsam and Jetsam" have rendered events with stark realism, others have created parabolic stories and explored the psychic responses that give rise to nostalgia, the wish to recall and value a lost connectedness that transcends communal strife. Few stories have depicted the uncertainties that continued to haunt the lives of the ordinary like of Sonadas Baul in "The Ballads of Sonadas Baul" by Imdadul Haq Milan, and few have shown how the families which stubbornly resisted the impact of migration even after the Partition had to face manifold socio-economic pressures. This is best represented in Hasan Azizul Haq's "The Cage" and in Sunanda Bhattacharya's "The Narrative of Kerech Buri".

[50]Sengupta, Anwesha, and Ishan Mukherjee. "Legacy of Partition: Foundations of the Indian Nation." *Economic and Political weekly*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2018, pp. 40-42.
[51]Bag, Shamik. "A River Runs through It." 20 Jan. 2012,www.livemint.com/Leisure/NHb1FGSlWRjyOkIXSeg7eM/A-river-runs-through-it.html.

Although nostalgia and forgetting appear in some examples of Partition literature in many stories, the protagonists struggle to remember and to overcome memory in order to recover. The intense process of remembering enables them to put their fragmented, bruised selves back together, to recover a dignified identity for characters like that of Dayamoyee who supresses her longing for 'desh' and her wish to return. Similar scenes can be seen in Ritwik Ghatak's story "The Road" that tell us of the old woman and her grandson's nostalgic song about the beauty of East Pakistan, their home. But they know that they are doomed because they cannot forget or because they cling only to sweet memories, hoping to escape the pain of the cruel present.

This dissertation, having set out to explore the dynamics of history through a critical examination of the autobiography and short stories written on the theme of the 1947 and 1971 Partition, has also brought to the fore certain relations between historiography and literature. The literary pieces examined in this thesis offer an alternative depiction of 'everyday' rather than rely on the state-sponsored historiography and of powerful men's sentimental stories. This research argues that the Partition was something more than a political divide. It had far-reaching socio, economic, psychological and cultural consequences on the lives of the migrants and concentrates on the life history of the marginalized people who migrated around the period of 1947 and 1971 from West Bengal to East Bengal (Bangladesh) or vice-versa in search of a safer place.[52]

This research argues why there is a need to re-examine the issue of Partition migration from the perspective of the minorities who faced the Partition both physically and mentally. It finally leads to the realization of how the Partition was only a political solution to a hollow ethnic conflict. The violence and upheaval of the Partition that included abduction and sexual assaults on women became a prominent theme in fictional writings and historical accounts after the destructive event. There was a denial and silence about women's experience of the Partition. In this context, Manik Bandopadhyay's "The Final Solution", and Waliullah's "The Story of a Tulsi Plant" express the silence of women but this research further shows how their stories of personal trauma and victimization are recorded through men's consciousness.

[52]Sunanda Sikdar's *Dayemoyeer Kotha* wriiten by a female writer represented the mutual migration and pathetic shift in ordinary people life for both the religious community. This autobiography talked about the class and caste and religion-based discrimination that was practiced during pre and post-Independence period. This autobiography attempted to create a contra history and argued why the Partition event was not for the majority but for the minority as well as this impacted on the ordinary people the most.

The writers from West Bengal focus on the plight of thousands of refugees who had crossed over from East Bengal to West Bengal and their struggle for rehabilitation. In contrast the writings from East Bengal though they express certain misgivings are shown to welcome the Partition because it offered a space to claim a separate identity. This can be seen in Selina Hossain's story "An Evening for Prayer" which is about a birth in transit and metaphorically the birth of a nation is followed by the birth of a child. Through the metaphor of childbirth, the writer marks a new journey and hopes for better prospects for their new nation. This story revolves around the strengthening of the claim for a separate Bengali Muslim identity and nationalism. It raises questions about borderlands to show unresolved issues of nation, identity and home that reflect the long lasting impact of the Partition by portraying characters such as Ali Ahmad and his family who leave India for Bangladesh only to realize that they do not have a motherland of their own.[53] In view of this one might conclude that this study gives form and shape to individual micro-history through Bengali novels, short stories or memoirs that offer unusual multi-layered experiences that the Partition brought in its wake.

Moreover, it has been observed that even after much attention has been paid to the Partition and the migration during and after the Partition its impact on the North Eastern regions remains unaddressed. Similarly, insufficient attention has been paid to the violence of the Bihar Riots 1946-48 in Eastern India. Very little has been written about the Bihari Muslims even though they suffered not once but twice – first when British India was divided and later when East Pakistan became the sovereign nation of Bangladesh.[54] As Ashis Nandy writes in his foreword to *Mapmaking*, future studies should focus on the victims of Bihar who had a different kind of stake in the idea of Pakistan that produced some of the most ruthless killers and ardent collaborations with the Pakistani army when it went on a genocidal spree.[55]

My research could not focus much on the aspect the of caste and migration in context of Bengal Partition as reflected in Bengali Dalit Literature and could be worked on in future studies. Bengali Dalit Partition discourse has been dominated by the accounts and memoirs of the Bengali *bhadralok*. The experience of growing up as a Dalit refugee in and outside West

[53]M.R.A Baig writes in "The Partition of Bengal and Its Aftermath" "It seems clear that few Muslims, to begin with, and practically Muslims, to end with, supported the movement. This is not very strange since it was obvious that the formation of the new Province, in which they formed a majority, was in their interests from every point of views. Their demand for separate representation was the logical consequence. However, we must not forget that at times course, was that the Muslims were also considered as non-Bengalis.

[54]However, the suffering of the Bihari Muslim got the attention in Papiya Ghosh's recent released book, based on archival research *Partition and the South Asian Diaspora: Extending the Subcontinent.*

[55]Sengupta, Debjani. *Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals*. Amaryllis, 2011.

Bengal remains mostly undocumented and unknown. Therefore, writers like Jatin Bala in his book titled *Stories of Social Awakening: Reflections of Dalit Refugee Lives of Bengal*[56] provide a vivid description about all displaced migrants who have experienced violence and trauma on one hand and on the other hand, have experienced discrimination, inequality and oppression encountered in their everyday lives because of their inferior status in the caste hierarchy.

[56]For detailed review see Sinharay, Praskanva. "Unheard Stories of Partitioned Lives." *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. 52, no.41, 2017, pp. 38-39.

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