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## Partition Literature: A Study of Intizār Husain

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### I

IN an interview given in July 1974,<sup>1</sup> Intizār Husain, one of the most perceptive creative writers of Pakistan, had this to say about the experience of migration that was the direct outcome of the Partition of India in 1947:

A decade ago when I was talking about the experience of migration and the articles I wrote concerning it,<sup>2</sup> I was in a state of great hope and optimism. It was then my feeling that in the process of the Partition we had suddenly, almost by accident, regained a lost, great experience—namely, the experience of migration, *hijrat*, which has a place all its own in the history of the Muslims—and that it will give us a lot. But today, after our political ups and downs, I find myself in a different mood. Now I feel that sometimes a great experience comes to be lost to a nation; often nations forget their history. I do not mean that a nation does, or has to, keep its history alive in its memory in every period. There also comes a time when a nation completely forgets its past. So, that experience, I mean the experience of migration, is unfortunately lost to us and on us. And the great expectation that we had of making something out of it at a creative level and of exploiting it in developing a new consciousness and sensibility—that bright expectation has now faded and gone.<sup>3</sup>

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Urdu consonants *ṭē*, *ṣē*, *ẓāl*, *rē*, *ṣuād*, *zuād*, *ṭō'ē*, and *zō'ē* have been transliterated in this paper as t, s, z, r, ṣ, z, ṭ, and z; transliteration of other Urdu letters will be found self-explanatory.

<sup>1</sup> This was given to the present writer at Lahor, Pakistan. The text has appeared in India in the literary journal *Shab-khūn*, Vol. 8, No. 96 (July–September 1975), under the title, '*Intizār Husain aur Muḥammad 'Umar Maiman kē darmiyān ek bāt-chēt.*' An English translation of this interview by Bruce R. Pray, along with other writings of Intizār Husain, will appear in a special issue of the *Journal of South Asian Literature*, being currently put together by the present writer.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., '*Hamārē 'ahd kā adab,*' in *Savērā*, No. 31, pp. 8–17.

<sup>3</sup> 'Interview,' *Shab-khūn*, Vol. 8, No. 96, p. 19.

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It is Intizār Ḥusain's conclusion that the totally unwelcome interruption of Muslim life that came in the wake of the Partition of India, and the ensuing bloodbath had, at least, the redeeming value of having provided the Indian Muslims with a sense of continuity about a fundamental and recurrent historical experience—*hijrat*<sup>4</sup> (*hijra*, in Arabic)—and that, therefore, on creative level, just as on any other level, it was expected to have enriched Muslims, but, unfortunately, it failed to do so.

According to Ḥusain, the creation of Pakistan not only gave the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent a sense of direction and purpose, a present and the hope for a future, but also a past, or, at least, the desire to know their past. The unchallenged ascendancy of such ideas as nationalism, love of humanity, reform of the society in Urdu literature in time yielded to a wholly new theme focused on the experience of 'migration,' which became the dominant experience of the time immediately following Partition. The experience/theme of 'migration' gained greater currency among Urdu writers although it did not completely oust other themes, which continued to be cultivated by a number of them. Numerically small, these writers nevertheless stand out prominently in the history of Urdu letters because they allowed their inner selves, their modes of perception and feeling to be affected by the experience of 'migration.' Thus, a large segment of Indo-Pakistan Muslim community did feel the impact of this experience in one form or another, and a group of poets and prose writers, however small, did consciously try to make this experience the pivotal concern of its creative endeavour. The question of mental migration was posed even for those who had not physically migrated.<sup>5</sup>

*The hijrat*, in its widest possible sense and with all its ramifications, has a place all its own in the history of the Muslims. 'It is a recurrent phenomenon,' writes Ḥusain, 'which through a long and arduous process of suffering experienced both on external and internal planes [of the self] succeeds in transforming itself eventually into a major creative experience.'<sup>6</sup> In those stormy days of 1947, it was not simply a 'question of migrating from one region to another, rather, it was one of migrating from an old to a new country.'<sup>7</sup> It was a creative moment in which Prophet Muḥammad's migration from Mecca to Medina was reenacted, with all the concomitant freedom to give direction to an encapsulated

<sup>4</sup> As far as I am aware, Ḥusain is the only Muslim writer who has given this experience a dimension both in time and space.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 'Hamārē 'ahd kā adab,' *Savērā*, No. 31, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

creative force. Thus conceived, the *hijrat* would be seen as a progression from an external event to an intense, internal spiritual 'experience.' In fact, this was the central theme of that time and was treated with particular intensity and fondness by such writers as Qurratu 'l-'Ain Ḥaidar, A. Ḥamid, Nāṣir Kāẓmī and Intiẓār Ḥusain.

The new experience greatly affected the perception and judgements of writers. They now began to look at the past as not entirely negative, to be best forgotten, but also as having some intrinsic merit. The experience of migration made it possible for the writer to reassess his earlier, totally negative view of past cultures and societies.<sup>8</sup> In the domain of poetry, the new experience contributed to the resuscitation of the *ghazal*, (which had been stifled to a premature death by the ascendancy of the *nazm*), and transformed it with a new and astonishingly powerful and exuberant series of images.<sup>9</sup>

Yet there is a pervading sense of gloom, skepticism and failure in Ḥusain's words because this dominant experience failed to inspire enduring works of literature. He, moreover, sees this literary failure as in some sense related to a general failure in the political world. In his sense of failure lies the reality of the betrayal of an ideal. No endeavour, whether in the realm of literature or in the domain of politics, approaches this ideal.

Ḥusain's observations do incorporate a substantial core of truth. Except for occasionally brilliant flashes, the entire corpus of Urdu writing inspired by the political event of the Partition does not, indeed, constitute what Ḥusain would consider lasting and enduring literature.<sup>10</sup> Talking less categorically, however, one cannot deny that some good pieces of creative writing have also resulted from the experience of Partition.

## II

The term 'Partition Literature' is a vague one. The Partition of India was a multi-dimensional phenomenon which was bound to touch, as

<sup>8</sup> The Progressive writers were particularly fond of playing down the role of past societies and cultures.

<sup>9</sup> The revival of the *ghazal* itself may be viewed as an effort to define one's cultural personality; hence its predominance among the Urdu poets of Pakistan. The Progressive poets, on the other hand, generally preferred the *nazm*.

<sup>10</sup> A similar view has been expressed by Ramesh Mathur in regard to Hindi, for which see Ramesh Mathur and M. Kulasrestha, *Writings on India's Partition* (Calcutta: Simant Publications India, 1976), p. 17.

indeed it did, the Hindu and Muslim masses at different levels. For some it stirred up only memories of the rioting and bloodbath that followed. For some, especially for Muslims, the event necessitated defining their national identity and cultural personality. For Muslims, therefore, important questions were raised: What and where were their cultural roots? How are they to interpret the harsh reality of the moral fall of man within the larger and, perhaps, more enduring context of the Indo-Muslim civilization of the Subcontinent? Still others, once the anguish resulting from the communal violence had subsided, thought of the situation in pragmatic terms. They concerned themselves with the problems of social and emotional rehabilitation of the refugees, particularly female refugees, in their new homes.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the Partition offered a variety of facets and experiences, and different writers chose to emphasize various aspects. But the great majority of them generally wrote about the communal violence, which, in the consciousness of many, became the most representative aspect of the Partition experience. This tendency to limit the experience to one aspect is clearly misleading. I shall return to the reasons for the predominance of this tendency; for the present, however, any writing that poses or attempts to answer or even pursue a question inspired directly or indirectly by the Partition must be included within the body of Partition literature.

Why the tendency to limit the experience of Partition to only one of its offshoots, and an unnecessary offshoot at that? One answer that comes readily to mind is the near-universal impact of the rioting itself. There was hardly a Muslim family that had not lost one member or more in the process of migration, or had not at least been affected in some way by the incident. The rioting had totally seized the minds of people, its memory haunted them and kept them tormented, even after they had made it to the safety of the promised land. Thus the fiction that emerged during and soon after the heat and chaos of the Partition presents little more than variations on the all-pervasive theme of communal violence.

But this answer appears neither compelling nor sufficient. Upon reflection it becomes clear that communal violence cannot by itself constitute the very basis, or be an organic part, of a historical event—such an organic part that without it the realization of that event would be unthinkable. Indeed, had the year 1946 been used for a peaceful, planned and rapid population exchange and a methodical rehabilita-

<sup>11</sup> A representative work on this theme is Qudratu 'l-Lāh Shahāb's novelette *Yā khudā*.

tion, as was suggested by the Muslim League leaders and also by a few farsighted Congress leaders, the human massacre of 1947 on the Indian soil could have been averted.<sup>12</sup> Some of the more perceptive writers came to realize—and Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Askarī, a prominent Urdu critic, even went so far as to declare—that the rioting cannot become the subject of true literature.<sup>13</sup> Thus the rioting does not by itself give us much clue as to the necessity of the historical event of Partition whose one possible, though peripheral, outcome it was.

The predilection of the writer for communal violence as the only reality to have emerged from the Partition raises some disturbing questions about the world-view of the writer himself. What, if anything, did he see in the division of the country? Was it, or was it not, a historical necessity? Unfortunately, for most Urdu writers India’s division and the subsequent emergence of Pakistan had no deeper meaning. They could not view the incident within a larger historical and cultural context. Most of the stories woven around the theme of Partition leave one with the distinct impression that the writer is not here attempting to describe reality, but, rather, avoid it by focusing his attention on intrinsically less significant elements. The treatment remains superficial and artificial due perhaps to the desire to appear impartial. The hero is forced to react not according to the dictates of his personality and nature, but according to an ideal superimposed upon his individuality. The necessity or the forces leading to the Partition are hardly ever reflected upon, nor the specific problems resulting from the incident isolated for treatment, not at least at this early stage. One gets the impression that the writer does not like the Partition, that it has in his view given rise to deep human misery. One is therefore forced to conclude that the writer either looks at the Partition negatively or rejects it, but provides no compelling historical or rational basis for either judgement.

However tentative and cursory this negative attitude and rejection may be, it nevertheless flows directly from a world-view that was prevalent among the Urdu writers at the time of Partition. What was this world-view?

### III

At this point it is necessary to talk about the Progressive (Writers’)

<sup>12</sup> Mathur and Kulasrestha, *Writings on India’s Partition*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> As quoted in Mumtāz Shirīn, ‘*Pākistānī adab kē chār sāl*,’ in her *Mi’yār* (Lahore: Nayā Idārah, 1963), p. 171.

Movement (PM). The PM<sup>14</sup> was launched in the mid-thirties in the effort to restore to man his lost human dignity. For most of the Progressive writers, man, though the only meaningful reality in existence, was nevertheless a reality in the present moment.<sup>15</sup> All wars had to be fought in man's name and for his material betterment.<sup>16</sup> The Progressive writing was thus charged with the formidable task of promoting ideals of social justice and reform, and equal distribution of wealth. The PM declared war not only against the decadent forces operating within Muslim and Hindu societies, but also against the hated rule of the British. Indeed some writers, among them Rājindar Singh Bēdī, who otherwise had no affinity with the ideological formalism being promoted by the PM, nevertheless came under its influence because of its 'anti-imperialist slant.'<sup>17</sup> The imperialist designs of the alien British had to be thwarted if the programme of the PM itself was to make any headway.

<sup>14</sup> On this Movement, see Khalilu 'r-Raḥmān A'zamī, *Urdū meñ taraqqī-pasand taḥrīk* (Aligarh: Anjuman-e-Taraqqī-e-Urdū, 1972); Carlo Coppola, 'Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970: The Progressive Episode' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Chicago University, 1975); Hafeez Malik, 'Marxist Literary Movement in India and Pakistan,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (August 1967), pp. 649-64; Gōpāl Mittal, *Adab meñ taraqqī-pasandī* (Delhi: National Academy, 1958); Mumtāz Shiriñ, 'Taraqqī-pasand adab,' 'Pākistānī adab kē chār sāl,' and 'Fasādāt par hamārē afsānē,' in her *Mi'yār* (Lahore: Nayā Idārah, 1963), pp. 139-47, 171-98, and 199-228; Sajjād Ṣahīr, *Rōshnā'ī* (Delhi: Āzād Kitāb-ghar, 1959).

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it is revealing to note that much of the scathing criticism of Ṣabindra Nath Tagore by Akhtar Ḥusain Rā'ēpūrī (on him see Coppola, 'Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970,' n. 10 on p. 109) stems from the former's love of the past. Thus, Rā'ēpūrī writes, 'None of Tagore's literary achievements are free of this conflict of past and present. He has a great, extreme hatred for the present. . . . Not that life has expanded to infinity; rather, instead of expanding into eternity, it has shrunk into an instant of "today" and now' (as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 121).

<sup>16</sup> To quote selectively from the London version of the *Manifesto*: '... Indian literature, since the breakdown of classical literature, has had the fatal tendency to escape from the actualities of life. It has tried to find refuge from reality in spiritualism and idealism. . . . Witness the mystical devotional obsession of our literature, its furtive and sentimental attitude towards sex, . . . its almost total lack of rationality. . . . It is the object of our association to rescue literature and other arts from the priestly, academic and decadent classes in whose hands they have degenerated so long; to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people; and to make them the vital organ which will register the activities of life, as well as lead us to the future. . . . We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence to-day—the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation . . .' (as quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 63-4; for the full text of the *Manifesto* and its different versions, see pp. 63-6 and 161-4).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. 'Mahfil interviews Rajinder Singh Bedi,' *Mahfil*, Vol. 8, Nos 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1972), p. 147.

## IV

Even a fleeting perusal of the contents of the first few issues of the periodical *Savērā* (Lahore) will help delineate the drift of the Progressive thinking on the eve of India's partition and after. *Savērā* was a staunch supporter of the PM and at one time its semi-official organ.

On page 1 of Issue 2—undated, but which internal evidence reveals to have been published shortly before Partition, possibly in June or July 1947—*Savērā* defines itself as 'A Series [Devoted to the Transmission] of the Thought of Modern Writers.' This changes to 'Interpreter of the Creative Output of Progressive Writers' with Issue 3 and to 'Interpreter of Literature's Progressive Movement' with Issue 4. Thus, with Issue 4, *Savērā* becomes, avowedly, an organ of the Progressive writers.

Edited jointly by Aḥmad Nadīm Qāsmī—a well-known Pakistani Progressive and Secretary of the All Pakistan Progressive Writers' Association (APPWA)—and Naẓir Chaudhri—proprietor of the small publishing establishment *Nayā Idārah*—*Savērā* No. 2 exudes in its lyrical editorial an unmistakable optimism about India's coming liberation (*Savērā* being, thus, a most fitting title for a periodical launched on the eve of independence), as well as underscoring the need for revolution (pp. 4–5). By revolution is meant the alliance of the working and oppressed Indian masses against the British, who must quit India, and their hobnobbers, the native land-owning class, whose power must be irreparably broken. This revolutionary mandate is reinforced in the articles of Zāhīr Kāshmirī (pp. 40–8) and Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥusain (pp. 49–56), and in a translated extract from Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru's *The Discovery of India* (pp. 57–64).

The inclusion of the last only makes the absence of what is left out more conspicuous. Coming as it did on the very eve of India's Partition, what, one wonders, prompted *Savērā* No. 2 to abstain altogether from making any reference to either Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League, or the Muslim demand for Pakistan? If the editors of this issue and their many contributors chose to ignore questions of Muslim identity and culture in South Asia and the need for the creation of Pakistan, it was largely because a division of the country along religious and cultural lines was itself the greatest barrier in the realization of the Progressives' utopian dream of a free and socialist India based, preeminently, on communal harmony. Yet it was just this 'communal harmony' which Muslim leadership had the common sense



to visualize, as early as the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as unattainable so long as cultural incompatibility divided the Hindus and Muslims. Rather, the Progressives found Nehru's sentimental attachment to a united India more appealing. Nehru, it has been maintained, 'abhorred the very idea of communalism,' thought of it as 'an unbelievable anachronism,' and 'refused to recognise the communal problem as such and understood it only in terms of economic disparity.'<sup>18</sup>

Small wonder, therefore, if neither Iqbāl nor his idea of Pakistan could find a niche in this dream. Indeed both had become anathema to many Progressive Urdu writers already a good decade before Partition. Akhtar Ḥusain Rā'ēpūrī, a zealous Progressive who later became disenchanted with the PM and repudiated it, had, as early as 1933, denounced Iqbāl as a 'reactionary' and the idea of Pakistan as 'Islamic Fascism.'<sup>19</sup>

Amidst this idealistic thinking the stark reality of August 1947 was staring the Progressive full in the face. After a brief interruption *Savērā* resumed publication with Issue 3, which probably appeared in early 1948. One would have expected the reality of communal feeling and violence to have compelled even the most enthusiastic Progressives to rethink their earlier stance of a united India based on communal accord. Instead, *Savērā* No. 3, now joined by a third editor, Sāḥir Ludhyānvī—who later built himself no mean fortune in the Indian film industry as a prospering lyric writer—vehemently denounced the Partition as a sad byproduct of religious fanaticism. It also pledged to exert itself maximally in preserving the common literary and cultural heritage (p. 5), but felt no need to define or present even the broadest outline of this 'common literary and cultural heritage' it was pledging to preserve. Much of what was said in this and the next few issues had an air of being painfully *déjà vu*: August 15 had not led to true independence, owing to the alignment of the Indian bourgeoisie with the Anglo-American imperialist block; the writer must declare solidarity with workers and peasants, etc. No. 3, however, also carried a special section of writing, both prose and poetry, devoted to 'August 15' (pp. 10–52), and No. 4 mourned Gandhi's assassination and paid glowing tribute to his exceptional genius (pp. 12–30). (What has irked some Pakistani writers,

<sup>18</sup> Mathur, *Writings on India's Partition*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Fateḥ Muḥammad Malik, *Ta'aṣṣubāt* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Funūn, 1973), p. 77. Malik quotes similar views of Majnūfī Gōrakhpūrī (*ibid.*, pp. 76–7) and Firāq Gōrakhpūrī (*ibid.*, p. 77). See also Carlo Coppola, 'Iqbal and the Progressive Movement,' *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1977), pp. 49–57.

among them Fateḥ Muḥammad Malik, is that no such sentiment was shown by *Savērā* on Jinnah's death.<sup>20</sup>)

The Progressives of *Savērā* did not, in general, address themselves to questions of Muslim identity and culture, especially at a time when these questions had been given urgency by the events surrounding the Partition. Their importance was, however, evident to some older Progressives. Thus Chirāgh Ḥasan Ḥasrat,<sup>21</sup> 'Abdu 'l-Majīd Sālik<sup>22</sup> and M. D. Ta'ṣīr showed an acute awareness of these questions in their writings. This may have been due to their age, traditional training, and culture, but, more importantly, to the fact that Progressivism did not represent to them a narrow Marxist orientation. To extricate Progressivism alive from the bog of Marxism into which it had been pushed by the Progressives, Ta'ṣīr wrote, as early as 1948, an article in which he reviewed the status of dance, music, drama, film, painting, calligraphy, as well as other arts and crafts in contemporary Pakistan. He warned that unless the creation of Pakistan were used to infuse confidence in Muslim personality and identity, lack of faith and absence of belief so pervasive in the period would carry all cultural life away in its torrential sweep. He also bluntly asked the Pakistanis whether they had any pride in being Pakistanis.<sup>23</sup>

The answer came in the form of a ringing denunciation by no other than the Pakistani Marxist/Progressive poet, Ḥāhīr Kāshmirī.<sup>24</sup> Ḥāhīr also used this opportunity to subject Ṣamad Shāhīn and Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Askarī, both non-Progressives, to a vitriolic frontal attack. In Ḥāhīr's view, the former had outraged the Progressives by establishing a new (i.e., Pakistani) school of literature, the latter by dubbing them as disloyal to Pakistan. In reality, however, 'Askarī had tried only to articulate Muslim consciousness and define the role of literature within the newly-emergent Pakistan in his article 'Our Literary Consciousness and Muslims,' which appeared in the first issue of *Urdū Adab*.<sup>25</sup>

The Progressives, for their part, did not go beyond paying mere lip service to a vague and ill-defined 'common literary and cultural heritage.' Rather, they tried to purge from literature any discussion of a nascent Pakistani nationalism or ideology and Muslim culture. 'Askarī's,

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>21</sup> See his welcome address to the first conference of the All Pakistan Progressive Writers' Association (Lahore, November, 1949) in *Savērā*, Nos 7-8, pp. 17-23.

<sup>22</sup> See his '*Adab wa tahẓīb kā mustaqbil*,' *Savērā*, No. 3, pp. 85-8.

<sup>23</sup> See Malik, *Ta'aṣṣubāt*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>25</sup> Pp. 41-52. *Urdū Adab* was edited by 'Askarī, along with Mantō.

Shāhīn's and Mumtāz Shīrīn's<sup>26</sup> efforts to stem the tide of the Progressives' tendency to dance around the issue of culture but never define it—a tendency which, moreover, threatened the ideological basis of Pakistan—were met by the Progressives, as we have seen, with exceptional resistance.

*Savērā's* Progressive contributors, most of whom were Muslims, continued to think of India's partition as a conspiracy of the British and their cohorts, the native feudal aristocracy, and to consider the rioting a logical consequence of the communal ill-will the seeds of which had been sown by the Cabinet Mission Plan of 16 February 1946 and the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June 1947 (No. 3, p. 233). They still drew inspiration from the Russian Revolution, Nehru and Gandhi, whose assassination prompted a number of eulogies, all published in *Savērā*. Still they strove somehow to write off the Partition, for it was the sad offspring of an 'independence which added nothing significant to history' (Nos 5–6, p. 243) and while 'the womb of 1947 had given birth to the damsel of independence, it had also to India's partition, communal riots, and a series of inhuman crimes perpetrated by religious fanaticism—crimes that were the product of a reactionary leadership imposed upon progressive masses' (*ibid.*).

When, however, that proved impossible, the elders of the PM relented somewhat and allowed a measure of freedom to the membership, in that the central leadership of the Movement would not make too much of a member's defending Pakistan.<sup>27</sup> That was the farthest the Movement could or did go in accommodating itself to the reality of Pakistan. It is, however, instructive to note that shortly after setting foot in Pakistan, where he had been sent by the Communist Party of India to forge the disarrayed Pakistani intellectuals into a formidable Communist organization, Saiyid Sajjād Ṣahīr, himself a prominent Marxist and Progressive, offered the advice: 'Every honest man ought to be genuinely happy at Indo-Kashmir alliance and ought to work towards its success.'<sup>28</sup> And 'Abdullāh Malik clamoured: 'Loyalty to people—not to state!'<sup>29</sup>

Any ideological deviation, however slight, or even a mere verbal expression of solidarity by a Pakistani Progressive with fellow Muslims outside Pakistan on the basis of Islam and 'common culture' was sharply

<sup>26</sup> After their arrival in Pakistan Shīrīn and her husband Ṣamad continued to publish the periodical *Nayā Daur* they had started in Bangalore, India.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Malik, *Ta'aṣṣubāt*, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

<sup>29</sup> *Savērā*, No. 4, p. 193.

criticized and the culprit harshly advised forthwith to fall in step with party line. When Qāsmī politely questioned the continued vacillation of the Progressives in accepting the creation of Pakistan even after it had become an incontrovertible reality,<sup>30</sup> ‘Ārif ‘Abdu ’l-Matīn, a man who cherished an extremely idealistic attitude towards Gandhi and had mourned the latter’s death in a poem,<sup>31</sup> quickly moved to discipline him by party mandate. Matīn attacked Qāsmī for being a ‘revivalist’ because he had the audacity to use such anachronistic terms as ‘the mace of Muṣṭafā [i.e., Prophet Muḥammad],’ ‘idols,’ ‘the Ghaznavid monarch [i.e., Maḥmūd],’ ‘Medina’ and ‘the Arabian Muḥammad’ in his poem ‘Battle Cry of the Kashmiri Freedom Fighter.’<sup>32</sup> The accusation of ‘revivalism’ was extended also to another Progressive poet, Qatīl Shifā’ī,<sup>33</sup> while Zāhīr Kāshmirī had to suffer the ignominy of being labelled as a ‘revisionist,’ a ‘compromiser’ who, moreover, used such an ‘unscientific symbol’ as ‘mad house’ to describe the world.<sup>34</sup>

Altogether, then, this thinking may be said to have dominated the Progressives effectively until the Communist Party of Pakistan was outlawed in July 1954 and deviously until 1958, when APPWA, considerably weakened since the fall of the CPP, itself ceased to exist.

During this period *Savērā* worked as a mouthpiece of the Progressive ideology. If it subsequently changed its stance, this, then, was the work of its new editor, Ḥanīf Rāmē,<sup>35</sup> a man with considerable literary and artistic pretensions. Although Rāmē had assumed editorship of *Savērā* with Issue 15–16, it was with Issue 17–18 that the earlier Progressive motto came to be decisively dislodged in favour of the somewhat esoteric ‘Literature and Art’,<sup>36</sup> and the pages of the magazine were made available to pro-Pakistan intellectuals such as ‘Askarī, Shīrīn, Nāṣir Kāzmī and IntiẒār Ḥusain, to name only a few. Some of these had been a few years ago dubbed as ‘reactionaries,’ ‘revisionists,’ and ‘right-wing.’ It was, again, in this issue that Jinnah’s name and his efforts towards

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Malik, *Ta’aṣṣubāt*, p. 79. Qāsmī’s statement appeared in January 1949 in the newspaper *Imrōz*.

<sup>31</sup> For which, see *Savērā*, No. 4, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos 7–8, p. 107.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

<sup>35</sup> Younger brother of Nazīr Chaudhri; he later broke away from *Savērā* and started his own periodical, *Nuṣrat*. During the Bhutto régime he entered politics and became Chief Minister of Punjab; he was subsequently imprisoned.

<sup>36</sup> ‘and Culture’ with Issue 22. All these were dropped with Issue 44. *Savērā* now publishes hymns to God, articles on Ṣūfism, besides the regular secular prose and poetry.

establishing Pakistan were acknowledged appreciatively for the first time (p. 5) and the writer was offered the propitious advice to keep himself altogether detached from his desires, bodily needs, and prejudices at the moment of creation (*ibid.*). The premonition of this about-face, which must have appeared to the Progressives as shocking in its suddenness as it was humiliating in its tenor, was already apparent in Issue 13–14. In it the editors published on behalf of the Association of Pakistani Literary Journals an appeal to the Government of Punjab to return *Savērā* the security deposit it had collected from the latter as a condition for licence renewal, because ‘*Savērā* has now changed its extremist policy and that as far as we know the Government of Punjab has not objected to *Savērā*’s current policy’ (p. 6). Whatever this ‘current policy’ may have been, certainly it couldn’t have been one drafted or favoured by the Progressives.

## V

It is difficult, nor is there any need, to doubt the sincerity of the Progressives’ commitment and concern. But imposing restrictions upon creativity<sup>37</sup> could only lead to tragic results. The obvious victim in the case of PM turned out to be the protagonist himself. Man in whose name the war was being fought emerged from it as less than himself. He was shrunken, curtailed and abbreviated as never before, though, perhaps, slightly better off than his predecessor in a material sense. This man lived in the present moment. He had no memory of the past, nor even the desire to know it, since any reference to the past carried with it the excruciating realization of his subjugation and captivity. He had to be, therefore, *acultural*.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For a balanced evaluation of the literary worth of the Progressives, and for a critique of their literary ideas, see N. M. Rāshid, ‘Interview,’ *Mahfil*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1–2 (Spring–Summer 1971), pp. 1–20.

<sup>38</sup> The break with the past, the radical split between the inner and the outer implicit in the Progressive *Manifesto* could not remain hidden for long from the more perceptive writers. Sooner or later they managed to extricate themselves from its stultifying embrace. But some were less fortunate. The saddest casualty was, perhaps, Krishan Chandr who, according to his friend and contemporary Bēdī, ‘was completely destroyed; he became a slogan-monger. He no longer makes distinctions between soul and body; he talks only of the body, of bad people, of absolutes. What happens inside a man he never considers’ (cf. *Mahfil*, Vol. 8, Nos 2–3 (Summer-Fall 1972), p. 151). N. M. Rāshid credits the Progressives with having promoted a sense of social awareness among Indian writers, but criticizes them for putting literature in the service of a particular ideology and group. ‘I have no quarrel with the Progressives,’ he writes, ‘in so far as they believe that literature should reflect a social consciousness,

It is perhaps for this reason that much of the Progressive writing, although it is informed and inspired by genuine human considerations, fails to see man as a continuity in time and space. Then again, for the Progressive writer, man is not a complex being in whom both good and evil are found, he is either basically good or basically evil.<sup>39</sup> More than anything else, he is a *practical materialist*, a pure *economic being*, leading a surface existence, launched in the present moment, and behaving in a predictable way, devoid of any emotional depth or complexity. Even in the writing of Premchand, who initiated the tradition of social realism in Urdu fiction and who is justly considered the grandfather of Urdu short story, man regrettably remains 'utilitarian.'<sup>40</sup> It is instructive to note that in his presidential address to the First All-India Progressive Writers' Conference, held at Lucknow on 10 April 1936, Premchand defined the nature and purpose of literature as: 'Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, all the prophets, tried without success to lay the foundation of their equality and moral precepts. Today the distinction between high and low, rich and poor, is manifesting itself with a brutality which has never been surpassed before . . . We shall fail again if we attempt to attain our goal with the help of religion.'<sup>41</sup>

Now, at the time of Partition, most Urdu writers were either zealous Progressives themselves or, at least, under the influence of the Progressives.<sup>42</sup> It is not hard to see why these writers inclined heavily in favour of communal riots as being most representative of the Partition. They could not see in the event any deeper historical significance; in fact, from their peculiar point of view, the event itself was deplorable, altogether unnecessary.<sup>43</sup> But, since it had occurred, it could not be altogether I do differ with them when this social awareness in their view must be completely impersonal. This is indeed the denial of the whole creative process and of the *raison d'être* of all creative activity' (cf. *Mahfil*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1971), p. 7).

<sup>39</sup> 'The two extremes of human nature, the highest and the lowest, are generally reflected in the writing on communal riots' (Mumtāz Shirīn, '*Pākistāni adab ke chār sāl*,' in *Mi'yār*, p. 174).

<sup>40</sup> Mostly and generally; there are, however, some exceptions, for instance his famous short story '*Kafan*' (The Shroud).

<sup>41</sup> As quoted in Mohammed Sadiq, *Twentieth-Century Urdu Literature* (Baroda: Padmaja Publications, 1947), p. 61.

<sup>42</sup> 'All the prominent writers of Urdu,' remarks Bēdī, 'have at one time or another been Progressive writers. The best of them have felt the stultifying atmosphere of the Movement and have come out to breathe a freer air' (cf. 'Interview,' *Mahfil*, Vol. 8, Nos 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1972), p. 148). Intiẓār Ḥusain, too, seems to have been under their pervasive influence but only in the initial stage of his career as a writer. He himself remarks that there was a time when he used to read the Progressive writers avidly and there were some of them whom he even idealized (cf. 'Interview,' *Shab-khūn*, Vol. 8, No. 96 (July-September 1975) p. 11).

gether ignored; so they concentrated on one of the minor aspects<sup>44</sup> of the Partition, namely, the rioting, and in their treatment of this aspect, they generally appeared to adhere to their specific view of man.<sup>45</sup>

## VI

After reducing Partition to mere communal violence, the Progressives and those under their pervasive influence did not, generally, take the next logical step of questioning the motivation behind this violence. Since they did not believe in the reality of communal feeling, they contented themselves merely by painting elaborate scenes of violence perpetrated by members of one faith against those of another, thereby evoking in the reader their own sense of disgust and indignation.

Often this led to some very melodramatic situations. The nobility of emotion, combined with a considerable measure of fair-play, required that if the scoreboard did not show clear winners, neither did it show clear losers. The match of communal rampage and mayhem must end in a draw. Indeed, some writers were so overwhelmed by the responsibility of remaining neutral and by *poetic justice* that they wrote two separate sequences of abduction, rape and murder. Thus Kartar Singh Duggal—a Punjabi writer, however—brings the ‘gift of independence’ to the young Sikh or Hindu school teacher in the form of a ‘Muslim houri,’ Kulšūm, in the story that takes its name from her.<sup>46</sup> Soon, however, Duggal finds his sense of fairness outraged. He moves quickly to make it up in the story ‘He Abducted Her’<sup>47</sup> by throwing the helpless Sikh or Hindu Rājkarṇī at the mercy of sexually aroused

<sup>43</sup> The Progressives vociferously decried the creation of Pakistan for it could be justified only on religious grounds, while religion was something which they had, as Shiriñ points out, excluded from the more important agents and manifestations of collective life (cf. *Mi’yār*, p. 197). In support of her argument she quotes Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Askari, ‘It was not out of some ill will on their part that the Progressives decried the creation of Pakistan but because of the blow they thought it administered to their ideology [of unity and nationalism]’ (cf. *ibid.*).

<sup>44</sup> Minor only in the larger historico-cultural context; in humanitarian terms, it was indeed a great tragedy.

<sup>45</sup> This is perhaps the reason why most of the Progressive stories on the theme of Partition and the communal riots lack depth and conviction. The conscious, and thus perhaps artificial, effort to appear impartial, drove the bulk of the Progressive writers, as Shiriñ has aptly observed, ‘farther away from the reality’ and rendered their writing quite ‘lifeless’ (*Mi’yār*, p. 172).

<sup>46</sup> English translation in Mathur and Kulasrestha, *Writings on India’s Partition*, pp. 220–3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 224–7.

Shahzād Khān, a Muslim. Shahzād Khān, however, lets out 'a blood-curdling [*sic*] scream' and starts to run, without gratifying his desire. Whether his flight is due to a sudden onrush of human feeling, the revenge of Heavens, or—in poor imitation of Mantō's Īshar Singh in the story 'Ṭhandā gōsht'<sup>48</sup> (Cold Meat)—to a sudden frigidity, is best left to the reader's imagination.

On the other hand, Krishan Chandr, who has probably written most on communal violence after Mantō, but in a more direct, and therefore less effective, way, generally attempts to fuse both sequences within single stories, most of which can be found in his collection *Ham wahshī haiñ*<sup>49</sup> (We Are Brutes).

The scene of communal violence in Krishan Chandr's story 'Andhē' (The Blind) (pp. 21–9) is Lahore. After plundering and sacking the property of Hindus and murdering as many of them as he could, when the protagonist of the story returns home, loaded with plundered gifts for his wife and children, he finds, in what turns out to be a curious and terribly laboured bouleversement, his own wife and children butchered by a group of Mahāsabhā'īs. Blind with rage, he throws the gifts before the corpse of his wife, vows revenge, picks up a cleaver and dashes out, shouting: ' . . . I am headed straight to Shāh 'Ālmī [Hindu majority area of Lahore]; let anyone who dares stop me. *Allāhu Akbar!*'

Krishan Chandr tries to hold the scale with still steadier hands in the story 'A Prostitute's Letter' (pp. 42–51). On behalf of two abducted girls, a Bombay prostitute with the heart of gold addresses the Indian leader Nehru and the Pakistani leader Jinnah. The story, otherwise of doubtful literary merit, is nevertheless a masterpiece of tight-rope walking. Everything is laid out in pairs, neatly and with almost mathematical precision, with the writer—or prostitute, if you will—standing equidistant from the contrasting poles: Bailā, 12 and Hindu, comes from a prospering and noble middle-class family of Rawalpindi (Pakistan). Muslim rioters sacked her house, murdered her parents, raped her and later sold her to a pimp from whom the prostitute in question has bought her. Batūl, 11 and Muslim, daughter of a Pathan of Jullundur (India), has fared a similar fate at the hands of her tormentors, the Jāts, who first gouge out the eyes of her father, urinate in his mouth, cut him open from throat to abdomen, then rape her and her married sisters. She, too, is subsequently bought by this prostitute.

<sup>48</sup> *Ṭhandā gōsht*, Lahore: Maktaba-e-Shi'r-o-Adab [19?]; English translation by C. M. Naim and Ruth L. Schmidt, *Mahfil*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1963), pp. 14–19.

<sup>49</sup> Lucknow: Kitābi Duniyā [1947 or 1948].



After a good bit of sermonizing—‘Bailā and Batūl are two girls, two nations, two civilisations, two temples and two mosques,’ etc. (p. 50)—the prostitute asks the two leaders what to do with the girls now, and herself proceeds to suggest that Jinnah adopt Bailā and Nehru, Batūl.

The quest for balance, justice and impartiality appears to be the guiding principle, and for that reason the limitation, also of the story ‘Amritsar’ in two parts ‘Before Independence’ (pp. 75–82) and ‘After Independence’ (pp. 83–100). In the Amritsar of pre-independence period members of all three faiths live in perfect communal accord; together they defy the alien rule and lay down their lives for their country. In pre-1947 Amritsar the poor Muslim Ṣiddīq sacrifices his own life to save that of his rich neighbour Ōm Parkāsh; and four women—one Hindu (Pārō), one Sikh (Shām Kaur), and two Muslim (Zainab, Bēgam)—while grocery shopping, heroically defy the British order to walk on their knees in the vicinity of Jallianwala Bagh; instead they walk with their heads proudly erect, and are forthwith reduced to corpses by a volley of bullets.

The rhetoric of fellow-feeling is here evoked as a convenient structural ploy to heighten the trauma and immorality of the coming, indiscriminate murder of one community by another in the second part. Soon after independence, one evening two special trains pull into Amritsar: one coming from ‘free Pakistan’ and carrying Hindus and Sikhs, only one-third of them alive, the rest dead; the other from ‘free India’ and carrying Muslims, again only a third of them alive, the rest dead. The train from Pakistan has the message inscribed on its forehead: ‘Learn to kill from Pakistan’; the one headed for Pakistan, the retort: ‘And learn from India how to take revenge.’

The story, otherwise without any redeeming value, is made a bit poignant by an undertone of what appears to be casual, though not necessarily unintentional, cynicism. It is when Krishan Chandr turns man’s inhumanity back upon his own coreligionists (a device used also by Agyeya in his Hindi story ‘Muslim-Muslim Bhai-Bhai’<sup>50</sup> to accentuate the absurdity of Partition, indeed of any chaotic situation). And the story ends with the usual, elaborate sermon. The ghosts of ‘the martyrs’ Ṣiddīq, Ōm Parkāsh, Zainab, Bēgam, Pārō and Shām Kaur all vow to return ‘because,’ as they pontificate through the writer, ‘we are *human beings*, the heralds of life in the whole universe, and life cannot be killed, molested or plundered; we are life and you—you are destruction, you are animals, brutes. You shall die, but we shall not, because man

<sup>50</sup> English translation in Mathur, *Writings on India’s Partition*, pp. 64–8.

never dies, for he is not a brute; he is the very spirit of good, the purpose of God's creation, the pride of universe' (p. 100). (The harangue reminds one of Aḥmad Nadīm Qāsmī's ranting and delirious hero in the fantastic short story 'I Am a Human Being.')<sup>51</sup>

The fallenness of human personality and its moral perversion is picked up again as a theme in the famous short story 'Peshawar Express' (pp. 101-17)—widely acclaimed, not just in the period soon after Partition but also today, as a masterpiece. But overstatement, lack of conviction, didacticism, and intrinsic failure to come to grips with both the nature of evil and its relationship to individuals plague this story as they do most of Krishan Chandr's writing on Partition. His punctilious patterning of contrasting pairs, which has led some critics, among them Shiriñ, to take a less critical view of the story,<sup>52</sup> appears to the present writer, at least, not just tiringly repetitive but also counterproductive.

In what appears to be a novelty—and no more than novelty for its own sake—the story of massacre and carnage in the present case is told by an express train, which embarks upon its ominous odyssey at Peshawar, carrying Hindu immigrants to India from different parts of northwestern Pakistan. A hapless band of Sikhs join them at Hasan Abdal. Forced to make a protracted stop at Taxila, it suffers the further ignominy of being a witness to the first systematic killing and rape of its innocent occupants by Baluchi soldiers.

Using delicate suggestion a more careful writer would have successfully contrasted the present orgiastic killing with the rich associations Taxila has with Buddhist culture and learning, with their emphasis on non-violence. Propelled by reforming zeal, Krishan Chandr rather weakens the contrast intrinsically present in the situation by punctuating the Baluchi firing of Hindus and Sikhs with brief sermons of his own: 'Here [i.e., at Taxila] was the biggest university of Asia; the cradle of civilisation and culture that nurtured countless students.' . . . 'Kanishka once ruled here, bringing people a surfeit of peace, tranquility, wealth and beauty.' . . . 'It was here in India that Islam first set foot, waving its banner of equality, brotherhood and humanity' (pp. 105-6).

The train lumbers on, making stops at Rawalpindi, Jehlum, Gojar Khan, Lala Musa and Wazirabad, witnessing more bloodshed and rape, providing tenuous shelter to more dispossessed persons in its distended bowels. At Wazirabad Junction, its last stop on Pakistani territory, another train coming from the opposite direction (India) and carrying a

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Shiriñ, *Mi'yār*, p. 212.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

combination of dead and half-dead Muslim immigrants grinds to a halt right next to Peshawar Express. Four hundred Muslim men and fifty Muslim women are found short in the other train, so an equal number of Hindu passengers are forced out of Peshawar Express on to the platform, where the males are put to the sword. This is done, the writer volunteers, 'to keep the population of India and Pakistan in perfect balance' (p. 110).

Already from Mughalpura things begin to change. The Baluchi escort is replaced by Dogra and Sikh soldiers, and it is Muslim blood and corpses that greet its entry into Amritsar Station. On the last leg of the journey, the Peshawar Express witnesses more bloodshed, looting, killing and rape as it makes scheduled and unscheduled stops along its route through eastern Punjab. The details of Muslim killing are, however, as Shīrīñ has pointed out,<sup>53</sup> less graphic.

Footworn and emotionally drained, the anthropomorphic Peshawar Express staggers to a halt at Bombay, its final destination, and implores in distinctly Communist jargon that it may no longer be used to haul corpses and hate, but only relief supplies to famine-stricken areas; coal, oil and iron to factories; new ploughs and fertilizer to farmers. Or it may be used to transport bands of prosperous peasants and workers, chaste women, and children whose faces would be as fresh as lotus blossoms and who would bow their heads in greeting, not to death, but to the coming, new life 'when no one will be a Hindu, or Muslim, but only a worker and a human being' (pp. 116-7).

Not only are these stories terribly simplistic and formulaic, they also suffer from a lack of genuine creative tension that allows the many elements of a composition to jell into perfect totality of experience. Stories about human beings they surely are. But about human beings they tell precious little, indeed. Instead of presenting human personality in its fullness and complexity, with its paradoxes and contradictions, they tend, rather, to stereotype it. Finally, they fail also in their—and the Progressives'—avowed purpose of creating disgust in us for communalism by painting elaborate scenes of manslaughter, etc., owing—and this may be a serious accusation—to what may in the end amount to bad faith and lack of integrity on the part of the writer. Mere depiction of violence is rarely enough in itself to produce feelings of rejection and disgust, let alone in the period immediately after Partition when violence was commonplace and fact stronger than fiction.

Quite apart from whether creating disgust is or can be the object of creative endeavour, it may still be possible to do so when evil is syn-

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

thesized to, and not merely accentuated in, the total personality of the individual—a personality which even in its state of utter fallenness carries a capacity for good. Krishan Chandr tries to excite emotions of pity, hate, anger and disgust, but rarely does he attempt either to accept the reality of violence or to explore its effects on the psychology of the perpetrator and the victim. In view of this failure his sententiousness is consequently transformed into what S. H. Vatsyayan (Agyeya) has aptly described as ‘sadistic glee.’<sup>54</sup>

How evil forms and deforms personality, how it affects the oppressor and victim, has been portrayed with remarkable artistic finesse only in ‘Lājwanti’<sup>55</sup>—Rājindar Siñgh Bēdī’s only contribution to Partition literature—and in numerous stories of Sa‘ādat Ḥasan Mantō, especially ‘*Ṭhandā gōsht*,’<sup>56</sup> ‘*Khōl-dō*’<sup>57</sup> (Open Up!) and ‘*Ṭōbā Ṭēk Siñgh*.’<sup>58</sup> Here Mantō, as has been rightly pointed out by Leslie A. Flemming, ‘genuinely comes to grips with the human pain of partition, exploring with a remarkable combination of anger, sarcasm and tenderness the effects of the violence and dislocation on its victims.’<sup>59</sup> Mantō achieves this by eschewing any direct and external enactment of violence, by eschewing, in other words, the ‘sadistic glee,’ the rapturous sensuality of Krishan Chandr *vis-à-vis* violence. Violence in his stories appears, generally, as a faint and distant echo, and where it does sometimes move into the center, its only purpose is to show its impact on individual lives, to understand man’s actions in stressful situations, to plumb the depths of the human mind, and to attempt to unravel, if possible, the infinite mystery, the wonder that is man.

## VII

Thus the stories written by members of the PM or by those under their

<sup>54</sup> ‘Hindi Literature,’ in *Contemporary Indian Literature, A Symposium* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1957), p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> English translation by Khushwant Singh in Mathur, *Writings on India’s Partition*, pp. 126–35.

<sup>56</sup> See note 48, above.

<sup>57</sup> This story appears in his collection *Namrūd kī khudā’ī* (Lahore: Nayā Idārah, 1950); English translation, ‘Open Up,’ by Leslie A. Flemming and G. C. Narang, in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 13, Nos 1–4 (1977–78), pp. 157–9.

<sup>58</sup> For the story, see his collection *Phundnē* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Jadīd, 1955); for English translation, Robert B. Haldane, *Mahfil*, Vol. 6, Nos 2–3 (1970), pp. 19–25.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Riots and Refugees: The Post-Partition Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto,’ *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 13, Nos 1–4 (1977–78), p. 105.

influence stress in varying degrees of emphasis, as Shīrīñ has successfully demonstrated,<sup>60</sup> one or more of the following four points:

1. The entire responsibility for creating the hatred among Muslims and Hindus that brought on communal violence, falls squarely upon the British who were interested only in promoting their imperialist and colonial objectives and who, even when leaving India, adhered to their reprehensible policy of 'divide and rule.'

2. Both Hindus and Muslims should have stuck together under all circumstances; Partition was a mistake.

3. All parties involved in, or affected by, the Partition participated equally in the rioting.

4. In spite of the cataclysmic and traumatic experience of the Partition, it would be a great mistake to lose one's faith in the basic goodness of man and his humanity. The erstwhile hatred and enmity between Hindus and Muslims will, of itself, evaporate. The inhabitants of the Subcontinent will soon realize that they are neither Hindus nor Muslims nor Sikhs but human beings. A new man will soon emerge, a new order will soon be established in which all men will be equal; hatred will be wiped out and peace will reign supreme.

The course of history since Partition has shown the Progressives to be wrong on all these points. Not only is this formula devoid of any historical sense and awareness, but by placing all the responsibility upon the British it also denies the people of the Subcontinent any right to behave as conscious human beings, freely choosing among a number of options and alternatives. And what is most disconcerting, by shifting responsibility it condones, it would seem, the very violence it wanted to condemn.

Nevertheless there were some writers, among them Mantō,<sup>61</sup> Bēdī and Intizār Ḥusain,<sup>62</sup> who were rather too independent and individualistic for the Progressives' ideology. They did not view man as some simple phenomenon whose every response to a given stimulus could be predicted with precision. And as Ḥusain has put it rather pointedly, but

<sup>60</sup> *Mi'yār*, p. 205.

<sup>61</sup> On his life and works, see Leslie A. Flemming, *Another Lonely Voice: The Urdu Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto* (Berkeley: University of California, Research Monograph Series of the Center for South and Southeast Asia Area Studies, 1980).

<sup>62</sup> Here I might be inadvertently implying that Ḥusain was against the Progressives and their particular ideology right from the very start of his career as a writer. Such, however, was not the case. He started out admiring the Progressive writing but the break came quite early (see above, note 42); indeed it came precisely because of the peculiar attitude of the Progressives *vis-à-vis* the creation of Pakistan (cf. reference in *ibid.*).

aptly, amidst the cataclysm of the Partition, the demand for a new dawn and a new man 'is most vulgar!'<sup>63</sup>

Of the three above-mentioned writers, I shall, however, restrict myself to Intiẓār Ḥusain only. I shall try to show how he perceived the events of 1947 and what his particular view of the Partition was and how he treats Partition in his stories.

## VIII

Of all the Urdu fiction writers of Pakistan, Intiẓār Ḥusain is perhaps the most conscious of the flow of Muslim history in the Subcontinent. Almost every single story that he has written reflects in one way or another his abiding preoccupation with this history and the character of Muslim culture within it. But it is not because of their topicality that his stories stand out in Urdu literature, it is rather his remarkable artistic sensibility and historical awareness that makes his stories first and foremost creations of art.

Still, there is more than a measure of ambivalence in Ḥusain's attitude towards the pre-Partition Indo-Muslim history, the Partition and the creation of Pakistan.<sup>64</sup> This ambivalence, creative ambivalence, which is never resolved, tends to endow the better part of his work with a tragic awareness of life. Eventually, it may be better than the rather naïve understanding of the Progressives in regard to India's Partition.

In the greater part of his writing Ḥusain gives a strong impression of his being both an Indian and a Muslim. This, indeed, is a very difficult fate, because a person in whom both these consciousnesses are pointedly articulated is bound to be torn apart by the tensions and contradictions arising from each. As a Muslim he, naturally, looks beyond India, but as a product of Indian culture, he cannot survive outside India. A personality that is the battle-ground of these two distinctly conflicting forces cannot be totally satisfied with the 1947 answer—the creation of Pakistan. Satisfaction would result only if it were possible to scrape off every single last trace of Indian-ness from one's consciousness. The inevitable failure to do so can only heighten one's sense of loss and make one ask: If nothing is to change, who must pay the price of the incredible human suffering that resulted from a political settlement that failed to take into account the psychological, the emotional, the cultural element? Those who believe in an overnight change of attitudes would perhaps fail to

<sup>63</sup> 'Interview,' *Shab-khūn*, Vol. 8, No. 96 (July–September 1975), p. 31.

<sup>64</sup> This comes out quite clearly at many points in the interview he gave me.

appreciate truly the nature and scope of the problem. Indeed, there can be no problem from the Progressives' point of view, for it has only the most superficial understanding of personality and ignores altogether the complexity of human motivation and response. More than anything else, due perhaps to the lingering influence of Gandhian idealism, this view preached a gospel of unity at a time when its realization proved to be neither attainable nor feasible. This peculiar dilemma—Indian-ness vs. Muslim-ness—can only arise when the personality has a distinct awareness of itself within a historical context.

Perhaps, then, as an alternative, there would be meaning in migrating back to India, as some did, among them the brilliant Muslim woman writer Qurratu 'l-'Ain Ḥaidar. This alternative, however, does not really resolve the problem. A migration in reverse or a second migration back to India only proves the predominance of the Indian element in the consciousness of the migrating individual. For such a person the problem of choice or alternatives does not arise with the same tormenting intensity with which it does for one who endeavours to synthesize the Muslim and the Indian elements within himself.

Intiẓār Ḥusain shows great love for the Indo-Muslim culture in which he grew up; indeed, he feels it to be superior to the puritan Arab Muslim culture<sup>65</sup> because of its inherent capacity for assimilation, expansion and open-mindedness, and its greater creative possibilities. At the same time, he cherishes an equally strong fondness for Pakistan. The anguish, however, arises from the painful realization that the course of history has confronted him with a choice between being Indian and being Muslim and thus rent the delicate fabric of simultaneous loyalty to both.

In the same interview with which the present inquiry began, he says:

We've used the term Indian Muslim culture. What a purely Islamic culture would be, I don't have any idea. It is this Indian Muslim culture of which I am a product and which has shaped the history of which I am a part. The Muslims came to India and formed ties with its soil. Indian Muslim culture is that creative amalgam which came about in response to the intellectual and emotional climate that was there . . . the feel of its seasons . . . these ties with the land. Much in it is Indian and much was brought from outside.

I've already said that Khwaja Nizamuddin Awliya [Khwāja Niẓāmu 'd-Dīn Auliya'] and Amir [Amīr] Khusrau are for me important symbols of this culture. Nizamuddin Awliya said at some point that 'I listen to the "Song

<sup>65</sup> Cf. 'Interview,' *Shab-khūn*, Vol. 8, No. 96 (July–September 1975), pp. 8–10.

of *Alast*'<sup>66</sup> in the *Rāgā Pūrbī*'—this for me is Indian Muslim culture. It was this frame of mind, this attempt to understand the Islamic revelation in terms of our land, this endeavour to merge that revelation with our soil which yielded a unity which later was shaped into what we know as Indian Muslim culture. But we did not permit this unity to continue for long, as its progress has been constantly obstructed or halted by that extremely unfortunate frame of mind which we may call the 'puritan' attitude.

I believe that there was this on-going cultural process which was brought to a halt in a very unnatural way. Its progress was blocked by a few Muslims who were victims of this puritan frame of mind and also by some conservative Hindus. On the one hand, there was the Muslim who tried to erase all of his history and live in some period before Muslims had come to India. On the other hand, there was the conservative Hindu who strove to ignore all this interaction and return to some earlier period before it began.

So these few reactionary Hindus and reactionary Muslims blocked the way of this culture, ushering in those tragic events which have afflicted us ever since. It seems to me that a fundamental cause of all the troubles and miseries which have befallen this Subcontinent and its people is the fact that a few powerful figures were able to halt the development and emergence of this culture.<sup>67</sup>

Elsewhere in an article written about fifteen years ago regarding the search for lost cultural modes of perception and living, Ḥusain says: 'You ask Jilānī Kāmṛān and he would, without a second's hesitation, head off in the direction of Medina. To me you do not put such a question, but if you did, chances are I would first go and watch the *Rām-līlā* show, then I might go to Karbalā', and may be there make preparations to set out for Mecca.'<sup>68</sup>

So, for Ḥusain, the Indian Muslim culture, or the composite culture of the Indo-Gangetic plain, represents the best of two religious traditions—a culture that ignores neither the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* nor the tragic events of Karbalā'.

But in 1947 all this came to a decisive end. The events of 1947 thus represent the culmination and the victory of the divisive tendency that had been working against Hindu-Muslim unity. Although Ḥusain appears to cherish the outcome of the events of 1947, it cannot be doubted that he accepts the creation of Pakistan more as a historical necessity

<sup>66</sup> On the day of creation God asked man *Alastu bi-Rabbikum?* (Am I not your Lord?), and the latter replied *Balā* (Yes). This episode is recorded in the *Qur'ān* (see 7:71). *Alast* is part of the Muslim mystical (*ṣūfī*) vocabulary and underscores the basic doctrine of Islam, namely, *at-Tauḥīd* (the perfect transcendental *Unity of God*). 'Song of *Alast*' would thus mean 'the song acknowledging the *Unity of God*,' which remains the cherished and ultimate goal of the mystic.

<sup>67</sup> Bruce R. Pray's translation (unpublished). For the original, see 'Interview,' *Shab-khūn*, Vol. 8, No. 96 (July–September 1975), pp. 20–1.

<sup>68</sup> 'Hamārē 'ahd kā adab,' *Savērā*, No. 31, p. 17.



than as the happy culmination of a dream which, as some historians have laboured to project, started from the earliest Muslim presence in the Subcontinent. Rather than adhere slavishly to emotion and an unworkable and unrealizable idea, Ḥusain accepts the reality of divisiveness and disunity (which is obviously not the case with the best Progressive writers). This is the reason why most of his characters behave not according to a formula, but, rather, according to their own natures. Ḥusain never attempts to eliminate the paradoxes and contradictions of the individual, and by thus divesting him of his individuality put him in the service of an unrealistic idea.

No creative effort can feed for too long on nostalgia or survive in a present haunted by the past. But consciousness of the past is too often mistaken for nostalgia. The failure to differentiate between the two has led some critics to declare Ḥusain a downright reactionary.<sup>69</sup> Most of such criticism has come in recent years from the group of intellectuals whose Marxist tendencies are only too apparent. Sa'ādāt Sa'id, one of the youngest and most vocal critics of this group, has gone to the extent of calling Ḥusain's writings altogether retrogressive. According to him, Ḥusain's metaphysics represents nothing more than defeatism, compromise and opportunism; his creative world alludes to a mode of being and perception that have long since become obsolete; and, finally, the world that he talks about has been wiped out along with its decadent values.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Others, in a somewhat less extravagant vein, reduce his stories to mere 'elegies on the fading culture of the Muslim nobility of Utter Pradesh.' The reason: 'because he is in search of "things that are lost" ' (G. C. Narang, 'Major Trends in the Urdu Short Story,' *Indian Literature*, Vol. 16, Nos. 1-2 (1973), p. 132). Needless to say such sweeping criticism accomplishes very little. By telling how Ḥusain's stories read like (i.e., as 'elegies'), but failing to identify the purpose, if any, of those 'elegies,' the critic misses their true significance. Unless one is willing to probe into the motivations of Ḥusain, his purpose and his vision, one is indeed liable to think of his stories as little more than mere 'elegies,' thus conveying the incorrect impression that his entire creative endeavour is devoted only to lamenting the past. This criticism may be met by the testimony to the contrary of the writer himself, for which see notes 71 and 75 below.

Here it would be pertinent to mention also the fact that many people share Narang's view. Although superficially true, this view is severely limited by its inability to either recognize and understand or account for Ḥusain's intimate knowledge of Hindu culture in its broadest sense possible, a knowledge which finds reflection in his writings. Ḥusain insists on Muslim culture, quite true, but one which is sufficiently mediated and mellowed by the incorporation of elements of the native Hindu culture in the Subcontinent, and not the inflexible, puritanical Muslim culture from beyond India.

<sup>70</sup> 'Mas' alē kā mas'ala,' *Funūn*, Vol. 12, Nos. 2-3 (December-January 1970-71), p. 236.

This and other such criticisms are eloquent examples of misguided energy. It would appear that the same psychology and world view that propelled the PM is being revived here. Intiẓār Ḥusain has never equated consciousness of cultural personality and awareness of the past with nostalgia for the past. To remember is not necessarily to worship the past. He believes that much of the present of the individual is informed, pervaded and influenced by his past. It can help man to understand his collective personality and, through this understanding, his own individual and unique personality. 'By insisting upon the past,' he writes, 'a creative writer does not, or at least should not, intend to revive the past as was.'<sup>71</sup> Elsewhere, and in no uncertain terms, he remarks: 'You will abandon me in a desert, I shall build myself a *ka'ba* there. If we can understand that, we would inevitably also understand that tears won't help. Wherever you find lamentation about a paradise that was, regardless this was the paradise of Mīrā Bā'ī,<sup>72</sup> Mīr<sup>73</sup> or Naẓīr<sup>74</sup>—wherever you find this lamentation, just remember that this is the voice of the old generation, for creation lies not in lamenting a lost paradise but in building a new one.'<sup>75</sup>

This insightfulness gives Ḥusain's work not just its unmistakable humanism but also its inevitable pragmatism. It is at this level that he accepts the creation of Pakistan and it is at this level, again, that he feels that creative ability has been betrayed, compromised and demeaned.

## IX

The career of Intiẓār Ḥusain as a writer begins from the time of the Partition itself. Like many Muslims, he migrated to Pakistan quite early. He wrote two short stories '*Qaiyūmā kī dukān*'<sup>76</sup> (Qaiyūmā's Shop) and '*Ustād*'<sup>77</sup> (The Boss) in 1948 and has since produced close to a

<sup>71</sup> '*Ijtīmā'ī tahzīb aur afsāna*,' *Nayā Daur*, Nos. 15–18, p. 64.

<sup>72</sup> The famous woman saint-singer of North India who composed her devotional poems to Lord Krishna in a mixture of Braj Bhāshā and Māṛwārī. She died in 1547.

<sup>73</sup> Mīr Muḥammad Taqī Mīr, a famous Urdu poet who died in 1810.

<sup>74</sup> Walī Muḥammad Naẓīr Akbarābādī; one of the two Urdu poets, the other being Muḥammad Qulī Quṭb Shāh of Deccan, whose poetry may be regarded as genuinely and totally Indian in spirit. Understandably, therefore, Ḥusain offers him unqualified praise and considers himself a true follower of Naẓīr in outlook and mentality (cf. Zulfīqār Aḥmad Tābish, '*Intiẓār Ḥusain se ek intarwiyū*,' *Kitāb*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (January 1973), p. 8, especially pp. 10–11). Naẓīr died in 1830.

<sup>75</sup> '*Khushbū kī hijrat (Shaikh Ṣalāḥu 'd-Dīn, Intiẓār Ḥusain, Naṣīr Kāzmī, aur Hanīf Rāmē kē darmiyān ek mukālimah)*,' *Savērā*, Nos. 17–18, p. 221.

<sup>76</sup> In *Galī kūchē* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Kārwān [19?], pp. 13–35.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 259–82.

hundred stories. They have appeared in numerous Urdu journals of both Pakistan and India.<sup>78</sup> Most of these stories directly or indirectly deal with Partition. The characters, the situations, the problems posed or answered—all find their ultimate meaning in the experience of Partition. The stories ‘*Sīrhiyān*’<sup>79</sup> (The Stairway) and ‘*Apnī āg kī tarāf*’<sup>80</sup> (Towards His Fire) deal with the loss of memory and the desire to retrieve it, while others such as ‘*Wōh jō khō’ē ga’ē*’<sup>81</sup> (The Lost Ones) and ‘*Shahr-e-afsōs*’<sup>82</sup> (The Dolorous City), project the fall and annihilation of memory. Between these two specific ideas falls a curious but necessary hiatus. The stories of the hiatus period, namely, ‘*Ākhri ādmī*’<sup>83</sup> (The Last Man), ‘*Zard kuttā*’<sup>84</sup> (The Yellow Cur) and ‘*Kāyā-kalap*’<sup>85</sup> (Metamorphosis), deal with the degeneration and moral fall of man, and thus provide the necessary link in the three-act tragic drama of the *self*, which begins with the attempt to retrieve the past through the process of remembrance, failure and moral fall and culminates in the death of the creative self.<sup>86</sup>

But if there is a single story in which most of the problems arising from the Partition find their most pointed expression, then this is undoubtedly his ‘*Ēk bin-likhī razmīya*’<sup>87</sup> (An Epic that Never Came to be Written). Written a few years after Partition the story attempts to present in its bewildering multiplicity of forms an experience undergone

<sup>78</sup> Most of these are available in his *Kaṅkari* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Jadid, 1955), *Ākhri ādmī* (Lahore: Kitābiyāt, 1967), and *Shahr-e-afsōs* (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Kārwan [19?]).

<sup>79</sup> *Shahr-e-afsōs*, pp. 63–83; English translation by Muhammad Umar Memon, ‘The Stairway,’ in *Indian Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 6 (November–December, 1976), pp. 87–102.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190–206; English translation by Muhammad Umar Memon, forthcoming in *Journal of South Asian Literature*.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–28; English translation by Muhammad Umar Memon, forthcoming in *Journal of South Asian Literature*.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 249–70; English translation, ‘The City of Sorrows,’ by Muhammad Salimur Rahman, in S. Viqar Azim (ed.), *Modern Urdu Short Stories from Pakistan* (Islamabad: Pakistan Branch, R.C.D. Cultural Institute, 1977), pp. 128–45.

<sup>83</sup> *Ākhri ādmī* (Lahore: Kitābiyāt, 1967), pp. 1–13; English translation by Leslie A. Flemming, forthcoming in *Journal of South Asian Literature*.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–36; English translation by Daud Rahbar, forthcoming in *Journal of South Asian Literature*.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93–105.

<sup>86</sup> For a fuller discussion and analysis of these stories, see Muhammad Umar Memon, *Hāfzē kī bāzyāft, zawāl aur shakhṣiyat kī maut (Intizār Husain kē chand afsānōn kā tajziyah)*, *Savērā*, Nos 50–52 (May 1976), pp. 43–68; or *Shab-khūn*, Vol. 9, No. 100 (August–September 1976), pp. 3–15.

<sup>87</sup> *Galī kūchē*, pp. 193–224; English translation by Leslie A. Flemming, forthcoming in *Journal of South Asian Literature*.

by a whole people.<sup>88</sup> With an economy of words rarely achieved in Urdu short fiction, Ḥusain here presents the Partition and communal violence against a fair-sized social and political backdrop. So many dimensions of meaning criss-cross within its limited span and so many aspects of feeling, sensation and apprehension are laid bare within it that the story succeeds in gathering a whole era within its sweep. It presents the climate of hope and unbounded optimism prevailing among the Muslims in the days just prior to the Partition, and their deep emotional attachment to the idea of Pakistan. It is interesting to note that the writer makes no effort to define this idea, for that would have meant sacrificing its complexity for emotional edification. However complex and elusive, the idea of Pakistan was real enough to have influenced a majority of Muslims, even those of the otherwise insignificant settlement of Qādirpūr, to take up arms against an enemy several times its size and thwart its inhuman designs. The irony implicit in this situation thickens with the realization that those within this settlement who had once so zealously shouted the slogan '*baṭ kē rahēgā Hindustān, ban kē rahēgā Pākistān*' (India will be divided, Pakistan will be created) themselves had no precise idea where this Pakistan was going to be, and even when it was created, they had no desire voluntarily to migrate to it.

The protagonist of the story, Pachhwā—a wrestler, a neighbourhood bully, who was extremely handy with his club (*lāṭhī*)—exploited the situation to show off his muscle, since everyone else around him had already had a taste of it. Whatever it may have meant to the historian, the intellectual, the '*ulamā*', indeed even to the founder of Pakistan, the new concept, Pakistan, was intelligible to Pachhwā primarily in terms of the opportunity it afforded for personal perfection. In fighting the Hindu attackers from the neighbouring locality, Pachhwā was not, let us be perfectly clear, motivated by the desire to enhance the cause of the Muslim League, for, as Ḥusain has put it aptly, 'he had never allowed his *art* to be tainted by purposiveness.'<sup>89</sup> Fighting was an end in itself, and

<sup>88</sup> As far as I am aware, Shīrīn is the first critic to have noticed the merit of this story and drawn attention to it. She discusses it at some length in two of her articles, for which see *Mi'yār*, pp. 171–98 and 199–228. My own discussion and analysis of this story draws heavily upon her work.

<sup>89</sup> A further telling example: A truly epic personality rises above events and objects; rather than allow itself to be used by them, it, instead, influences and moulds them to underscore what is unique in and about itself. Not only did Pachhwā not allow encroachment of art by purposiveness, he also spurned the idea of modifying his club in any way, even for greater effectiveness. When his companions attached spearheads to their clubs, Pachhwā shunned the innovation/modification altogether, preferring to oil his instead. For adding spearheads changed the character of the club, its *club-ness*, while oiling it did not (see pp. 198–9).

his use of the art of club-fighting was altogether free of self-serving. When all hell broke loose in the form of communal riots, Pachhwā put all other considerations out of mind, concentrating only on the opportunity he would now have of displaying publicly his skill with the club. In great excitement, he ordered his band with an air of authority, "Get ready, boys, for God has finally heard us. We'll crack open their skulls and they will bloom like spring flowers—a sight to behold and remember God be praised!" (p. 204). Thus, 'Pachhwā's gang made preparations for the coming fighting and bloodshed with the same zest and elegance that characterizes the preparations for the celebration of 'īd' (*ibid.*).

Although it is likely that the Muslim League's idea of Pakistan may have lurked in Pachhwā's consciousness,<sup>90</sup> it was essentially a totally personal Pakistan he fought for in his native Qādirpūr. For him as well as for most of the denizens of this tiny Indian locality, Pakistan meant Qādirpūr. But when the closest boundary of the blessed land fell hundreds of miles away from Qādirpūr, Pachhwā's frustration was boundless. He first attempted to fly the Pakistani flag atop the *pīpal* tree beside the Qādirpūr 'īd-gāh, but having been talked out of this crazy idea by the inhabitants of the locality, who probably had a better common sense, he alleviated some of his misery and frustration by hoisting the Islamic banner of his party atop the same tree, saying, 'If Pakistan has excommunicated us, so what?—we shall make our Pakistan ourselves, right here, in this very Qādirpūr' (pp. 205–6). This may be the expression of individual tragedy and frustration, but by implication it represents also the tragedy and frustration of countless others who may have cherished Islam and Pakistan but who were left behind.

The sudden sense of defeat, frustration and betrayal experienced by the Indian Muslims as soon as Pakistan was created; their great enthusiasm, vigour, hopes and expectations, and then their bitterness and pessimism, illusion and disillusion—all the complementary and contradictory states experienced by a whole nation during those stormy days of 1947 have been here displayed with remarkable artistry. Pachhwā, the hero of 'An Epic that Never Came to be Written,' is a symbol of that experience and its greatest victim, since even in being just an ordinary man he has the potentiality of a hero of an epic. The utter waste and failure of those possibilities, stifled as they were while awaiting the moment of their future becoming, is, by implication, the failure of a whole nation.

How does this failure come about? The story does not end with the

<sup>90</sup> But even here, perhaps, considerably tempered by his own vision of it.

subduing of the locality of Qādirpūr by the Hindus, but continues in Pakistan, where many inhabitants of Qādirpūr, including of course Pachhwā and the narrator, have migrated. Much of the story from this point on is in the form of a diary. This diary not only discusses and analyses comprehensively the conditions obtaining at the time the story was written, but also deals with the then existing literary needs and problems.

Once on Pakistani soil, Pachhwā begins to change, as does the narrator. The change is for the worse. And yet, before the process of moral deterioration is complete, Pachhwā makes one last bold effort to redeem himself. Against overwhelming odds, he returns to Qādirpūr. Subsequently, the narrator receives a letter from the Šūbēdār Šāhib, who is still in Qādirpūr, informing him of the tragic end of Pachhwā. Qādirpūr has changed beyond all recognition. Hindu fanatics have even changed its name to Jātūnagār. The Jāts, who had never forgiven Pachhwā for hoisting the Islamic flag of his party, find fruition of a long-awaited moment in his return. They decapitate Pachhwā and hang his severed head from the same *pīpal* tree atop which once fluttered the Islamic banner of his party (p. 222).

The story ends as the writer, who once cherished human and literary values, meets the death of his creative self in the tragic fall of his protagonist. He can no longer write the epic he once wanted to about Pachhwā. The creativity of the writer subjected to a process of smothering ever since his arrival in the new country, has now been completely atrophied. But the real reason why he is unable to finish the story of Pachhwā is perhaps this: although Partition had interfered with the natural development of Pachhwā's personality and reduced it so that he could no longer be the subject of a great epic, in heroically meeting his end Pachhwā had nevertheless restored to himself some of the lost elements of his once truly epic personality. To the writer, however, no such redeeming grace is available. The new situation, with its peculiar sets of problems, stresses and strains, has totally changed the mentality of the writer. The wells of inspiration have all dried up. He can no longer write, even if he wanted to.

The death of the creative self is tragic enough; what intensifies this sense is the newly-acquired conviction of the writer that literature itself can have no meaning, that it is a totally negative and useless occupation. Now, in the promised land, his concerns and preoccupations are no longer the same; he no longer writes, but is happy tending his material interests, which, for the moment, lie in the smooth operation of a flour mill, the abandoned property of a Hindu, which has been recently

allotted to him, thanks to the influence of Na'im Miyāñ—a compatriot from Qādirpūr (pp. 223-4).

The 'swan song' of the creative self is briefly interrupted by a series of attempts to arrest or, at the very least, somewhat postpone the impending tragedy. One such attempt is the short story '*Sīḥiyāñ*' (The Stairway).

The experience of Partition, which affected the Muslim immigrants in a number of adverse ways, has had a particularly damaging effect on Saiyid, the central character of the story 'The Stairway.' Not only has it left him exhausted, it has also robbed him of his memory. Instead of coming to inner peace at the journey's end, Saiyid suffers from excessive insomnia and a feeling of emptiness. Far from solving the problem of Muslim identity in South Asia which it was expected to, the Partition has, in a way, created a crisis of identity for Saiyid. In Pakistan he is, thus, a man without memory and, therefore, without past.

The only recourse now available to the benumbed mind of Saiyid is to retrieve memory subconsciously through dreams. This, however, remains an impossibility since the ability to dream or to sleep has departed him subsequent to his arrival in the new country.

Saiyid's dilemma is finally resolved not so much by any act of will or determination on his part as by the salutary effect a conversation between Akhtar, Bashīr Bhā'ī and Raḏī has on his tired senses one particular sultry summer night when all four lie in their beds atop some roof in the mysterious half-light of a lantern. Raḏī has just finished relating a dream which he had recently had and Bashīr Bhā'ī is interpreting it.

Raḏī's dream, loaded with memories of his past in a small city somewhere in eastern U.P. and Bashīr Bhā'ī's skilful and engaging interpretation of it have captured the attention of all, except Saiyid, who appears to be totally uninterested in the activity. He makes repeated efforts to fall asleep and fails repeatedly. The instant, however, that Raḏī mentions seeing the *imām-bārā* in his dream, something happens to Saiyid. The very mention of the word, full of symbolic meaning and associations, triggers off a series of past images that inexorably superimpose themselves upon his consciousness in a veritable cinematic montage. He suddenly throws his eyes fully open and feels 'a tiny aperture forming in the darkness of his mind' through which he drifts into the bygone world of his childhood and youth and relives every moment of it.

Thus, thanks to the conversation of his companions, the past has again become accessible to Saiyid; the act of remembrance has restored

the power to dream. Toward the end of the story, after Saiyid has been successful in retrieving his past, he feels very light and strangely at ease. Perhaps, he is again a whole man. He opens his sleep-laden eyes and looking toward Razī says in a mysterious voice, 'My heart is beating rather fast. It seems I am going to see a dream, after all' (p. 83).

In Saiyid's case, although he has lost touch with his reality, there is awareness, however faint, of the self and the desire to recollect. This desire becomes transformed into active resistance, however, in the case of the nameless, but central, character of the story '*Apnī āg kī taraf*' (Towards His Fire).

Two childhood friends, who as adults have lived an intensely intimate life together in a room inside a tall building, come to be separated by the vicissitudes of time, though they continue to live in the same city. They meet again, accidentally, when the building in which Z—we shall call the central, nameless character by this letter—has continued to live catches fire and his friend—whom we shall call B—happens to come by that way. B recognizes Z and tries to persuade him to move over to his house since the gutted building is no longer safe. Z, however, won't. Explaining his hesitation he says, rather quizzically, 'Shaikh 'Alī Hujwīrī once saw a mountain that was enveloped in fire, in which fire he spotted a tormented little mouse running frantically around. Somehow in its mad running the mouse managed to get away from the volcano. But, just as soon as it got away from the fire, it dropped dead.' He fell silent. After some time he added in a very low voice, 'You see, I don't want to die' (p. 204).

The parable of the mouse and the volcano is brimming with mystical symbolism. Z is aware that outside the building he cannot be the man he is. The building, on the other hand, is a whole cosmos in itself—self-sufficient and self-sustaining—and stands, possibly, for many things: a tradition, a society, a whole world, or indeed the Muslim culture of pre-Partition days, with the fire being an allusion to the communal rioting that disrupted and destroyed that culture.

So, even if there is death inside, Z must, like Pachhwā in 'An Epic That Never Came to be Written,'<sup>91</sup> return to his own element, to his own fire, because there is a greater and more painful death awaiting him outside.

The active resistance of Z to succumb to an alien death comes to be entirely lost in more recent stories of Ḥusain. '*Shahr-e-afsōs*' (The Dolorous City) and, more importantly, '*Wōh jō khō'ē ga'ē*' (The Lost Ones) provide outstanding examples of the fall of personality. In the latter

<sup>91</sup> Or like Arshad and Na'im in the story '*Andhī galī*' (*Shahr-e-afsōs*, pp. 227-48).



story, written shortly after the break up of Pakistan in 1971, the personality reaches its inevitable death and all memory of the past is irrevocably eroded and, with it, all self-awareness.

Four people, symbolically divested of names to enhance the sense of loss of personal ego, are identified only by their physical characteristics and by the signs they wear—e.g., ‘the man with the bag,’ ‘the bearded man,’ ‘the youth’ and ‘the man with the wounded head’—which is a way to dramatize the unreality about their beings. They are insubstantial, intangible shadows with no identity. All we know about them is that they have somehow managed to escape a great and painful persecution. Their homes have been sacked, so on and so forth. But where are they coming from? or where are they headed?—there is no precise answer, and if there is one, it is curiously bereft of any sense of present actuality and is to be found in the repeated expulsion of Muslim peoples over the centuries: from Granada and Cordoba in Spain, from Bait al-Maqdis in present Israel, from Kashmir and Jahānābād (i.e., Delhi) in India. As the man with the wounded head himself says: ‘I have been uprooted. And that’s what matters. What difference does it make for me now to remember whether it’s Granada that I’ve been thrown out from, or Bait al-Maqdis, or Jahānābād, or Kashmir’ (p. 15).

The loss of memory and the consequent death of personality is masterfully brought out by the episode in which somehow these four men begin to suspect that one of them is missing. They count and recount, and each one of them misses himself while counting. All they can remember is that one of them is missing. But which one? They cannot remember the face or even the name of the missing one, or whether, indeed, the missing person is a man or a woman. What this amounts to is that none of them has any precise idea or awareness of himself.

Later on, it suddenly occurs to the man with the wounded head that perhaps he had failed to include himself while taking the count. He mentions this suspicion to the others. Each, in turn, realizes his mistake. Each thinks that he is, in fact, the missing man.

The missing man thus attains to the real man, while the real flesh and blood men, because of loss of consciousness, fade away into murky oblivion, into the colourless realm of non-being.

And it is only the testimony of the others to this or that man’s being that endows him with whatever reality there may be to his existence. The tragi-comical paradox embedded in the situation is brought into sharper relief when the man with the wounded head realizes that his

being depends not so much on his own thinking and awareness of himself as on the goodwill of others who are willing to testify to that effect. He shudders at his own lack of Cartesian faith, which can point only to a tragic fate. Addressing the old man, who has chided him for his ingratitude to the willingness of the other three to testify to his existence, he says: 'And suppose you suddenly decided to withhold your testimony—I would right away cease *to be*, wouldn't I?' (p. 23).

But where Saiyid, Ẓ and Pachhwā are successful,—however brittle this success may be—the four men in the present story are truly lost and done for. Little more than intangible shadows of their former selves, they are kept alive by the testimony of others. What tenuous existence, indeed!

Thus through a circuitous route, interspersed with spurts of life and brief moments of will, resistance and fluctuating optimism, the main idea of 'An Epic That Never Came to be Written' is resumed and brought to a logical conclusion in 'The Lost Ones,' with the numerous stories in between merely highlighting man's odyssey through moral degeneration, amnesia, attempts at regaining, through reclamation of memory, a sense of corporate and individual identity to eventual extinction of the creative self.

### Conclusion

At the time of the Partition of India in 1947, much of the Urdu creative writing was under the influence of the Progressive Movement and the peculiar ideology fostered by it, compelled, no doubt, by human considerations. Those in the Movement viewed the Partition as totally negative and failed to appreciate it within a historical context. Devoid of any deeper historical understanding, this writing focused narrowly on an offshoot of the Partition, namely, the communal riots, leaving the forces that necessitated it virtually untouched. The literature produced on the theme of communal riots appears to be generally tentative and superficial. But there were some writers, both in Pakistan and India, who could not write off the Partition with ease. One such writer is IntiẒār Ḥusain. He shows a keen awareness of the history of India since the arrival of the Muslims in the Subcontinent. He feels that the creativity of the incoming Muslims, working in close collaboration with the creativity of the native Hindus, produced a composite culture. But, from the very beginning, puritanical elements within the Muslim and Hindu populations worked against this synthetic culture. The situation

progressively deteriorated. A time came when, lamentably, the idea of unity had to be abandoned. The Partition was, thus, a historical necessity. Any writing that fails to view Partition within a historico-cultural context fails to do justice to it. Although historically necessary, the incident was nevertheless tragic. Much of his writing attempts to portray this sense of tragedy. But Husain is also a pragmatist. Tragedy, unless it is sublimated through a creative process, is pure waste. The Partition of India must, therefore, be seen as a creative force also. The experience of migration, a recurrent phenomenon in the history of Muslim peoples, was again made available to the Muslims as a result of the Partition. This experience had creative possibilities which ought to have been exploited. Unfortunately, they were not.