CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

That which I love I cannot go to,

What I hope is always divided.

- Brij V. Lal

The studies and analysis in the preceding chapters of this thesis have engaged with fictional narratives by some women writers that foreground personal memories as opposed to statist narratives of Partition. Memories of abducted and raped women, migrant and displaced women, and memories of women as survivors and witnesses represented in creative literature have been exhumed to challenge their erasures from official history. The study has sought to establish that an understanding of women's Partition experience must necessarily be made against a wider canvas and not only within the limited frame of Partition. The social and cultural contexts which determine the structures of identity and community and the wide array of social relations within which women's everyday lives are worked out are essentially central to any discussion of women's experience of Partition.

The study has shown that women protagonists, though trapped in somebody else's war, have all displayed immense potential for resilience and in whichever role they have been seen in – whether wife, mother or daughter or as separated from family – their stories are an assertion of human values. Given the circumstances and the socio-cultural conditioning they have been subjected to, all the women make choices with full knowledge of the fact that they are intrinsically connected to others as human beings and for them, to put it in the words of Bowden and Mummery (2012), "caring relations

with others are intrinsic to their process of decision-making and, indeed, to their sense of self as a whole" (p.130). Circumstances are surely beyond their control but how these women respond to them is their individual decision. Sutara, Laila, Ayah, Roop, Pooro, Bibi and Amma – each one of them decides on the basis of their convictions in the responsibility they owe to the self and to the human bonds that they develop. All these women are suffused with the vitality of life, bogged down by the brutalities of Partition, but not broken, are alive and sensitive and respond challengingly to the forces that they are pitted against.

The non-linearity and complexities inherent in the way the Partition experience of women is narrativised in the works analysed as well as the structure of this study is almost akin to Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) concept of the rhizomatic framework of thought, which appears in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In botany, a rhizome is a root system of some plants, which grows horizontally and spreads across the ground. Macey's (2001) *Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* describes a rhizome thus, "Unlike a plant with a single tap root, rhizomes spread in all directions, creating a chaotic network in which every point can be connected to every other point" (p. 89). A rhizome is based on the "principles of connections and heterogeneity" (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 7). Although a very complex structure as conceptualised by the French philosophers, narrativisation of the Partition experience can be explained in terms of the rhizomatic for there is a "decentering" of the "issue into other dimensions" (Deleuze and Guattari, p .8). Elaborating on this concept, they add, "A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (p. 7). According to them, multiplicities characterise the rhizomatic and "connect with other multiplicities" (p. 9).

Rhizomes may have ruptures but whatever segments emerge they still remain part of the rhizome. This gives rise to further stratifications and proliferations. The rhizome lends itself to “external, productive outgrowths” (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 14). This study has based its analysis on a rhizomatic structure. Historical accounts are represented in a sequential and traceable manner, but women’s experiences cannot be represented in such a linear narrative. As Butalia (2015) suggests, “Every historical moment that offers us the possibility of looking at it through the prism of memory demonstrates that the more you search, the more there is that opens up” (p. ix). To see the Partition experience as disconnected from the socio-cultural matrix is to be completely blind to social relations including patriarchy. Such a study will only result in a fragmented representation of the women’s lived experience.

This study will hopefully help open up avenues to develop a greater variety of approaches to not only study women’s experience of Partition but also of many other categories like children, Dalits, refugees, migrants, enclave dwellers whose lives transformed because of Partition or other conflicts and wars. It can provide further ways of expanding the debate to include many more marginalised categories. What it has also sought to do is to suggest a more serious status for the women writers than they currently enjoy because they made it their business to handle a theme that has otherwise been swept under the carpet. It is only slowly that their reputations as writers of an alternative Partition historiography have been seriously accepted. All the novelists and short story writers included in this study can easily earn a place as major figures in many an international list of 20th century and contemporary fiction writers as they have been taken up for study by scholars and critics even beyond the subcontinent. Writers already set about engaging with India’s Partition immediately after the event and a

renewal of interest has taken place since the 1990s. Prior to the 90s, these writers earned barely any recognition as writers of Partition fiction from reviewers, critics and readers.

This study has been undertaken with the conviction that we are in a period when Partition literature can be significantly relevant in understanding contemporary situations of conflict and their consequences. Their relevance is not confined to India only but crossing territorial boundaries their works can serve to illuminate situations of conflict that have arisen in places such as Algeria, Bosnia, Ireland, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and also the German Holocaust. Since Partition remains even now a major reference point, both at the political and socio-cultural level, a constant remapping of the insights provided by literature becomes imperative to understand the issues related to refugees, border, rehabilitation and peace, which still hound the subcontinent. The writers who lived through Partition were undoubtedly influenced by a changed social and political climate when imperialism had been the national enemy and democratic institutions were emerging. This was a period, which experienced not only freedom but also uncertainty about human nature itself, which was a logical consequence of the catastrophe brought about by Partition.

How was it possible for an India, which had already stepped very much into the 20th century in 1947 to have been so violent and barbaric towards its women? In addition, how is it still possible for the India of the 21st century to continue to witness violence against women in both the public space and the private? Do the rules of conflict prescribe that men of the warring sides must communicate through the bodies of women? On the streets, in the homes, during communal riots and so-called ethnic cleansing, in the name of moral policing and honour killings – violence against women

extends itself even beyond Partition. Can the violence against women during Partition and beyond it be seen as an endemic phenomenon? Are we to believe Baldwin (2012) when she says in the *Huffingtonpost*, an online newspaper, that "India is worst G20 country to be a woman"? Surely these and similar such questions will and should hound us. None of the novels or short stories taken up for study gives us easy clear-cut formulas by which closures and finalities can be affected. They make us take a hard look at the many strands that a reading into the women's experience throws up, all relevant in post-Independence India. A study of almost any event of contemporary violence will inevitably take one to the Partition of 1947. The antagonism between India and Pakistan, the turbulence in Kashmir, the riots of 1992 and the numerous other communal riots that keep raising their ugly heads, border disputes, illegal infiltration, secessionism, enclave dwellers and their plight – examining all of these will invariably require a retracing of steps back to Partition. There is an even greater necessity to study Partition in all its different dimensions by those who have not lived through the event. Wounds that Partition inflicted have not shown much signs of having healed and the present generation's connection with the realities of 1947 will add newer and more thoughtful perspectives.

Saint (2016) has talked of the need of "exorcizing the ghosts of Partition-era collective violence" (p. 85) because of the "pervasiveness of the Partition's afterlife and continuing manifestations of historical trauma in the present…" (p. 75). Whether the trauma of 1947 and its hold on the present is explained by Hirsch's (2012) term "post memory" (p.4) or by Kabir's (2013) term "post amnesia" (p. 26) or as Mohanram (2016) puts it "the ghosts of the past" (p. 11), the fact remains that the ghosts continue to haunt and to cause anguish and "gesture toward unresolved history and pasts that are

impossible to forget" (Mohanram, p. 11). Once again recalling Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic structure, the study of Partition entails not a linear progression from past to present to future, but in order to look to the future the ghost of the past will need to be first unearthed to be made sense of in the present. Multiple genres engaging with Partition including creative writings, films, memoirs, academic research, oral narratives and interviews will provide the present generation with material to explore a past that until today colours the present of the entire subcontinent. Fictional narratives such as those taken up for study are about women who have carved out their destinies in the midst of utter mayhem and madness and their humanism can be suggestive of a potential force which can affect transformation in a world where conflict is the rule of the day. The lessons learnt from the women's Partition experience will hopefully enable later generations to look beyond polarised perceptions. The burden of Partition's history and trauma that the sub-continent still carries can be lightened with newer perspectives offered by literature. It would be apt to conclude with the words of Jain and Jain (2017):

> Literature is one way of cohering affirmative memories one gathers in the course of understanding the pain and anguish of the 'other'. It opens a path for us to travel on so that the cycle of hate and revenge can be halted. (p. 27)

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