

**Name : Kajal Tehri**

**Supervisor : Dr Asmat Jahan**

**Department: Department of English**

**Faculty of Humanities and Languages**

**Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi- 110025**

**Title: PATRIARCHAL AND NATIONALISTIC RHETORIC: REPRESENTATION OF PARTITION IN SELECT SOUTH ASIAN WRITERS**

In this thesis my aim has been to subject to critical attention English novels engaging with the traumatic Partition of the subcontinent in the aftermath of the annihilating ethnic violence of the 1980's. This study is propelled by the urgency to address pressing questions of belongingness not only in the nation states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, but also the South Asian diaspora. The study is equally invested with making visible the nationalistic and patriarchal underpinnings of the discourses centered around the body of the nation and the body of the woman while contending that it is not only the gendered female who is vulnerable to violence but also the gendered male. Thus the study tries to map the contours of representation and remembrance of the Partition of the subcontinent through the mode of fiction and tries to understand what these narratives of cultural recall reflect about the dynamics of relationship between the ethnic communities and the sibling countries. Through this study I have tried to map the social, cultural and political legacy of the Partition especially with respect to the gendered self in fictional representations by select authors.

The first chapter 'Introduction' makes visible the heterogeneity and pluralization of the historical archive in the light of a cross current of movements such as rising engagement with the

‘subaltern’, rising feminist consciousness and the strengthening of feminist organizations, bouts of communal violence, renewed diplomatic relationships with Pakistan, and greater transnational movements with the advent of globalization.

The second chapter ‘The Spectre of Haunting Eyes-Women, Ethnic Violence and Multiple Patriarchies in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *Ice-Candy-Man* and Sorayya Khan’s *Five Queen’s Road*’ engages with the charged semiotics of the “theft” of the body in the spaces of the pre and post-independence nation state of Pakistan and complicates the location of gendered violence in the hegemonic narratives of nationalism or desire or revenge and precarious belongingness.

The third chapter ‘Body, Community and the Nation- A Critical Reading of *What the Body Remembers*’ I argue, is a foregrounding and hierarchisation of the Sikh experiences of the Partition casting the gendered body as the recipient of violence within the matrix of not only the domestic patriarchal family but also in an inter-ethnic framework.

The fourth chapter ‘Interrogating Boundaries and Gendered Nationalisms : A Critical Reading of Mukul Kesavan’s *Looking Through Glass* and Mehr Nigar Masroor’s *Shadows of Time*’ are narratives of cultural recall which foreground collective amnesia in an inability to remember syncretic modes of being in the spaces of undivided India which embodied an ethics of tolerance. These texts, I suggest, are informed with the humanistic imperative to develop peaceable inter-ethnic relationships between Hindus and Muslims.

The fifth chapter titled ‘Women, Nation and the World: A Critical Reading of Amitav Ghosh’s *Shadow Lines* and Kamila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows*’ takes forward the discourses on Partition and refract the dialectic between nationalism and globalization mapping the area with new insights. Both the authors are invested with exposing concomitant disintegrations the world

over and therefore underscore the need for a sympathetic imagination which breaks free from a provincial understanding of the Partition, uncovering the dialectic between nation and the world from a gendered subject position.

I thus conclude that the contours of representation illuminate the differential relationship of the gendered self to the nation even as both men and women negotiate patriarchies- domestic, national and even planetary. The thesis is thus an attempt to intervene in discourses of othering which increasingly saturate public sphere especially from the subject position of the gendered self. The chapters under study gesture towards the irreversible trajectory of unification of the two nations while also making visible the selective memorialization of the Partition especially within the framework of violence to the gendered body. The exceptional nature of gendered violence has perhaps been sedimented under layers of seven decades. Representational overdeterminism of grotesque gendered violence has been displaced with concerns about women's partial citizenship and humanist concern with peaceful coexistence. In particular the authors of the diaspora seem to have veered far from a fixation with the loss of South Asian syncretic spaces which undergirded the fiction of earlier generations of writers. The constitutive centrality of lament for the neem tree, cordial relations across ethnicities is replaced with a concern for egalitarian gender politics, civil rights and citizenship of a 'cosmopolitical' order.