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**A DOOMSDAY CARAVAN OF PARTITION DAYS IN
 GULZAR'S DEBUT NOVEL *TWO***

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Abstract:

Gulzar's novel Two explores the experiences of the people trapped in the web of rumours and realities of communal riots in the demonic days of Partition. The exodus of the Sikhs and Hindus from West Punjab towards east was triggered with the changing scenarios of the socio-political spheres of the country after the cursed Great Calcutta Killing in the summer of 1946. The flame of violence swallowed eastern, northern and western part of the country. The dream of four hundred million people of a free India was relegated to unbridled bloodshed and accompanying uprootedness of millions of helpless people. Religious affinity was searched everywhere to escape the sword of religious animosity. Marches of caravans were seen towards the border en route to the so-called 'safer' land. The caravans ended up in the calamitous refugee camps. The rose of freedom bloomed amid the thorns of apocalyptic Partition and the tears of partitioned India choked the smiles free India. The storm and dust of Partition gradually subsided but the air of the subcontinent was already polluted with the particles of doubts, hatred, intolerance, and enmity. The paper pictures the journey of such a truck caravan and the lives of the passengers or rather the 'refugees' in the subsequent decades of the great divide of 1947.

Keywords: Riots, Partition, Caravan, India, Pakistan, Border, Refugee, Camps.

1947 Partition of India has been a matter of perpetual debates and discussions, which come in a variety of forms – poetry, short story, novel, play, film, documentary, critical writing, academic research, and painting to name a few. Those who were the eyewitnesses to the hellish time of Partition or those who experienced its trauma are leaving the world and their next generations have been bearing the legacy of the traumatic time in the scorching stories and mordant memories of their elders. Gulzar belongs to the first generation who had undergone the devastating days of Partition and its many ramifications. He is a well-known face of post-Partition Indian literary and cinematic world. His colossal contribution to the creative fields brought him many national and international accolades – Padma Bhushan, Sahitya Akademi Award, Dadasaheb Phalke Award, several Indian National Film Awards, twenty Filmfare Awards, one Academy Award and one Grammy Award.

He was born in Dina in the Jhelum District of undivided Punjab in 1934. His family migrated to India after Partition and this very disastrous dislocation due to Partition left a deep impress on his mind. He has been speaking and writing extensively on the subject of Partition for many years but never indulged in writing a novel. *Two* is his first attempt in that direction and it well captures the cataclysmic time of Partition. He first wrote the novel in Urdu in which he excels most and later he mostly translated it into English. The web of this imaginative story is embroidered with the multi colour threads of Partition experiences of his own and of those partition victims whom he knew and met. He says, “No work of fiction exists in a vacuum. Mine too is rooted in the world I have seen and experiences.” (Gulzar 179) The brilliant story telling ability of Gulzar has given the novel a realistic dimension, which is needed to present a theme like Partition.

Gulzar's novel captures the changing scenarios of the Indian subcontinent after the end of Second

World War. The peace and harmony of the country was suddenly superseded by extreme communal propaganda, which soon led to communal hatred and violence. The demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims became impossible to thwart in the face of a critical inter-communal conflict. The path to freedom narrowed to Partition. Reality and rumour equally frightened the Hindus and Sikhs of West Punjab and Muslims of East Punjab. Caravans of Hindus and Sikhs started to move towards east and of Muslims towards west. *Two* tells the story of such an eastward truck caravan, which started its journey by the end 1946. It finely delineates the scathing experiences of the people of the caravan during their journey to the so-called 'safer' land. Interestingly the novel does not end here and further explores the life of the people of the caravan in India and England decades after the Partition. The passengers of the truck dispersed in different directions after reaching India but they could not dispel the curse of their past which set the course of rest of their destinies.

Everything was quite peaceful till the end of the Second World War in Campbellpur, a small town of West Punjab. Soon the amicable air of the town scented communal disharmony in the following year as rumours started to roam the town that Muslims were torturing the Sikhs and Hindus in different parts of West Punjab. Fauji drives trucks of Ujagar Singh and his friend Lakhbeera runs a highway dhaba, which become a depository for all sorts of gossips and rumours. Fauji has no connection with military but people call him so because of his khaki jacket. The bosom friends have no family and enjoy their lives as they choose. Trucks running on the highway bring rumours of communal disturbances and it provokes the natives of the town to stretch their imagination. Painti-Chatti was such a truck owner who regularly brings rumours to Lakhbeera's dhaba and it worries Fauji and his friend. Painti-Chatti has told Lakhbeera that Hindu women have been paraded naked in Sheikhpura by the Muslims. News of kidnapping Hindu woman is also coming. "Rumours gradually became news. And the news began to ferment. People believed whatever they heard." (Gulzar 7)

Karam Singh and Fazaldeen teach in M. B. Middle School of Campbellpur and they are not only colleagues but also good friends for years. During the Second World War, Fazaldeen's anti-British propaganda in the classroom caught the eye of the British. He was severely whipped in front of the students and Karam Singh shielded him and shared his friend's pain. When he was suspended from school, Karam Singh arranged tuition for him and paid school fees of his two sons. Police Inspectors Sharma and Verma harassed Fazaldeen a lot after that incident. Suddenly the nationalistic fervour evaporated by 1946 with the growing demand for Pakistan. However, rumours reach the school and Karam Singh becomes anxious to know that Hindus will have to go to Hindustan to make room for the Muslims coming from east. He trusts the knowledge of his friend Fazal who confirms the news of the proposed plan to divide the country. Karam Singh is not aware of the intricacies of the religious politics of the time and naively asks "But why, yaar? I have not done anything, nor have you! Why should our land be divided?" (Gulzar 17) Karam Singh has no problem with Pakistan if he is not separated from his native place and people. "If it's good for you, I will surely fight for your rights. My yaar wants Pakistan. All right then, Pakistan Zindabad!" (19) Karam Singh puts the relationship of friendship before any religious sentiment and believes that a mere political decision of division will never be able to separate him from Fazal. Karam asks his friend if he also wants Pakistan. "Master Fazaldeen lowered his eyes. He was unable to answer. He was unable to say: 'These Sharmas and Vermas are after my life and even call me a "sulla". They humiliate us. That's why Muslims want Pakistan.'" (19) It is true that the Muslims were not happy with the superiority complex of a class of Hindus but that had not been a serious problem until the political demand for Pakistan fanned it. Suddenly the Hindu-Muslim relation of the country was poisoned and Muslims started to anticipate insecurity in the Hindu majoritarian country after the departure of the colonial power.

With each passing day, Campbellpur is losing itself in the smoke of doubts, confusions, and apprehensions. Seeing the rampage of time Fazaldeen sounds worried: "Another giant step of history is about to fall here in Hindustan. Some forces are contemplating another partition, of land and people."

(Gulzar 20) Master Fazal could not answer his friend Karam whether he wants Pakistan but his silence affirmed on his behalf. He is a man of intellect and deep insight and can well analyse the time. "This arrogant, conceited history strides ahead with her head in the clouds and never looks down. She does not realize how she crushes millions of people beneath her feet. The common people. She doesn't understand that one may cut a mountain in two, but people? It's hard task, Bhai to cut one people into two. They bleed." (20-21) He well anticipates the pangs of Partition, which will separates one from another. It is not easy to erase the shared memories of past people and place. It is also difficult to accept new people and place because the past always haunts. People in the trap of Partition thus will be torn apart between past and present. Fazaldeen is a sensitive man and has the capacity to delve deep into the psyche of the common people. He remarks, "That is how this arrogant history walks with her head held high. She doesn't deign to look down and see what she crushes beneath her feet. Doesn't see that people are below." (21)

Amid the suffocating milieu of Campbellpur Painti-Chhatti continuously brings news to Lakhbeera's dhaba. In Mirpur Muslims have desecrated a Hindu temple by throwing cow's head and it has already caused Hindu-Muslim riots in the area. Hindus are fleeing towards India. Pakistan has not yet been created and nobody knows where it will be but Hindus and Sikhs of West Punjab are moving towards east leaving the conjectural Pakistan behind. "Pakistan had begun to take place in the minds of the people. Only the declaration was awaited. It looked like there was no going back on the partition now. Even if the leaders wanted to turn the clock back, it was no longer possible. Anyone who tried would be killed." (Gulzar 24) Pakistan and Partition both were becoming reality and people who were thinking that a miracle would happen to change the course of the history, were proved wrong.

"The seeds sown by the British had sprouted thorns which had begun to prick. They were masters of their craft." (Gulzar 24) The British policy of divide and rule was futile to break Bengal in 1905 but it was now best implemented in time of their departure. "The British saw and discussed Indian society and politics in terms of Hindus and Muslims as separate political and cultural entities." (A. Singh 9) A Muslim police Inspector tells Rai Bahadur Des Raj that they have no problem to keep their Hindu neighbours in Pakistan but it will not be easy to control the retribution Muslims want to take on the native Hindus after the incidents of Muslim carnages in India. "Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured and both raped. From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; and to Bihar where Hindus massacred Muslims." (K. Singh 1)

Usman Khan brought Panna Bai from Amritsar and married her by changing her religion. An English officer, Gary Tomson killed Usman during a scuffle with the pistol of Rai Bahadur. Now Panna comes to Fauji with her jewellery and little savings to take her to her family in Amritsar. She pleads, "Here, I found neither home, nor my motherland! . . . Take me to the place from where Usman uprooted me . . . my roots lie scattered, broken." (Gulzar 32). The 'kothe-wali' feels the heat of the communal tension and finds no reason to be in the town. Suddenly she becomes conscious of her 'root' and a strange insecurity grapples her. Fauji assures her to take to her parents once the chaotic situation in the country settles down. "Campbellpur was now simmering like a pot with a fire underneath it had begun to rumble and smoke." (39) 'Bad news' is pouring in but Karam Singh still discards those as rumours. Gradually Masterji realises that people look at him differently than before. He visits to his neighbour Umar Sheikh to listen to radio but comes to know that the husband of the latter's daughter has been killed in riots in Meerut. "Master Karam Singh's legs trembled as he walked out. He took few steps, staggered and fell." (42) Hindus and Muslims of Campbellpur are now in the clutch of a bizarre terror. "The entire city held its breath. Everyone sat with her hearts in their mouths. And there was not even a rumour to offset the tension." (43) Lakhbeera cannot find the reason behind the fire in his shack. When he asks Fauzi who can do it, the latter replies, "Are you asking for the name of the person or his religion?" (46) Fauzi too can measure the depth of the communal situation

in the town. Rai Bahadur wants Fauzi to carry some of his goods to Delhi and if situation deteriorates, his family will go to Delhi in the truck. Fauzi thinks to take Panna and his friend Lakhbeera along with him. He will have to take some safe and alternative routes to Delhi to avoid G.T. Road as looting is on the rampage there.

Lakhbeera cannot solve the mystery behind the fire in his shack. Fauzi reminds him of the insignia of 'khanda' on the signboard of the dhaba. Now Lakhbeera understands that the rioters have targeted the shack as he is a Sikh. "He picked up a piece of burning wood and scraped the part of the board that the khanda, blackening it . . . He did not have the heart to scour it out." (Gulzar 52) Religious identity of a man would decide whether he would be allowed to live in the town or not because "One man's religion is another man's poison." (Sidhwa 117). Now Tiwari wants Fauzi to take his family and some luggage in his truck to Meerut. Punjab went in the grip of severe communal violence and the province was divided on communal lines. Hindus and Sikhs were tortured in West Punjab and Sikhs of East Punjab were pushing the native Muslims hard towards West Punjab. By the end of 1946, people were terrified to hear the news of religious conversion, massacre, loot, rape, and abduction of women and girls. It triggered cycle of violent reactions throughout Punjab. In most of the cases, outsiders perpetrated such heinous activities and incited the natives against their neighbours. "The year '47 had dawned. The political climate was changing, and the situation on the ground was getting worse. As the date for Independence neared, freedom seemed more and more distant." (Gulzar 59)

Army started evacuating Hindus and Sikhs and kept them in camps set up for their safety. Many came in groups and joined the camps. Outgoing Hindus and Sikhs were hopeful that the army truck would carry them to border. Ironically, local people were supplying food and water to the 'refugees'. "When one is hungry, caste, community and religion cease to matter. They are running from the very people who now feed them." (Gulzar 59-60) One night Lakhbeera's dhaba aide Hameed kills Pali over an argument about 'jhatka' and 'halal'. "Fear gripped Campbellpur like never before. So far turbulent, the town came to a standstill. Fear crippled everyone. Disturbing news started to pour from the other side of the city as well." (60) Fauzi asks Lakhbeera to go with him to Delhi to escape the communal frenzy. Lakhbeera was in dilemma: "What can Hindustan offer me? Why should I leave my country for another? If Pakistan, so be it this is my country." (61) Lakhbeera finds no reason to leave his native land for an alien country where no one knows him. But he forgets that the communal situation has punctured all his social relations in his native land and the persons whom he thinks his own can turn out to be his enemies anytime. In fact, the madness of sectarian violence does not guarantee any relationship to be trustworthy. Lala Des Raj decides to leave the town with his family for the time being and hopes to return when the fire will cool down.

Tiwari is also ready to leave the town even by giving a hefty ten thousand to Fauzi. Fauzi again urges Lakhbeera to go with him and says if does not go, the trip will be cancelled. After the horrific incident of Pali's murder, Lakhbeera agrees to go but still hopes to return later. Lakhbeera and Des Raj are the kinds of people who cannot easily sever the ties with their native land and still cherishes a blink hope to return in near future. Fauzi asks his friend, "Beere, tell me, what is freedom? Where does it come from? For whom?" (Gulzar 64) The people of the subcontinent fought for years against the British to make the country free from the bondage of the colonial rule. They wanted to discard the colonial slavery and acquire self-rule so that the countrymen could breathe in the free air. But seeing the narrative of violence it seemed that reins of terror were loosed by some invisible power and people and the land were being chopped into pieces. Whereas people should enjoy the upcoming freedom, they were mourning it as they hardly imagined to be divided on religious lines. Common people of the country remained where they were before independence but the decision makers of the division were hardly affected by the wave of communal violence. Their freedom remained intact but the millions did not taste it.

Hindus and Sikhs of Campbellpur start moving towards east in groups leaving their homes and other immovable properties. Terror has loomed large in the town and nobody wants to take the risk of

losing life in the chaos of religious conflicts. "A long caravan of people walked along the city's roads. Bundles on their heads, boxes on shoulders, children in their arms and dragging the elderly along. These people were leaving their land. Overnight, they had been assigned a new country." (Gulzar 65) The silent march of the terrified people towards east sent chills down the spines of those non-Muslims who still could not decide what to do. Shrugging off all the emotional attachments, they too become ready to follow them. Karam Singh says, "The city is shrouded in a deathly silence ... wonder if it's the lull before the storm." (66) Fauzi's truck caravan starts with the family of Lala Des Raj, Tiwari and his wife, Tiwari's daughter-in-law Kanta and grandson Guddu, Panna Bai, and Lakhbeera. The passengers had to discard most of their luggage as advised by Fauzi otherwise it would attract the looters on the way. However, it was a lacerating moment for the passengers to leave their homes in such a traumatic condition in search of 'safer' place in an alien country. "Their eyes were tearful. Some for leaving their motherland behind, others, perhaps, their valuables. It is not easy to leave behind one's roots. Not knowing when, where or if at all they would grow new ones. They had seen branches fallen from trees, withering away in the dust. With each mile, the hope that they would ever return began to recede." (71) The people were happy with whatever they had to live a peaceful life in their motherland but suddenly the cannibal time uprooted them and hurled into an uncertain future. On the way, Fauzi takes a ten-year-old boy and his old grandfather in his truck. Muslims have killed the parents of the Sikh boy but left his grandfather unharmed. As his Dada hid him, the boy could escape the rage of the rioters. The caravan moves ahead but suddenly they discover that they have left food and water behind. Panna gives the little water she has to the old man and his grandchild. Umar Sheikh's wife gave Kanta some rotis, which she gives to his son and Panna. Whereas Tiwari and his wife disassociated them from Kanta, Umar has accepted her as his daughter and even given money to Fauzi to take her in her truck. He said if she safely crosses the border, his Hajj would be complete. However, when the caravan slows down in Hasanabad town for food and water, local people start quizzing Fauzi and chasing his truck. Fauzi cannot make out whether they are Hindus and Muslims and seeing the danger, accelerates the truck. The caravan tries to avoid the routes through big cities as there are more troubles there. On their way, they witness smokes and flames coming from houses and caravans of panicky people. The truck stops in front of a ransacked and scorched bungalow to get some water. The bungalow is of a wealthy man Kavishwar Singh and a Pathan guards it. Rioters attacked the empty bungalow and looted everything they could. They have locked two young women in the bungalow. The rioters threaten the Pathan and rape the women whenever they come. Women and girls became the soft targets of the rioters and this gender violence added perhaps the darkest chapter to the Partition history. Yasmin Khan remarks:

"Of all the horrors of 1947, the experience of the women who were raped is the most difficult to write about. It is a history of broken bodies and broken lives. Rape was used as a weapon, as a sport and as a punishment. Armed gangs had started to use rape as a tool of violence in Bengal and Bihar in 1946 but this now took on a new ubiquity and savagery in Punjab. It sparked the deepest feelings of revenge, dishonour and shame." (133)

However, the loyal Pathan cannot leave the bungalow as his master has entrusted him with the job to look after it. Fauzi and Lakhbeera persuade him to leave for Kabul at the earliest because it will not be safe for him to be there. Pathan requests them to take the two kidnapped Sikh women and they take them into the truck. After some time the caravan encounters a stranded Sikh family in a station wagon as they are out of fuel. Two Sikh men come with guns and ask for petrol. Lakhbeera unwillingly gives them a canister of petrol. Their behaviour enrages Lakhbeera and he tries to get hold of one of the sardars. They fire and Lakhbeera dies on the spot. It is a huge loss to Fauzi as he has started the journey only to save his friend from the imminent danger of communal violence. Now heart-broken Fauzi is no longer interested to continue the journey but for the women and children. He wants to cremate the dead body of his friend as he was a Sikh. When Des Raj suggests to bury to save time, Fauzi tells them to go if they are in a hurry. At this Tiwari retorts that Fauzi has taken money and cannot say so. Tiwari's insensitive manner infuriates Fauzi

who leaves him and his money behind and continues his journey. Surprisingly Tiwari's wife dare not get down from the truck to be with her husband. Sometimes people abandon all relations and become inadvertently self-centered when their sole purpose is to be alive at any cost.

It is already twilight and suddenly the truck caravan halts as one of the tyres deflates. The passengers cannot keep patience and all of them except Panna and the Sikh boy with his grandfather leave the truck at night when they get the company of another caravan of refugees. In the morning Fauzi finds that two of the tyres are deflated and the truck has succumbed. Fauzi sees a reverse journey of a long caravan going towards Pakistan. When Panna asks him where Pakistan is, Fauzi replies, "It will be somewhere. Someday." (Gulzar 107) Hindus and Sikhs were leaving their homes in the fear of being killed in Pakistan and Muslims were leaving their homes in the hope to be safe in Pakistan. "They travelled on foot, in bullock carts, crammed into lorries, clinging to the sides and roofs of trains. Along the way at fords, at cross roads, at railroad stations they collided with panicky swarms of Muslims fleeing to safety in the west. The riots have become rout." (K. Singh 2) Fauzi is moving towards the border but he says, "I have no idea where this border is and what it's called." (Gulzar 95) Like Fauzi millions of people are moving towards the border, which has not yet come into existence. Words like 'Partition', 'Pakistan' and 'border' swayed people across religions and an ambience of terror gulped the subcontinent. However, the Sikh old man dies on the truck. Panna moves towards the border with his grandson or Kaka assuring him that Fauzi will do the last rites of his grandfather. Fauzi has no physical and mental energy left after the exhausting journey to do the last rites of the old man. He leaves behind the dead body and his truck and joins a caravan. One by one all the passengers of the truck caravan disappear in other caravans. The wheels of the truck have stopped rolling but the journey has to be continued if they want to save their lives. All are desperate to reach the border but Lakhbeera and the old Sikh are not lucky to see what is called a 'border'. Fauzi is a Muslim who took the responsibility to take his Hindu and Sikh passengers to border so that they are not killed by Muslims. When they almost reached their desired border, they abandon Fauzi. The ruinous time made people self-centered and the passengers of the truck are no exceptions.

At last freedom came sailing on the sea of blood and carrying tons of miseries for millions of helpless and hopeless people of the subcontinent. A class of distressed people came into being and they were called 'refugees'. "Refugee caravans gathered at camps, then began to spread out like pathways emerging from a jungle. ... Famine, unemployment, and hopelessness scaled new highs. History had seldom witnessed lost souls on such a scale." (Gulzar 112) The menace of Partition perished what they had in their native lands and pushed them towards abject poverty in an alien land. Migration perhaps secured their lives from the swords of communal violence but it snatched their sustenance. They will have to start everything from the beginning like phoenixes. After crossing the border, the truck passengers disperse or rather dissolve in the sea of refugees. "Fauzi's musfirs were all lost, like a few grains in a bounty of crops." (113)

After being separated from her husband Tiwari's wife Damayanti clings to Kanta whom she once threw out of the house. On their way to Amritsar Damayanti gets high fever and severe stomach pain. Kanta can no longer wait for her ailing mother-in-law lest the procession will move forward leaving her alone. "Many people fell by the way side, injured, knocked down by high fever. No one stopped to enquire. Many died but no one stopped to mourn." (Gulzar 113) When they reach Amritsar, they find it to be an ocean of afflicted people. Camps mushroomed all over the city and volunteers and other supporting people were roaming everywhere to serve the continuous influx of refugees. Gurudwaras were organising langar. "The movement of millions across the new international border meant that the plan did not work as originally envisaged and the massive upheaval changed the entire composition of India and Pakistan." (Khan 156) In Gurudwara Harminder Sahib, Kanta encounters her father-in-law Tiwari who has almost lost his mind. His searching eyes are hard to face for the woman. She thinks the man will snatch his son and in fear of that, she leaves the camp. She cannot communicate with her parents who are in Delhi as postal

and telephone services are not working. All India Radio announces the names and addresses of the refugees throughout the day but she has not that patience to wait for her turn. She once again joins a procession of refugees walking towards Delhi.

Two young Sikh women Soni and Moni take refuge in Gurudwara Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. They are cautious of any trap as there is no dearth of bad people around the city. Refugee influx continued and it became impossible for the old refugees to live in the crowded camps. "Across Punjab, coexistent communities fragmented as the entire non-Muslim population was exchanged for the Punjabi Muslim population of India." (Khan 157) Old refugees dispersed in different directions to try their destinies and new batches of refugees took their place. Poor refugees were in an alien land and lost themselves in the labyrinth of unknown places and people. Soni and Moni too travel aimlessly from this city to that city. When Moni discovers that she is pregnant, she becomes restless to abort the child of the rapist but finds no means to do so. "After their ordeals, the women suffered the fears of unwanted pregnancies, tried to induce miscarriages or sought out illegal abortions." (134)

Ultimately, they reach Bundi fort refugee camp, Rajasthan where they meet a Punjabi matriarch, Bebe. The sisters are not eager to share the shameful incident of rape with anyone. Perhaps they fear to be abandoned by their campmates once if they confess the truth. Soni lies to Bebe that Moni's husband was killed in the communal violence. Bebe believes her words and tells Moni that she is not a widow as life is still in her womb. "She left, transforming an unmarried girl into a married one." (Gulzar 124) Both the sisters go to nearby village to find some work and the poor villagers give them whatever they can. Bebe becomes more caring to the pregnant woman and gives her some advice. She urges her to give her the child if she gives birth to a daughter as the large family of Bebe has no daughter. Gradually Moni too starts to relish her motherhood and the hatred for the unborn vanishes somewhere. Unlike many others, Bebe's sons were able to bring considerable wealth. Here, in Alpha Nagar, they buy large area of farmlands and take possession of an old haveli too. They give Soni and Moni a house.

One day Moni gives birth to a son. "Moni's breasts filled up with so much milk that she forgot she was unmarried. She stared at her son as though he were a miracle. All the anger, disgust and hatred with which she would beat her belly were washed away. All the poison turned to nectar in her breasts." (128-29) Moni's past shrinks as a full-fledged motherhood expresses in her. When Bebe asks the name of the boy's father, Soni again lies and says it is Trilok Singh. Bebe suggests to give the same name to the boy and a naming ceremony is held at the gurudwara. They call the boy 'Loki' who has become a lovable one to everybody especially to Bebe. He is growing perfectly like a Sikh with enough love and care from all around him including Moni. One day Moni cuts the hair of the boy and she shudders at the resemblance of the boy to the rapist. Moni tries to keep herself away from the innocent child. "The child born of a mixed union was a constant reminder of the violation of the woman, of the fact that she had had sex with a man of the other religion." (Butalia 161) Moreover, she is an unmarried woman and always feels to be spoiled for life. She can no longer tolerate the boy as it reminds her of an irreversible shame. The trauma becomes so unbearable that one day throwing Loki into the well, she disappears. Police find her after three or four days and arrest her. She is mentally quite disturbed and refuses to talk to Soni. Whole Alpha Nagar including Bebe shows strong aversion to Soni. People do not know the toxic past of the sisters and the lie spread by Soni was taken as truth. To them it is an unpardonable offence to kill a child by his own mother. Perhaps Soni is doubted to be complicit in the cruel act. Moni is sent to Kota Central Jail where Soni somehow manages to see her. Moni has grown signs of derangement and she still tries to ignore the presence of her sister. When Soni asks her if she knows what she has done. Moni replies, "Yes! He killed so many Hindus in Campbellpur. So what if I have killed one small Muslim?" (Gulzar 134) Moni could never forget the wound of the past, which haunted her all the time and it got aggravated when she came to know about her unwanted pregnancy. She never wanted to bring the child to the world but she failed to abort it. Under the influence of Bebe she forgot the poisonous past for some days but the moment she saw the face of the rapist

on the child's face, torturous past possessed her. She lost the mental sanity to think that the child was innocent and had no role in what happened to her in the past. She became vindictive and took him to be a mere 'Muslim' forgetting that the innocent child has nothing to do with any religious identity. In fact, no one is born with any religious identity. His parents, relatives, or society rather imposes it on him as they like.

After granting independence to the Indians, British went back to their country. Some daring refugees of India and Pakistan followed them to England in search of a new life. "Here, they could greet each other like long-lost brothers. They belonged neither to Hindustan nor Pakistan. They had a common name: refugees." (Gulzar 146) Des Raj's son Jaipal was one of the overseas refugees in England. "It was impossible to search for those who had left Campbellpur with Fauzi. One leaf drifted a long way off." (137) He entered the country with false passport and even got admission in a college. He falls in love with the daughter of a former British civil servant in India and by marrying her he becomes a British citizen. In spite of getting a new identity, he still feels proud to be a Hindu Pakistani and has a deep love for his native town Campbellpur. There he meets Saleem Siddique who runs Fazal Food Centre in England and both of them become business partners. Saleem is one of the sons of Master Fazaldeen of Campbellpur. The current of Partition once separated two Campbellpur boys but destiny brings them together. Together the friends visit Campbellpur but Saleem has his family and home in the town, whereas Jaipal has none of the two. Jaipal visits his ancestral house and finds a Muslim refugee from India to live there. He becomes emotional to see the nameplate of his late father. Des Raj had hoped to return to his home but could not. Now his son returns but not as an owner of the house but as a visitor.

Panna Bai settled in Kanpur with Guddu who is now Kartar Singh. He is now a family man and runs a shop of auto parts in Delhi. After the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, anti-Sikh riots erupted in Delhi. In Kanpur station, he gets the news and becomes worried about his family. A Muslim man saves him from being a prey to the rioters in the station. He takes him in his truck and advises not to travel by train as the rioters target the Sikh passengers. Jafar Miyan suggests him a haircut to dodge the rioters but Kartar is not eager as he has recently disowned his son for haircut. When they reach Delhi, they witness rampant atrocities on the Sikhs and their properties are being burned down. As soon as Kartar enters his shop, the rioters come. He does not get the time to take off the signboard that reads Singh Auto Parts. His shop is attacked and he is chased by a wild mob. He somehow saves his life by hiding in a garbage van. It reminds him of the decades-old calamitous day when his Dada hid him in the hay. The faces of his Dada and Panna Maiyya flash before his eyes as he is lost in delirium. Pavan K. Varma writes in the introduction of the novel:

"The same emotions that made the Partition one of the most gory chapters of India's modern history are now repeated in entirely different circumstances, only to prove the point that the irrational and warped furies that lurk just below the surface of 'civilized' societies can be easily triggered even when the past should have taught us to overcome them resolutely." (xviii)

Panna has been waiting for Kartar for three days but he does not return. Panna becomes anxious and thinks that the Muslims have burned down his shop in Delhi. Jassi, Kartar's wife, consoles the old woman saying that his son will come back and corrects her that this time the rioters are Hindus not Muslims. Actually, the riots rake up her bleak memories of the Partition days when millions of Sikhs and Hindus had to leave Pakistan because of Muslim atrocities. She thinks that Sikhs and Muslims are still belligerent communities. Riots did occur in the name of religion during the time of independence and it partitioned the country into two but people still have not taken the lesson from the past. In this context Butalia writes, "I looked at what the large political facts of this history seemed to be saying. If I was reading them right, it would seem that Partition was now over, done with, a thing of the past. Yet, all around us there was a different reality: partitions everywhere, communal tension, religious fundamentalism, continuing

divisions on the basis of religion.” (7)

Fauzi did not return to Campbellpur as he thought it meaningless to go there without Lakhbeera and his dhaba. Fauzi was a Muslim but he found no reason to be in Pakistan where no one was waiting for him. He well understood that a place does not decide where to live but the people of the place do that. He has been roaming on the trails of Kashmir for more than half a century searching for peace. When Kargil War broke out he remarked, “There they go again, the rascals! They didn't let me sleep all night.” (Gulzar 172) Fauzi was born and brought up in an undivided India when people were fighting unitedly for a common cause to oust the British. He never felt religious identity of a man could be a matter of conflict and could cut his root from his people and motherland. But it did happen and to his utter surprise he became a victim of that. The animosity he witnessed then is still burning and blackening the skies of both the countries. Gulzar writes in the poem “A Knock”: “Last night there was shelling at the border, I hear/ Last night, some dreams were killed at the border!” (Footprints 26) Fauzi was pained to see how one country was divided into two and became enemies forever. Since the Partition of 1947, India and Pakistan fought four wars and still there is no sign of ceasing the bloodshed. Scorn and derision was evident in his remark: “Fifty years ... in fact, more. God knows when they will grow up.” (Gulzar 173) The nonagenarian is missing the old fraternity and is still searching the lost days of peaceful togetherness on the trails of Kashmir, or rather of life.

After crossing the border, the passengers of the caravan got a relief that at least they escaped the imminent death. Those who could bring some wealth easily started a new life but the helpless poor suffered most. The refugees were struggling hard to cope with their broken dreams and blistering wounds. Time is said to be the best healer and the refugees lost them in the good hope that one day they will resurrect their lost happy days. They plunged into sweat and toil to rebuild their lives and remould their dreams. They realised the basic truth that the caravan of life never stops though in an alien land.

In an interview with NDTV Gulzar says that the riots and wars are the splinters of the blast that took place during Partition. More than seven decades have passed since Partition took place but the two countries still fight with each other. Political fraternities of the two countries failed to come to a peaceful conclusion of the decades-old hostility. Common people of the subcontinent are still divided on the hate-line of religion and extremist religious forces are always ready to sabotage any attempt of establishing peace in the countries concerned. “Partition is a lasting lesson of both the dangers of imperial hubris and the reactions of extreme nationalism. For better or worse, two nations continue to live alongside each other in South Asia and continue to live with these legacies.” (Khan 210) Inadvertently people of the subcontinent across religions and borders have been carrying a legacy of animosity for generations.

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