

Revisiting Partition: Cultural Memory and Collective Identity in *Train to Pakistan* and *Ice-Candy-Man*

Dr. Wahaj Unnisa Warda

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University,
Al- Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The Partition of British India in 1947 remains one of the defining traumatic events of the twentieth century, producing both a demographic catastrophe and a long, contested afterlife in cultural memory. This paper argues that fiction constitutes one of the principal sites at which the memory of Partition is preserved, transmitted, and reshaped for subsequent generations. Drawing on Halbwachs's theory of collective memory and Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory. The two basic narrative frames within which the genre has been interpreted ever since: *Train to Pakistan's* adult-faithful account of rural Sikh-Muslim Mano Majra, and *Ice-Candy-Man's* child-narrator reconstruction through the eyes of Lenny, a young Parsi girl in Lahore. The paper shows that the two novels together constitute a single, durable mnemonic community, encoding the catastrophe through personal recollection, multiple perspectives, and symbolic condensation, while simultaneously raising questions about the integrity of communal memory and the ethics of literary representation. The paper concludes that literature's role in keeping historical experience alive is not incidental but constitutive; Partition fiction does not merely commemorate the past – it actively shapes the categories through which later generations can imagine communal and national identity.

Keywords

Partition literature, cultural memory, collective identity, *Train to Pakistan*, *Ice-Candy-Man*, South Asian fiction.