

Placing Nostalgia and Agony: Bioregionalism, Space and Meaningful Non-human Objects in Bengal Partition Narratives

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Abstract

The Indian Partition, a saga of human displacement, loss of identity and mass evacuation with the drawing of a boundary (Radcliffe line) resulting in the anthropocentric creation of two nation-states (India and East Pakistan), has ecocritical connotations. The sense of “place-attachment” as espoused by Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, (63) is strongly embedded in the minds of individuals who have been deterritorialized and reterritorialized because of partition. The proposed paper seeks to analyze this notion of “place”, “space” and “non-place” (Buell, 63) emerging out of both lived experience and imagination of the natural environment by different characters in selected short stories of Bashabi Fraser’s *Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter* (2008). Applying the idea of ‘bioregionalism’ this paper attempts to show how characters in the mentioned text challenge the anthropocentric boundary of partition and unveil the agony of loss emanating from place-based sensibility. This paper also employs Martin Heidegger’s notion of “gathering” as discussed in his essay, “Building Dwelling Thinking” (343) to show how non-human objects become a site of nostalgia, formation of self in terms of loss and a critique of anthropocentric border.

Keywords: Partition, ecocritical, place, bioregionalism, gathering, nostalgia

Introduction

The Bengal Partition of 1947 was a cataclysmic event that gave rise to a porous border and fragile identities. It is a watershed moment with consequences so complex and diverse that it has been inviting fresh dissections for the last seven decades. The story of displacement, violence, migration and identity crisis is multilayered, vast and ever expanding. The anthropocentric mutilation of the landscape resulted in a vivisection of the lives and psyche of millions of people who lost the sense of belonging all on a sudden as they found themselves on the 'wrong' side of the border jotted by Radcliffe. They were turned into aliens in their own place. The British left India in a hasty manner and under the guise of freedom was the saga of suffering of partition. While stating the poignancy of partition, William Dalrymple says, "Partition is central to modern identity in the Indian subcontinent, as the Holocaust is to identity among Jews, branded painfully onto the regional consciousness by memories of almost unimaginable violence." (Dalrymple 2015). Partition also ushered in the generation of refugees who were

uprooted from their place and in the quest of a new homeland found themselves in a subhuman state, in the hostile terrains of Dandakaranya and Marichjhapi with the government lacking an intention for their rehabilitation. Debjani Sengupta notes that within 1960, as many as 30 lakh Hindu refugees entered West Bengal, 7 lakh Muslims left for East Pakistan and 80 thousand women were subjected to abduction and sexual assault. (3). Literature has responded to Partition in multifarious ways and they can be read not only as social and historical documents but also as "sites of meaning making of the region and in the long run, the postcolonial nation," (Sengupta 2), metaphors of bridging of spaces, nostalgia and restructuring of self. They propagate human consciousness of surroundings and natural objects, family and neighbourhood turning into strangers and the place of belonging getting lost in the dark alleys of the unknown. The natural environment, landscape and non-human objects render meaning to the lives and in the process are rendered meaningful. They are a critique of the artificial boundary and also sites of nostalgia and memory. These texts also became a site of belonging, decolonization and provided "a renewed sense of place" (Sengupta, 2). Bengal Partition has generated an extensive body of literature, both fiction and non-fiction. *East West* by Sunil Gangopadhyay, *A Golden Age* by Tahmima Anam, *A Life Long Ago* by Sunanda Sikdar and Anchita Ghatak, "Ekti Tulsi Gachher Kahini" by Syed Waliullah published in the short story collection named *Dui Teer o Onyanyo Golpo*, *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh, *Bishaad Brikkho* by Mihir Sengupta are few of the fictional works. *The Uprooted* by Nema Ghosh was the first film on the partition of India. Ritwik Ghatak's films such as *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, *Jukti Takka Goppo*, *Komol Gandhar*, *Subarnarekha* and *Nagarik* depict themes of refugee crisis, migration, destruction of innocence, disillusionment and post partition struggle to its bare bones. These texts amalgamate historical reality and fiction to represent the drastic psychological, political, geographical and phenomenological change which are a burning reality even today as Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal says that partition is "the central historical event in twentieth century South Asia" and it is "a defining moment that is neither beginning nor end, partition continues to influence how the peoples and states of postcolonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future." (qtd.in Dalrymple 2015). Bashabi Fraser's *Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter* is the first major collection of short stories which has been translated in English from Bengali and it tries to bridge the gap of silence about Bengal Partition and in the process records "the tales of an exodus that has changed the cultural, social and economic character of a divided Bengal, having an effect on modern India and the new nation of Bangladesh" (Fraser 1). The stories present the "historical reality of an interaction that existed in Bengal, in spite of social taboos" and also illustrates "a syncretic society of inter-dependence before factional politics disturbed this socio-economic fabric"(2). This paper takes up selected stories from Bashabi Fraser's collection and tries to analyse them from the point of view of 'place studies', an offshoot of Ecocriticism, bioregionalism and phenomenology. Partition is as much about human suffering as it is about the environment, bioregional consciousness, landscape and non- human objects becoming deeply meaningful in multiple layers and metaphors of a wide array of human experiences.

It is generally believed that modern environmentalism starts with "A Fable for Tomorrow", in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published in 1962 (Garrard 1). The term "Ecocriticism" first appeared in William Rueckert's essay, "Literature and Ecology: an experiment in Ecocriticism" (Rueckert 71-86) where it has been defined as, "application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature." Cheryll Glolfelty in her

book *The Ecocriticism Reader* says "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment." (Glotfelty xviii). Lawrence Buell in his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism* says that "environmental criticism arises within and against the history of human modification of planetary space"(62). Glotfelty also argues that the basic principle of Ecology is inter-relatedness (Glotfelty 93). He endorses the experience of landscape to counteract attitude of landscape as seen only as an object of consumption. (Glotfelty 102). Buell argues that human beings emplaced in environment have a dialectical relation between being and habitat and there is a "self-conscious sense of an inevitable but uncertain and shifting relation between being and physical context"(62). Here comes the intricacies of place which "also gestures in at least three directions at once – toward environmental materiality, toward social perception or construction, and toward individual affect or bond" (Buell 62-63). Bashabi Fraser's collection of stories becomes particularly intriguing in this context of an individual's response to place and belonging, generation of refugees and the ensuing societal, political and economic complications. It problematizes while challenging the belief of the concept of place of an individual as a result of displacement also pointing towards the possible formation of, at times, an imagined place and often nostalgia of an individual's abandoned place. This paper seeks to analyze this relativity of place and space to unveil the trauma of partition resulting in the change of psyche connected to the known physical context which becomes not only unknown but murderous and exploitative. Phenomenological dissection of environment, with partition at its backdrop, is also significant as phenomenology argues that the environment with its non-human objects and landscape are fields of diverse meaning making and identity formation.

Place, Space, Bioregionalism and *Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter*

Lawrence Buell gives a distinction between "place" and "space." as geographical concepts. "Place entails spatial location, entails a spatial container of some sort. But space as against place connotes geometrical or topographical abstraction" (Buell 63). Place is "space to which meaning has been ascribed" (Carter, Donald, and Squires xii). Places are "centers of felt value" (Tuan 4), "discrete if 'elastic' areas in which settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identify" (Agnew 263). "A place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared, revered" (Walter 142). Buell also states that humans think of "place attachments" rather than "space attachments" and the history of the world is a tale of space becoming place. In the beginning, the earth was a space without form. "Then through inhabitation places were created" (Buell 63-64). In early human societies a fusion of place and society was possible but with the advent of societies based on economic exchange, the conceptual fusing of space and society has become difficult (Smith 78) and thus the traditional sense of emplacement becomes almost impossible (Buell 64). In American history, a vital example is the transformation of "democratic social space" (Fisher 60-101) into liveable places (Meine 45-62) for settlement purposes and in the process the Native Americans lost both space and place until they were resettled in federally defined spaces such as internment camps (Buell 64). There is also a worldwide production of abstract space as a result of aggressive industrial capitalism. This generates more displacement even of the most privileged denizens. "The development of the border-concept is coeval with those of other new spaces: new kinds and conceptions of hierarchical spaces such as the metropole, periphery, and the semi-periphery, linked together in an imbricated relationship of colonial capitalism. This production of the world as a concatenation of spaces, namely, bounded territorial markets for the buying and selling of labour power

and other commodities, also presents it as a disenchanted space of colonial capitalist modernity. To render it into a lived space, these spaces must be re-animated with an affective charge and re-signified as dwellings" (Banerjee 3-4). This shift is to obsolete place attachment which a human being carries with himself and languishes for a right to return to his place (Buell 64). In modern environmental criticism place offers a "politics of resistance" against modernism's excesses – its "spatial colonizations" (Oakes 509). Place is "that within and with respect to which subjectivity is itself established," or "places are part of the source of our rational capacities from the very beginning" (Malpas 35; Preston 116).

Bioregionalism, a self-conscious movement, according to two Canadian environmentalists who coined the term, "refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness." A bioregion is determined "initially" by "climatology, physiography, animal and plant geography," etc., typically including a "major watershed"; but its boundaries and "resonance" are confirmed over time by inhabitation of those who have made a long-term commitment to living there (Berg and Dasmann 399-400). Bioregionalism is an attempt to "integrate ecological and cultural affiliations within the framework of a place-based sensibility" (Thomashow 121). It also tends to avoid "hard shell localism" as well as "free floating sentimentalism" of fancying one is in tune with nature (Buell 83). It is "not just a rural program," but "as much for the restoration of urban neighborhood life and the greening of the cities" (Snyder 43). However, defining bioregions is not an easy task due to the malleability of its border, lack of homologous topography and clarity of natural markers. This makes citizenship of a bioregion complicated although thinking bioregionally is not to redraw state or national boundaries but to pay keen attention as to how interaction with topography, climate, and nonhuman life directs not only how people ought to live but also the way they do live without realizing it (Buell 84). Bioregionalism views bioregion "as a focus of citizenly allegiance that challenges conventional political boundaries" (Buell 135). Swarnalatha Rangarajan says "bioregional perspective can also help us relate positively to the world around us as well as help construe our identity beyond the narrow confines of the ego-bound self" (Rangarajan 65). For Snyder, the deep realisation of the entire earth as a life-place inspires a bioregional awareness that is not just about 'loving nature' or being 'in harmony with Gaia' – it is a more conscious relationship to the natural world 'that takes place in a place' and is 'grounded in information and experience' (Snyder, 193). Bioregional inhabitation and ecological restoration have important cultural dimensions that support bioregional values. In their introduction to the work *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* (2012), the editors argue that, 'human imagination and stories create bioregions ... that every bioregion is already filled with stories and modes of discourse ... of the values and practices ... that ordinary working people who live in that place embrace' (Lynch, Glotfelty and Armbruster 14). However, bioregionalism today has expanded its interest from narrow eco localism. A recent term 'cosmopolitan bioregionalism' (a term used by Mitchell Thomashow), "demonstrate that authentic rootedness in the politics, ecology and culture of a place enables the appreciation of other life-places and consideration of responsibilities we owe to the human and non-human others who inhabit other life-places that are interconnected with ours in more than one way" (Rangarajan 73).

Bashabi Fraser's collection of stories covers various human experiences of common people such as soul sapping violence, fear, rootlessness, identity, dislocation, belonging and the malleability of meaning of land and property. All of these acquired a new

poignancy during the apocalyptic time of partition. In Samaresh Dasgupta's "Home Sweet Home! (Janmabhumi)"(313) the narrator fondly reminisces his place which he lost because of partition. The river Gomati for the narrator was a source of inspiration and it provided him peace and contentment. He could spend hours watching the river and "felt a quietness within and out, as though there was no strife in the world, no cause for sorrow or pain" (Dasgupta 313). The house was also alive and a source of meaning as the narrator remembers the banyan saplings put their head out through the bricks of the wall. The landscape with all its non-human objects like birds, trees, flowers etc. gave the narrator a sense of the presence of God. He revered his place. The elder brother of the narrator's father never left his ancestral place which he believed could never be his enemy in spite of the apocalypse of partition. His place shaped his politics of resistance as he stayed on. He would rather die for his place attachment than being displaced. They were one with their place with its non-human objects which constituted them. To the narrator and his family, they were meaningful, throbbing with life and they rendered the narrator and his family's life meaningful. The narrator also imagines the Mynamati Hills, the shores of Buriganga and Ramana, the places which shaped his psyche and taught him to observe, etch pictures in memory and portray them. However, his portrait after being uprooted from place and being dislocated to a space, showed how he was mentally scarred; "In my picture, the hills are out of focus behind a row of barbed wires creating a boundary. This boundary is in focus. I had named this landscape 'Refugee'" (Dasgupta 315). The refugees were displaced to federally defined spaces like Sealdah-platform, Cooper's Camp and Dandakarnya as the narrator says. He lost his homeland, had blood curdling nightmares as the river Gomati was not spiritual anymore, it became poisonous. It was as though the place which constituted his identity made him an alien called 'refugee'. It was like a deception perpetrated by the surrounding with which he identified. His place became a space by anthropocentric dissection. The narrator's relatives after becoming refugees and being displaced to spaces could never be the same again. The acclimatization was not possible for them and they met unfortunate ends failing to adapt to a new society and culture. The narrator's cousin sister committed suicide after being traumatized in the new space where she was raped and called a mistress of her own cousin brother. The loss of her homeland was too unbearable for her as she embroidered "Janani Janmab-humischa Swargadarpi Gariyasi" meaning "Mother and motherland are greater than Heaven!" (Dasgupta 320). The narrator also lost a part of his self as he could no longer draw anything other than passports and visas and "amidst that two blurred faces emerge, one is my mother's, and the other is the river's" (Dasgupta 321). In Ramapada Chaudhuri's "The Stricken Daughter (Karun Kanya)" (323), Arundhuti felt a shiver down her spine as soon as she turned over the pages of her memory and arrived in the banks of the overflowing Padma river. They were fleeing from their place after partition when she was abducted and raped. A new chapter began on her life at a space where she would pass "the remaining days with her head buried in unclean waters" (Chaudhuri 324). She could not call the father of the child born out of "monstrous act of love," (Chaudhuri 324) her husband and where she passed her days, her home. She hid herself and her thoughts in a dark and dingy room which was never her own. She became placeless because of partition. Going back to her mother's home, she faced ignominy from all concerned even from her mother and her childhood love Subimal. Apart from being homeless, a part of her life, her past, her identity and her relationship with the society and her own people were lost, stained and became devoid of any meaning or value.

In Annada Shankar Ray's story "Alien Land (Angina Bidesh)" (271) Adhirath's brother who is referred to as Dada throughout the story narrates the story of a launch named Pomfret. After partition Dada and his wife settled in Kolkata but Dada was sent as a magistrate to Fateyabad zilla which was very known to him along with the neighbouring provinces of Ranimahar and Nanadiya, on the other side of the Radcliffe border. These were his "old districts" but Dada's wife did not want to leave Kolkata. The anthropocentric border artificially divided one bioregion which shared similar geographical terrain, culture and people. In Dada's consciousness, both the sides of the border were one bioregion which is a critique of the border and the violence, strained communal relationship and displacement resulting from the anthropocentric vivisection of this bioregion. Dada soon realized that "no one considered the other person as his co-patriot or as his fellow being any more. The people on that side of the border seemed alien to those living on this side and vice versa. It was the same province, the same people, and still it was a strange magic which made one class of people seem alien to others." (Ray 274) During his inspection of the borders, one day Dada saw his old house, at Ranimahar and he could not hold back his tears. What had once been his place, a common bioregion filled with stories and memories, was divided into two. He was amazed to learn that a boundary line was drawn in the river Padma to separate the river's share between two nations. The common landscape, the non-human objects, the flora and fauna were dissected. Various anthropocentric lacerations of the bioregion bred uncertainty. "According to the geographical map and the official ledger, some of the sandy land fell within the boundary of Fateyabad. People from this side planted and grew rice paddy on those lands. They even grew other kinds of crops, and then cultivated them" (Ray 276). The new argument of dividing the region put forth by Pakistan would destroy the livelihood of the farmers. In Amar Mitra's "Wild Goose Country (Bana Hangshir Deshe)" (577), an excited Aloka finds it difficult to believe that forty yards away lay a different country with a different national flag and currency. The field yonder belonged to a different country and she felt "these artificial boundaries are all rubbish!" (Mitra 581). Though Aloka has not felt the pangs of partition, does not know the towns and river on the other side, her imagination helps to understand one bioregion. "Rajshahi, Pabna, Natore, Baguda, Dhaka, Faridpur, Khulna, Jessore, Rupsha, Meghna, Padma, Madhumati, Kapotakshi... Aloka knows all the names. A strange feeling of peace descends on Aloka as she recites the names" (Mitra 587).

Heidegger's notion of "gathering" and Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter

Human beings are inextricably intertwined within the rubric of nature which is unrestricted by any political border. Natural objects disclose themselves or show their essence through a language of unravelling which consists of nostalgia, emotions and attachments of mortals. They are inseparably linked with human beings creating a certain wholeness of phenomenological experience for the latter. This constitutes the Being of humans and challenges a political boundary of segregation. Martin Heidegger in his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" (343) emphasizes on the importance of language in the constitution of the Being of man and then goes on to elaborate the idea of 'gathering' that facilitates that process of the becoming of the Being. He says "It is language that tells us about the essence of a thing, provided that we respect language's own essence...Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man" (Heidegger 348). Gathering is "the power, enacted through and as language, which brings human beings, things, and natural objects into

relation with one another" (Knowles 349). Here Heidegger elaborates the idea of the fourfold where by "a primal oneness the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one." Dwelling preserves the fourfold by bringing the essence of the fourfold into things (Heidegger 353). According to Heidegger "Gathering [*Versammlung*], by an ancient word of our language, is called thing" (355). He gives an example of a bridge which is a thing and it is a gathering of the fourfold. The bridge is not just an object but it is a symbol of the fourfold. The bridge expresses something which strictly does not belong to it. The bridge is an expression, a gathering of the fourfold, a site of meanings and significances. Therefore, in this light we can measure and study the Beings of the displaced subjects in Partition in terms of the things that have been surrounding them forming an aroundness. Through gathering of what is around, that is the environment and the eco-polis or the eco-space where one is situated, the Being acquires its meaning beyond the artifice of anthropocentric political boundaries.

In the short story "The Border (Shimanta)" by Salam Azad (283) Pobitra Saha's father-in-law migrated to Karimgunge in India whereas Pobitra Saha and his wife Neelima remained in Pakistan. Neelima's father being ill, wanted to see her for the last time but there was strict vigilance on the border and visas were not being issued. Neelima, being the darling daughter of her father, reminisced the sweet memories she ascribed to the Padma river which became a site of her childhood memories, her father's love and indulgence which shaped her caring personality. "Her father never let her go to the riverside. Even now in mature middle age Neelima could not figure out why. One day after a lot of crying and cajoling she managed to accompany him to the river. She remembered a big boat, what Baba called a steamer, and seeing the black smoke coming out of its roof she had shouted in excitement. The sound of the whistle that could be heard from their house, was actually the whistle that was blown from the steamers, baba had told her. Not only Neelima's granny but lots of other people too called this whistle 'satee'" (Azad 286). Now, whenever she heard a 'satee' it reminded him of her father. The aroundness of things thus constitute the phenomenological subjecthood of Neelima and her sense of bioregion to which she is situated transcending the geopolitical determinations of the post-partition subcontinent. The Padma River, with all the activities happening in it, becomes more than just a river. It becomes a gathering of a mortal's (young Neelima's) feelings of curiosity and wonder situated within the entirety of nature. Activities on the river and emotions of her father and other family members engraved a certain wholeness of experience in her and became a part of her Being. After being uprooted because of partition, the meaningful Padma still remains with her and thus challenges the political boundary. Pobitrababu saw his wife greatly overcome with sorrow and wanted to visit her father. He decided to take Neelima to Jockeygunge, a border post on the Pakistan side, the next day. Soon after reaching there, Neelima grew impatient to go to Karimgunge, on the other side of the border, where her father was. This time she would "snuggle his head in her own lap. Now her father would be like her child. For only a child would so pine for his mother" (Azad 287). However, Neelima, in spite of a lot of negotiation with the guards at the check post could not cross the border to meet her father. It was decided that she would stand on the bank of the river Kushiara wearing a red saree on Sunday at 10 a.m. and her father would be brought to the opposite bank which was on the other side of the border. This happened and she and her father were separated by half a mile, the river only the witness to the emotion of two helpless individuals divided by a political border. Neelima, vaguely seeing her father on the other side, broke down completely. She did not know whether her father saw her. The river

Kushiara was not only a water body but it carried a stream of deep emotions of thwarted reunion of a daughter and her father. It united them as their consciousness merged with the river. It becomes a site of an impossible homecoming and an example of collective and mutual gathering of the Being of both the father and the daughter who get connected through the sameness of experience and situatedness despite the border. Kushiara also became one with Pabitrababu's lamentation of artificial border making and his complaining cries as they stood on both the banks which the river connected. The river connected a daughter's last glance with her ailing father who would be no more on this earth. The river, replete with meaning becomes more than just a river as it gathers human emotions and experiences, literally connects both the banks situated on either side of the border. It has an essential language of its own. It reminds us the futility of artificial border making and human beings' deep relationship with unfettered nature as the river gets etched in Neelima's heart as a site of her last meeting with her living father. In Amar Mitra's "Wild Goose Country (Bana Hangshir Deshe)" (577), Mazarul's whole family crossed the boundary and migrated to Bangladesh except for Mazarul's father. Mazarul at first denies the attachment but as the story proceeds it becomes increasingly clear how much he misses his family. He laments that he could not even convey the news of his father's death to his cousins. While his visit to the border, he gets acquainted to Amal Bhattacharya who knows Mazarul's family and during their verbal exchange Mazarul becomes so passionate that he grabs the barbed wire which cuts into his hands. "It seems to him that he can even recognize the unknown face of his Pishi's son." (Mitra 589). Earlier in the story Mazarul speaks of noticing a flock of wild geese. He told Subir "I saw them in the starlight, the stars were over-shadowed by their wings-how they glided into the distance! It had to be geese.' A while later, they had seen a lone bird that had strayed from the flock, flying past rather low. The lonesome wild goose staggered across the sky." The wild geese do not have to worry about any anthropocentric and political border. They embody Mazarul's defiance of the border and also his yearning for his family as they fly in a flock. He is the lonely wild goose estranged from his flock. At the end of the story the stars with their glistening beauty become symbols of estranged relatives. They become one with mortals on the earth. Aloka looks up at the sky and says "That beautiful flock of wild geese, those exquisitely beautiful geese, flying far, in the north-western sky, where is it? That lone goose, will surely show up again-it only drifts away and returns again. It has flown away yesterday, it'll come back, it'll go back once more. It seems that a multitude of stars in the sky are looking down on the earth with their bright eyes. Aloka's eyes meet theirs. Aloka watches Phoolpishi, Chhotopishi their beauty refracted through the skies and concentrated in this point within the pupils of her tearful eyes. Mazarul should have been here. Aloka calls out, 'Maza-rulda, Will you come ... Please remain in the sky ... Mazarulda is coming." (Mitra 591-92) The flock of wild geese and the stars express their essence through a language of entanglement with the humans. They are a critique of any dividing border. Bioregions are sites of gathering separated by anthropocentric borders. Bioregions form the Being of the individuals and create a sense of mutuality based on shared environment and entanglement. Partition can alienate the self from such bioregional experiences but cannot erase the gathering which is responsible for the Being to be the way it is or as Heidegger would call *dasein* (being-there). Therefore, borders become sites of human emotions of estrangement and loss, yearning for unification and unfettered existence within nature – a desire for homecoming and union with bio-regional experiences responsible behind the formation of the Being. The knowledge and feelings arising out of the meaningful non-human objects constitute the Being of humans. They unveil the wholeness of nature of which

man is not only just a part but also united to it in terms of gathering and formation of the Being. The humans and non-humans dwell poetically in collective, mutual and entangled belonging. Experience of partition not only shows the forced political alienation of man from his/her bioregion, but also points towards the impossibility of the same in terms of emotions, thinking and imagination.

Conclusion

Literature is not only an extremely sensitive index of cultural and political life but also a manifesto of personal emotions, recollections and empathy of humans arising both out of encounters with fellow humans and the environment. Through stories we can tap into the dimensions of human psyche which unveils the mystery of existence. By venting out emotions through art, both the writer and the reader achieve a cathartic effect. Human memory is essentially anthropocentric but a close perusal of the stories in *Bengal Partition Stories: An Unclosed Chapter* shows how non-human objects can act as sites of memory and identity formation. Landscape with its non-human objects constitute the place of human beings with which they identify and are inextricably intertwined. Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* says "The memorable is that which can be dreamed about a place" (qtd.in Sengupta 1). This relativity of place and space is wonderfully delineated and it becomes particularly relevant and poignant in the context of the partition of Bengal on which a collection of translated short stories is hard to come by. The non- human objects, in deeply expressive language, become inextricable with the humans and tell their stories. The bioregional critique of a political border in terms of lived experience and imagination is a subject of everyday discourse even today. This is the relevance of the unclosed chapter of partition. This paper adds to the scope of envisioning partition from an ecocritical angle. This epoch-making event is not only human centric but the landscape which no longer can be seen as a mere setting, plays an important part akin to human characters who are situated within nature and a part of it. The meaningful non-human objects become sites of gathering of human emotions and experiences which constitute their Being. They express the wholeness of nature and challenge any political boundary.

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