

'Who am I?' Critiquing Refugees in Asif Currimbhoy's *The Refugee*

Ikbal Ansary

Assistant Professor
Department of English, Berhampore Girls' College, Murshidabad, West Bengal

&

Md. Rakibul Islam

Assistant Professor
Department of Law, Aligarh Muslim University, Centre Murshidabad, West Bengal

Abstract

The word "partition" immediately conjures up the images of the division of British India into two independent states and the gruesome massacres that took place in past decades. The unimaginative partition of India based on religious identity overlooked the geographical and ethnic oddities between the two parts of Pakistan: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. As a result, the people of East Pakistan, who are ethnically similar to West Bengal, had to organize a 'Mukti Juddho' (liberation war) against the elitist West Pakistan government's religious and linguistic imperialist ideologies. During the nine months of the unequal and gruesome liberation war, no less than ten million people were forcefully displaced from their native land. The stateless people were given refuge by their relatives or by different social organizations on the other side of the border. They are now homeless, though their ethnic identity remains the same. Will ethnicity matter least to a refugee housed in a foreign land against his own will? The research paper looks into this question of identity over ethnicity by delving deep into the pages of Asif Currimbhoy's 1971 play *The Refugee*. The research article further critiques partition narratives through the lens of historical data. The study focuses on the semiotics and metaphor of separation that the literary work involves in retelling the plight of refugees. The research also takes a deep insight into the constant psychological battle and mental schizophrenia that the uprooted refugees suffer due to the unforgettable and gruesome memories experienced during migrations.

Keywords: gruesome massacres, liberation war, memory, partition, refugees, schizophrenia

Forced migration across the borders or within the state due to war, famine, conflicts, tensions, diseases, political unrest, persecution, and violence resulted in the creation of the most volatile and vulnerable community, called a refugee community. As with the Rohingya Refugee Crisis currently occurring, there have been previous global refugee crises, such as the Jewish Refugee Crisis of the 1930s, the Cyprus Crisis of 1974, and the

Refugee Crisis of 2013 in the Central African Republic. According to "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2021," released by the *UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency*, the global refugee crisis at the end of 2021 is characterized by an estimated 89.3 million forcefully displaced people. They are compelled to flee and become refugees experiencing schizophrenia, social exclusions, and identity crisis even after their rehabilitation in their homeland or naturalization in the hostland. The lives of refugees are studied carefully with humane touches in different literary works that do not treat them merely as numbers but as humans. Indeed, the study of refugee lives could serve as a telling metaphor for the refugee crisis that the world suffers today, particularly in South Asian countries.

Immediately after the Second World War, the United Nations felt the necessity to ensure a peaceful life for violently uprooted people, particularly European countries. Hence, the UN formed the international body of "The 1951 Convention" to naturalize the asylum seekers of different nations into their hostland or help them return to their homeland with social and psychological protections. The Convention defines a refugee as the one who

...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it ("1951 Convention" 14).

The "well-founded fear of being persecuted" is so traumatically injected into the minds of the refugees that they prefer to live the life of a refugee with complete uncertainty rather than returning to their birthplace because returning home might be risking their lives. So, the study of the lives of refugees resulting from the partition of India and the migration during the Bangladesh Liberation War, 1971 is as relevant today as they were in those hard times.

On the midnight of August 14, 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, in his most memorable speech titled "Tryst with Destiny," joyfully remarks: "At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom" (185). He further expresses, "We end today a period of ill-fortune and India discovers herself again" (186). But, ironically, the "ill-fortune" continues. The political decision to divide the nation into India and Pakistan solely "on the basis of ascertaining contiguous areas of Muslims and non-Muslims" (Radcliffe 159) brings 'Purna Swaraj' or 'complete freedom' to the Indians at the cost of the "murder, mayhem, rape and abduction of countless men, women and children" (Sengupta x). *The Boundary Commission*, headed by a British Judge, Sir Cyril Radcliff, who had no prior knowledge of India, contentiously placed a barbed wire on the Eastern side of the Indian map ignoring the plight of the 14.5 million people who reached uncertainly on the other side of the fence in a very disastrous and inhuman condition during the first four years of independence. These refugees, particularly the 2.9 million Hindus, migrated from East Pakistan to present-day West Bengal during the days of "the greatest mass migration in history" (Guha 16). Later, millions of refugees who migrated during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 came into contact with them and suffered physical harassment, mental agony, and traumatic memories together.

Historically, West Pakistan never accepted East Pakistan as an equal contributor to its national identity. Religious nationalism that divided India into parts was immediately replaced with the idea of neo-colonial imperialism of the West Pakistan leaders. They always demanded that “their vision of Pakistan should rightfully take precedence” (Schendel 180) because the East Pakistani inhabitants, both Hindu and Muslim, due to their accommodative cultural behaviour “did not adhere to many of the cultural practices that North Indians considered properly Islamic” (Schendel 180). This preference for ethnic identity rather than religious identity was what made East Pakistan people “lesser Muslim” (Schendel 180) and hence the ‘other’. The binary opposition of Islamic/un-Islamic paved the way for the Pakistani colonial government to propagate their ideology by imposing language as a discourse. Governor general Mohammad Ali Jinnah commanded a large gathering in 1948: “Let me make it clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan” (qtd. in Schendel 181). The linguistic imposition gradually led to cultural imperialism. Added to this, the economic exploitation and disparity in the distribution of resources to millions of East Pakistan people gradually led to their disinterest in religious nationalism. The economic expropriation led to democratic unsettlement as the bourgeoisie and the military oligarchy controlled the state of East Pakistan. Smelling the impending threat of the existence of East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman realized that self-rule was the only alternative option. As a consequence, he led the Bengali nationalism campaign from March 1969 through December 1971, from the wealthiest man in Dhaka to the last marginalized man in Chattogram, leading to a landslide victory for the Awami League in the December 1970 elections and the proposal for power transfer in March 1971. Instead of transferring the governance, the Pakistan military forces dug their own grave by instigating genocide in the dead of night on March 25, 1971. At this point, Asif Currimbhoy’s historical play *The Refugee* (1971) starts.

Asif Currimbhoy, an Indian English playwright, realistically portrays things as these happened during the liberation war in 1971. Currimbhoy took a serious interest in the South Asian conflicts and the doldrums of the 1960s and 1970s and wrote famous plays like *The Doldrummer* (1960), *Goa* (1964), *Inquilab* (1970), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), and many others carving a niche in the temple of Indian and Asian theatre. *The Refugee* (1971), a one-act play, mainly revolves around the exodus of 1971 refugees and extensively examines their fate and treatment by earlier refugees settled in West Bengal. Currimbhoy further eloquently portrays and expositoryly critiques the bloody days of the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971. He once comments on the play, “yet there seems to be very little choice. A mistake committed at a particular point of time seems to have a cumulative effect, and one inevitably gets drawn into it all” (qtd. in Bower xii). Faubion Bowers seconded the statement saying, “a voice of sanity lost in the din of unreason” (xii).

The metahistorical play, *The Refugee* raises its curtain with the historical setting of March 25, 1971, when Prakash Sen Gupta, a refugee from Comilla city of present-day Bangladesh, fled to West Bengal during partition. Sen Gupta, now a well-settled upper-class gentleman in the town of Malda, or West Dinajpur border in West Bengal, brought Yassin, another refugee from the same city, to his home. Sen Gupta, as a refugee, promises to provide shelter to every other refugee like Yassin, who seems to be non-committal to the question of liberation war and the crisis of refugees. Later, the play

unravels the mutilated conditions of the refugees, who are described as "maimed human beings reduced to inhuman existence, robbed of dignity and essential life" (Currimbhoy 212). As their number grows, the perception of the native citizens changes because personal interests are more precious than social and collective interests. The same Sen Gupta who once talked about the social responsibility of looking after the refugees now creates the binary of Hindu refugee/Muslim refugee, Pakistani/Indian, and proclaims, "we'll seal the borders...We will push them back" (Currimbhoy 214). The floodgates of refugees that expose the behaviours of the natives are further illustrated in scene three where Ramul, a surrealist, inspects different refugee camps and concludes with his sensible madness that the refugees are the worms of the world that everyone wants to exploit for their own benefits. The scene also pushes the character of Yassin into more dilemma as society has criticized him as the one with no conscience. The charges become graver and more severe in the next scene, reflecting the psychological pressure Yassin suffers once he reluctantly visits a refugee camp and talks with Ramul, his alter ego. Yassin, as a refugee, searches for his identity and articulates, "I am searching for my conscience" (Currimbhoy 225).

In the short span of life in this world, human beings exist at two levels: the social and the individual. The social level of existence is influenced by economic, political, cultural, linguistic, religious, historical, and geographical discourses. On the other hand, the individual level of existence is mostly dominated by the psychological understanding of the concerned person. They are interconnected with each other yet are separated from one another. Their association can be discerned from their complementary nature because, undeniably, a society constructs an individual as much as individuals together develop a society. However, as long as the individual level of existence controls the social level, the psychological understanding of the individual remains in perfect equilibrium. However, once the role reverses, the individual self is gradually withered, resulting in an existential crisis. A refugee who has lost both the individual and the social level of existence lives in a state of acute ethnic and mental deformity, but the social level of existence can be revived with habilitation and proper settlement in the new haven of another state. Is it possible for the person to regain the individual level of existence ever in his life? The question can be well settled by unravelling the underlying discourses of refugees presented by two characters—Yassin and Ramul. They represent the well-received and marginalized class of refugees respectively. Meghna Guhathakurta, an expert on post-partition migration and minority rights in South Asia, quotes the following Bengali song by Moushumi Bhowmik in her research work "Family Histories of the Bengal Partition" (1998), explaining the social level of existence of a refugee:

Ekhaney tumi shonkhyaloghu
Okhaney tumi jomjomat
Ekhaney tumi bostibashi
Okhaney chosho rasta-ghat

...Kothai jeno manush kadey
Kothai jeno kadchey hai
Manush boro bhoi peyechey
Manush boro nishshohai.

[Here you are the minority

There you are dominant
Here you dwell in slums
There you reign the highways.....

But somewhere humanity cries
Somewhere you can feel the pain
People have become fearful
People are feeling helpless.]

(126)

Refugees at every time and everywhere are the most vulnerable people exposed to unspeakable agonies socially and individually, physically and psychologically. First, the sexual violence, rape, harassment and caste violence, institutionally organized genocide, ethnic cleansing, and mass exodus; second, the food crisis that results in acute hunger and poverty, the natural disaster in the form of unstoppable rain and flood during monsoon, and the pandemic disease of cholera that kills a large number of people in different refugee camps; and third, the discriminatory and unwelcomed reception sometimes based on religious identity and at other times due to jealousy, feeling of social insecurity and clash of interest of the native citizens- all these manmade and natural calamities in 1971 somehow forced the refugees to realize their insignificant and non-human social existence.

In the absence of a secured homeland, the violently uprooted people choose to live in uncertainty in a foreign land where in addition to being treated as outcasts and insignificant entities, they are deprived of the daily necessities of life such as food and clothes. Revealing the vulnerability of refugees on both a social and physical level, Currimbhoy articulates, "the refugee scene grows with early dawn or evening shadows like an ominous prehistoric beast's death pangs. Groans and wails, skeletoned men and sunken-eyed babies sucking on to shriveled breasts" (Currimbhoy 212). They are forcefully rooted out of their homes, and a mass exodus occurs on the other side of the border as the brutalities of the Pakistan military forces continuously mount up. The Bangladesh Documents, which were published by the Indian Foreign Ministry, stated that 6,971,000 Hindus fled from Bangladesh to India and registered as refugees in March and August 1971. Specifically, "by July-August 1971, 90% of the refugees were Hindus concentrated in the border districts of West Bengal with large Muslim populations" (Ayoob para. 7). The refugees, mostly Hindus who were the minorities in East Pakistan, are welcomed and assisted by their relatives who look after them mercifully and support them mentally. Sen Gupta, a refugee of partition days, who believes in brotherhood, pompously articulates:

You're welcome. As friends and neighbours, you're all welcome. As long as there's enough room to live in and food to share, I promise you there will always be shelter in this town for those who need our help. Many of us came here uprooted after partition. Settled down, worked hard, built proudly our own positions in life, but not without a sense of responsibility and social purpose. What we do is equally for you...as for ourselves (Currimbhoy 208-209).

In every social or communal conflict and economic crisis, the worst sufferers are the marginalized and subaltern people who become the victims of the institutionalized power game. The upper-class *Bhadralok* (gentleman) and those traditionally in white-collared

jobs can escape such crises, even the worst crisis like riots, religious persecution, and the life of a refugee. Joya Chatterji, while studying the causes and patterns of migrations of a large number of minorities on both sides of the border, particularly Hindus from Bangladesh, in her book *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967* (2007), paradoxically discovers that the landlords and the upper-class Brahmins migrated first to Calcutta leaving behind their huge properties in their motherland, while the poor landless marginalized and scheduled caste peasants and farmers migrated last. Because unlike the *babus* (a respectful title, or educated one), "they fled for their lives, taking nothing with them, and despite the fact that they had nowhere to go in the west, no kins, no friends, no associates, no jobs and not even some of their own caste folk with whom they could take temporary refuge on the other side of the border" (Chatterji 118).

The play, *The Refugee*, captures the refugees' memory and spatial crises in its well-developed plot. Sen Gupta belongs to that class of refugees who had relatively modest means to recover as a refugee after getting some direct support from the people of the new harbour of West Bengal. When the curtain rises, Sen Gupta is a well-settled man with a home, garden, car, porch, ponds, green fields, and palm trees. Despite all these comforts, he cannot erase his memories of leading an amnesiac life. He as a refugee recalls, as it haunts, gruesome memories of the past because "a major influence on the claim of memory is to be faithful to the past" (Baruah 210). The ethnic feelings for fellow Bengalis on both sides of the border are expressed by Sen Gupta, who nostalgically memorizes his past old days in East Bengal by passionately expressing, "The East Bengalee, whether Muslim or Hindu always yearns for his old home town" (Currimbhoy 206). So, the gruesome and heinous events of partition that he has gone through do not allow him to live as a liberated self. "What is fascinating here is the peculiar persistence of memory that continues to haunt and affect the present even after the passage of decades" (Baruah 220). Some historical events are so tragic and horrendous that we cannot forget them so quickly, and so is the tragedy of partition for Sen Gupta. Sen Gupta, therefore, bemoans the loss of meadows and groves, relatives and friends, and all the familiar landscapes and home as he expresses, "on a clear night, heavy with the scent of the Mahua flowers and my own loneliness, I can feel the presence...of the past" (Currimbhoy 206).

Asif Currimbhoy, explicating the mental restlessness of a refugee, creates the character of Ramul, another important character in the play, in the same way as Manto created Toba Tek Singh in his eponymous short story "Toba Tek Singh," which was deeply rooted and based on the partition of India. The metaphoric enigma of partition and trauma is represented by the mad lunatic Toba Tek Singh through his repeatedly pronounced gibberish "*Upar di gurgur di annexe di bedhiyana di moong di daal of di Pakistan and Hindustan of di durr phitey mun.*" ["The inattention of the annexe of the rumbling upstairs of the dal of moong of the Pakistan and India of the go to bloody hell!" (qtd. in Chattopadhyay para. 13)]. It sounds more sense as it expresses the chaos in the outside world created by the political decision of partition and the dreamlike hope that madness only can understand the madness. The complicated maze of trauma that the unprecedented migration history of South Asia gave birth to be studied as the metaphor for the ultimate burgling of freedom and the sense of identity of the refugees that the sensibly insane character Ramul represents here in the play. Like Bhisn Singh during Indian independence and partition, Ramul, with all his madness, speaks more sense than

any sensible person in the independence movement of 1971. Ramul realistically puts in the question:

Food, clothing, shelter- our urgent need. Take all the help we get now. As our numbers grow, the warmth and welcome will cease. The heart and home will grow cold. And they will want the refugee to move on and on; out of sight is out of mind. But, where can millions go... (Laughing queerly)... I ask you... where can millions go (Currimbhoy 213)?

The meagre Bengali literature and immensely prolific Urdu literature on the partition, the nationalist history that champions the state's role in refugee rehabilitation, and the socialist history that studies the contribution of the native citizens as well as different non-government organizations in providing basic necessities to the victims of persecutions- all these discourses unanimously agree on the point that all refugees are not welcomed warmly, mainly when the number grows. "By the end of April 1971, there were half a million East Pakistan refugees in India; by the end of May, three and a half million; by the end of August, in excess of 8 million" (Guha 452), records Ramchandra Guha in his book *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (2008). Many refugees in our society still remember and can speak about the devastating days of migration, reception, and conditions. They used to live in the huts made of tarpaulin and bamboo, in the school buildings, on the banks of the river, and under any shade they fortunately found. They also repeatedly mention how the government under the leadership of Indira Gandhi used to provide polythene, food, medicines, ration, and other necessities to them. Besides, foreign agencies also came forward in support of them. They supplied daily pieces of stuff, but the warmth and sympathy that the native people had shown to these refugees gradually got withered as time progressed. Using Ramesh Chandra Sen's Bengali Novel *Pub theke Poschime* (1956), we can correlate the heartless reception of refugees of 1971 to those who fled partition in 1947. "মেঠো রাস্তার পাশের এক ঘরে এক যুবা শীতের শয়্যায় স্ত্রীকে বুকে টেনে নিয়ে বলল, ঐ বুঝি এল আর এক দল হতভাগা। বধূটি উত্তর করল, হ্যাঁ, বাঙালরা দু'মুঠা ভাতও সুখে খেতে দেবে না।" (Sen 76). [*On a winter night, a young man in his house beside the field calls his wife lovingly to his bed of roses and tells her that there comes another unfortunate group of refugees. The wife nods and replies that these Bengals will not let us enjoy our food in peace*]. The character Sen Gupta who earlier addresses the refugees as Bengali brothers and sisters, and proudly remarks, "you see why we're one" (Currimbhoy 206), now irritatingly proclaims:

Of course, I feel sorry for the refugees outside, but look what a filthy mess they've made of things. Where's my open field and coconut palms and pond. They...they're encroaching. How long are they going to stay here? When will they turn...anti-social? And they're growing in numbers all the time. We've called an emergency meeting of the town elders. This can't go on. We'll... we'll seal the borders (Currimbhoy 214).

The binary opposition of Indian/Pakistani, Hindu/Muslim Refugees, and rich/poor immediately got logocentric attention in the discourse of refugee rehabilitation, in which the predicaments of refugees are measured based on their religious identities instead of their social exigencies. Hindus were severely victimized during the turbulent period because the majority Muslims targeted them exclusively. In this context, Ramchandra

Guha notes, "The army was harassing the Hindu minority in particular; the authorities were 'demolishing Hindu temples, regardless of whether there are Hindus to use them" (Guha 452). It is historically witnessed that minorities in every nation and at every religious tension are the most persecuted people, be it Rohingyas in Myanmar, Tamils in Sri Lanka, or Hindus in Bangladesh. Reasonably, the minorities such as Hindus have faced boisterous torture and genocide in East Pakistan. Those nightmare days of genocide by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan were one of the strategic plans of the Pakistan government to keep India under pressure by pushing its citizens, particularly Hindus, into India's territory as refugees. Sen Gupta directly tells Prof. Mosin that the people coming to West Bengal as the herd of sheep are "Hindus now- minority Hindus being exterminated and driven out to purge Pakistan! If this pressure keeps and the hoards of Hindu refugees grow, how much longer will we in India remain secular" (Currimbhoy 222). Immediately after this, India declared an indirect war against Pakistan by helping the Mukti Fauj or Liberation Army in different ways; sometimes by hosting training camps for the unskilled but passionate men and women of East Pakistan and at other times by providing arms and ammunition to these freedom fighters. The ironic truth of India's help to Mukti Fauj is explicitly portrayed in the play through the character of Sen Gupta's 19-year-old son, Ashok. Ashok intends to join the liberation army because, as he observes, the refugees "... are our problems, Baba. We've got to help them... The crux of the problem is to throw the Pakistan army out- with guerrilla assistance given to our Bengali brothers" (Currimbhoy 216)!

Refugees who are dispersed far from their homeland lose their "identity and strength" (Currimbhoy 217). The individual level of existence, which is generally psychological and ideological, encounters more challenges than the social level of existence because, on the social level, there are many organizations like "The 1951 Convention" that ensure the safeguarding of rights and well-being of refugees by following naturalization, repatriation, rehabilitation or resettlement with minimum citizen rights. Even after forming all the policies of self-reliance, empowerment, or self-respectability for the socially displaced and stateless people, it is challenging to rehabilitate them mentally as minds can be fastened. The memory of the sordid past that haunts one may cause schizophrenia, a mental disorder. In schizophrenia, people abnormally interpret reality. So, those refugees who suffer from mental shock or trauma may develop schizophrenia. Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja, in the introduction to their edited book *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (2020), define trauma as "psychological injury, lasting damage done to individuals or communities by tragic events or severe distress" (1). So, a refugee who lives more on the psychological rather than physical level suffers trauma more severely than any other type of traumatic person because his/her vulnerable existence always reminds him/her of the possible repetition of past atrocities in the future.

Refugees are always in a crisis when they resettle in others' land, seeking safety there, but they do not feel as safe as they do at home. They cannot return home for severe threats to their life and freedom. Therefore, the refugees' struggles for freedom remain integral to their existence; their identity is caught in a state of flux or fluidity. The essence of freedom is the ability to act, speak and think freely, not to be restricted by any form of tyranny or oppression. In-depth, freedom which means "the condition or right of being able or allowed to do, say, think, etc. whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited" (Woodford 495), entails having the chance to develop the

autonomy to pursue one's interests and the conviction that one's chances are equal. Ramul, ironically the messiah of the refugees, wants to protect the Hindus against the Pakistani army, sometimes as lord commander and at other times as the role model of East Pakistani intelligentsia who understands the policies of Pakistan in a very rational way. He lives his life as he pleases. On the other hand, Yassin who also comes from Comilla of East Pakistan like Sen Gupta, enjoys some privileges of residing at a 'home' unlike other refugees of different camps. Yassin receives proper shelter as a refugee in the home of Sen Gupta, but he never feels at home like Ramul, who paradoxically enjoys more freedom than him. Yassin has a different philosophy of life. He does not believe in the freedom struggle, retaliation against the enemy, and murder and arson. He does not want to remember anything of his past, and hence neither discusses politics nor talks about refugees. As Sen Gupta's wife observes, "he wants to be independent. Shrug off the stigma...of being a refugee. Forget the past tragedy" (Currimbhoy 215). Sen Gupta also left no stone unturned to bring comfort and confidence to Yassin so that he could overcome those haunted memories. So, Sen Gupta tries to convince him with a new place as his own home and promisingly assures him, "remember... this is home, Yassin...and we are your family" (Currimbhoy 205). Yassin arduously attempts to live a non-committal and amnesiac life as he believes, "all pains come from attachment, all wrongs come from self-interest. That is why we should each...lead our own lives" (Currimbhoy 220). To Yassin, "amnesia appears to become almost a survival strategy (Baruah 221). He appears to be relying on amnesia to forget the past, rather than feeling stigmatized as a refugee because he focuses on surviving in the present and making his future a better one.

Can a refugee surpass the memories, even after the willed or "engineered forgetting" (Baruah 223)? Does a refugee ever have the authority to liberate himself from the disciplinary institutions that society constructs? The answer is mostly negative because, at this time, everyone talks to you without sense, as if your disinterested attitude causes more damage to the liberation movement itself. Mita, Sen Gupta's daughter and the social activist working for the rehabilitation of refugees, tries to impose her ideology on Yassin: "All of life draws me...the human condition. The need and its recognition. If... if all of us were to abstain the way you do, we'd be doing harm, don't you see, the kind of harm that is deliberately done through neglect" (Currimbhoy 220). Sen Gupta also finds it quite unnatural that Yassin "never talks about...politics or refugees or home" (Currimbhoy 215) while Prof. Mosin calls him "closed" (Currimbhoy 221). Ashok, the twenty-year-old child, through the symbolical uniform of Mukti Fauj, constantly reminds him of his unavoidable duty for the liberation of his motherland. Yassin craves his own peaceful thought and protests, "But you must allow me freedom of thought and action, or else you deprive me of refuge in this very house of yours" (Currimbhoy 223). Freedom is never given to a refugee as he must act according to society's principles willingly or unwillingly. In this case, the ideological state apparatus rather than the repressive state apparatus subjugate the refugees more convincingly than anything else. Yassin repents, "They throw on me a guilt, and indirect compulsion, to do what I don't believe in" (Currimbhoy 225). He reluctantly visits refugee camps, witnesses the inhuman pain and agonies of the refugees or the hell before his eyes, and his conscience strikes. The severe psychological injury that acknowledges "how a painful past can resurface through the present" (Davis and Meretoja 3) is witnessed through these events. Yassin has "lost distinction between reality and non-reality" (Currimbhoy 228), and life to him now

seems like an unavoidable business that one must accept with all its ugliness. Thus, Yassin as a refugee with his loss of identity both on the social as well as individual level finally recalls the truth: "Man, really has little choice in life. He is often forced into a situation...where there is no way out. A decision, an action...gets destined, almost involuntarily" (Currimbhoy 229). This knowledge of Yassin's loss of identity, nonetheless, confirms his identity because he could doubt now the underlying social, political, and religious discourses that work behind the construction of the identity of the refugees. And as Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the seventeenth-century thinker, after experiments with methodological doubt for every form of knowledge, finally discovers that the object of study may not be accurate or true, but the person who doubts the object definitely exists; hence he/she is true. Thus, his famous aphorism "I doubt- therefore I think, I think- therefore I am" (qtd. Harrison 02) can be applied to Yassin, who doubts his identity and, therefore, he as a refugee exists.

Despite so many years of excruciating life journeys, the refugees may be able to live socially through rehabilitation in their homelands or through naturalization in host lands, but they will not be able to live again psychologically due to the trauma of migration that occurred during the partition, 1971-liberation war, or any moment in their lives. Despite the well-settled and happy life, Sen Gupta suffers from an identity crisis since he, as a refugee, is emotionally stuck between his homeland and hostland. Therefore, Sen Gupta becomes a subaltern being whose entire thoughts and identities are centred on the question of existence. Reasonably, Sen Gupta, who suffers from a psychological or emotional injury due to traumatic partition memory, remains compassionate to other refugees like Yassin. Ramul, viewed as vermin, faces mistreatment as the earth's worm for being a refugee. Representing the physical and mental injuries that refugees at every society excruciatingly suffer is represented by Ramul who with the revelation of agonized life through his madness actually expresses the fearful image of a refugee. Davis and Meretoja observe, "Once trauma could be named, described and diagnosed, suffering could be recognized as real rather than dismissed as imaginary or, even worse, as exploitative malingering" (3). Trauma victims who passively witnessed the violence of the partition and liberation war and suffered psychic damage may get well through treatment, counselling, or forgetting the past. But, victims like Yassin, who actively witnessed the liberation war and the migration tragedy and suffered trauma, will not be able to forget the memories voluntarily or involuntarily. Yassin's memories, for he is a refugee, will haunt him forever despite his desire to forget the past in his quest for independent identity. Cultural critic Stuart Hall explains identity as a constantly shifting process rather than a set of fixed attributes. Similarly, the identity for these refugees "is always a never-completed process of becoming - a process of shifting identifications, rather than a singular, complete, finished state of being" (Hall 16). Conclusively, we can say that with the subordination and subservience of the present and the uncertainty of the future, a refugee is left in a mental state that permanently questions his identity, though there is a bleak chance of getting his identity back by losing it in the chaotic pool of the minds.

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