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PARTITION AND THE FRAGMENTED SUBJECT: A LACANIAN-FREUDIAN READING OF MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN, THE SHADOW LINES, AND TAMAS

Mahesh Shantaram Shimpi[1], Dr. Sharayu Omprakash Sonawane[2]

[1] Research Scholar, Sandip University, Nashik -422213, India, Email: shimpims@gmail.com [2] Assistant Professor, School of Engineering and Technology, Sandip University, Nashik - 422213, India. Email: sharayu.sonawane@sandipuniversity.edu.in*

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Abstract
The Partition of India in 1947 continues to shape South Asian literary representations of identity, memory, and belonging. While existing scholarship has largely focused on trauma and memory, the present study examines how Partition reshapes subjectivity through a comparative psychoanalytic reading of Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1981), Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines (1988), and Bhisham Sahni's Tamas (1974). Drawing on Jacques Lacan's concepts of the Symbolic Order, the Other, and Lack, and supported by Sigmund Freud's theories of repression and mourning/melancholia, the study employs close textual reading and comparative thematic analysis. The study attempts to highlight that Partition is represented not simply as a historical event but as a continuing disruption of symbolic structures that shape identity and social relations. The study highlights the relationship between symbolic instability, otherness, and unresolved loss in shaping post-Partition subjectivity.

Keywords: *Partition Literature; Lacan; Freud; Symbolic Order; Otherness; Lack; Melancholia; Subjectivity; Identity; and South Asian Literature.*

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1. Introduction

The Partition of India in 1947 was not only a political event but also a profound human tragedy that transformed the lives of millions. The creation of India and Pakistan led to mass migration, communal violence, displacement, and the loss of homes, families, and communities. While the physical consequences of Partition were immediate, its psychological effects continued long after the borders were drawn. As a result, Partition has remained a recurring subject in South Asian literature, where writers have explored its lasting impact on memory, identity, and human relationships.

Over the past few decades, Partition scholarship has been strongly influenced by trauma and memory studies. Critics have examined how violence is remembered, narrated, forgotten, and transmitted across generations. Such approaches have made important contributions to our understanding of Partition literature. However, they often focus primarily on the representation of traumatic events and their remembrance. Comparatively less attention has been paid to how Partition reshapes subjectivity itself, that is, how individuals understand themselves, others, and their place in the social world after a major historical rupture. This research gap can be traced in novels such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), and Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974). Although these novels differ in narrative style and historical focus, all three depict characters struggling with fractured identities, unstable social realities, and unresolved experiences of loss. Rather than presenting Partition as a completed event of the past, they reveal its continuing presence in personal and collective life.

Research Questions:

1. How do Midnight's Children, *The Shadow Lines*, and *Tamas* represent Partition as a continuing psychic rupture that disrupts symbolic structures, reshapes subjectivity, and transforms relationships between self and other?
2. In what ways do Lacan's concepts of the Symbolic Order, the Other, and Lack, supported by Freud's theories of repression and mourning/melancholia, help explain the representation of identity, loss, and belonging in the selected novels?

Aims and Objectives:

1. To analyze how the selected novels portray Partition as a disruption of the symbolic structures that shape identity, community, and social belonging.
2. To investigate how communal and national identities are constructed through processes of othering and how these processes contribute to the fragmentation of subjectivity in the aftermath of Partition.
3. To explore how experiences of loss, repression, and melancholia produce identities marked by absence, incompleteness, and unresolved attachment to the past.

2. Research Methodology:

The present study adopts a qualitative and interpretative research design based on comparative textual analysis. The study employs a Lacanian-Freudian psychoanalytic framework, drawing on Lacan's concepts of the Symbolic Order, the Other, and Lack, and Freud's concepts of repression and mourning/melancholia. Selected scenes, characters, and narrative episodes from Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), and Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1974) are examined comparatively to explore representations of symbolic rupture, otherness, loss, and subjectivity in the aftermath of Partition. Relevant scholarly works on Partition literature, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism are used to support the analysis.

Theoretical Framework:

The present study employs selected concepts from Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud to examine the representation of identity, loss, and social relations in Partition fiction. Lacan's
concept of the Symbolic Order refers to the network of language, laws, social norms, and cultural structures through which individuals understand themselves and their world. As Lacan states, "This is precisely why the unconscious, which tells the truth about truth, is structured like a language…" (Écrits 737), emphasizing the role of symbolic systems in the formation of subjectivity. The concept of the Other occupies a central position in his theory. According to him, "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (Lacan 235). The Other represents the larger social and symbolic order through which identity is recognized and constituted. Another concept of Lack is closely connected to subject formation. For him, 'lack is central to desire' because human subjectivity is marked by an enduring sense of incompleteness.

Vol. 12 Issue 07 (July 2026)
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DOI: https://doi.org/10.69980/btajpd19

Individuals continually seek a lost wholeness that can never be fully recovered, it means, lack is inseparable from desire because desire emerges from what is absent or unattainable.

To complement Lacan's framework, the study draws upon Freud's concept of repression. In "Repression" (1915), Freud defines repression as "The essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious" (Freud 147). It is the process by which unacceptable wishes, thoughts, or memories are excluded from consciousness while continuing to exert an influence on the individual. The study also employs Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia. In "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Freud describes mourning as "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (Freud 243). Mourning is the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, whereas melancholia emerges when the subject remains unable to detach from the lost object.

Partition and the Crisis of the Symbolic Order:

For Lacan, the Symbolic Order refers to the network of language, laws, institutions, and cultural meanings through which individuals make sense of themselves and the world around them. It provides the frameworks that organize identity, social relations, and collective belonging. Nations, borders, religious communities, and political institutions can all be understood as symbolic structures because they derive their authority from shared systems of meaning rather than from any natural or fixed reality. Partition literature repeatedly reveals the instability of these structures. The violence and displacement of 1947 expose the fragility of symbolic frameworks that once appeared secure and coherent. At the same time, Partition brings to the surface tensions that had long existed beneath official narratives of unity and order. Read through Lacan and Freud, Partition emerges not simply as a political event but as a crisis in the systems through which subjects understand identity, community, and belonging. In Midnight's Children, Salman Rushdie presents the nation itself as an unstable symbolic structure. Saleem Sinai's birth at the exact moment of Indian independence establishes an immediate connection between individual identity and national history. As Saleem famously declares, "Who what am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter…I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world" (Rushdie 370). The statement suggests that his life cannot be separated from the larger historical forces shaping modern India. Yet the novel continually questions whether either the self or the nation can ever be understood as coherent wholes. This instability is reflected in Saleem's narration. His memories are fragmented, interrupted, and frequently revised. He repeatedly acknowledges errors, omissions, and uncertainties in his account of the past. Rather than presenting history as a stable narrative, the novel reveals it as a contested process of interpretation. Saleem's difficulty in constructing a coherent story about himself mirrors the difficulty of constructing a coherent story about the nation. From a Lacanian perspective, this reflects the divided nature of the subject. Saleem can never fully occupy a single, stable identity. He exists between multiple social, religious, and historical categories, and every attempt to define himself produces new contradictions. The Midnight Children's Conference provides one of the clearest representations of this symbolic instability. The conference initially appears to embody the ideal of a unified postcolonial nation. Children from different regions, religions, languages, and social backgrounds are brought together within a single collective space. However, the project quickly fragments as competing interests and conflicting visions emerge. What appears to be a symbol of national unity becomes evidence of the internal divisions already present within the nation itself. The conference demonstrates that national identity is not a naturally unified reality but a fragile symbolic construction held together by competing signifiers. The crisis reaches its most visible form during the Emergency. Through censorship, surveillance, and coercion, the state attempts to impose a single version of national identity and order. The sterilization of the midnight children is particularly significant because it represents an effort to eliminate forms of difference that resist incorporation into official narratives of national unity. Freud's concept of repression helps illuminate this moment. The celebratory discourse of independence cannot fully contain the contradictions, exclusions, and traumas that accompany nation-building. These tensions remain submerged beneath the rhetoric of progress and unity, only to reappear during the Emergency in the form of authoritarian control. The state's attempt to secure symbolic order ultimately exposes how unstable that order has been from the beginning.

While Rushdie examines the nation as a problematic symbolic framework, Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines focuses on the uncertainty of borders themselves. The novel repeatedly questions the assumption that political boundaries possess an objective and self-evident reality. This concern is most clearly embodied in

Vol. 12 Issue 07 (July 2026)
ISSN: 2208-2190 Pages-63-71
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Tha'mma, whose strong commitment to nationalism depends upon the belief that borders clearly separate one nation from another. Yet the narrative gradually exposes the limitations of this belief. Tha'mma expects national boundaries to be visible markers dividing distinct worlds. Instead, she encounters a troubling contradiction. During the journey to Dhaka, the landscape, language, and social life often appear remarkably familiar despite the existence of an international border. The distinction between self and other that nationalism promises is difficult to locate in lived experience. Her confusion is captured in the question to her son: "If there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if here's no difference both sides will be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before…what was it all for then-partition and all the killing and everything- if there isn't something in between" (Ghosh 151). The question reveals the dependence of national identity upon symbolic distinctions. If the distinction disappears, the sacrifices made in its name become difficult to justify. Ghosh therefore presents the border as a signifier whose authority depends on collective belief rather than physical visibility. Its power lies not in any material presence but in the meanings attached to it. The novel repeatedly demonstrates that shared histories, memories, and cultural practices exceed the political divisions imposed by nation-states. The Symbolic Order attempts to organize identities through fixed categories such as nation, homeland, and citizenship, yet human experience consistently unsettles these boundaries.

The consequences of treating such symbolic distinctions as absolute become evident in the novel's portrayal of communal violence. Tridib's death is not simply a personal tragedy but a moment that reveals the destructive potential of rigid symbolic identification. The riot emerges from categories of nation and community that have acquired unquestioned authority within public consciousness. Freud's theory of repression helps explain why this violence appears so sudden. Beneath official narratives of national belonging remain unresolved fears, prejudices, and historical resentments. When these tensions surface, symbolic structures that once promised order prove incapable of preventing fragmentation. The novel thus demonstrates that borders may be imagined as guarantees of stability, yet they often produce new forms of insecurity and violence.

In Bhisham Sahni's Tamas, the crisis of the Symbolic Order is explored through the breakdown of everyday social relations. Unlike Midnight's Children and The Shadow Lines, which focus primarily on national narratives and borders, *Tamas* concentrates on the local community and the institutions responsible for maintaining social cohesion. The novel opens with the placement of a pig carcass outside a mosque. On a practical level, the incident appears minor. Its significance lies in the symbolic meanings attached to it. Once discovered, the carcass becomes a powerful signifier through which communal fears, suspicions, and antagonisms are articulated. The resulting violence demonstrates how rapidly social order can collapse when symbolic meanings become contested. The event itself does not create communal hostility; rather, it activates tensions that already exist within the social fabric. As unrest spreads, the inability of political and administrative institutions to restore order reveals the limits of symbolic authority. Meetings are held, instructions are issued, and official procedures are followed, yet these measures fail to prevent escalating violence. Institutions derive their authority from collective belief in their legitimacy. When that belief weakens during moments of crisis, symbolic authority loses its capacity to regulate social relations. The disorder portrayed in the novel therefore represents more than administrative failure; it signals a deeper collapse in the structures that organize communal life. This collapse becomes visible in the transformation of ordinary relationships. Neighbours who previously shared everyday interactions begin to perceive one another primarily through religious identities. Familiar social bonds are replaced by suspicion and fear. Freud's concept of repression is useful here because the riots reveal tensions that had remained latent rather than resolved. The violence does not emerge from nowhere. Instead, Partition functions as a catalyst that brings underlying anxieties into the open, exposing fractures that had long existed beneath the appearance of communal harmony.

Thus, Midnight's Children, *The Shadow Lines*, and *Tamas* present Partition as a profound crisis of the Symbolic Order. Rushdie exposes the instability of national narratives, Ghosh questions the certainty of borders and territorial identities, and Sahni reveals the fragility of civic and communal structures. In each novel, symbolic systems that appear natural and enduring are shown to depend upon precarious networks of belief and identification. Partition disrupts these networks, bringing hidden contradictions and tensions to the surface. The legacy of Partition therefore extends beyond political division. It marks a breakdown in the symbolic frameworks through which individuals understand themselves, their communities, and the world they inhabit.

Vol. 12 Issue 07 (July 2026)
ISSN: 2208-2190 Pages-63-71
DOI: https://doi.org/10.69980/btajpd19

Constructing the Other: Identity, Community, and Difference:

Lacan argues that identity is never formed in isolation. Individuals come to understand who they are through the symbolic world of language, social relationships, and cultural meanings that surround them. The self therefore depends upon the presence of others for recognition and definition. At both individual and collective levels, identities are shaped through distinctions that separate "us" from "them." In Partition literature, this process becomes particularly significant because political, national, and religious identities are increasingly organized around difference. The three novels examined here reveal that communities often secure a sense of belonging by defining themselves against those perceived as outsiders. At the same time, they demonstrate that such distinctions are neither natural nor permanent but historically produced and sustained through social and political narratives.

In *Midnight's Children*, the relationship between Saleem Sinai and Shiva illustrates how identity is formed through difference. Born at the exact moment of Indian independence, the two characters share a symbolic connection to the nation, yet they develop into contrasting figures. Saleem is associated with memory, imagination, and multiplicity, while Shiva becomes linked to power, aggression, and conflict. Their significance lies not simply in their opposition but in their mutual dependence. Each acquires meaning through his relationship with the other. Saleem's understanding of himself repeatedly emerges through comparison with Shiva, just as Shiva's role gains significance through his contrast with Saleem. Their rivalry therefore reflects a broader tension within postcolonial India, where competing visions of the nation struggle for recognition. This dynamic also shapes the Midnight Children's Conference. Conceived as a space that could unite children from different regions, religions, languages, and social backgrounds, the conference initially appears to embody the dream of a plural and inclusive nation. Yet its meetings quickly become marked by disagreement and rivalry. Regional loyalties, linguistic divisions, class differences, and political interests repeatedly challenge the possibility of unity. The conference demonstrates that national identity is never a complete or settled category. Instead, it is continuously negotiated through internal differences. Rushdie suggests that the nation does not achieve coherence by eliminating these differences; rather, it is constituted through them. The presence of internal others is therefore not a threat to national identity but one of the conditions through which that identity takes shape. The novel repeatedly emphasizes the impossibility of reducing either the individual or the nation to a single, unified identity. Saleem's declaration, "To understand me, you'll have to swallow a world" (Rushdie 370) captures this complexity. The statement suggests that identity emerges through a network of relationships, histories, and differences that cannot be neatly contained within fixed categories. In this sense, Midnight's Children portrays identity as relational, fragmented, and constantly shaped through encounters with others.

While Rushdie focuses on internal differences within the nation, *The Shadow Lines* examines how national identities are produced through distinctions between nations. Throughout the novel, India and Pakistan are presented as separate political entities, yet Ghosh repeatedly questions the certainty of that separation. Rather than treating national identities as self-contained realities, the novel reveals their relational character. The meaning of one nation depends upon the existence of another against which it can define itself. This tension is most visible in Tha'mma's understanding of nationalism. She believes that nations require clear and visible boundaries that distinguish one person from another. Her faith in national identity depends upon the existence of firm distinctions between inside and outside, belonging and exclusion. However, her experiences repeatedly challenge this assumption. During the journey to Dhaka, familiar languages, customs, and social practices blur the differences that nationalism seeks to establish. Faced with these similarities, Tha'mma's question regarding the partition, killings and nation borders reveals the extent to which national identity relies upon symbolic distinctions. If the distinction itself becomes uncertain, the foundations of that identity are placed in doubt. Ghosh further develops this idea by questioning the process through which enemies are created. Through Robi's reflections on communal violence and Tridib's death, the novel demonstrates that hostility is often directed toward people who share common histories, cultural practices, and social experiences. Difference, therefore, cannot be understood as a simple reflection of objective reality. Rather, it is produced through narratives that organize people into opposing groups. The novel suggests that communities often depend upon images of outsiders in order to secure a sense of collective identity. Yet these divisions remain unstable because the similarities they attempt to conceal continue to persist beneath them. The novel ultimately exposes the paradox at the heart of national identity. Communities seek certainty through the creation of clear distinctions, but the very boundaries that promise stability are repeatedly shown to be fragile and constructed. Identity depends upon difference, yet the differences themselves are far less absolute than political narratives would suggest.

Vol. 12 Issue 07 (July 2026)
ISSN: 2208-2190 Pages-63-71
DOI: https://doi.org/10.69980/btajpd19

In *Tamas*, the construction of the Other occurs through everyday processes that gradually transform neighbours into enemies. Rather than focusing primarily on national borders or ideological conflicts, the novel traces how communal identities are shaped within ordinary social life. One of the most important mechanisms in this process is the circulation of rumours. As tensions increase, rumours spread rapidly across Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities, generating fear and suspicion. Their influence does not depend upon factual accuracy. Instead, they derive their power from the meanings attached to them and from their ability to create boundaries between communities. Through constant repetition, rumours encourage individuals to interpret one another through communal stereotypes rather than personal experience. The novel carefully shows how familiar relationships are redefined through these emerging divisions. People who once interacted as neighbours, colleagues, and acquaintances begin to see one another primarily as members of religious communities. Individual identities become subordinated to collective labels. What matters is no longer who a person is but which community that person is perceived to represent. Difference thus becomes politically charged, and social life increasingly revolves around distinctions between "us" and "them."

Religious processions, public meetings, and collective gatherings intensify this process. These events strengthen communal solidarity by creating a shared sense of belonging, but they simultaneously reinforce boundaries separating one group from another. The stronger the feeling of collective identity becomes, the more sharply the figure of the outsider is defined. Sahni demonstrates that communal identities are not fixed or natural categories. They are produced through repeated social practices that determine who belongs within the community and who is placed outside it. The violence that follows does not emerge from sudden or irrational hatred. Rather, it develops through a gradual process in which symbolic distinctions become increasingly rigid. The novel reveals how fear, political manipulation, and communal narratives transform ordinary differences into antagonistic identities. In doing so, *Tamas* exposes the mechanisms through which the Other is socially constructed and mobilized during periods of crisis.

Taken together, Midnight's Children, *The Shadow Lines*, and *Tamas* demonstrate that identity is relational rather than self-contained. Rushdie shows how national identity is shaped through internal differences and competing visions of belonging. Ghosh reveals the dependence of national identities upon distinctions that remain historically contingent and unstable. Sahni examines the everyday social processes through which communal identities are formed through exclusion and fear. Across all three novels, the Other is not merely an external enemy but a necessary point of reference through which individuals and communities understand themselves. At the same time, the novels emphasize that these distinctions are historically produced rather than naturally given. Partition intensifies such processes by transforming difference into a central principle of political and communal life, revealing how identities are continually shaped, sustained, and contested through relationships with others.

Lack, Loss, and the Persistence of Melancholia:

Partition disrupts lives through displacement, violence, and separation, but its effects extend beyond immediate historical events. It also shapes how individuals understand themselves and relate to the past. Lacan's concept of lack offers a useful framework for understanding this experience. For Lacan, human subjectivity is marked by an enduring sense of incompleteness. Individuals continually seek forms of wholeness, certainty, or fulfilment that can never be fully attained. Historical experiences of loss do not create this lack; rather, they make it more visible. Partition confronts individuals with losses that cannot be entirely repaired or recovered, exposing the fragility of identities that were once taken for granted. Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia further clarifies these responses to loss. While mourning gradually accepts the absence of what has been lost, melancholia emerges when the lost object continues to exert a powerful influence on the self. The selected novels reveal how Partition transforms loss into a lasting condition of consciousness, shaping both personal identity and collective memory.

In Midnight's Children, the experience of lack is closely connected to Saleem Sinai's struggle to reconstruct the past. Throughout the novel, he repeatedly attempts to create a coherent account of his life and of the nation whose history appears inseparable from his own. Yet every effort to impose order on memory encounters gaps, contradictions, and uncertainties. Events are revised, details are forgotten, and chronology becomes unstable. The past remains elusive, resisting complete recovery. Saleem's famous assertion of his identity and connection with the world around reflects the scale of this task. His identity is dispersed across personal memories, family histories, and national events, making any final or complete self-understanding impossible. The novel repeatedly presents memory as a process shaped by absence as much as by recollection.

What cannot be remembered becomes as significant as what can. Saleem's search for coherence therefore

Vol. 12 Issue 07 (July 2026)
ISSN: 2208-2190 Pages-63-71
DOI: https://doi.org/10.69980/btajpd19

resembles a search for a lost completeness that remains permanently out of reach. In Lacanian terms, desire is sustained by precisely this impossibility. The more Saleem attempts to recover a complete account of himself and his history, the more he encounters the gaps that structure both. This condition is reinforced through the novel's recurring imagery of bodily fragmentation. As Saleem's body deteriorates, physical disintegration mirrors the fragmentation of memory, identity, and nation. The body no longer represents unity or stability; instead, it becomes a reminder of vulnerability and incompleteness. The novel's conclusion intensifies this idea when Saleem imagines himself breaking apart into countless pieces. His dissolution reflects not only personal mortality but also the impossibility of achieving a fully unified self. The novel ultimately suggests that wholeness remains an unattainable ideal. What endures instead is an awareness of lack that becomes central to subjectivity itself.

Where Midnight's Children explores lack through fragmented selfhood, *The Shadow Lines* examines it through absence. The novel is structured around figures, places, and histories that remain powerfully present despite their physical disappearance. At the centre of this network of absences stands Tridib. Although his life ends relatively early in the narrative, his influence extends throughout the novel. The narrator's understanding of the world is shaped by Tridib's stories, ideas, and imaginative vision. Even after his death, Tridib continues to occupy a central place in the narrator's consciousness. The narrator repeatedly returns to the circumstances surrounding Tridib's death, reconstructing the event through memory, testimony, and reflection. Yet these attempts never produce complete closure. The significance of Tridib lies not simply in what he was but in what his absence continues to mean. Freud's concept of melancholia helps illuminate this attachment. Rather than gradually separating himself from the lost object, the narrator incorporates that loss into his own sense of identity. Tridib becomes part of the narrator's way of understanding both the past and himself. The loss therefore remains active rather than resolved. A similar dynamic shapes the novel's treatment of Dhaka and the world that existed before Partition. The past survives through memories, stories, and emotional attachments, yet it cannot be fully restored. The novel refuses the comforting belief that memory can recover what history has destroyed. Instead, recollection repeatedly confronts the limits of recovery. The desire to return to a lost world persists, but fulfilment remains impossible. In this way, absence becomes productive rather than merely negative. What is lost continues to shape identity precisely because it can never be fully regained.

In *Tamas*, experiences of loss are expressed through displacement and the destruction of ordinary social life. The novel portrays a world in which familiar relationships, neighbourhoods, and patterns of coexistence are violently disrupted. Families are forced to abandon their homes, communities are scattered, and long-standing social bonds begin to collapse. Partition is therefore experienced not only as a political event but also as the loss of spaces and relationships that once provided stability and belonging. Unlike many narratives that move toward reconciliation or recovery, *Tamas* offers no easy resolution to these losses. The violence eventually subsides, yet the conditions that produced it remain unresolved. Suspicion continues to linger, communal trust remains damaged, and the future appears uncertain. The absence created by Partition cannot be repaired simply through the restoration of order because the social world itself has been transformed. The novel also explores how individuals remain marked by events they cannot fully comprehend or control. Characters such as Nathu become caught within forces far larger than themselves, illustrating how historical violence leaves lasting psychological consequences. What persists is not merely the memory of particular events but a deeper awareness that familiar forms of life have been irreversibly altered. The experience of displacement therefore extends beyond physical movement. It produces a continuing sense of estrangement from places, communities, and identities that once seemed secure. Sahni's refusal to provide emotional closure is central to
the novel's power. Loss remains unresolved because the conditions necessary for genuine restoration no longer exist. The past survives as a reminder of what has disappeared, while the future offers no certainty that such losses can be overcome. In this sense, Tamas presents Partition as an experience that permanently reshapes both individual and collective consciousness.

Although Midnight's Children, The Shadow Lines, and Tamas differ significantly in narrative style and historical focus, they share a common concern with the persistence of loss. Rushdie explores the impossibility of achieving a complete or unified sense of self. Ghosh examines how absent people and vanished worlds continue to shape the living. Sahni reveals the lasting consequences of displacement and the destruction of communal life. Across all three novels, Partition exposes forms of absence that resist closure and continue to structure experience long after the historical event itself.

Read through Lacan and Freud, these texts suggest that loss is never simply left behind. Historical losses become intertwined with the deeper incompleteness that characterizes human subjectivity. The desire to

Vol. 12 Issue 07 (July 2026)
ISSN: 2208-2190 Pages-63-71
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recover what has disappeared remains powerful, yet complete recovery is impossible. As a result, memory, identity, and history remain shaped by absences that cannot be fully overcome. The legacy of Partition survives not only in what was lost but also in the enduring awareness of what can never be entirely regained.

Conclusions:

The present study highlights that Partition is represented in Midnight's Children, The Shadow Lines, and Tamas not merely as a historical event but as a profound disruption of the symbolic frameworks through which individuals and communities understand themselves and their world. Through a Lacanian-Freudian reading of these novels, it becomes clear that the effects of Partition extend beyond political division and territorial change. They reshape identity, social relationships, memory, and collective belonging in ways that continue long after the historical moment itself.

The analysis of the Symbolic Order demonstrates that the three novels portray Partition as a crisis of meaning and authority. In Midnight's Children, national history appears fragmented and unstable, challenging the possibility of a unified postcolonial identity. In The Shadow Lines, borders and national categories are revealed to be symbolic constructions whose certainty is repeatedly undermined by lived experience. In Tamas, the erosion of civic authority and communal trust exposes the fragility of the structures that organize social life. Together, these texts suggest that the institutions, narratives, and identities that appear stable often depend upon symbolic systems that can become unsettled during periods of historical crisis.

The study has also shown that identity emerges through relationships of difference rather than through fixed or essential characteristics. Across the three novels, individuals and communities define themselves in relation to others. The relationship between Saleem and Shiva in Midnight's Children, the interconnected national identities explored in The Shadow Lines, and the communal divisions represented in Tamas all demonstrate that identity depends upon symbolic distinctions through which people understand who they are. At the same time, the novels reveal that such distinctions are historically produced rather than naturally given. The self is therefore neither autonomous nor self-sufficient but is shaped through larger social, cultural, and symbolic relationships.

A further finding of the study concerns the persistence of loss. The novels repeatedly return to experiences of absence, displacement, and longing that cannot be fully resolved. Saleem's fragmented sense of self, the narrator's continuing attachment to Tridib and the remembered world of pre-Partition connections, and the displacement and uncertainty experienced by characters in Tamas all point to forms of loss that continue to shape identity. Through Freud's concept of melancholia and Lacan's notion of lack, these experiences can be understood as historical losses that become intertwined with the deeper incompleteness that characterizes human subjectivity. The novels suggest that loss is not simply left behind or overcome. Instead, it becomes part of the way individuals understand themselves and their histories.

The study further demonstrates that symbolic instability, processes of othering, and unresolved forms of loss are sustained by tensions that remain partially repressed within social and political life. The selected novels repeatedly show that communal anxieties, political conflicts, and historical antagonisms do not disappear simply because they are excluded from public narratives. Rather, they continue to exist beneath the surface of everyday life until moments of crisis bring them into visibility. The violence portrayed in these texts reveals the return of tensions that official narratives of unity, nationhood, and belonging are unable to fully contain.

Taken together, the findings support the central argument that Partition functions as a continuing psychic rupture whose effects extend across generations. The desire for wholeness, belonging, and recovery remains powerful throughout the novels, yet complete fulfilment is never achieved. Characters continue to search for lost homes, lost relationships, stable identities, and coherent histories, but these objects of desire remain only partially attainable. In this way, the novels reveal how the legacy of Partition persists not only through historical memory but also through the ongoing experience of absence, longing, and incompleteness.

By bringing Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis into dialogue with Partition literature, the present study contributes to existing scholarship by offering a comparative reading of Midnight's Children, The Shadow Lines, and Tamas. The analysis demonstrates how symbolic instability, relational identity, repression, and unresolved loss continue to shape the psychic and social afterlives of Partition. Ultimately, the selected novels move beyond recording historical events to explore the deeper structures through which individuals understand themselves, others, community, and the nation. Their enduring significance lies in their ability to reveal how the trauma of Partition continues to influence subjectivity and collective life long after the event itself has passed.

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Vol. 12 Issue 07 (July 2026)
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