

Existentialism during Partition

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the contribution of writers to portray the scenes during partition of India in 1947. Hard struggle against British rule was marred by the division of a united India. Millions of people had to leave their home and across the border, countless people lost their lives and women were raped brutally. It was noted to be an irreparable loss for the subcontinent and identity. The partition cannot be undone however to much extent it can be remembered as a lesson.

My purpose is to write this paper to throw light on the stories of brutality, women's rape and remarkable role of writers to explore the pain of division of 1947. It is inevitable that the majority of the writers are generous in portraying characters that bore the pain of being cut from the roots and transcend the petty ethnic prejudices. The creation of Pakistan synchronized with the partition of India, which marked the communal hurly burly and resulted in a large scale migration, torture and massacre. Its' scars will remain in all walks of life. 50,000 Muslim women and 35,000 Hindu and Sikh woman were abducted, raped and forced to convert and marriage. Many girls were on both sides were killed by kinsmen in order to protect them from being raped. Thus, the most victimized people in the partition on both sides were WOMEN.

India is a land of cultures, languages and religions and therefore "Diversity". It has been practicing love and unity from the times immemorial. Despite of it disparity, people fought for independence equally and thus got liberated India. However it is inevitable that freedom was welcomed by division and division brought death and migration. A trauma of partition is still alive in our minds. The foremost attempt towards pages of partition has been taken by Sadat Hassan Manto (1912-1950) who is known for his stories of bitter truth. He has witnessed all the trauma of 1947. *Toba Tek Singh* has been called as enfant terrible of the Urdu literature by Mushirul Hasan. It is a conglomerate of the psychology and emotional state of the pre and post partition affairs revolving against a central character named Bishan Singh who has gone mad 15 years ago. He was called Toba Tek Singh in the asylum, the name of

his village. The man often chants non sense phrase all the time in this short story like “upper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain”.

The word *Laltain* is interpreted as an enlightenment which was needed in 1947 to remove the darkness which had made blind to see the reality. *Toba Tek Singh* is an ironic classic.

It seems so absurd that after the two years of division, both the governments (India and Pakistan) decided to send the lunatics to their respective lands. Muslims lunatics should be sent to Pakistan and Indian lunatics should be transferred to India. All the inmates were unable to perceive the idea of “New Land”. Insanity is created between two countries by the three words “No man’s land”. “If they were in India where on earth was Pakistan?” Sadat Hassan Manto has revealed the real state of mind during migration of great number. As we readers are left with one question “How a world which was so familiar had suddenly become a world of strangers?” The whole story is pathetic which is full of chaos and confusion that prevailed at the time of partition. A vague line has described the clear picture of the condition of women during great migration, when Bishan Singh asked his friend about his daughter and Fazluddin replied with a hesitated voice “yes, she is also fine .she left with them.” This answer is again giving birth to too many questions. Does she leave safely? Bishan’s death on no man’s land reveals the state of inner mind which describes his refusal to accept two lands. Manto is remembered till now for his bitter and sensitive truth. Although he is known for his short stories but every single line depicts the live situation of gone partition scenario. As in “*khol do*” the very title speaks the whole situation of how woman was targeted only. Madness which caused by partition on women and cruelty which engulfed all parts of subcontinent. The depths of human depravity was described in “*Khol do*” which is again a short story revealing the pain and madness of woman after being raped repeatedly. The story revolves around a partition of family during partition. Sirajuddin goes looking for her daughter madly after the attack by rioters. A story really takes a shocking turn when the girl was found on railway lines after being raped by those who were trusted and requested by her father. The continuous rape by them and left her to die evokes the trauma of victims whose perpetrators were men within their own communities as often as those of others.

A situation of utter panic and chaos, where there is an interchanging role of victims to perpetrators. The complete effacement of ethics. Butalia’s ‘*The other side of silence*’ (1998) uncovers the facts and experiences of women all through Punjab. Sexual assault on both sides of fences which was contemplated as a threat to the “honor” of second sex and her community, led to a numberless suicide in order to prevent dishonor. Historians nowadays are less apprehensive about the causes of the division. This lethal man-made tragedy has left permanent wounds on the psyche of all Indians and Pakistanis. In

particular, it haunts those whose family members were the victims of this holocaust. A number of writers came ahead and penned down saying the genocide, cruelty and agony of the separation. Urvashi Butalia estimated that in 1947 “roughly ten to twelve million people are said to have moved within the space of a few months, between the newly truncated Indian and newly created Pakistan”. It is not a fiction to read in novels and stories to read for the sake of interest but actually it is undeniable bitter truth when thousands of men and women were being cut like trees without having an idea of how many lives are ended up and how many are burnt alive. There were flames of fire everywhere and spread darkness which is the irony. That is why Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) who wrote *Toba Tek Singh*, although it is a short story but a few words are enough to give a picture of trauma, Bishan Singh has gone mad because his lands had been left behind and a man can have piercing thought of being uprooted from his motherland where he was brought up and lived.

“*Train to Pakistan*” (1956) by Khushwant Singh (1915-2014) is not just a story which spread political hatred and unfortunate passengers were ruthlessly butchered. Men and women and children were discriminate victims. They were molested and murdered by armed bands of men. Women are died for the sake of honor. The women of Sikh families gave up their own lives for the name of honor and chastity. Kamla Bhasin wrote “*Borders and Boundaries*”, “*The other side of silence*” by Urvashi Butalia were perceived by many scholars and documentaries were made upon them by filmmakers. Basically killing of innocence was remembered .What the body remembers (1999)which is questioning to the patriarchal society to give the answer of rapes and sacrifice of those girls who themselves committed suicide. Memory still haunts people who had experienced that psychological injury.

Literature represents not only mere stories of death or mourning but the harsh reality of the absurdity of the decision taken by politicians in 1947. Saadat Hasan was imprisoned just for his blunder to write reality which is hard to see, perceive or read. Actually his obscurity in literature does seem inappropriate only to those who do not have courage to listen reality. Khushwant Singh who himself belongs to Sikh family represents harsh truth about the policies of common people who kept killing mankind without any intention and raping girls. Beneath this novel, there is a hard slap on people who spread fire. The title itself reveals the whole fire of partition, which transformed everything into ashes.

It is difficult to blame on any one of the actors QUID-I-Azam Ali Mohammad Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru. But deaths and killings show insanity of that time. Migration could have done with peace. According to some writers the idea of dividing nation was absurd. It is hard to read the lines of novel in which writers describes in the end the act of violence, back in *Pari Darwaza*, Kusum was murdered, her womb was brutally removed, and her whole body was cut in multiple acts of cruelty, recalling the novel’s

title –What the body remembers- this dis- membered, re-membered body compels a close reading in light of the scenes of gendered ,embodied remembering . *Thanda Ghosht* (1950) is not free from violence where a dead girl was raped , therefore the story is called “cold flesh”. An unbearable truth is hard to perceive that how man had gone mad after woman’s flesh. Killing or raping a woman is some sort of revenge?

In *Thanda ghosht*, woman was considered to be a flesh only .No one was thinking about real state, raping was perceived as revenge in the eyes of people during separation. In the end when the boy Ishwar singh was about to rape her and found that innocent girl died, he got flabbergasted to find himself in such dilemma. He was full of fear to see that girl which was just a cold flesh. A story is again not so long but full of darkness all around. Manto knew the people were not ready to read him and were using offensive language for him but reality can be degraded but not be changed .Many readers offend him not to write such scenes which are full of obscenity .But obscenity is actually a transparent truth through which people can see their ugly acts.

PARTITION AND POLITICS

On the other side of separation is the birth of the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. They are the heavens of the earth as well as the threatened places to survive. Sikh, Muslims and Hindu had been living together since ages without any quarrels but one line of dividing made them bitter enemies in a moment. As a result of Mass relocation, they all became enemies, human traits turned to be inhuman and peaceful area of such land transformed into a land of bombs, blood suspicion overnight. They all started to seek other as enemies.

When the concept of partition was carefully contemplated then it was seen that British rulers were not to be blamed only, overview could be taken carefully. Thus Moulana Azad commented that “ the partition was neither in the interests of India nor in the interests Muslims themselves”. Similarly Aysha Jalal said in a critical tone that “the psychology legacy of partition has left a much deeper impact on people’s mind than the social, economic and political dynamics that led to the division”

Khushwant Singh himself had relations with the community which were the victims of partition .A subtle view of all the events of *Mano Majra* which is a isolated village where all Hindus and Muslims lived together before being divided. The opening lines of the novel speaks that “the fact is both sides killed .Both shot and stabbed and clubbed .Both tortured .Both raped (10). The quality of his novel of being a Sikh is that he is neither blaming Sikh nor Muslims. The novel runs around two themes, one about bloodshed which was about to come during partition and other is love affair which did not remain still

and surpassed the dead cruelty of war. Moreover the writer wants his reader to be connected with the positivity of the work:

He brought the girl's face nearer his own and
 Began kissing her on the back of her neck and on her ears
 He could not hear the goods trains anymore.
 It had left the countryside in utter solitude.

EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is also the basic theme of all the process of partition. Whatever is going on in all works is just due to one line of separation between two nations. Bishan Singh is also seeking identity .Because a man who is living in his village and suddenly he loses his identity because he is no longer a part of his motherland. He has lost all his lands which are very close to a farmer. Bishan Singh kept asking for his village that ‘’ is it in India or in Pakistan’’. And in the end his refusal to accept the decision of government gives us a solution which could have been taken at the time of 1947. People could stand and raise voice against this absurd decision of being divided at once. Existentialism means to find existence when a land becomes foreign land and people become alien to each other. Every girl was raped, stabbed and being killed for the sake of honor.

Why?

People were finding meaning of their lives. The Quest of their life was to be safe and to run in 1947.The darkness of rage had engulfed the whole subcontinent. Today migrated are knows as refugees which is a form of degradation. It means they still re searching for their identities in this century?

The world in which we are dwelling peacefully without any idea of being cut from our roots, but suddenly one decision would pass and our identity, land and relations are gone and vanished .Existence becomes an overall goal of life. Actually Manto had gone through this trauma of being uprooted from his birth land. That is why the theme of seeking identity is common in his stories; in every story he is revealing truth one by one.

To conclude partition is not an idea but a ridiculous decision taken at that time. Intention could be any but this absurdity of division brought deaths and only deaths which cannot be denied and forgot. People were killed blindly and the number of dead bodies is countless. Many were lost and many were chucked out .Many girls were murdered and killed in a brutal way. Even mad women were bearing babies

due to raping. The character Sakina who was missed due to the migration and lost, her kept raping became her made and stopped her power of thinking and understanding about the prevailed facts. On doctor's saying to open door and she opens down her salwar which is a pathetic scene in that story of Manto.

Birth of the two children (India and Pakistan) brought doom and killing. Every year the celebration of freedom makes people forget the pain of uprooted. The article examines critically the situation of that time in a sensitive way. History gives us lesson, it is to read for the sake of learning thoughts not facts. This history of partition gives lesson and knowledge to new generation who is unaware of the passed acts in 1947.

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