

LITERATURE OF PARTITION: AN ANALYSIS OF SUFFERING AFTER 1947

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ABSTRACT

The British announced the division of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan in August 1947, and turned it into a diabolical region. This was a path way for wickedness, violence and pure evil to erupt into a powerful mass and soar out of control, consuming everyone who came in its way!

Pakistan was preferred by the Muslims and India was preferred by the Sikhs and Hindus, and hence they moved into the respective regions with the prospects of peace and better living. They wanted to live in harmony with their own religious and ethnic identities.

The irony was, that the mass scale migration entailed crimes of unprecedented violence, murders, rapes and bestiality. An account of the exact number of people who were victims of the partition trauma is difficult to ascertain, however, its impact can be compared to that of the effects of the Great War on Britain or the Second World War on Japan and France. The effects of the tragedy of the partition encounter gave rise to the fictional explorations in an attempt to define the inner turmoil and the social complexities that plagued the subcontinent thereafter. The Partition of India has been the main theme of the discussions and novels that have been written in India. The novels and articles articulated the inexorable logic of partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism and fanaticism, that were sparked due to the hardening communal attitudes of the religious and ethnic groups. These novels were placed in a new genre of the Partition novel!

The novels of this genre, depicted the throes of Partition that relentlessly divided friends and effectively and realistically explained the vulnerability of human understanding and life. The petition was considered as a proven mishap as it led the people to turn to fanaticism in no time throwing away all their sanity! There was no difference between being human and savage if people people kill each other. People ought to have faith in justice and the rule of law. "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." The world must be made a better place to live in.

KEYWORDS: Partition, Trauma, Subcontinent, Violence

INTRODUCTION

The Partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in August 1947 by the British turned the entire episode into a diabolical subdivision! When people choose to migrate to live peacefully with their religious and ethnic identities, ironically, iniquity, violence and pure evil erupted into powerful issues and soared out of control, consuming everyone that came in its path.

The events and bloody riots that followed the partition of India and Pakistan, inspired many artistic minds in both the countries. The results of such thoughts were creations in the form of literature and cinematic depictions of the events. Some of the creations depicted the massacres of the Partition. There were creations that explained the aftermath in terms of

the difficulties faced by the refugees on both sides of the border. Even to this date, after completing 65 years after partition, works of fiction and films are made on the subject of partition explaining different aspects of that suffering.

The dawn of independence on 15th August 1947, also announced the end of the British Raj in the Sub-continent. The departure of the British army heralded the emergence of two independent states namely India and Pakistan. The partition was based on nation theory, arguing that “the Hindus and the Muslims cannot live together as one nation since both have distinct social, cultural and religious identities. The Muslim majority regions of Punjab and Bengal were divided, with west Punjab and East Bengal is forming West and East Pakistan, and India in the middle of the two (Hassan: 1993)”

The result of this migration was massive and violent! The people who had faith in Islam moved into Pakistan while the Sikhs and Hindus moved into India. Both the communities moved with a basic desire to live peacefully with their own religious and ethnic identities! But, paradoxically the results of this mass scale migration were entailed with unprecedented violence and crime. Murders and rapes were done with a gust of violence and hatred. The exact account of the partition trauma is difficult to ascertain, however, its “ impact can be compared to that of the Great War of Britain or the Second World War on Japan and France (Roy: 2009).”

Urvashi Butalia (1998) describes the monstrosity of the situation as “the partition left one million dead, 75000 women abducted and raped, and turning twelve million displaced into refugee status.” The split between India and Pakistan unfortunately served to heighten each other’s hostilities instead of promoting peace! Civil tension continued for months where thousands of families were split apart and homes burnt and villages abandoned. Women were embarrassed of sexual humiliation and opted for suicide as they feared returning home. The grievous trauma during the partition was destruction of families through, murder, suicide and kidnapping.

The tragedy of the partition gave rise to fictional explorations causing inner turmoil and social complexes that plagued the subcontinent.

A number fiction in English, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali and other languages of the Subcontinent authentically recorded the human disaster in the wake of partition. The incredible suffering and bewilderment of the people of the subcontinent has been a favorite theme with the Indian and Pakistani writers. A common element in all this partition genre literature is pathos.

It is not just a historical narration of incidents, but it carries with it an embodiment of human suffering and pain due to partition.

Some of the authors who have contributed to this partition literature are authors such as Krishna Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Amrita Pritam, Sadat Hasan Manto, K.S. Duggal, Nanak Singh and others have revolved their prose on the subject of partition. This historic moment has been captured by the novelists like Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) by Manohar Malgaonkar, Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Rajan's *The Dark Dancer*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*. These novels explain Partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism and fanaticism sparked by hardening communal attitude of the people and that is the inevitable logic behind the Partition. The novels belong to the genre of the partition novel and effectively depict the “vulnerability of human understanding and life, caused by the throes of Partition which relentlessly

divided friends," as Novy Kapadia observes. She acknowledged that throughout history, fanatics as well as ideologies, pushed to the emotional brink of daring their lives and has triggered off a chain reaction of rigid mental fixations and attitudes.

Ravikant, an historian observes that "history could never show Partition as a great human tragedy of the suffering of common men and women—they being always kept out as collective, amorphous mass of the population (161).

The exodus of people across the border could not view beyond their religious identity. However, various forms of cultural literature, both of Indian and Pakistani origin, sensitively deal with this aspect of the Partition. Partition literature unlike history writings, concerns in much greater detail with the ways in which ordinary people came to terms with their sudden identities as refugees in postcolonial scenario. These writings document the emotional effects of the horrors during the exodus very vividly giving us a clear picture of the suffering of the masses during the partition.

Gyanendra Pandey in *Pinjar*, presents us with —"a survivor's account, between history and memory—a protagonist who refuses to assume stereotypical identities assigned along the lines of religion (6).

A moving account of the tragedy of Partition, in the small Indian frontier village of Mono Majra is pictured in *Train to Pakistan*. In *Ice Candy Man*, Bapsi Sidhwa describes "the communal violence and the turmoil during the partition through the eyes of Lenny - an eight year old young Parsi girl from Lahore. Lenny in *Ice Candy Man* says that she was —born with the awareness of war (p. 31).

Another work by Manto, in "*Open It*" is a despairing and heart-renting tale about a girl Sakina was abducted and badly treated so many times that when she was hospitalized and the doctor asks her father to open the window, she involuntarily opens her trouser strings. But her father exults with joy, just because *She is alive*. This is an ironical and is a slap on the face of the human race, which boasts to be civilized and cultured. Almost every other literary work depicts the fury, crime, murder and rape as the fabric of civil order that has been torn into pieces as man has turned savage. Suvir Kaul rightly says, "*Partition issues need to be explored because they define not only our past in crucial ways, but also our collective future.*" This is true as it is seen that the society is still in the clutches of colonialism and religion. Hollow idealism and chauvinism leads a person to shun his prudence and resort to barbarianism, Muscle flexing on the issue of Kashmir is another needling issue.

Ram Chandra Guha describes the valley as "a valley *bloody and beautiful*". Violence is depicted in partition literature so as to invoke a sense of disgust to violence in the minds of the reader and sensitize the readers to contemplate over the heinous deeds in the name of religion and identity politics.

Authors from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have created a plethora of literature in this regard. Some of the distinguished authors who have voiced their views on the partition. Poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz lamented, „*This stain covered daybreak, this night bitten dawn. This dawn is not that dawn we craved for*‘.

The Muslims and Hindus migrated leaving back their ancestral homes, tradition and culture become refugees in a distant land just in the name of fanaticism. An author while dealing with a formidable historical event such as the partition needs to maintain isolation from historical facts and not adhere to any perspective. The author provides a culmination of human emotions, fantasies, tales of hope and sorrows with a message to the world.

This is a common feature that is evident in almost all the literary writings of the partition. Here history loses its sense of time and facts and in its place lingers the author's flight of fantasies.

CONCLUSIONS

The dramatic event of Partition resulted in the biggest exodus of people ever in the history of mankind. Compassion and fraternity were forgotten words in those days and men became thirsty of each other's blood. The literature of Partition is woven around with a common chord of violence and trauma that connects all literature of its genre. It explains partition as not just an historical event, but a saga of untold miseries and human sufferings. These issues, when presented as works of art instills a sense of despising towards the political gamblers and fanatics who have made the general public as a sacrificial lamb to fulfill their political vendetta. The sufferings and pains of partition continue till date and have a far reaching effect. The Indian sub-continent till date, witnesses terrorism, riots, plane hijacking all in the name of religion. Whereas no religion teaches bloodshed or violence. Different religions are like flowers of different colors which make the bouquet of life colorful and lively. The greatest wealth of this world is vividness. Homogeneity is dull and monotonous.

People must respect conflicting ideas as they help to bring the bigger picture of truth. It is the benign face of humanity which allows conflicting ideas to grow as nobody can be completely right. Tolerance is a priceless virtue which is required for the growth of any civilization. The biggest exodus of people in the history of mankind proved to be a serious blot on the face of entire humanity as it showed that man can reach a level of brutality that he can "*mutilate breasts* and "*sacks full of breasts*" has a sinew chilling effect upon reader pushing him to pray for peace. The partition mishap proves that people turn to fanaticism in no time throwing away all their sanity. There will be no difference between human and savage if people kill each other. People should have faith in justice and the rule of law. "*The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.*" The world has to be made a better place to live in.

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