

PARTITION AND INDIAN AUTHORS : AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The partition of India was a great human tragedy that occurred on the Indian sub-continent. Quite a few people took notice of it and wrote about it. Many authors who gave us an account of the thrills and spills of carnage, genocide, horrendous suffering, horrible bloodshed, horrific aggression, horrifying communal riots, people crying in horror and panic, houses bursting into flames, helpless millions facing the horrors of starvation, the inhuman way of killing people in refugee camps, fugitive fleeing from the riot-torn areas, thousands of refugees escaping across the border.

The holocaust of partition was cataclysmal in its incubation, eruption and aftermath. For Pakistanis, partition came as a result of their struggle for separate identity, it was a glorious moment for them. Pakistani writers thus both celebrate their achievement and also feel disillusioned at the outcome. Women have been the worst victims of partition. The scar of the holocaust run deep, its ramifications can be felt in every sphere, social, political and economic. Partition is the deepest wound of modern times in the country's physical and spiritual corpus.

Key Words: Partition, suffering, riots, bloodshed, tragedy etc.

Introduction

The partition of India remains one of the greatest human tragedies of the century and its memory cannot be wiped off so easily and so soon. In the Indian subcontinent no historical event has left a greater impact than partition. Bifurcation of the land, creation of boundaries between regions that culturally flowed into each other, migration of a large chunk of population, displacement of masses and the cruel and ruthless bloodshed of innumerable citizens constitute the tapestry of this great human tragedy. Partition was not merely a 'batwara', a division of geographical boundaries, properties, assets but most definitely a division of hearts too. The minds of this generation are still fresh with the bitter and painful memories of partition as they bear witness to the fact that overnight the two religious communities, which had lived together in relative harmony for centuries and struggled for country's independence together, became hardcore enemies and deliberately indulged in cold-blooded Violence, communal frenzy, genocide, arson, abduction of women, rapes and bloodshed on a large scale with just one announcement which 'freed' India "at the stroke of midnight hour", but divided it into two on communal basis – a decision which was imposed upon the destiny of 'millions without their mandate. As a result of this division, millions of innocent people were butchered and several hundred died either due to contagious diseases or-malnutrition. An equal number of people were uprooted and rendered homeless, jobless and penniless and these orphans of the storm had to migrate enmasse with almost nothing but their bleeding hearts and tormented souls, to pick up the threads of life afresh. Among the Indian English writers, credit goes to stalwarts like Khushwant Singh (*Train to Pakistan*), Chaman Nahal (*Azadi*), Manohar Malgaonkar (*A Bend in the Ganges and Distant Drum*) who sensitively handle the issue of communalism and partition in their classics.

Themes of partition in the novels of Indian English novelist

Partition has evoked a great body of work, be it literature, art or films. As an event, it has moved human hearts and the writers have given heartfelt – expression in the treatment of this subject. Their writings show that the trauma is very much alive the Indian psyche. The agony, instead of lingering as a private island of pain, can be shared if we go through partition writings. At the same time, it will help in healing of wounds associated with the traumatic experience.

The literary reconstruction of partition of India further finds expression in the works of K.A. Abbas's *Revenge*, Amitav Ghosh's *The shadow lines*, Gulzar's *Ravi Paar* and other stories, Collins and Lapierre's *Freedom at Midnight*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children*, Gurucharan Das's *A fine family*, Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead*, Raj Gills *The Rape*, H.S. Gills *Ashes and petals*, B. Rajan's. *The Dark Dancer* and Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with three Banks*, also in the works of Pakistani writers like Abdullah Hussain's *Udas Naslen* (weary Generations), Intizar Hussains *Basti* and Saadat Hasan Manto's *Sian Hashiyay* (mottled Dawn : Fifty Partition sketches) who have Focused on partition from different perspective in their works. While many of them are realistic in approach and delineate actual human experience during partition, some others seek to express their anguish, sorrow, hopelessness over the entire ghastly drama of partition.

Communalism and Partition -

Communalism in India has its roots in modern colonialism. This communalism is based on fear and hatred and has a tendency to use violence of language, deed or behavior, the language of war and enmity against political opponents. It was this kind of extreme

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communalism that played an important role in the partition of India. And it was also at this stage that the Hindu communalists and the Muslim communalists put forward the theories of separate nations based on religion.

When the British began to rule India, communalism was almost unknown. There is no doubt that the colonial rulers found that the religion could be profitably exploited to keep the larger community divided against itself and to ensure the permanence of their colonial domination. For creating a divide between the Hindus and the Muslims such views that the Hindus and the Muslims are two different nations were created.

In fact, economic and political interest of both the communities was the same and there was no logic in making a division between these two communities on these issues. The problems that the communalists were projecting were not the real problems at all. Communal persons are those religious leaders who run their religious communities like business enterprises and raise the scepter of “Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism or Christianity being in danger to save their personal interests. For them God and religion are merely instruments to be used to live luxuriously as the king parasites of society and to attain the political goals.

Social, Psychological Phenomenon

The partition caused great upheaval in the lives of those who used to live amicably sharing one another's joys and sorrows irrespective of religious or ethnic differences. The most serious consequence of the partition was the gruesome violence that resulted in communal hatred for each other. The communal hatred gave birth to suspicion. People started looking at each other with distrust. Those who were friends turned foes and started to live amid the feelings of insecurity. The twine of faith was snapped giving place to fear and suspicion.

The freedom of India, which was achieved after a long struggle waged against the colonial rule by the Indian irrespective of caste, religion or any other regional affiliations was, marred by the colossal tragedy of the partition of the country. A new nation state of Pakistan for the Muslims was carved out of India. This political decision led to unimaginable human suffering and large-scaled migration on both sides of the border. The religious distortions propagated by individuals and political organizations for vested political interests led to monstrous atrocities and large-scale violence and bloodshed virtually unprecedented in human history. People of both the communities, turned against each other and riots broke out killing, looting, arson, abduction, rape and bloodshed became a routine affair. The historians have dealt with the political cause of the partition in detail, particularly the factors that caused the partition, but they did not record its impact on large sections of humanity. The tragedies of the uprooted masses have remained largely untouched by the historians.

Impact on Literature

Partition has actually proved to be a trauma from which the sub-continent has never fully, recovered. Alok Bhalla in his ‘Introduction’ to a collection of partition stories in English translation states that when it comes to partition, ‘there is not just a lack of great literature, there is, more seriously, a lack of great history’. If this is true to any extent, this is perhaps because Indian historiography has focused more on Independence than on partition, more on the unifying force of nationalism than the divisive forces that rent the country in 1947. Indian history writing followed the traditional nationalist discourse in which the role of the great congress leaders and

the importance of national integration were always given pride of place. This particular discourse has been termed the ‘Nehruvian narrative’ of Indian history, and one cannot overemphasize the importance of Nehru’s own books in fashioning this discourse. Such works of Nehru’s as *An Autobiography* and *The Discovery of India* show how he viewed Indian history and how he reinterpreted it to create a modern secular nationalist discourse for the emerging independent state of India. The feminist perspective that gained prominence in the 1990s sought to address this long standing lacuna in history writing in India. This new approach was pioneered mostly by women authors, who saw partition as a male narrative, in which women were sacrificed or abducted or recovered in a conflict which gave primacy to community and hierarchy at the expense of Individual rights.

Their work first attracted attention in 1993 with the publication of two articles in the *Economic and Political Weekly* looking at the role of the Indian state in the recovery of women abducted during partition. These articles highlighted the extraordinary sufferings that women went through at that time – in some cases killed by their own families to prevent them from falling into the hands of the other community, in other cases raped and abducted, then recovered and rejected by their original families, in others, settling for a new life with their abductors only to have their choices overturned by tribunals set up by agreement between the two new states. This concentration on the role of women – as sufferers and victims – during partition violence may rightly be regarded as constituting a new chapter in history writing in India.

Conclusion

The partition of India, was really a turbulent and traumatic period in the history of the sub-continent when the worst passions were aroused in the name of religion. It was a period when all young and old, children and women, the Hindus and the Muslims fell prey to communal insanity. Freedom, the long cherished dream of Indian masses, turned into a bloody nightmare.

Even after large scale bloodshed and a sense of insecurity the Muslim and the Hindus gave a show of amity and brotherhood. People lost faith in one another. The partition period witnessed the worst kind of loss of human values. But this was also the period that displayed the courage of humanity. The writers of the partition stories do not paint life with morbid and pessimistic strokes alone. They reveal characters with a strong urge for survival despite sufferings and calamities.

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