

AFTERMATH OF PARTITION IN SELECT SHORT STORIES

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Abstract:

The declaration of the Indian Independence in 1947 was both gratifying and melancholic due to the Partition of India and Pakistan. People migrated from one nation to the other in large numbers which resulted in a lot of death and carnage. The aim of the paper is to bring out the aftermath and the cruelties experienced by the migrants. The themes of displacement, mass migration and diaspora are portrayed in the stories of K.S. Duggal, Saros Cowasjee and Saadat Manto. The selected short stories show the horrors of partition and the authors sketch the incidents through a humanist view.

Keywords: Partition, Migration, Displacement, Diaspora, Humanist

Introduction:

The Partition of India and Pakistan impacted the lives of millions of people who were imperatively displaced. People lost their homes which held the essence of centuries down the ages, their livelihood which they were forced to forfeit, their identity which was annihilated during the period of migration, their own bodies which were plundered through tears and bloodshed, and many even lost their lives which was ripped away in the name of religion and power. This paper aims to bring out the aftermath of partition through the select short stories, K.S. Duggal's *Pakistan Zindabad*, Saros Cowasjee's *Another Train to Pakistan*, Saadat Manto's *Toba Tek Singh* and *The Reunion*. The selected stories show the views of three different writers who belong to different religions and countries but they show a humanist perspective on the sufferings of the people at the time of partition.

The Partition of India and Pakistan:

The plan of Partition was officially implemented on 15 August 1947. The advent of this important division began with the decline in the power of the British rule. The British Crown followed the ironclad motto of divide-and-rule and the first seed of Partition was sown in Bengal in 1905. The province was divided into two, East Bengal for the Muslims and West Bengal for the Hindus. The partition failed due to increasing nationalist opposition and Bengal emerged as one province again in 1911. The desperation for an Independent India led to numerous movements which slowly chipped away the power of the Crown. The end of World War II saw the fall of Britain's economy and power. On the other hand, colonial India slowly descended into a chaotic period of religious riots and communal violence. The Two-Nation Theory proposed during the time stated that the Hindus and Muslims should have two separate nations which led to the creation of India and Pakistan. Kingsley Davis, in his *India and Pakistan: The Demography of Partition* reflects that, "In 1941 there were 94.5 million Muslims and 270.2 million Hindus in the subcontinent. The Muslims comprised 24.3 per cent of the total population, and the Hindus 69.5 per cent...Partition was possible only because of the uneven distribution of the Muslim minority within India" (257). Amidst the declarations of Independence, Lord Mountbatten, the then Viceroy of India declared the partition of India and Pakistan on 3 June 1947. Lord Cyril Radcliffe was put in charge of the Boundary Commission. He was given a mere five weeks to draw the borders of India and Pakistan in a completely unfamiliar terrain. So his commission split regions based on the majority of Hindus and Muslims. The boundaries were announced on 17 August 1947 and it led to one

of the biggest genocides in history. The effect of this mass migration filled with communal carnage is portrayed in *The Partition Omnibus* as,

Nobody knows how many were killed during Partition violence. Nobody knows how many were displaced and dispossessed. What we know is that, between 1946 and 1951, nearly nine million Hindus and Sikhs came to India, and about six million Muslims went to Pakistan. Of the said nine million, five million came from what became West Pakistan, and four million from East Pakistan... Estimates of deaths vary between 200,000 and three million. (xxiv)

The aim of this paper is to analyze the Partition stories of Kartar Singh Duggal, Saros Cowasjee, and Saadat Hasan Manto, an Indian Sikh author, an Indian Parsi writer, and a Pakistani Muslim author respectively. The selected short stories include K.S. Duggal's *Pakistan Zindabad*, Saros Cowasjee's *Another Train to Pakistan*, and Saadat Manto's *Toba Tek Singh* and *The Reunion*.

A Note on the Authors:

Kartar Singh Duggal was born in Dhaminal, Pakistan in 1917. He is well known for his works, *Come Back My Master* and *Ik Chhot Chanan Di (One Drop of Light)* which won him numerous laurels including the Padma Bhushan (1988) and Sahitya Akademi Award (2007). During Partition, he migrated from Pakistan and settled in India. He died in 2012.

Saros Cowasjee was born in Secunderabad, India in 1931. He is widely known for his in-depth analysis of Sean O'Casey and Mulk Raj Anand's works. His notable works include *Sean O'Casey, the Man Behind the Plays* (1963) and *So Many Freedoms: A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand* (1978). He died in Canada in 2019.

Saadat Hasan Manto was born in Samrala, Punjab in 1912. After the 1947 Partition, he moved to Lahore and died shortly in 1955. He is widely known for his collections of short stories, *Toba Tek Singh* (1950) and *Siyah Hashiye (Black Borders)* (1948). His works bring out the struggles and sufferings of the people during Partition. In 2012, he was awarded the Order of Excellence entitled, Nishan-e-Imtiaz Award.

Displacement and Diaspora:

The Partition of 1947 resulted in many changes including displacement which led to an acute loss of identity and forced diaspora. Saadat Manto's infamous *Toba Tek Singh* brings out the sufferings of innocent people due to the decisions of the people above them. The Indian and Pakistani governments tried to take the citizens of their respective religions stuck inside the borders of the other nation. Bishen Singh, a Sikh had been placed in a mental asylum for 15 years in Lahore. After Partition, the governments decided to take over the patients of their respective religions from the asylums as well. So, the Sikh was to leave for India but he didn't care. He only had one goal in mind and that was to live in the country that had his beloved village, Toba Tek Singh. He had been a content farmer there. He constantly enquired everyone about the location of the place which earned him the name, Toba Tek Singh. His answers arrive on the day he was supposed to leave for India. At the exchange borders, he learns that his village was in Pakistan. Manto, in *Toba Tek Singh* notes that, "That was all Bishen Singh wanted to know. He turned and ran back to Pakistan. Pakistani soldiers apprehended him and tried to push him back towards India. Bishen Singh refused to budge" (152). His family had gone to India but Toba Singh didn't want to leave his home where he had lived all his life. He just could not do it. His village had been intimately intertwined with his identity. For 15 years, he had held on to it. He had spent years dreaming of going back there but in the face of reality, his mind and body could not handle it. He died in the no man's land in the midst of his shattered dreams. The short story brings out the concept of forceful displacement which took away numerous lives along with their homes.

The Partition had a major impact on the minds and lives of the people. Families that consisted of different religions were separated and forced to move to the other nation. K. S. Duggal's *Pakistan Zindabad* shows the rift in the borders creating a rift in a loving family. Rakhi, a Hindu girl grew up in the midst of the communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims. She witnessed the cruelties of both sects done in the name of religion. After Partition, she was happy to live a good life with her Muslim husband, Sher Baz. She did not care about the difference in religion or about finding a home among people of her fellow religion like her family. Rakhi's identity changed along with the flow of the two countries. Duggal portrayed it in *Pakistan Zindabad* as, "Her real name was Ram Rakhi, though she had now been given the name of Allah Rakhi. But she was called Rakhi before and she was called Rakhi now" (98). Though her names changed, she didn't struggle with her own identity as it was tied with her world which was her husband, her neighbours, and her village. Despite being a Hindu, she took Pakistan as her own nation. She even weaved, Pakistan Zindabad (Long Live Pakistan) into her fans. It's all ripped away from her first, in the name of religion, and second, in the name of the country. The governments had strictly ordered people of their respective religions to leave for their respective countries. The ones who refused were forcefully removed from the country. Rakhi was forced to leave her world behind. Even her husband, Sher Baz didn't put up a fight against the officers taking her away. He let her leave along with his child in her womb all for the sake of his country because he believed that, "No sacrifice was too big for Pakistan - their beloved country" (Duggal 102). Countless families were subject to such forceful changes and it ruined the lives of millions in the name of two separate nations.

Mass Migration and Human Nature:

According to *History of Contemporary India*, "Communal carnage was compounded by mass migration. Millions of men, women and children migrated from India to Pakistan and vice versa. People driven by fear, insecurity and uncertainty started moving from both sides of the border in Punjab. Ten and a half million people were uprooted within three months after independence" (6). Saros Cowasjee brings out these despairing feelings in his *Another Train to Pakistan*. The Partition affected not only the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, it also severely affected the minorities including the Anglo-Indians who were born and raised in India and had never seen their homeland, England. Leslie worked in an automobile workshop and had a steady pay but he feared the murky future. His fear of the unknown turned into hatred for the country he had lived in for years. He wanted to leave India behind and go to Pakistan for a brighter future. His wife, Irene was also scared about their future in India but she was more scared of going to a new country to live in a blind and uncertain future. He managed to persuade her and decided to join his friend, Robert serving in the Pakistan army. A few minutes before departure at the railway station, he sees Robert who had transferred himself to the Indian army to live with Leslie and Irene. In a sad turn of events, the train was already leaving and the married couple had no choice but to carry on towards Pakistan. The Partition caused chaos and a lot of innocent lives fell victim to the confusion of a bleaker future as Cowasjee, in *Another Train to Pakistan* states, "...the transfer of populations, the widespread massacre and looting, the common man should have remained unaffected in a population of 400,000,000 people. But the common man no longer thought himself common after such a fight for freedom. The present did not trouble him – he just could not do anything about it. And so he thought of the future. What will happen in the future?" (89)

After Independence, a lot of internal and external conflict reigned hell over the two newly partitioned nations. Saadat Manto's *The Reunion* focuses on the horrors inflicted on innocent lives, especially women. Sirajuddin left Amritsar along with his wife and daughter but he arrived in Lahore alone, with his wife murdered and his daughter missing. He went through various refugee camps looking for Sakina, his daughter. He sought the help of a group of young men who volunteered to bring back lost women and children. The group successfully found Sakina a few days later but Sirajuddin never heard of it. He constantly looked for her, finding strength in the fact that the group of young men was also

searching for her. A few weeks later, the refugee camp finds Sakina unconscious and abandoned near the railway tracks. She's taken to the hospital but when she hears the male voices, Manto heartbreakingly states in *The Reunion* that, "The young woman on the stretcher moved slightly. Her hands groped for the cord which kept her salwar tied round her waist. With painful slowness, she unfastened it, pulled the garment down and opened her thighs" (157). The father is completely ecstatic to see his daughter alive and returned back to him. Though Sakina is alive, the physical and psychological trauma of being assaulted by men who were supposed to protect her will always haunt her days. Sakina's actions reveal the plight of innocent women who were sexually abused and physically tormented. The partition brought out the vilest natures in a human.

Conclusion:

The Partition came about as a result of the British's plan to divide-and-rule, and the Two-Nation Theory. Ayesha Jalal, in her *The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Work Across the India-Pakistan Divide* notes that, "The partition of India did more than rip apart the territorial unity of the subcontinent. Looting of properties and the indiscriminate murder of innocent men, women, and children, purportedly because of their religious identity, destroyed the psychic equilibrium of people, now divided into two separate and mutually hostile nation-states" (99 – 100). The writers, Cowasjee, Duggal and Manto belong to different walks of life, religion and country. However, they bring out the lasting effects like mass migration, displacement and loss of identity left in the wake of Partition through their stories. Their religion and country do not matter as they are all humanists in the end.

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