



Literary Expressions Of Partition In Novels- Train To Pakistan And A Bend In The Ganges

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Abstract:

One of the most painful events in Indian history has been the Partition of India in 1947. Historians and authors have sought to reflect the profound trauma, impact on human values and its enduring consequences in various literary writings, capturing the human tragedy of unforeseen violence, loss of human identity, displacement and loss of domestic identity, trauma of sexual violence faced by women and just the unmeasurable extent of violence that was experienced by people impacted by this tragedy. The literature available captures not merely the facts and numbers but also the emotional personal experiences of people who experienced the tragedy.

One literary piece that really captures the pain and tragedy of partition is the “Train to Pakistan” written by Khushwant Singh. Published in 1956, this is a very powerful rendition of the impact of partition and the tragedy that followed the partition, while at the same time, sharing a message of hope that amidst all this, humanity is still alive and it wins in the end. Victory of good over evil. The story is based in a fictional town of Mano Majra along the border of India and Pakistan, a village like any other where people from all communities lived peacefully and in harmony with each other. However, on a fateful day during the partition period, this peace was shattered when a train arrived in the village from Pakistan carrying bodies of slain Hindu and Sikh who were fleeing from current Pakistan to India. The troublemaker (Hukum Chand) strokes communal tension and lights up the fire of conflict in the erstwhile peaceful village, but hope still prevails when Juggut Singh, against all odds, helps Muslims fleeing from the village to reach current Pakistan, safely. The story is written beautifully capturing the impact of politics on human life and how human beings react to an event that they did not create, both tragic and hopeful.

Another powerful literature reflecting the human angle of the impact of the struggles of partition is the “A Bend in the Ganges” by Manohar Malgonkar, written in 1964. This story spans a period from the civil disobedience movement to the time of partition in 1947, and weaves through various twists and turns in the lives of its two characters – Gian Talwar and Debi Dayal. These are two revolutionaries, jailed in Andamans, however, while Debi is depicted as a revolutionary who is willing to go to every extent including using violent means to fight the British, Gian is a staunch Gandhian, believing in the principles of non-violence. As the story unfolds it weaves through the trials and turbulations in the relationship between the two characters and how it tests their friendship, as both seek to achieve a common goal while treading different paths, very vividly taking us through the minds of people impacted by the tragedy of partition and the harsh realities of life. Literary phrases such as “Revolution is not a meal consumed at night; it is an act of blood and fire” illustrate the viewpoint of Gian's who sought the aggressive and violent approach in dealing with the enemy, while on the other hand another phrase in the book - “Friendship is not measured in tranquility, but tested amidst the turmoil of politics” highlights the strain in the relationship between Gian and Debi as both the characters seek to pursue different paths in achieving their nationalistic objectives. Unlike Debi, Gian believed that to love one's own country does not necessarily mean harming people or having an aggressive attitude. These characters with such different ideologies and assertions signify the impact of political occurrences in a society and how they shape the personal destinies of ordinary individuals as they pass through this socio political turmoil. In both the literary marvels, one very beautiful common thread that emerges is that, during difficult times, many regular people merge as heroes while those that always seemed to be heroes, can at times turn out to be ordinary when the going gets tough. It is the trying and adverse moments, when there is a clash between lofty ideals and harsh realities, that the decisions made by individuals, reflect their true character and strength.

Keywords -Revolutionary Violence ,Nationalist Resistance ,violent resistance

Introduction :

1947: Partition Overview

Looking at the period of partition of India and Pakistan, one sees the unfolding of the most catastrophic historical event, across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, leading to a country being divided in two parts. Looking back today, one wonders if the catastrophe following the partition could have been avoided and most historians agree that one of the most significant mistakes in the process was that we first declared independence and then announced partition later. As a result, the burden of maintaining peace in both India and Pakistan fell on the new governments who were high on spirits and emotions but very ill equipped to handle the massive population migration. The extensive migration of population came as a surprise to many. There was an expectation that both nations would ensure safety for their minority groups. The newly formed governments in both countries, however, were ill-equipped to handle the ensuing violence and crime. Based on the 1951 census data from India, following the Partition, approximately 7.226 million Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan, while about 7.249 million Hindus and Sikhs moved from Pakistan to India. A significant 78% of this migration took place in the western regions.

This massive massacre of humans during the partition riots was like a tragedy waiting to happen because of the socio economic and political background of the partition. On the one hand there was the Muslim League under Jinnah who kept pushing for creation of Pakistan, a separate Muslim state because he said that Muslims felt threatened and unsafe in a Hindu majority India, and on the other there was Congress stance on a unified India. The League continuously asserted that the Muslims had no future under a Congress-led government. These conflicting ideologies led to minor and then major communal riots across the country starting with Noakhali. During his visit to the riots in Kolkata, Gandhi declared on November 5th that he would fast unto death unless the violence ceased within a day. While Gandhi gained some success in Bengal, the communal rift was continuously stroked in other parts of the country and was soon followed by the Bihar crisis. Gandhi urged Hindus in Bihar to refrain from retaliating, as the Hindus had in Noakhali. However, by December 1946, riots erupted across several cities in U.P., and new clashes emerged in Punjab and Bengal. In Karachi, Muslim mobs targeted Hindu homes, setting them on fire and brutally attacking the Hindu families leaving behind a street of corpses. The small minor incidences had now taken the shape of a national emergency and spread across all of India.

Concerns of the British:

The extent of violence by now had become a nightmare for the British Government and they needed a way out of this crisis before it blew out of proportions into a nation-wide civil war. The only solution in sight for the British was to quickly complete the transfer of power to the new governments and move out of India and leave the new governments to deal with the problem on their own rather than take ownership of the issue and work through it for a solution. As a result, they expedited their plans for India's independence. On February 20, Attlee declared in the British Parliament that the British would depart from India by June 1948. The announcement spread like wildfire through the nation. On the one hand, while it was a joyous moment for Indians who had been fighting for independence, there was also a sense of chaos under the surface of happiness. Gandhi feared that he would not have enough time to work on his dream of an Independent united India and that partition was imminent. Jinnah, on the other hand, was thrilled because his vision of Pakistan was becoming a reality. Nehru and Patel were anxious for they feared that if the riots did not stop, partition would happen leaving India divided. With the announcement of India's Independence, communal strife escalated in Punjab. Sikh leader Tara Singh took up the sword to proclaim that Pakistan would never be formed and in retaliation the Muslim League called for Direct Action, leading to riots in Punjab. On March 2nd, the coalition government in Punjab fell apart. Riots erupted in Lahore, Amritsar, and Rawalpindi on March 4th and 5th, with Hindus and Muslims turning against each other. Governor Sir Evon imposed president's rule in Punjab however, the violence didn't stop.

On March 24, Lord Mountbatten arrived in Delhi as the new Viceroy of India, assigned with the task of addressing the chaos in the country. Mountbatten held several discussions with Jinnah, Nehru, Patel, and Sikh leaders, hoping to find a solution to the chaos, but the situation continued to worsen. Very soon, Mountbatten realized that Gandhi's vision of a united India was no longer visible on the horizon and if something was not done soon, nothing could stop a civil war. Mountbatten reached out to his advisor, V.P. Menon, to take swift action and they came up with two plans. The first plan was The Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 which proposed the idea of setting up a loose federation, but the plan was rejected by both Jinnah and Nehru, as it would fragment India into smaller parts. The second plan, known as the Dickie Bird plan, proposed to allow provinces to select their own boundaries. This plan was also dismissed by Nehru. Meanwhile, riots erupted in Gomatheshwar (U.P.), resulting in the death of approximately 2,000 Muslims. It seemed as if there were no other solution in sight.

On June 3rd, 1947, Mountbatten declared that India would be split into two nations based on religious lines: India and Pakistan, with Sindh and Balochistan allocated to Pakistan. A referendum was to be conducted in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Sylhet. The 565 princely states were required to determine their allegiance to either India or Pakistan. The date for Independence was set for August 1947. A Partition council was established to divide the assets of the two countries, including treasury, army, police, and the debts of British India. On July 4th, the Indian Independence Bill was presented in the British Parliament, and the House of Commons approved it on July 15th. and House of lords approved it on 16th July

On July 18th, just two days later, it was declared that India and Pakistan would become independent Dominions, and the British Monarch would no longer be Emperor of India. The leaders of the princely states were given the option to decide which country to join. The decision of the states was determined by the predominant religion of their populations. The boundary between India and Pakistan was established by Sir Cyril Redcliffe, a lawyer from London, who utilized old maps and census information. By August 10, 1947, the preparations for Independence had progressed significantly throughout the country. Administrative divisions were created alongside the borders separating India from Pakistan. British officials were occupied with designing the flags for India and Pakistan, which featured tricolor and green and white, respectively. At the stroke of midnight on August 14, Pakistan came into existence, followed by India at midnight on August 15th. Celebrations erupted in both nations, with Jinnah being sworn in as the Governor-General of Pakistan, proclaiming it as an Islamic democracy, while Nehru gave his famous Tryst with Destiny speech from the Red Fort in Delhi and raised the tricolor flag on the morning of August 15th.

A whole nation erupted in joy with the sound of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Vande Matram" being heard across the nation. Sweets were being shared and people celebrated and hugged each other with happiness. But, while on the one hand there was joy, on the other hand the storm of another tragedy was brewing up. Millions of Hindu and Sikh refugees were fleeing Pakistan as they faced severe discrimination and fear. In India, too, Muslims in places like Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Jalandhar, and Ferozpur suffered from violent attacks. Trains transformed into "corpse carts" as both Hindus and Muslims were slaughtered and forced onto trains to be transported to the other side. In Punjab alone, between 500,000 to 600,000 people were killed during Partition. The independence that we fought for and so looked forward to had come at a very heavy price for people on both sides of the border.

Literary Expressions from selected Novels-

While the government statistics and records talk of numbers, timelines, the true emotion and tragedy of Partition have been captured in literary recounts of the Partition of India (1947) by our authors who transformed these historical accounts into personal and emotional narratives. Authors, in their writings have attempted to illustrate the trials and pains faced by common people who were caught in the socio, economic and political storm of partition, facing violence, grief, and dislocation. Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan depicts a story of violence and yet of hope in these times of despair. The pain felt by women in the form of abductions, honor killings, and resilience, is seen in A bend in the Ganges and also in Amrita Pritam's poem "Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu". Saadat Hasan Manto's Toba Tek Singh captures the essence of loss of home, identity, the silence of unspoken anguish and madness. Each of these and

many more bring to life the tales and tragedies of partition while at the same time giving us a sense of hope that all is not lost even in such situations.

Train to Pakistan- Khushwant Singh:

Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh (1956) is one of the most impactful novels illustrating human impact of Partition: The story is set in 1947 in a small peaceful village near the India-Pakistan border, Mano Majra which suddenly finds itself engulfed in communal strife. People of different communities, Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs who co-existed as friends and neighbors, living a peaceful, non-eventful life are suddenly caught in the political storm, not of their creation, and are flung into a situation of chaos, mistrust, anger and violence. The story traverses through the ethical dilemmas faced by its protagonists and touches an emotional chord allowing the tragedy to resonate on a personal level. It focuses less on political aspects and more on how ordinary people were caught in a storm they didn't create and their reaction to the storm.

The main characters of the story are the Train, Juggut Singh and Nooran. Juggut Singh was a local troublemaker and Nooran, the Muslim girl he loves. Their love transcends religious boundaries, and the small village exists peacefully with them. However, all changes when a train arrives from Pakistan with the dead bodies of slaughtered Hindu and Sikh refugees who were fleeing Pakistan post partition. The arrival of bodies immediately sparks a sense of anger against Pakistan and therefore the Muslims, an anger which is stoked by the local politicians. The calm of the village is suddenly gone and the Muslim in the village fearing their safety in the political turmoil, plan to flee to Pakistan in the Train. The Hindu and Sikhs of the village get to know of the plan and seek to take revenge by killing the Muslims just as they had seen their Hindu and Sikh brethren being massacred. Juggut Singh comes to know of the plan and though he is the local criminal cum troublemaker, decides to save the passengers in the train as Nooran was also on the train. Love triumphs and he gives up his life to save Nooran and prevent the massacre by severing the bridge's rope, which stops the train from being attacked. The novel depicts how normal human beings like you and me, regardless of their faith, are caught in the turmoil of partition.

Juggut Singh is a local criminal, but he possesses a kind heart and a profound affection for Nooran, a Muslim girl. His ultimate act of selflessness by cutting the bridge rope to prevent the train massacre, transforms him into a genuine hero, illustrating that humanity can transcend communal strife. He represents hope in times of adversity.

Nooran is a young and beautiful Muslim girl. She embodies innocence, vulnerability, and strength, when confronting communal violence. Her bond with Juggut transcends religious divides, symbolizing love and unity in the face of hatred. Her existence personalizes the tragedy of partition, illustrating how women and marginalized communities endure suffering during times of conflict

The third main character of the story is the Train. While on the one hand it is seen as a representation of death (transporting slain refugees) on the other hand it is also depicted as a ray of hope (carrying survivors to safety).

Through these lenses, literature makes Partition feel personal and unforgettable.

A Bend in the Ganges—Manohar Malgonkar

"A Bend in the Ganges" by Manohar Malgonkar, describes our Holy River Ganga as a witness to the inhuman violence and tragedy of the partition. Ganga is the Holy river and one dip in the Ganga is said to cleanse us of all our wrongs. Ganga is where we perform all our holy rituals as shardh, pind daan and trapan too. The Ganges has also been a witness to our history and civilization. But during the partition, the author says, Ganga paused, it bent. The river Ganga, which is revered, could cleanse people, is pure and divine, stopped momentarily to witness the bloodshed and lifeless bodies of the tragedy of partition, transforming a river known for its sanctity and divine nature into a representation of moral decline and degeneration.

The story explores various themes such as the conflict between ideas of violence and non – violence, the idea of friendship and loyalty, identity and betrayal, between the three main characters Shafi Usman, Giani Talwar and Debi Dayal as it weaves through their lives from the time of the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) to the Partition of India (1947)

The character of Giani embodies Gandhian ideologies, while Debi Dayal represents a revolutionary aggressive perspective, and story moves around their inability to reconcile their conflicting ideologies. Ultimately, when both find themselves imprisoned in Andaman, they come to realize that communal violence only undermines nationalism, and that the British were not benevolent figures deserving of appeasement through nonviolent measures. The anguish and suffering experienced by both of them led to a shared understanding that no single path is ideal for resisting British oppression and that every community must prioritize its own dignity.

The third character Shafi Usman, is a secular protagonist who projects the secular side of the society and tries to build balance between the two extreme points of view taken by the other two characters in the story though very often it falls short of its intent.

Through this book, Manohar also seeks to bring forth the impact of the partition especially for women. The partition led to communal tensions, riot and violence amongst the two communities, but the impact on women went beyond what a logical human mind could comprehend. The book seeks to bring forth the massive scale of severe sexual violence crimes against women, abduction and absolute inhuman acts of atrocity against women being committed and the holy Ganges, also paused in shame witnessing the tragedy. Malgonkar illustrates the Partition not merely as a political separation but as an event where "humanity is mutilated," showing women's bodies as the battlegrounds for the honor of communities. Malgonkar describes scenes of women being taken away in the nude, "struggling and screaming at the top of their voices." Women were often regarded as "objects or property," subject to trade or sale, and their bodies frequently served as a means to humiliate the rival community. Not just the rival community, people of the same community also treated women as objects as it happened with Mumtaz in the book, who is subject to violence despite being from the Muslim community. The narrative depicts situations where women were branded or disfigured, with inscriptions like "Pakistan Zindabad" or "Jai Hind" carved into their skin, marking them as emblematic targets for vengeance. Malgonkar through his book brings out the pathetic plight of women folk who had no sense of safety and were the worst victims of the partition. The novel also contrasts this by depicting characters like Sundari, who strives to break free from traditional submissive roles and challenges the constraints imposed on her amid the chaos. Nonetheless, the central theme relating to women revolves around deep trauma and victimization.

Over the years, several authors have researched and written about the one of the worst human tragedies faced by humans in India, talking not just merely facts, numbers and statistics, but human emotions, pain, suffering, courage, resilience and hope, all rolled in one. Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan, is a story of an onset of communal violence during the Partition of 1947 in a peaceful village, where love

conquers all by transcending communal lines and humanity wins in the end. On the other hand, Bhisham Sahni's "Tamas" explores the darker side of the partition and delves into how hatred and political manipulation take root in communities. Bapsi Sidhwa's "Cracking India" (also referred to as *Ice-Candy-Man*) tells the story of the trauma of Partition through the eyes of a child and emphasizes the sufferings of women. Manohar Malgonkar's "A Bend in the Gange" is a story that captures the essence of nationalism and personal ethical decisions amidst political storms.

Collectively, these novels depict Partition not merely as a historical incident but as a profound human tragedy, each possessing its own narrative approach and emotional resonance. They emphasize the human experience, illustrating how everyday lives were devastated, which encourages empathy and a deeper comprehension of this intricate history.

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