CONCLUSION

PURGING THE CORRODING VENOM
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_Hurl your thunder on the prisons of dharma
And send the light of knowledge in this wretched world._

- Rabindranath Tagore

The Partition is a great event of tremendous impact on the country's cultural, communal and social values. India became an independent nation-state after the partition. Even before the partition, India was a nation, although a subordinate nation. The pre-British and British India was culturally one. Despite the absence of the notion of being a nation among its people, the awareness of cultural unity was very much there in spite of all the other differences of religions and languages. Only when Gandhi invoked this awareness, he became successful in unifying all the people of India against the British rule. The multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-lingual, and pluralistic nation of India was partitioned when there were attempts by the major communities to rebuild the Indian nation on the European model, which was based on cultural, religious, and linguistic homogeneity; when the minor communities tried to assert their existence and to protect their interests by separating themselves; and when the British rulers followed the principle of 'divide and rule' and 'divide and quit'. Thus, the partition is the result of a triangular fight among the nationalistic, the separatist, and the imperialistic forces.

A look at the Indian life gives us a feeling that even after six decades, India has not completely recovered from the ghastly memories of the great tragedy of the partition. The politics of India is still deeply enmeshed in the history of the partition. There is a view that it is better not to remember the gore and dementia of the partition times but to forget everything about the holocaust. But the ghost of the partition is not easily laid to rest. Deliberate attempts at forgetting it reinforce its memories. Such has been the magnitude of the devastation and trauma caused by it and its impact on the Indian psyche that we often turn, even today, to it as an evocative repository of different metaphors, meanings, and messages to the present Indian life and politics.

The partition is not over, but is continuing. It is not just an event of the past alone but also of the present, for it has its roots in the past. The bitterness of the division still reverberates in the minds of the innocent victims and the sensibilities of the people who witnessed it. It may be of the future also for it will be built on the basis of the present. If we do not take steps to stop it, we will, perhaps, have to witness another partition in future. The partition that has been living as the demon of communal violence raises its ugly head every now and then and disturbs and disrupts the human life in the independent India as it did during the partition. Thousands of Sikhs were butchered in the communal attacks as a result of the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in 1984; thousands of Muslims were killed in Bhagalpur in Bihar in the worst


243
communal riots in 1989; the Babri Masjid, in Ayodhya, was demolished by frenzied Hindu Karasevaks in the name of Lord Rama in 1992; the series of bomb blasts in Bombay killed hundreds of innocent people in 1993; and hundreds of Karasevaks were burnt alive when the railway compartments were set on fire in Godhra, Gujarat, in 2002. These kinds of incidents, which appear to be the replica of the partition, have constantly been seen in different parts of the country. The venom of communal hatred has been spreading far and wide in the country. Xenophobic rightists have made use of the communal hatred that triggered off in 1947 to build their places of power, position, and influence. Their hatred of the other is still fed upon the tales of communal clashes and religious rigours that brought about the partition holocaust and the great migration. Pakistan was created on the basis of community and religion. There have been attempts to carry India on similar lines of community and religion.

Unfortunately, most people of the present generation do not know much about what happened at the time of the partition. Only a few of them vaguely remember the real stories of violence and suffering narrated to them by their aged parents or grandparents who were themselves the victims of the partition ravages. The intensity of the grief and suffering of the victims has not been felt by their progeny. Their loss and affliction means nothing to their children and grandchildren who make up the present generation. The nations and generations that forget their history are fated to repeat it. The present scenario gives us an impression that history may repeat itself in India. But whether history certainly repeats itself or not, we have got to reflect and meditate on what happened in history. We should remember what happened in the past even though it is unpleasant. This is the unavoidable toll that we have to pay to earn our comfort and peace in the present. Literature stands as a bulwark against the human tendency of forgetting or neglecting history.

The Partition divided the people on communal and religious lines, though not completely, for many nationalist Congress Muslims remained in India. Now, there are nearly 15 crores of Muslims here. Despite its failure to divide the people clearly and completely, the partition resulted in the clear division of the land. But language and literature have never been divided. Besides all the Muslims, many Hindus, Sikhs, Sindhis, Parsees, and others have continued to use Urdu in India. The Urdu stories/works of S.H. Manto, Ismath Chuughtai, Intizar Husain, and others have been read and appreciated in India. Writers like Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Upendranath Ashk, and others have written in Urdu and their works have been read and appreciated in Pakistan and Bangladesh as well. Using the undivided partition literature, the present generation should be made aware of the dangers of communal hatred and religious bigotry.

We should study partition literature because history does not tell us much about the partition. Even if it does, it is only in numbers and aggregates like 10 millions of people migrated, 2 millions dead, 1 lakh women abducted and subjected to dishonour and so on. But literature tells us of the real experiences, feelings, and sufferings of those who lived through the partition.
It is an event that has shaken the very roots of Indian life. Its impact has been seen on every field of life. The literary importance of the partition event and the historical importance of the partition literature are beyond any doubts and questions. The partition literature recreates the event before our eyes and plays an important role in rebuilding an atmosphere of mutual trust, friendship, and fraternity. Especially, short stories, which suit the modern temperament of urgency, speed, and brevity, play a very significant role in bringing out the futility of violence and cruelty and in making readers real human beings.

The partition transformed the lives of the people beyond recognition. Overnight, millions of people lost their identity, home, hearth, land, property, and country; and became alien citizens and refugees. The oral stories about the unbelievable cruelties and unbearable sufferings and also of concern and compassion and friendship and fraternity were being told and retold in the households of the victims. These subjective, partial, and biased oral narratives have perpetuated the myth that villains always belonged to the other community; that victims always belonged to the own community; and thus prevented the establishment of a significant dialogue between the opposing communities in the aftermath of the partition in India. The people of India should never forget the terrible experiences and must do everything they can to prevent the repetition of such an event in the Indian subcontinent. It is impossible to deny the function of short stories (literature) as a moral warning about what another partition can do to our nations. They play a significant role in bringing out the truth that the villains and the victims belonged to all the communities. They also drive home the fact that the suffering of the victims was the same among the people of all the communities.

Writing short stories, about the partition of the nation and the consequent migration and misery, appears to be easy. But it is not as easy as it appears to be, for there is always the danger of being partial and biased. Successfully withstanding the danger, all the writers stood firmly rooted against the bad prospect of being carried away by the flood of blood and losing all sense of balance. Despite the brutality and horror of the event, almost all the writers kept up their sense and sensibility balanced and integrated, and have produced innumerable short stories about the event. In fact, the impact of the partition was so strong that it has permeated through the creation of short stories and given the Indian short story form a new psychological dimension. The short stories make the readers feel the tragedy emotionally by providing a deeply felt, realistic, and universalized picture of the partition experience. These stories are special and unique as they are based on a rare, real, ravaging, and traumatic event. To read these stories is to remember that the present Indian life is built on the loss of millions of homes, disruption of millions of lives, the creation of millions of refugees, the slaughter of millions of people, the dishonour of thousands of women, and the cries of thousands children. All these were committed out of venom of vengeance, spite, and hatred.
It is true that it is painful to read these stories, especially those which picture the violence and sufferings of the victims. It is also true that these stories disturb the calm and complacency of the readers. They contain everything cruel in their relentless passages. But the objection that the realistic representation of violence and suffering in short stories will evoke the feelings of vengeance and hatred is not justified. The representation of violence is controlled and suggestive in most of the stories. Manto's *Toba Tek Singh* or Ajneya's *Post-Box* cannot be said to evoke communal feelings of vengeance or hatred. In the short stories about the Partition written in Bengali, the representation of violence is very less and kept only in the background. All the short stories, which represent violence and suffering, would make the readers sick of violence and suffering, and make them take an oath that they will not be forgetful in future. Once the readers experience the pain in reading the stories, they would shrug their shoulders, change themselves, and become sober and wiser persons.

Besides, an undercurrent of harmony and humanity permeates through all the stories, including the stories of violence and suffering. Despite the fact that every writer treats the partition according to his/her own experience and understanding, almost all of them stand united in being impartial, unpartisan, and humanistic. All the writers have affected a perfect balance in treating the atrocities and cruelties on each side. To achieve this balance, they have repeated certain incidents and events on both sides. They have normally used equal number of villains and victims from both sides. It is remarkable that all the stories, except a few communally charged stories, point out the folly and wickedness of the horrible event of partition. All of them signify that the partition was unnatural and unnecessary. They also hint that all the cruel and savage acts were unwarranted and meaningless. A little understanding, rationalism, restraint, tolerance, concern, and compassion would have averted the terrible tragedy. All the stories condemn narrow-mindedness, communal hatred, and religious bigotry; and glorify broad-mindedness, communal harmony, and religious tolerance. They emphasize the necessity of having an all-embracing attitude of human concern and compassion, harmony and humanity, friendship and fraternity, and sympathy and sacrifice. The noble characters like Dauji in *The Shepherd*, Zaibunnisa in *The Refuge*, the elder Sikh in *Getting Even*, Mozel in *Mozel* or the Sikh neighbour of Sheikh Burhanuddin and Ghulam Rasul in *The Death of Sheikh Burhanuddin*, Yunus Khan in *Where is My Mother*, Dr. Roopchand in *Roots*, etc., stand before us in our memory to be emulated. Even Parameshwar Singh, in *Parameshwar Singh*—which is considered to be a communally charged story by Dr. Alok Bhalla—by adopting and bringing up a Muslim boy as his own son, gets the readers' admiration and stands as a role model of harmony and humanity.

We need to confront the darker sides of our history and experience in order to gain maturity and learn a lesson. Though it is no use crying over split milk, we should be careful enough not to allow milk to split again in future. The short stories bring to light the darker sides of our history and experience. These stories approach the partition with idealistic and humanistic attitude, articulate the voice of the victims and refugees, and represent their fragmented and
deformed lives. Presenting the violence, sorrow, and suffering of the people who lived through the partition; and by bringing out the futility of all the cruelty, bloodshed, and destruction, the short stories make us shiver and fill us with a sense of shame and humility. Our hearts would shun all the violence and suffering and crave for a friendly and harmonious atmosphere. The short stories on the historical event of the partition are thus still relevant today. With their human centrality, they are essentially contemporary rather than historical. They have a permanent literary value as Man's bestiality and humanity, treated in all of them, are related to his permanent nature.

As the present age is an age of fundamentalism, fanaticism, communalism, terrorism, and politics of divisiveness, it is imperative to create a suitable climate for a balanced understanding of inter-community relationships in relation to our historical experience. A fuller understanding of the partition at the human level would build an atmosphere conducive to composite living and sharing among different communities of our country. Partition literature helps us in gaining such an understanding. Especially, short stories would do the best with regard to this, as the present generation loves to read more short stories than novels or plays. Communal clashes and riots are becoming a common feature in various cities, towns, and villages in India. In view of this, amity and unity should be created among the Hindu, the Sikh, the Muslim, and other communities taking into account the communally interwoven texture of Indian society. The people of all the communities should be allowed to live their own lives peacefully together in mutual trust and happiness. The short stories play a significant role in purging the corroding venom of communal hatred and in saving the country by really making it a secular and pluralistic country.

There should also be some efforts in India and Pakistan to come together in friendship, for they cannot live in a perpetual state of hostility. When all the nations in the world are heading towards globalization and the borders among them are breaking down, even the thought of exterminating each other is abominable. So, the people of India and Pakistan should resign to create the old harmony and friendship. But it appears as though both the countries wish to bury the memories of the old harmony, the separation, the migration, the violence, and the suffering deep underground along with the lessons to be learnt from them. What has happened has happened; it cannot be undone. If they cannot wish to allow the wounds of the partition memories to rot within on both sides and if they do not want to destroy each other, the only way for them is to open the flood gates of the bitter memories to flow up and face each other without any inhibitions, suspicions, or shames. Writers, litterateurs, and artists on both sides of the borders have already done so. All the others can follow them.
The governments of both the countries should take steps to represent the event of the partition with a humanistic and harmonious attitude in school textbooks. The partition should be so represented as to make children sick of all suspicion, hatred, violence, and suffering so that they can develop feeling of friendship and fraternity. Some short stories, plays, and novels should be prescribed for study in colleges. A separate and compulsory subject of Partition Literature should be introduced in all the Post-Graduate Departments of all the Universities. A programme of translating the Partition Literature into English and all the regional languages should be taken up by both the governments and the published books should be sold at reduced and affordable prices or they should be distributed free of cost. Television serials and films should be produced and telecast to reach the vast majority of the common people effectively. A monument should be raised on the Indo-Pak borders to honour the martyrdom of millions of innocent people who were victimized during the partition on both the sides. A national day of mourning should be observed in both the countries. By all these measures, we can hope, the long-standing mutual suspicion and hatred between the two nations can be removed and they can, at least, become good neighbours. Thereupon peace can be restored in the Indian sub-continent.