Chapter - V

AZADI
Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), the most thrilling and acclaimed partition novel after the *Train to Pakistan*, takes a focal look into the characters of the novel the impact on the lives of human beings and their relations with other communities. Written as a part of the Gandhi quarter, *Azadi* 1975 has been claimed by the critics as a poignant and truthful novel. It also won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977, Nahal has to his credit some criticism of Ernest Hemingway and D.H. Lawrence, an account of his conversation with J. Krishnamurti and a collection of short stories. But one can find the real promise in creative writing in the following four novels *My time Faces, Into Another Dawn* and *The English Queen*, *Azadi* effectively gives ample evidence of variety, profundity and artistic integrity.

The 'truth' of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 lay, at least for its victims in the violence done to them, with the qualification that the 'victims' of partition were rarely victims alone. I seek in the following pages of *Azadi* to examine the ways in which the violence of the times is conceptualized and remembered by those who lived through partition-as victims, aggressors or onlookers. Critical events like partition often lead to the radical reconstitution of
community. This has its roots in the freedom struggle of Indian Independence.

The title ‘Azadi’ in itself is a puzzle for the reader as when we read the novel we come to know that did we really imagine or dream of such an independence, which created rubles among people and communities.

Novelist who have written about the partition, especially those who lived through its days of terror, take their stand beside those who suffered, in order either to bear witness or to after solace to call dawn domination an those who were responsible for it, or lay a wager on a life of good sense in the future, to renormalize nostalgically communities in the past or speak with bitter irony about the possibilities of life in past-colonial days. The best of them like Nahal’s Azadi do not repeat historical views. Nahal has sought to make connection with the social and cultural life of a community in its entirely within a historically specific period. In the novel we find profound troubled inquiry about the survival a four moral beings in the midst of horror. In an interview Chaman Nahal himself opines Azadi as follow:

The theme was with me the time. I think that historically, politically, ethically and morally partition was wrong. In believed and still believe
that we are one nation, one culture. When the tragedy of partition took place, I was not mentally prepared to write about it. Time had to pass for bitterness to be assuaged.¹

Under the above pretext when we try to analysis the text *Azadi* we come to cross various details sensed by people during partition. Partition on the whole cannot be de-detailed from freedom struggle, which is the crux of the present study. The other novels in the study *Kanthapura, Waiting for the Mahatma, Midnight's Children, The Great Indian Novel* are part and parcel of Freedom Struggle. Whereas *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* highlights the effect of idealism with which people started the struggle. But in the partition novels under study we come cross situation truly faced by victims (common people) and leaders miraculously escaping the true spirit of it.

The novel is conveniently into three parts. ‘The Lull’, The Storm’ and ‘The Aftermath’ the irony implied title which enter the characters mind and destroy ones mental peace.

The title can be co-related with the historical facts of that occurred before partition, at real time the partition took place and finally the post-partition dilemma.

*Azadi* pictures events full of human implications seen and felt through the lives of a few individuals. The greater focus in on one
particular family, the family of Lala Kanshi Ram who has a world of his own and has built a small world of his own, happy contented in the city of Sialkot now in Pakistan. He is a grains merchant in Sialkot, root deeply to the place and emotionally. The protagonist is portrayed as a person with perfect blend of the Hindu and the Muslim cultures. A long stay in place for years of his existence in Sialkot have ripened his life in every sense:

It was in this house again that Lala Kanshi Ram had acquired a social status for himself. His business as a wholesale dealer in grain was of firm standing now. His reputation as a learned Arya Samaji was known to every child of his mohalla.²

A.C. Bhatta points out in his review of *Azadi* on Lala Kanshi Ram’s life as follows:

His attitude towards the British Raj is marked with an element of ambiguity. He is on the one hand moved by the patriotic exhortations to free the country. Yet he likes the pageants and processions and the safety of the British Raj.³

The novel spans from the period of the announcement of the cabinet mission plan on June 3, 1947 to the ‘aftermath’, the murder of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948.
The pain of partition in the offing has shaken Lala out of his self-centered cocoon and sends him into a reflective mood. He is oppressed by the feelings of anxiety and fear:

'I've taken more than quarter of a century to make all this'- and he made a vague gesture towards the rooms. 'Everything will be ruined if Pakistan is created'.

The protagonist has great faith in that wizard Gandhi. Who would never support the partition and also the promise made by the congress to this effect:

After all, how could it happen? The Congress had a promise to keep with the people. For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it had taken the stand that India was a single nation, not two. And Gandhi was not only a politician, he was a saint. He had his inner voice to satisfy, too. Would that nagging voice of his let him accept the slaughter of so many? That's what it would mean, if Pakistan did come into existence. And Gandhi was shrewd - surely he saw it all. He wouldn't give in to such butchery. If nothing else worked, his fasts unto death always did. Lala
Kanshi Ram’s business friends in the market were certain that’s what Gandhi would do.5

The role of Gandhi in freedom struggle the most vital one. This can be traced through the dialogue of characters in Azadi:

‘what if the English agree to give Pakistan to Jinnah?’

‘Your know that won’t happen. Gandhi would never agree to a division of the country – you’ve told that to me all along’.

That’s true. But what if there is no other way out?’ And you know these English, they would rather divide than leave behind a united India’.6

The above lines predict the sentiment of people who fought for freedom. They never dreamt of partition and believed in traditional notion of Vasudev Kutumbakan, ‘Whole world is one. The crux of wind ideology.’

Further we find Lala Kanshi Ram stating:

what accord had they reached on the fate of four hundred million people? What accord had they reached on Pakistan, on the future of the Punjab and Bengal? That’s what concerned him, in the main.
'If Pakistan is created, we’ll have to leave. That is, if the Muslims spare our lives!'"

The pious life of Lala is traced graphically in the following lines:
“Morning he went to his store, evenings he came back home. This had been the routine, without a break, for the last thirty-five years of his married life. No movies, no books to read”,

During the struggle Gandhi had impact on the individual lives of the people who used try hard and live Gandhian life. Lal Shamshwer Bahadur fellow business man of Kanshi Ram, he opined about Gandhi as follows: “’Bapu has a Shakti, an inner power, which on one else can dream of’”.

People followed Mahatma Gandhi with religious forever. Which can be sensed in these lines: “They are not interested in politics, nor in Gandhi’s speeches. For them Gandhi was a mahatma, a religious figure, and they had come only to pay homage to a saint”.10

Even Muslims followed Gandhi, Chaudhri Barkat Ali a businessman in Sailkot bosom friend of Kanshi Ram lead a pious life this can be viewed in the following: “But Mahatma Gandhi and non-violence had made a lamb of him and he went round in home-spun cotton shirts and loose pyjamas, his head bowed in humility”.11
It is interesting to note that in the first part of the novel, we come across dialogues that hold the leaders with high esteem and regards. The common citizens were in reverie with future freedom.

The second part of the novel 'The Storm' Lala becomes pungent and says:

What the leaders of India were offering the people of the Punjab was an enormous bluff, he felt. They had neither the power nor the intention of maintaining the minorities in their homes; they had not the power of saving their lives. They should have devised means of mass migration to begin with, before rushing to partition. Now they should at least keep their mouths shut and not mislead the poor, credulous people. Jinnah and Nehru were villains enough.¹²

The protagonists dreams are shattered. Lala Kanshi Ram faces more personal tremors on his has to India. He loses his daughter and dear one's one by one during his long journey to free India the partition had made him impotent this can be recapulated in these lines:

He had lost the ability to communicate with his family... He couldn't establish a contact either with his wife or with his son... The concern was there.
Their respect for him was there, too. Yet the contact
was broken. Something had driven them apart.13

During the concluding pages of the novel we hear through lines
on Gandhi:

'It all happened because of the partition. And it
was Gandhi who sanctioned the partition.'

'That's not true'. Arun felt he had to put the
record straight. 'It was the other congress leaders,
like Nehru and Patel'.

'They were his stooges'.14

The above lines, which come from the heart of the character
describes the pain and agony felt by the people. During the later part of
partition people had to face many difficult situations. This made them
goes against the so called idols of freedom struggle.

The novel runs almost parallel on the life of father and son is Lala
Kanshi Ram and Arum.

The character of Arun is quite in contact to his father. He is
portrayed as a boy of different tastes who reads, plays, goes to pictures
and is completely free in his mind and spirit. The novel brings out him
from boyhood to manhood. In the novel we come to know that he is
first in love with a Muslim girl called Nur. The partition snatches her
out of him. His love for her is felt in as follows:
'You know I love you and will do anything for you. But soon it will cease to be a question of personal love. My parents are old, and they'll be hard hit if they are obliged to leave. I'll have to go with them to help resettle them somewhere. But maybe I'll come back and then we can marry the way you wish'.15

Nur’s brother Munir and Arun were bosom friends. Once when a British officer passes a comment on Gandhi both react to the officer unitedly by saying: ‘Still, we want you to withdraw it’, said Arun, and Munir nodded his head’.16

In the course of the novel Arun loses his beloved Nur and dear sister Madhu during the partition. Later on at the refugee camp he comes across with a girl called Chandani, a charwoman. Unfortunately he loses her too. Yet he compromises himself and continues his study in Delhi and finds a new way of life:

He had found a new identity for himself, an identity which had partly been thrust on him by the surge of events, and which partly he had worked out for himself metaphysically. He did not want to give that identity up.17
Through the character of Arun, Nahal balances the impact of partition that the younger generation was successful in compromising with facts rather than fiction. Freedom a concept of independence had shattered the dreams of common people. The father who belongs to the older generation is psychologically defeated person whereas the son controls himself and carries life forward with challenge.

Since Gandhi and Hindu-Muslim unity and enmity is dealt in the novel. *Azadi* the novel is written the framework of freedom struggle, because partition is only the after effect of freedom struggle. Throughout *Azadi* we find instances that have affected the human beings and disturbed the values of life. The main aim of freedom struggle and its consequences have shattered the impulses of the people in common.

Thus *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* have many similarities on the context of term “Partition”.

156
REFERENCES


5. Azadi, 48-49.

6. Azadi, 39.

7. Azadi, 41.


10. Azadi, 104.

11. Azadi, 185.

12. Azadi, 211.


15. Azadi, 97.


17. Azadi, 233.