CHAPTER – 5

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF

SELECT SHORT STORIES

ON PARTITION
A Critical Analysis of Select Short Stories on Partition

A Critical Reading of Bhisham Sahni’s ‘Pali’

Bhisham Sahni (b.1915) came to India after Partition and settled in Delhi. He has published five novels, eight collections of short stories, three plays and a biography of his actor brother, Balraj Sahni. His outstanding Hindi novel, Tamas (Darkness), based on India’s Partition, is the recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award and was later telecast as a television serial. Sahni has translated many Russian and Soviet classics into Hindi. His own work has also been translated into English, Russian and Malyalam. The short story, ‘Pali’, which is under consideration, is translated into English from Hindi by the author.

Sahni’s ‘Pali’ evokes pathos and compassion of the readers. The story opens on a note emphasizing the gloominess and complexity of life:

Life goes on and on. Its ends never meet.

Neither in the mundane world of realities nor in fiction. We drag on drearily in the hope that some day these ends may meet. And sometimes we have the illusion that the ends have really joined.¹

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The artistic use of the word 'illusion' throws light upon the futility of life while at the surface level complexities seem to unravel but deep below it the root cause of the problem remains as it is. Man acts merely as a puppet in the hands of fate and his powerlessness reflects his littleness in the broad universe. ‘Pali’ is about a child who gets lost during mass migration at the time of Partition, leaving the parents sorrow-stricken. Manohar Lal, the father of the lost baby, feels the pain acutely: “Manohar Lal’s throat had gone dry shouting ‘Pali’! ‘Pali’ His legs shook and his head reeled. Such was the irony of the situation for this homeless man - he was shouting for his son on a road crowded with people, and yet he appeared to be shouting in a desert.”\(^2\) The suffering of the wailing couple becomes unbearable with the death of their second child:

There are some wounds which heal with the passage of time, leaving a mark on the mind.

But there are certain griefs which slowly eat into the heart like termites, completely ravaging the body. There is nothing a man can do about it. When Kaushalya reached
India with her husband, her lap was bereft of a child.\textsuperscript{3}

Time and again the author is found emphasising the powerlessness of man which enhances the tragedy of Partition. Most of the victims of that unfortunate event were those who were innocent and had no hand in inflicting miseries on others. They were innocent in the sense that they had not participated in the events that led to the division of the country. Hence their victimization underscores their helplessness.

It is not right to put entire blame on fate. There is no doubt that the communal forces did fan the hidden fire of hatred between the two communities. In ‘Pali’ the religious zealots could have left the problem of the custody of the baby to be solved by two parents peacefully, without causing any disturbance. But it is ironical that the question of Pali’s identity does not remain simply a problem of two families as it should have been, but it becomes a communal issue. The distress of the child is appreciated neither by Muslims nor by Hindus. Instead, Hindus and Muslims give vent to hidden animosity against each other. Thus, Pali becomes the symbol of dastardly indifference to the real issue. The unnecessary interference by the members of each community leaves Pali bewildered. At first the boy is circumcised by
Shakur’s people and made acceptable there, but when he comes back to his parents, he is again ‘purified’ by the community of Manohar Lal. Here, in the story, both the Hindu as well as the Muslim parents are devoid of any ill feelings towards each other. But the biggest tragedy is that they are made to behave exactly in a way their society expects of them. The values which the two couples hold do not teach them to hate. It is a pity that they are not allowed to follow those principles which are dear to them. Zenab and Shakur never insist on the conversion of Pali’s religion. Nor do Manohar Lal and his wife want it. The author’s portrayal of the two parents in a favourable light and the disapproval of the acts of Chaudhri and Maulvi show that Sahni places the values of human kindness above religion.

The communal conflict which finally results in the division of the country created a deep gulf between the two communities. When Manohar Lal goes to Pakistan for the identification of his lost child, he is received with hostility by the people of Pakistan. The fire of Partition has acutely affected the mentality of many. The writer remarks:

> After the partition of the country the blood on the roads and streets had long since dried but its stains were still faintly visible here
and there. The fire that had engulfed the houses had died out long since but the charred frames were still standing. The mad frenzy of the partition had abated but its effects still lingered in the minds of the people.⁴

In such a depressing situation a ray of hope seems to come when a Muslim mother makes a sacrifice for a Hindu mother. To Manohar Lai, Zenab is like a goddess who saves his family from destruction. He feels grateful to her and is all praise for the Muslim family. But the guests who gather to celebrate the restoration of Pali are so full of hatred for Muslims that they cannot tolerate the praise and that too from a person of their own religion. The Chaudhry reprimands Manohar Lai: "...You must know those people have foisted a Muslim convert on you and yet you have nothing but praise for them."⁵ This hardened attitude gives a clear indication of the refusal of one community to take into consideration the positive values or actions of the other and to treat them always as enemies or outsiders.

Sahni has skilfully portrayed the insecurity of a mother and her constant fear of becoming motherless. She gets frightened when someone comes to
claim the custody of Pali: "The first time the police havildar came with the summons for Shakur, Zenab felt greatly upset, her condition being like that of a fish that has been thrown out of water. Her dreams were crumbling before her very eyes." Happiness as well as sorrow of both families depend on the little innocent figure of Pali. The victory of one in the legal battle means the shattering of the dreams of the other. Here, both the parties are victims and none can be blamed. In this story Sahni has shown the vital role of fate in the life of an individual. There is no feeling of hatred in Zenab’s heart for those who come to snatch away from her the most precious jewel of her life, Pali. Being a woman she can appreciate the misery of Pali’s real mother. With a trembling heart she asks Manohar Lal: “Take away the child. I do not want an unfortunate woman’s curse to fall upon me. How could I know you have lost both your children?” It is the crowd surrounding them that tries to give the situation a dramatic touch, leading to communal tension. Anuradha Marwah Roy points out: “Significantly, Zenab’s final heroic act of giving up the child she was living for, is devoid of any spoken or unspoken hatred for those who are taking him away from her.”

Sahni seems to be of the opinion that during perturbed times when everything goes wrong, the wall dividing right and wrong gets dissolved. The
tragedy of Manohar Lal underscores this fact. When he gets down from the lorry to look out for Pali, the people sitting in it get restless. It comes to the fore that when danger befalls their lives they turn callous and mean. At this point the author comments: “The refugees’ hearts had dried of all sentiments. The same Pali had once got lost and the whole mohalla had gone out in search of him. And here someone kept crying repeatedly, “Get down, you! If you want to search for your child, get down, and let us proceed!” However one cannot fully agree with Sahni’s view. The untoward happenings bring into light the real nature of man. It is easier to show sympathy as long as one is safe.

Saros Cowasjee comments:

Behind this grim comedy lies the traumatic experience of the boy which allows the author implicitly to suggest: To whom does a child belong? Does he belong to the parents who give him birth or does he belong to those who succour him? Does the child have a choice in this matter? Above all the story
contrasts the innocence of the child with the
bigotry of the adults.¹⁰

The story is to be appreciated at two levels. The writer emerges from the story
as a man with a noble soul; he does not present cruelties in order to prepare a
balance sheet of the two communities. On the other, he tells us that men
known for mutual love behave differently when passing through a traumatic
situation.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid., p.225.

3. Ibid., p.235.

4. Ibid., p.240.

5. Ibid., p.248.

6. Ibid., p.237.

7. Ibid., p.244.


10. Ibid., pp. xv-xvi
A Critical Reading of Kamleshwar's

‘How Many Pakistans?'

Kamleshwar (b. 1932) is closely associated with the 'Nai Kahani' movement in Hindi Literature. He has published ten novels, ten short story collections and a number of film scripts. He was also the editor of Sarika and Nai Kahaniyan, monthly journals. Kamleshwar's ‘How Many Pakistans?’ (Kitne Pakistan?) is a wonderful piece of creative writing. It was originally written in Hindi and translated into English by K S Duggal and included in Orphans of the Storm: Stories on the Partition of India (1995).

In ‘How Many Pakistans?’ the background story is the relationship between a Muslim girl and a Hindu boy. It is ironical that the meaning of their relationship gets changed during Partition: the horrifying event which killed millions of people and made many more millions homeless. The subject of the story is not original, as it has been dealt with repeatedly by many writers. However its uniqueness lies in the presentation of the theme. Kamleshwar takes us directly to the deeper consciousness of the narrator, laying bare his misery and pain. Through the story the writer has tried to explore various experiences of real life:
experiences that turn bitter owing to the tragedy of Partition. Kamleshwar makes an attempt to unravel the mystery of human consciousness in the context of the socio-political world.

Kamleshwar’s ‘How Many Pakistans?’ is a story of a tortured human soul: “This tortured, divided self, unable to come to terms with the repercussions on the personal level of larger historical events, can be traced back to the story we are dealing with, ‘How Many Pakistans?’ in the specific context of the Partition and its aftermath.”

The tragedy of Partition turns Mangal, the narrator hero, into a lonely wanderer. Unfortunately he has no one with whom he should share the anxieties of his tortured soul, as the people related to him have become helpless victims of Partition. The ghost of Partition looms large over the narrator throughout the story. He finds no rest in the divided India as the physical division of the country leads to his psychic fragmentation. While living in the present he wishes to live in the past when there was no barrier between him and Bano, his beloved. Bano’s innocence which was the source of his life and happiness, gets lost in the whirlpool of Partition. The protagonist feels sick at heart: “Where should I go now? Which town must I leave to escape Pakistan? Where can I live
with all my love and all my longings?" In his loneliness he keeps on oscillating between the past and present and is not ready to accept the reality of Partition. This continuous denial of the acceptance of the reality lands him in a traumatized condition: “Why must this Pakistan come between us? For you and me, it is no country. It is a name given to an unfortunate reality - something which separates us when we are together.” It is a moral belief that time never stops for anyone and it keeps on flowing, with its normal pace and those who fail to move with it are left far behind. The same holds true for Mangal when he prefers to live in his past, neglecting the present. Ultimately he gets lost in the crowd.

In the story ‘How Many Pakistanis?’ the journey of Mangal’s life has been divided into three sections. The first, when the fragrance of the queen of night intoxicated him. The second, when he saw Bano naked for the first time in the moonlight. The third, when Bano stood on the other side of the door and asked “Is there anyone else?” The common feature of the three sections is that each one ends on a note of despair and hopelessness.
“Exile is a condition that damages the spirit, draining away the content of social and ritual life.” Mangal feels disturbed on being asked to leave his birthplace. He asks himself how he can leave a place which has been a source of his entire being. The Chinar trees, the floating boats in the Ganga water, Bhartrahari’s castle, with the passage of time all have become a part of his life and leaving such a place is like leaving one’s soul. His entire life becomes a puzzle to him: “You can have no idea what happened to me when I heard this. How can I leave Chinar? But then, I had to leave.”

In India there is an amalgamation of various cultures, values and civilizations and it is this mixing up of multiple strands which becomes the basis of its uniqueness. While living in a pluralistic society one becomes part and parcel of a broader realm which transcends caste and creed. It is this pluralism which gradually enters the blood of an individual. In such circumstances if a Muslim poet chooses to write the story in praise of the Hindu saint, Raja Bhartihari, it is wrong to condemn his work. Master Sahab, Bano’s father, is abused by his own people when they proclaim: “He is no Turk – he is a low-caste Hindu converted to Islam.” Here, Kamleshwar seems to highlight the alleged narrow
mindedness of one community towards the other, responsible for creating a gulf between the two.

Kamleshwar's story shows the unfortunate conditions in which the communal forces destroyed the long-standing traditions and ethnic harmony, giving way to insanity. Mangal and Bano, who are the by-products of pluralism, are destroyed by the same. Partition connotes the disintegration of the composite society. The protagonist is hurt and humiliated at the time of leaving his hometown. He feels as if he has been exiled from a place of his childhood and punished for a crime which he has not done: "What should I tell you? To tell you the truth, for me it was only then that Pakistan came into existence. Like a dagger it pierced through my heart."

Independence was regrettably accompanied by a tide of hatred and revenge. The disillusion following Partition has been viewed through different angles by the writers of both India and Pakistan. The division of the country resulted in further polarization between the two communities. Ravikant and Tarun K Saint comment: "Such writings lament the loss of a world, though not only in the form of romanticized nostalgia. Partition was irrevocably etched on the minds of a people as a watershed, which
brutally severed them from their own past.” In ‘How Many Pakistan?’ Mangal goes through the feelings of loss and bewilderment. He views Pakistan as something insidious as it had cast a shadow on his relationship with Bano. His dream to marry Bano remains unfulfilled owing to Partition. The name ‘Pakistan’ creeps in between the two loving hearts, darkening all their prospects of happiness. The protagonist’s defeated soul seems to sink: “When something like Pakistan comes into existence, a part of man dies. The crops are destroyed. The streets are narrowed. The skies weep. The clouds dry up. The wind ceases to blow.”

Stuti Khanna opines:

Another image which the author invokes repeatedly, is that of an untrammeled flow, a spurting out. In the phantasmagoria that life seems to have become for Mangal, blood is seen to be gushing forth from decapitated bodies. Again, “a torrent of blood” flows from the grandfather’s amputated arm. This image of death mingles with the image of
life – milk, dripping from Bano’s breasts – to
c.coalesce into an image of raw pain, of life
and beauty gone waste, and literally going
down the drain that Ammi squeezes her
soaked odhni into.\(^{10}\)

The refrain ‘Is there any one else?’ sends Mangal in a state of
trauma. Pain always needs an outlet otherwise it enervates man. The
protagonist never tries, on his part, to improve the situation. Throughout
the story one observes him to be submissive. He keeps on accepting all
sorts of adversity without making a slight attempt to alter things. Instead
of going through humiliation and agony he should have helped the
suffering humanity. To some extent it is his fault that he drowns himself
in all sorts of immoral activities in order to escape from the miseries of
life and holds Pakistan responsible for all the mishaps: “Bano! I find
Pakistan at every step. It keeps stabbing me. I am bleeding - I am
humiliated.”\(^{11}\)
REFERENCES


3. Ibid., p.131.


6. Ibid., p.133.


Syed Muhammad Ashraf’s
‘Separated From the Flock’

Soon after Partition there had been a sharp division among writers. The writers who had migrated to Pakistan had their own views which were different from those of the writers in India. The fiction of this period reflects the polarization among the reading public as well, for their interests clashed. The theme of Partition has been addressed in different perspectives and the majority of writers choose to deal with violence of one kind or another. But in the hands of the literary masters the theme of Partition has resulted in the production of some of the heart-wrenching stories. Among Urdu writers the most noteworthy one are – Qudratullah Shahab, Saadat Hasan Manto, Aziz Ahmad, Syed Muhammad Ashraf, Intizar Ahmad, Ashfaq Ahmad etc. Ashraf (born 1957) is among the generation of writers who had started writing after Partition. He belongs to a Sufi family and received his education at Aligarh Muslim University. He has published two collections of short stories. One of his short stories ‘Man’ is the recipient of the Katha Award for Creative Writing. His story “Separated from the Flock” translated into English by Vishwamitra Adil and Alok Bhalla from Urdu is taken from his collection *Dar Se Bichchre*.

According to Aristotle, “a well defined plot should have a proper beginning, a middle and end”. Syed Muhammad Ashraf’s “Separated from the
Flock” meets these demands of a perfect plot. The events and incidents occur systematically with no loopholes. Two childhood friends meet by chance while going for duck shooting years after Partition. Their childhood memories come alive and their hidden sorrows come to the fore:

Suddenly, the frozen regions of past recollections thawed – the many-mirrored room of memories lit up. In a flash, I travelled back thirty years – I saw before me, as if by magic, scenes from my childhood and youth... faces of those I had loved... alas, those who were still alive were only shadows and no longer my affectionate companions.¹

The narrator and his friend, Nawab both of them have come for duck shooting but when the time comes to shoot them; they instinctively lower their guns in a gesture of the renunciation of violence. Alok Bhatla points out:

Here suffering is not forgotten, for it can never be, but what is aroused is a new awareness of the gratuitous infliction of pain on the unsuspecting creatures of the earth by
hunters like themselves, and of their responsibility in ensuring that the long enduring patterns of life are never again destroyed. Their own loss does not have to be repeated.2

In “Separated from the Flock” Ashraf has created an atmosphere of tension while depicting the ill-effects of Partition on the characters. The tragedy of Partition was not a minor event, as it had affected the lives of millions of people and still affects them. Partition was a traumatic experience. The territorial division was not only at physical level but also at psychological level and the effect of the latter proves to be more hazardous. Ashraf perceptively comments: “The hard, deep lines of the Partition have erased the signs of all other feelings – feelings which belong intimately to that place where a human being first opens his eyes on earth and catches a glimpse of the sky.”3

“Man is a great flatterer of himself”, says Bacon. Perhaps this is a human weakness that he always tries to suppress the weaker or negative points of his personality. The narrator is fully aware that he will never be able to go back to India. In such a situation he finds himself helpless. When Ghulam Ali makes him conscious of his helplessness, an element of hatred rises in his heart for him: “At that moment I hated Ghulam Ali intensely.”4
Ashraf does not raise any sectarian issue in his "Separated from the Flock". For instance, he does not talk about the effects of Partition on a particular community - Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs. The emphasis is not on their religious associations; rather, they are treated as human beings.

The narrator calls his relatives 'cowards' because according to him, none could stand up to the hardships of Partition and hence all of them fled to Pakistan. But it is not enough to confess guilt and get rid of responsibilities. A person should have courage to stand against the currents of time, and face an adverse situation with determination. This show of courage ultimately proves our humanity, makes us better human beings with no pangs of conscience. Apparently the narrator has all sorts of material comforts in life – a respectable job, a complete family yet his personality is incomplete. There is some gap in his life because part of him lies somewhere else and with such a feeling he can never be at peace with himself.

Traditionally birds are symbol of freedom and liberty. But the writer speaks of birds not in a conventional sense. In "Separated from the Flock" birds are a symbol of innocence, of women as victims. In the story birds appear as the victims of the cruelty of human beings. They are shot dead and can no longer go back: "O Birds, your wings have been broken. Now you cannot return to those fields of snow!" At this point the writer notes a similarity between the fate of
birds and of Ghulam Ali’s wife. The birds are shot by guns hence they have got separated from their flock. Their eyes are full of dreams, with visions of “an infinite number of blue and yellow and green birds singing and playing in sheer light amongst giant pine trees covered with snow ... a vision of exultation and joy.”6 Women characters in the story suffer from a sense of alienation and frustration like birds that have been separated from their flock for ever. But the narrator feels that in comparison birds are more fortunate in that they would not have to undergo the pangs of separation for long. On the other hand, these women are in a desperate and worse situation because there is no way out for them and they have to live with this burden throughout their life. Ashraf brings into relief this touching situation: “… our torment never dies, we die slowly, we are tortured at every moment of our lives, we are hunted without mercy and we can only beat our wings in the throes of death, but cannot die.”7

In “Separated from the Flock”, Ashraf has drawn characters both from upper as well lower stratum of society. The characters feel and act exactly in a way as we would have felt and acted if placed in similar circumstances. The narrator, who is the central character of the story, reveals himself mostly with the use of interior monologues: “… we are birds with broken wings and we can never fly back to those fields of desire – we are more helpless and defenceless
than those birds because once their wings are broken they are ritually
slaughtered – but people like us – our torment never ends.”

Ghulam Ali, the driver, is a typical example of male chauvinism. He believes in
the suppression of the weaker sex. His entire being glows with a sense of pride
while telling the narrator the incident of his friend tearing away the permit of
his wife and later beating her. Like his friend he also does not want to send his
wife on a visit to India. She makes an appeal to let her see and feel, at least once
in life, the place of her birth, the place where her identity began. But Ghulam
Ali considers her emotional attachment as a whim. He tells the narrator: “I am
not concerned about the permit, Sahib. It’s not the only problem a man faces in
his life, Sahib... It’s merely a whim – the visit to India. To satisfy that whim,
I’ll have to waste four to five hundred rupees.” Perhaps Ashraf wants to
emphasize that one who has not gone through such an experience can never
understand the pains of displacement. When a tree is uprooted from its place
and planted in an alien land, it gets shrivelled. Same is the case with Jameela,
Ghulam Ali’s wife. Although she has adopted the life style of a typical Punjabi
woman, her mind is not at peace because her roots lie somewhere else. One part
of hers constantly pulls her to return to her homeland.

“Man is a born slave”, says the famous proverb. He is bound up in
chains – the chains of social responsibilities. Apparently Ghulam Ali appears to
be unsympathetic, having no regard for his wife’s feelings. In reality he is a poor man and his meagre means do not allow him to spend any extra money, as on his wife’s visit to India. Even four to five hundred rupees mean a lot for him. Jameela is financially dependent upon her husband. She can only dream to go to India but cannot fulfil it. The narrator feels a gush of pain after he refuses the permit to Jameela: “That simple woman had placed all her trust in me as a brother and I had betrayed her. She shed her last tears for her home and for her dreams.”

The narrator himself is a senior government official and above all he has a family to take care of. He cannot go to India at the risk of his job and leave his family in a state of financial insecurity. He is helplessly trapped: “It occurred to me that neither of us had any control over our lives; that we were helplessly trapped by circumstances over which we had no influence; that we were utterly defenceless...” More or less same is the case with Nawab – the narrator’s friend. His visit to India would mean a loss of forty to fifty thousand rupees. It is not a matter of being money-minded but being practical. Thus, we observe that the narrator, Nawab, Jameela, Ghulam Ali are not free like migratory birds. Birds are free to move wherever and whenever they want, with no chains of social roles, to which human beings are bound.
Ashraf focuses on the human tragedy. After Partition many people preferred to go to Pakistan. They went to settle there at their own will, as they were given a free choice. And now living in Pakistan or in India they yearn to return to their homeland. This is a human weakness – never to be satisfied in given circumstances. This element of dissatisfaction is projected by Ashraf in “Separated from the Flock”. The narrator’s response to Partition is a mixture of guilt and shame. He feels guilty for his inability to act. In spite of his intense desire, he could not go to India – the place where he had made commitments but unfortunately could not fulfil them. He is ashamed as he has to refuse the permit to Jameela, although he could have arranged for it: “I felt as if my entire being had shattered into small pieces of sharp edged glass … Thousands of shadows flickered over Jameela’s face.”

In winter migratory birds leave their home in search of a better habitat which is necessary for their survival. But the tragedy with the human beings is that they themselves have created an unbearable environment. If they are compelled to leave their homeland, who is to be blamed? They have become victims of their own selfishness unlike birds who are forced by Nature to take such a course.

The imagery used in “Separated from the Flock” is vibrant and lively. The narrator passed his earlier days in a natural environment. In order to evoke
the memories of those days he succeeds in recreating the enchanting environment of the village – haze light of the morning, long stretched corn fields; white ducks floating in the lake etc. Ashraf has taken the imagery of the migratory birds from the natural world and has dexterously applied it in the human world. He has also made frequent use of similes and metaphors. For instance, “Compared to the noise outside, the silence in the jeep was ominous - like the silence of a lonely ship whose crew has been butchered by pirates, floundering in the midst of angry waves.”

At another place he is found comparing his beloved with natural elements, “A young girl, wildly sensual like the waves of the Brahmaputra, self-possessed and proud like the Himalayas…”

With the portrayal of events and incidents Ashraf appears to be a realistic writer. Inside him there is storm and in order to overcome that he wants to become one with the turbulent weather. He pleads with Nature to be quiet but of no heed: “…the silences on the road begged the whispering trees to be quiet. But when those who are living have become insensitive, how can one expect trees, which have no feeling, to respond with sympathy.” Hence the relationship between Nature and human feelings is wonderfully described by the writer.
“Separated from the Flock” presents a different perspective of Partition, i.e., the tragedy of a broken heart. The narrator had fallen in love with a girl. He must have nurtured hopes of leading a happy life with her but the tragedy of Partition was so devastating that it came like a storm and swept away all his dreams, “... that young man built many castles of sand over the years, but they were all washed away by the river – It had erased the dreams of even of the bravest, how could the longings of an ordinary young man survive?”

The comparison of Ashraf with his contemporary writers presents him in a more favourable light. His insight into the tragedy of Partition is admirable. Although Manto’s approach is humane, he usually discusses reality in a detached manner. Manto lacks the charm of subjectivity. He maintains distance from his characters. But this is not true of Ashraf. His approach is subjective and he pleasantly mixes up with his characters so effortlessly that he and his characters ultimately become one. In “Separated from the Flock” the narrator himself is the central character who has experienced the pains of Partition.

Ashraf has drawn a similarity between the women characters as victims and migratory birds. Both are bound by circumstances to leave their native place and settle in an absolutely alien environment. Ashraf has the ability of going deep into the intricacies of feelings. In “Separated from the Flock” he has put two characters side by side – Ghulam Ali, the man who is still living at the
place where he was born, and his wife Jameela who has been displaced from her homeland forever. Through Ghulam Ali the writer has made it clear that those who have not gone through such an experience can never understand the pains of displacement. Among the contemporary writers Ashraf appears to be the most challenging one. He has true subjectivity of an artist. He has an extraordinary ability to conceive and create characters. His characters are not limited to one section of society. The imagery employed in the story is powerful enough to attract our attention. Similes and metaphors lend further charm to it. Ashraf has portrayed a helpless and weak man. According to Ashraf, man is not a single individual, in the social circle he has to play many roles at a time. His obligations weaken him from inside. The secret of Ashraf’s craftsmanship seems to be his perfect understanding of human psychology.
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2. Ibid., p. xxv.

3. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

4. Ibid., p. 5.

5. Ibid., p. 17.


7. Ibid., p. 22.

8. Ibid., p. 22.

9. Ibid., p. 4.

10. Ibid., p. 17.

11. Ibid., p. 12.

12. Ibid., p. 16.

13. Ibid., p. 4.


15. Ibid., p. 3.

16. Ibid., p. 20.
Surendra Prakash’s ‘Dream Images’

Surendra Prakash was born at Lyallpur in 1930, a place now in Pakistan. His emotional attachment with it needs no explanation. With the division of the country non-Muslims migrated to India from those areas which were included in Pakistan. More or less the same was the case with most of the Muslims living in India who went to Pakistan. Prakash’s family was also amongst those who had to experience pains of displacement. This bitter tragedy of displacement was a first hand experience for him and he had borne its thorns of anguish and division. When such a person writes on the tragedy of Partition his words carry weight and create a long-lasting impression on the minds of readers. Prakash’s ‘Dream Images’ is a post-Partition story which was originally written in Urdu and translated into English by M. Asaduddin.

‘Dream Images’ relates the reminiscences of the narrator while he is lost in his world of dreams after Partition. As soon as one enters into the story a strange kind of fear grips the reader - fear of immediate war and death: “Outside, one could hear a rattling noise, the kind made by moving tanks. There is the danger of an immediate war with Pakistan”.
The plot of 'Dream Images' is superb as it takes us skilfully to the dream world of the narrator and until one realizes the gravity of the situation, he gets hypnotized by the stark realities of life. In his dream the narrator makes a trip to the place where he had spent his childhood along with his friends. His longing and his ultimate wish to get united with that place forms the outline of the story.

Most of the novels, written in Urdu, English, Hindi, Bengali and other vernacular languages of India and Pakistan, portray the horrors of one kind or the other. Train massacres, abductions, murders, rapes, displacement are the main themes of Partition fiction. Prakash's 'Dream Images' focuses on the tormented psyche of an individual who appears to be living in comfortable circumstances but has been suffering much from within. His anguish is clearly reflected in these lines: "I think I have separated myself from society, but as I read the newspaper I feel at one with it and the whole situation undergoes a change. Thoughts get blurred. Embers continue to burn." Through his dream, he traverses into his past and feels the trauma of Partition. According to his belief, it is not just his generation which has experienced the pangs of Partition but the coming generations, too, will be at
a loss. Hence, Prakash’s ‘Dream Images’ is not concerned merely with violence and death but with some vital issues of the violation of soul.

In his dream when the narrator enters his own ‘mohalla’ (locality) he observes that the situation is not the same as he had witnessed. Several houses have appeared, changing the topography of the place completely. Also, he could not stand for long in front of his ancestral home because numerous eyes stared at him from behind the walls. The imagery of the staring eyes explicitly emphasizes the strangeness that has developed between the people of the two countries. During Partition communal violence was perpetrated by the extremists killing the innocent persons. The story highlights the intensity of hatred which had taken hold of the members of both communities.

The chanting of ‘dervishes’ (Saints): “Ali da, mast qualandar, Ali da, Ali da mast qualandar”, suggests the idea of the shared socio-cultural life. The narrator experiences a sense of peaceful co-existence of a long cherished cultural life. The lyric of the song sends the narrator in an ecstatic state as he believes that it is a product of his own culture. The narrator gets immense happiness while relishing the ‘qulfi (ice-cream). The remark: “The eyes are moist, the heart is soothed.”³ indicates his heightened state of
happiness. 'Qulfi' is a symbol of the sense of fulfilment. His thirst to rejoin his friends and have a feel of his birthplace is quenched and therefore he is happy and satisfied.

In 'Dream Images' scenes from the past emerge with a sudden spark; Regal Cinema, Shrine of Baba Kaudi Shah, Adh Marg are some of these. These places have left a permanent mark on the memory of the narrator and when he sees them in a dream it becomes a reflection of his acute desire to return to them. Though presently he is leading a contented life yet there is an element of alienation which he could hardly overcome even after so many years. In his dream as he approaches the Hindu 'dharamshala'(guest-house) he is welcomed there with open arms and it occurs to him as though his aching nerves have relaxed: "It was a happy occasion. Having lived as unwanted tenants in other people’s houses all our lives, here at last was a welcome invitation." Obviously such an invitation can come only from those who have shared among themselves a common culture. Through the narrator Prakash has tried to represent the effects of Partition on helpless humanity.

The narrator moves, in his dream, through familiar paths but among strange looking persons. On his way in a taxi he meets a young man with
white hair and white beard, reflecting the trauma of human kind. His anxieties have darkened the prospects of his youth, turning him mercilessly towards old age. The criss-cross of broad and narrow streets depicts the dilemma and confusion of the narrator.

Prakash demonstrates in his ‘Dream Images’ that one can never go home again. Partition has brought with it a longing to return that might never have been there, had Partition not happened. The story is a sensitive portrayal of reality. It is the narrator’s dream to restore his childhood and hence achieve fulfilment. The butcher’s courteous behaviour changes all of a sudden as soon as he comes to know about the narrator’s identity: “He was regarding us as a policeman looks at a suspect.” The writer feels more closeness with Master Nazir Talib, Akhtar Bhai, Jalal Painter, Meraj Sheikh than with the people of his own community. His bond with these Muslims is stronger because they have together shared the social and cultural life of a particular place. Before Partition they were part and parcel of the same community life. There are many things that are common between him and his Muslim friends. The memories of his past life and of his friends keep on haunting him. The most formative period of one’s life is his childhood when
events once registered in the mind hardly get erased. And that period of narrator’s life was spent in the area now called Pakistan.

In his dream the narrator escapes human boundaries of every sort. He approaches Pakistan without any passport or visa, roams into the streets of his old ‘mohalla’ (locality). M. Asaduddin comments:

The interweaving of these visual details and the narrator’s associative perceptions recreate the past in all its variety and complexity. The dream journey takes place as though it were a common occurrence of daily life. Everyday reality and the world of imagination fuse, so as to become almost indistinguishable.6

Partition literature makes an attempt to discover the effects of the man-made boundaries on the spirit of man. Writers like Prakash strongly condemn the division of the subcontinent which according to them has resulted in the devastation of multi-faith society.
Prakash seems to be of the opinion that religion is just a matter of chance and not of strong beliefs and ideologies as he says: “I was then a child, but I kept thinking why we had to be either Hindu or Muslim. The answer lay in our birth – because we were born of parents who were either Hindu or Muslim.” It is unreasonable to hold the view that religion is hindrance in the path of secularism. Religion strengthens the character of a person. People resort to violence because they follow no religion. They feel that there is no power superior to them and hence they will never be punished for their wrong deeds. The question that is eventually raised is that if all religions promote love and brotherhood why people resort to violence. It is basically so because they lack firm faith and have no norms to follow.
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4. Ibid., p.58.

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A Critical Analysis of Jameela Hashmi’s ‘Banished’

Jameela Hashmi, a novelist and a short story writer, was born in Lyallpur, Pakistan in 1929. She has produced several collections of short stories and many novels. Her most acclaimed novel ‘Talash-e-Baharan’ was the recipient of the Adamjee Literary Award in 1960. Her other novel Dasht-e-Sus (1983) is equally famous. Aaap-beeti,Jag-biti is a collection of her short stories. ‘Banished’, a popular Partition story in Urdu, is taken from this collection. Muhammad Umar Memon has deftly translated it into English.

During perturbed times the greatest sufferers are invariably women. Lacking physical strength they usually become easy targets of the miscreants. The tale of their misery does not end just here but it drags them into the world of utter humiliation where in spite of being innocent they are condemned by the society. The tragedies of the victimized women during Partition days have been portrayed with vigour by many writers. For instance, Rajinder Singh Bedi’s ‘Lajwanti’, Saadat Hassan Manto’s ‘Mozel’, Qudratullah Shahab’s ‘Ya Khuda’, and Jameela Hashmi’s ‘Banished’ are wonderful pieces of creative writings and give voice to the silent miseries of women. And fortunately enough some of the stories have been translated into English - Umar Memon’s collection An Epic Unwritten (1998) was published by the Penguin Books, Alok Bhalla’s Stories
about the Partition of India came out in three volumes in 1994. Mushirul Hasan has also collected the translated stories into one of the volumes of India Partitioned: the other Face of Freedom (1995). In this context Saros Cowasjee’s and K. S. Duggal’s Orphans of the Storm; Stories on the Partition of India (1995) is also worth mentioning. Apart from them, there are many collections produced by noted authors.

Jamila Hashmi’s ‘Banished’ is related to the theme of abduction and rape. Here, in the story, the central character is a Muslim woman who has been abducted during Partition days by a Sikh and is compelled to live in his house as a housemaid and by whom she had two sons and one daughter. With time she develops a strong relationship with the mother of her abductor. Though she laments her present condition, yet cannot dare to leave that house: “Where can I go – with my wounded heart, my darkened fate? Munni stands in my way. She is the great distance that separates me from my own family. How can I dare look beyond her, beyond that distance?”

The narrator observes a great deal of similarity between her life and that of Sita. Just as Sita lived a banished life and bore the thorns of misery for no fault of her own, likewise the same tragedy befalls the narrator. The writer comments in this context: “Banishment is a hard thing to endure. But does one have control over anything? Anything at all? Who wants to suffer knowingly?”
Sita (the mythical character of the epic, *Ramayana*) of the past, who had lived a life of banishment, was pure and treated with respect and reverence. There was a great deal of dignity in her exile. But the present day Sita, i.e. the protagonist, is first raped and then forced to live all her life with the same person who had caused her this agony. In her exile what she receives back is insult and mental torture. M. Asaduddin comments:

This Hindu myth that Jamila Hashmi takes recourse to (as do many other Muslim writers, like Intizar Hussain, Ashfaque Ahmad and Ghulam Abbas), along with the Dussehra celebrations, marking the destruction of Ravana, foregrounds a racial memory and a consciousness in which the tragedy of women cuts across religion and community.³

The status of a ‘bahu’ (daughter-in-law) that has been imposed on her is not real but is false. How can she be given the place of a ‘bahu’ when, for entire life, she remains unmarried? Traditionally feelings of affection and respect are associated with this particular word. But to her it appears like an insult as if someone has abused her: “Whenever anyone calls me bahu, I feel insulted. I
have been hearing this word for years, ever since the evening when Gurpal dumped me in this courtyard and cried to Bari Ma, who was sitting on a Chauki. ‘Look, Ma, I’ve brought you a bahu. A real beauty! The best of the lot!’ The narrator’s personality shatters under the heavy burden of the illegal title that has been imposed on her.

Jameela Hashmi’s ‘Banished’ rests on the deep-felt consciousness of the female protagonist. The feeling of her separation from her family is so acute in her consciousness that she observes with great attention the little children who get lost on the eve of ‘dussehra’ (Hindu festival celebrating Rama’s victory over Ravana). She could feel their pain because the same tragedy had befallen her also. Fate has mercilessly separated her from her dear ones: “Paths, like the watery webs etched on the waves by minuscule crawling marine life, dissolve behind us. We can never backtrack on the paths we have already taken. Nothing ever returns. And the milling, jostling crowd at the fair can only move forward.”

The misery of the protagonist is indeed pathetic. She considers herself as a lonely tree which neither blossoms nor bears fruit. She does not bloom as she has been uprooted from her natural surroundings and placed in an alien land. With time she has withered. She looks for the reflection of her life in those things that are devoid of life and forlorn: “A solitary star throbs forlornly in the
sky, like the flickering flame of an earthen lamp. In the blue, empty space its loneliness reminds me of my banishment.\textsuperscript{16} The kind of life she is living presently is totally different from the one she had spent earlier. There was love, comfort, dignity and sophistication in her past life. Her present stands in acute contrast with her past. Now she faces humiliation, loneliness, want, despair and submission. If outwardly she appears to be dutiful as well as respectful towards Gurpal’s mother, it does not imply that she is satisfied with her present status. There is a volcano within her calm self that keeps smouldering within. Without complaining she performs entire household duties – churns milk, picks up the basketful of dung, makes cow-dung cakes with great effort, and does gorgeous embroidery. Her docile and submissive nature wins the heart of Bari Ma. The bonds between them become strong: “With time Bari Ma grew fond of me ... I’m her prized daughter-in-law now, her Lakshmi. She shows off the yarn spun by me to everyone she meets. When other women complain about their daughters-in-law, she praises me to high heaven just to rub it in.”\textsuperscript{17} She appears to be uncomplaining but in reality every pore of her body strongly revolts against the type of life she is leading. And above all, what can her complaints provide her now? It will bring more disgrace to her, more beatings from Gurpal’s mother. One makes complaints to those in whom one confides. How
can she confide in her abductor?, a person who has deeply wounded her soul. Therefore she remains silent.

In ‘Banished’, Hashmi presents the intricate understanding between a mother and a daughter. Munni is so different from her mother, as her roots in the place, Sangraon, are stronger than her mother. An inexorable bond exists between Munni’s body and the earth. Hashmi seems to point out that it is the effect of that bond which makes man complete from within. Munni is like that pear tree which is implanted in the courtyard of the house with its roots going deep below:

The pear tree has blossomed every year since Munni was born. When the seasons change, its branches become filled with flowers, the tree bends over heavy with fruit, deepening its bond with the earth. Its roots burrow deeper into the soil. No one can rupture that bond.\(^8\)

Man imbibes the culture of the place he lives in and his displacement creates a gap in his life and a feeling of a never-ending pain.

The style in which the story ‘Banished’ has been written by Hashmi is striking for its intensity of pain. It evokes pathos and compassion. Each word of
it seems to have echoed from a bleeding heart longing for mercy. The similes and metaphors that have been used in the story leave their imprint for long in the memory of the readers. For instance, “My heart was throbbing fitfully, like the lonely star trembling with apprehension above the blue mist in the clear western sky.”⁹ “.... and the light of the receding ship flickered like a lonely star and then faded away.”¹⁰; “Hopes keep circling the heart like vagrant thoughts.”¹¹; “In this human wilderness I am like a lonely tree which neither blossoms nor bear fruit.”¹² The morbid picture of Partition has been depicted by Hashmi when friends turned into foes and the country rolled into the fire of hatred. Those who had put their faith in humanity were deceived. The narrator sarcastically recalls the biggest tragedy of her life in tears:

Well, maybe Bhai and Bhaiyya weren’t present at my wedding – so what? Hadn’t Gurpal rolled out a carpet of corpses for me? Painted the roads red with blood? Provided an illumination by burning down city after city? Didn’t people celebrate my wedding as they stampeded, screaming and crying?¹³

Partition of the country came as a shock to the entire nation. A country which had been brought together over a period of time and enriched culturally
got divided by those who were essentially behind its making. When woman like Hashmi’s protagonist is abducted and bound to live a life of humiliation, it results in the creation of a crippled nation. What sort of values can a morally corrupt father and an emotionally bankrupt mother impart to their children? The difference created by religion and the politics of Partition blinded the masses, turning them out of their wits. In this context Hashmi comments: “The face of everything, was covered with blood. The very people who did charity in the name of Bhagwan, Guru and Allah slaughtered each other; those who readily laid down their lives to save the virtue of their sisters and daughters considered a woman’s honour no more than an illusion.”

The dividing line between reality and illusion gets dissolved for the narrator when events take a drastic turn in her life. Earlier the greatest reality of her existence used to be her family but now the same reality has subsided into an illusion. The faces of her dear ones have become part of her memory and are now no more real. She feels that “Outside Sangraon, all other villages look like doll houses to me, devoid of reality. Perhaps Sangraon too is unreal, a mere shadow. Perhaps everything is just a shadow.” Instead of giving emphasis on horrifying details Hashmi focuses on some of the universal truths faced by man in day-to-day life.
In Hashmi’s ‘Banished’ hope gives way to despair. For years the protagonist keeps on entertaining the hope of meeting her family. But the dim light of that flickering hope finally diminishes. Hence Partition becomes a metaphor for a tortured soul as millions of people suffered on account of it. Her anxiety is crystal clear in this passage: “The thought crossed my mind that perhaps Bhai and Bahiyya too, would come looking for me. They must have waited long for me outside the gates of the magic city... Everyday I’d tie my hopes into a bundle and peer with anticipation and longing at the bend in the lane.”

Hashmi has made an attempt to portray the repressed self of a woman through her protagonist in the story. She endures Gurpal’s insults as well as the beatings of his mother without a word of complaint because somewhere in the deep corner of her heart a ray of hope persists that someday her Bhaiyya and Bhai would come to Sangraon and take her along. And then ‘wind would rustle through the neem leaves and sing and the entire village would celebrate and rejoice.’ Though she hates to live a life of such humiliation in Gurpal’s house but she has no other option. Hashmi’s female character is totally dependent on her male counterpart. She waits impatiently for her brothers and when they do not come, she refuses to leave Gurpal’s home and go along with the soldiers who come for the repatriation of abducted women of Partition calamity. Finally
the beauty of the past gets dissolved in the ugliness of the present. That beautiful home of her past life which she had nurtured so lovingly gets shattered. Rodh Prakash, a critic, opines: “Both these strands come together in the narrator’s consciousness, and while the past is clearly more desirable than the present, there is also an acute consciousness that it is irrecoverable.”

Another reason which Hashmi provides to her narrator for deciding to stay in Sangraon all her life is that slowly with time her roots have sunk deep in the place. With the birth of Munni her bond with Sangraon has strengthened secretly. Towards the end she realizes that her past life is now just a part of her memory, an illusion that has no connection with the reality. Finally she accepts the bitter reality and prepares herself to tolerate her loss for the sake of her baby, Munni.
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6. Ibid., p. 91.

7. Ibid., p. 104.

8. Ibid., p. 88.

9. Ibid., p. 93.

10. Ibid., p. 92.


12. Ibid., p. 91.

13. Ibid., p. 102.


15. Ibid., pp. 97-98.
16. Ibid., p.102.


A Critical Analysis of Aziz Ahmad’s ‘Kali Raat’ (Darkness)

The writers who have distinguished themselves in Urdu Partition literature are Aziz Ahmad, Qudratullah Shahab, Jameela Hashmi, Saadat Hasan Manto and others. Aziz Ahmad’s short story, ‘Kali Raat’, has been skilfully translated into English from Urdu by Faruq Hasan. It expresses emphatically the downfall of man and has become a symbol of the horrors of Partition when all human values were crushed and bestiality became a common feature. Here we get a close look at the awfulness of Partition attended by violence, physical mutilation, train massacre, rape and homelessness.

The plot of the story is skilfully developed by the writer. It deals with the predicament of those unfortunate people who were heartlessly butchered during cross-border migration. Here, a Muslim family attempting to flee to the other side is brutally murdered by the extremists. Likewise the same tragedy befalls a Sikh family in which the entire family members get murdered, leaving two brothers who take their revenge by inflicting misery on other innocent people. Saros Cowasjee comments: “Aziz Ahmad is fair in assessing blame. He weighs human behaviour which is grossly wanting in tolerance, decency and charity.
with the potential for goodness which has been asserted by thinkers, philosophers and heroes of ancient myths.”¹ The writer’s psychological insight into the tragedy of Partition is superb as it is a result of his first-hand experience of the event. Ahmad had lived in Hyderabad and been a witness to the atrocities of men and their cold-bloodedness. He places his story in Hyderabad because of his familiarity with the place. In ‘Kali Raat’ when the news of the murder of their family reaches the three brothers they become emotionally paralyzed. The writer writes in this context: “Sometimes when the shock is too great, its effect is not felt immediately. At first the senses are dulled and then the brain registers nothing. Hope wants to keep its tiny lamp lit against the certainty of hopelessness.”²

Ahmad strongly condemns communal riots spilling the blood of innocents mercilessly. Sorrow should make man more patient, humane, and soft-hearted because while going through personal pain one can develop a sense to understand the misery of others but the troubled times change human psychology also. In ‘Kali Raat’ the two Sikh brothers make an attempt to turn their personal loss into a universal grief by causing misery to others. One Sikh justifies his killing by saying that he is taking revenge because his wife was mistreated. But one can never
justify one’s wrong deed by that of the other and if he does, it reflects his own perverted thinking.

Through his story Ahmad has tried to make alive the hard times of Partition. The train in which the ‘Baqar’ family is travelling is attacked:

The Rashtriya Sevak Sangh people were working as the train crew. Their most important duty was to pull the Muslims off the train...shout of “Jai Hind and Satsri Akal, Jai Bali Dev”; noises of the game hunt; calls of the beaters, the hunters, the butchers, the gods; cries of those who refused to let off the train, of those who were being lanced or stabbed – all were mixed up.

In ‘Kali Raat’ Ahmad has placed the issue of the rise and fall of man and has projected the basic instincts of man that he can be a maker as well as a destroyer. While climbing the ladder of evolution he has gradually fallen down to its last rung also. His false notion of superiority has made him devoid of all emotions and feelings of sympathy for others. Now he does not hesitate a bit in burning trains, killing people, looting and finally stifling all those moral values that were dear to his ancestors.
He seems to have wasted his energy on wrong causes. Lessons of mutual love and brotherhood are all forgotten by him. Man has humiliated man. Partition has evoked the suppressed evil instincts of man. Great philosophers, thinkers and emperors of the past — Plato, Aristotle, Nietzsche, and Alexander are embarrassed by the shameful deeds of man: “During the day as they walked, they were attacked; at night while they rested, they were attacked, their children were slaughtered, their young men butchered, their women taken away from them.” Ahmad emphasizes that man has degraded himself from the dignity of Aristotle to the lowest level of vermin. His stature is no better than ants and termites. The insensitive massacre of human race at his own hands speak about his failure: “My will engenders all postulates, all calculations, all actions, which enable me to harness nature; yet it is also my will which makes the sword descend, which creates darkness and reduces everything to nothingness in an instant.”

Ahmad believes that after achieving so much progress man is retrogressing towards the period of Dark Age when barbarism was a common feature. No doubt that man has produced electricity and discovered atomic power but it is ironical that he makes use of the same energy for destruction of his own kind and that too without having a
slight sense of guilt-conscience. His long-time journey seems to have taught him no lessons at all.

The inhumanity with which women were treated during Partition is horrifying. In ‘Kali Raat’ Abida, one of the women characters, commits suicide when her house is surrounded by rioters. She prefers a dignified death to a condemned life. Thus Abida’s act of suicide brings into light the narrow-mindedness of society which imposes taboos of chastity and purity on women only. During Partition when women were abducted and defiled, their society discarded them as if it were their own fault. Such a humiliation provoked many victimized women to commit suicide. Hence Ahmad also raises an issue of women violation. His stories are not didactic in the strict sense yet they impart lessons to humanity.

Ahmad skilfully personifies night as a wanderer who witnesses the evil deeds of man and his indulgence in immoral activities which he prefers to do in utter darkness of night with fear of being recognized. The night has seen him visiting the houses of prostitutes and sending those women to eternal sleep after quenching his thirst. The writer appears to lament the insensitivity of man. The night cries out the atrocities of man which it has seen in various cities— Multan, Delhi, Amritsar, Rawalpindi etc. The reference here is clearly to Partition days when men brutally
killed one another with spears, swords and daggers. Man can hide his evil deeds from his fellows but it is impossible to escape from the clutches of Nature which keeps a strict eye on his activities. ‘Kali Raat’ is a stern warning for the whole humanity.
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3. Ibid., p.34.

4. Ibid., p.42.

5. Ibid., p.40.

Manto is one of the eminent Urdu short story writers of the subcontinent. He was born in Sambrala, Ludhiana in 1912 and died in Lahore in 1955. The event of Partition had immensely affected him and he migrated to Pakistan, fearful of communal tension. But for his entire life he yearned to come back to India. Therefore an element of nostalgia and a feeling of hatred for those who had divided the country come to the fore in his work. Manto’s collection of short stories appeared in 1948. His ‘Siyah Hashiye’ is a collection of anecdotes on the violence of Partition. Manto produced fifteen collections of short stories between, 1949-1955, two collections of topical essays and two of personal reminiscences.

In his stories Manto has adopted a humanistic and secular approach, taking side neither with Muslims nor Hindus but focuses his attention on reality in a detached manner. According to his viewpoint, all these anti-Hindu and anti-Muslim activities are part of general human tragedy, the result of which is a horrifying disaster. Since faith is ingrained in the soul, values related with it can never be eradicated by brutal killings. The killing of Muslims at the hands of Hindus out of communal hatred is not going to wipe away Islam. Nor is the murder of non-Muslims going to affect their
religion a little bit. Then what is the use of indulging in these barbaric activities? These are some of the questions which Manto frequently raises in his short stories. His ‘A Tale of 1947’ is translated from the original in Urdu by Khalid Hasan. Here he has shown that when religious frenzy overtakes man, he loses his sense of proportion and becomes senseless. The theme of the story is the growing tension between the two communities. Mumtaz, the protagonist, makes up his mind to leave India after Partition. His heart aches while leaving Bombay, his city as well as his life-long friends. The narrator remarks:

He was packing his things as if it was a picnic he was going to, telling jokes and then laughing at them himself. Had a stranger seen him that morning he would have to come to the conclusion that his departure from Bombay was the best thing that had ever happened to him. However, none of us were fooled by his boisterousness: we knew he was trying to hide his feelings, even deceive himself.¹
The parting of the friends highlights the issue of religious incompatibility. Religion ought not to stand between friendship but it somehow creeps in. The friends who had been living in Bombay for long suddenly become suspicious of one another.

In ‘A Tale of 1947’ Manto highlights the evil effects of Partition – how it nurtured the element of distrust amongst people of different faiths. After receiving the news of his uncle’s murder in a communal riot, one of Mumtaz’s friends says to him “If Hindu-Muslim killings start here … May be I’ll kill you.” Mumtaz is shocked to hear such a comment, which he expects the least from his friend. The protagonist knows well the futility of guns and knives in the eradication of any of the religions from the face of the earth. God resides in the hearts of people and it is impossible to remove it from there. Mumtaz, in order to clarify his point of view, recalls the tragedy of Sehai who was a pimp by profession but in his heart of hearts he valued humanity. In communal violence he gets stabbed. The most striking element is that in spite of the attack Sehai never entertains negative feelings. His concern for a Muslim girl even on his death bed stuns the protagonist when he says to him, “There’s a packet in there … it contains Sultana’s ornaments and her twelve hundred rupees … I was going to return them to her. I wanted
her to have her money and the ornaments." Mumtaz draws a poignant contrast between Sehai and his best friend, Jugal. Sehai is mortally wounded by the rioters of another religion and dying yet he shows his concern for a Muslim girl. On the other hand is his close friend who feels no hesitation in saying that he can kill him if communal riots break out. Through this sarcastic statement Manto brings home the point that it is not religion which proves our humanity but the basic bond of trust, faith and love among human beings. However, one can dispute Manto’s ideology because religion and human kindness are not two different things. Every religion teaches the lesson of patience and generosity for fellow creatures. Therefore to hold religion responsible for creating the entire mess is not reasonable. Religion, when it is abused by extremists harms people and not otherwise.
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3. Ibid., p.164.
‘Toba Tek Singh’

‘Toba Tek Singh’ is taken from Saadat Hasan Manto’s collection Siyah Hashiye. It was originally written in Urdu and translated by Khushwant Singh. ‘Toba Tek Singh’ is a Partition story and has become a metaphor for the absurdity and mindlessness of politicians. A critic writes: “The strength of the story lies in a series of cleverly plotted devices which are used to establish an image of the Partition that is unlike any other that we have been given thus far.”¹ It is a pathetic tale of Bishen Singh, a Sikh lunatic who has been living in a mental asylum for more than fifteen years. He is a native of the village, Toba Tek Singh, and was once a prosperous farmer holding some land. The other inmates of the asylum call him Toba Tek Singh on this account. His only concern is to find out whether after Partition his village Toba Tek Singh goes to India or Pakistan. Being a Sikh he is handed over to the authorities of India but he refuses to go there and stands firm on the ground: “Bishen Singh planted himself on the dividing line and dug his swollen feet into the ground with such firmness that no one could move him.”²

The main theme of ‘Toba Tek Singh’ is Partition and its repercussions on humanity. Manto’s intention is to draw similarity between the asylum and
the world outside it. At the time of Partition monstrosity had become a common feature of the conduct of the two communities, and insanity had taken hold of the general masses in such a way that no difference existed between the lunatics living inside the four walls of asylum and those outside it. A critic comments: “The insane asylum is an obvious symbol for the entire world, and indeed the institution here, with its inmates of various religions, political beliefs, occupations (one is even a criminal) and temperaments, is a microcosm of Indian society.”^3 Through insanity Manto has tried to portray the dilemma of hundreds of thousands of people who were a part of it. A Muslim inmate of the asylum gives voice to the same confusion when he climbs on the tree and delivers a speech on Indo-Pakistan problem and finally declares: “I do not wish to live either in India or Pakistan; I want to stay where I am, on top of this tree.”^4 The lunatic’s climbing of the tree makes explicit his fear of the surrounding world. He is scared of the impending bestiality of human beings and wishes to escape from it. The tree appears to his innocent mind a place away from this world and hence he makes an attempt to seek refuge in that imaginary landscape.

The politics of the outside world is denounced by Manto through his insane characters. The antagonism between Muslims and non-Muslims is
well-portrayed by the author. He believes that this feeling of hostility is so strong that even the lunatics have got affected by it. In the story one of the inmates proclaims himself to be Mohammad Ali Jinnah while the Sikh as Master Tara Singh, the two prominent Muslim and Sikh politicians respectively. And after the attainment of new identities both of them start fighting and abusing each other: “They were declared ‘dangerous’ and put in separate cages.” In order to enhance the absurdity of the situation Manto has also involved the high level officials and bureaucrats when they pass judgments, like: “Muslim in the lunatic asylums of India be sent across to Pakistan; and mad Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistani asylums be handed over to India.”

Manto was a realist. The reality portrayed by him is not sugar-coated; it is terse and biting and directly hits its mark. In ‘Toba Tek Singh’ through the insane characters he gives a realistic account of the bitter realities of Partition. Arjun Mahey observes: “Thus, to say that Manto was a realist, is to say that Manto’s characters and situations are drawn from the grittier, or the more sordid margins of life, and that he centres his tales around the poor, the foolish, the deprived and the marginalized.” In ‘Toba Tek Singh’ there are no didactic elements, there are no sermons for the readers yet its moral
effect is enormous. Manto passes no comments on the grim event but he shocks us with its horrors. 'Toba Tek Singh' begins with a tone of light humour but soon it takes the form of black humour. There is no violence offered by Manto in the story yet much is conveyed implicitly. The nonsense talk of the lunatics embodies hidden meanings, hinging on Partition.

"It must be a monstrous thing indeed, the Partition, the story seems to say, which can rob even an insane man of his fragile hold on reality."8

Through the confusion of Bishen Singh, Manto condemns the division of the country. The protagonist enquires of his friend where Toba Tek Singh is. His friend surprisingly replies, "It's in the same place where it always was."9

Bishen Singh, who is insane, is unable to comprehend the situation that when Toba Tek Singh is exactly at its place then why is he being taken away from there? Through the character of Bishen Singh, Manto concludes that this territorial division is unreal. A Sikh lunatic wants neither to be in India nor in Pakistan but in his ancestral village, Toba Tek Singh, to which he belongs. According to Manto, no physical boundaries can divide the hearts of people. The victims of Partition were not Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs but they were essentially human beings, innocent ones. The writer remarkably touches upon the subtlest of human emotions: "The barbed wire fence on
one side marked the territory of Pakistan. In the no man's land between the
two barbed-wire fences lay the body of Bishen Singh of village Toba Tek
Singh." The heart-wrenching cry of Bishen Singh reflects the trauma of
those who were forced to leave their homeland. 'Toba Tek Singh' may be
studied also from the allegorical point of view. The central character is an
image of the state of the country. Arjun Mahey opines:

...the story ends both literally and
metaphorically as a jolting cry; and the fine
borderland between the aesthetic and the
ethical – an appropriate metaphor for a story
about borderlands - is drawn in the sensitive
use of the name of the story, which is also
the name of the village and a metaphor for
the central character's state of mind, as well
as the state of the country.  

The death of Bishen Singh arouses pity among readers and portrays a
pathetic picture of humanity.
REFERENCES


5. Ibid., p. 147.

6. Ibid., p. 145.


8. Ibid., p. 150.


10. Ibid., p. 153.


‘The Dog of Tetwal’

‘The Dog of Tetwal’ originally written in Urdu by Manto is translated into English by Ravikant and Tarun K Saint. The pain which Manto had experienced during Partition - the pain of displacement and mental harassment, finds expression in most of his short stories. “Through the refraction of his own experience as well as the general experience of humanity, Manto achieves a searing critique of the oppressive structures that came into being with the division of the subcontinent.”

‘The Dog of Tetwal’ is a masterpiece of Manto. The story is about a stray dog who becomes a helpless victim in the conflict between Indian and Pakistani army. However at the symbolic level the dog’s death signifies the ignorance of the values of life.

In the story the soldiers of the armies of both India and Pakistan are shown to be the products of the same place, speaking the same language and sharing the same culture. In spite of all these similarities they have become indifferent towards each other as a result of the division of the country. This acute sense of differentiation has pulled them farther and farther away. The Partition of the subcontinent has imprinted on their
minds that Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are essentially different communities and to place them in a unified whole is impossible.

The song sung by one of the soldiers fills the atmosphere with a sense of loneliness. Banta Singh’s tender feelings for his beloved come to the fore with the recitation of this song, describing the longing of a lover. While singing the passages from ‘Heer’ he appears to be a sensitive person who can do anything for the sake of his love. However, the same feelings undergo a drastic change when he comes across a stray dog and takes pleasure in shooting it. Inflicting misery on the dog and driving pleasure out of it reflect the heightened state of frustration of the soldiers. It is their indirect way of releasing suppressed feelings of depression. A man whose voice bears so much intensity of pain, turning the entire atmosphere melancholic, can never be heartless. Hence one may conclude that the portrayal of the soldiers is Manto’s critique of what communalism has done. Their reaction shows the damage which has been done to the Hindu-Muslim relations as a result of Partition.

In Manto’s story the dog is an allegorical figure. His condition is more or less like that of the refugees. During Partition millions of people were uprooted from their homeland and thrown into an alien place, without any resources. To begin life from the scratch was not an easy task for them.
Ravikant and Tarun. K. Saint feel that “the dog is explicitly described as a refugee, its vagabond status reminiscent of the many refugees wandering about, looking for shelter and food.” Like the refugees the dog too, becomes the victim of the insanity of human beings and ironically the fate of the two seems identical. Most of the refugees had to die a dog's death and no mercy was granted to them. The historical accounts and literature produced on Partition portray the grim realities but no effort can justly depict the agony of those men and women who lost their lives.

The tag affixed to the neck of the dog further enhances the irony. Just as the citizen of a country has to show his passport as a proof of his identity, the dog too, is provided with a hanging tag that confirms its citizenship. Once the people of both the countries of India and Pakistan belonged to one nation but with the division of the country they have become strangers and their strangeness has gradually taken the form of hatred. “Since Nation – states cannot do without fixing identities, the ultimate extension of this logic can be war. Emotions like anger and an unthinking aggression can be thus directed, so as to sustain the tired rhetoric of nationalism.” The Indian soldiers are found questioning the identity of the dog in a humorous vein. Jamadar Harnam Singh speaks aloud: “Like the Pakistanis, Pakistani dogs too will be shot.” On the
surface it seems to be ridiculous but in reality it is not. It carries with it the
powerful sting of hatred. The attitude of the soldiers is that they hate
Pakistan and everything associated with it. And this sort of hatred knows
no bounds.

"Now, even dogs will have to be either Hindustani or Pakistani!" This phrase expresses the black humour and the gravity of the scene. By questioning the identity of the dog, soldiers reinforce the irony of the situation. This shows that human beings are not satisfied simply by dividing their own lot and now their intention is to destroy the harmony of animal world.

The tragedy of Partition represented by Manto leaves its mark, especially through the depiction of absurd situations. For instance the dog becomes an issue of war for both the sides. Both the parties claim it but the moment they suspect the loyalty of the dog, it becomes an object of hatred for them. Subedar Himmat Khan’s sending of message on the wireless set and having a word with the Platoon Commander in connection with the identity of the dog sounds grotesque. However, if things are viewed closely, one realizes that it is Manto’s style of representing black humour. Mutual antagonism is reflected through such portrayal.
Religious fanaticism arouses blind fury which impels people to indulge in beastly activities. And no justification can be offered for such inhuman acts. Religious bigotry played a vital role in the victimization of the weakest and the most vulnerable sections of the society. The frightened dog reflects the trauma of the scared humanity at the time of Partition. Arjun Mahey remarks:

The irony is that, the only time when the enemies agree about something, is that when they want to kill a creature which has been an unselfish friend to both; the indictment of treachery is one that can only recoil back onto them. The tones of pathos and savage frivolity are balanced and captured by the simple tactic of overlapping images of the dog’s wounded bewilderment with the soldiers’ indifferent brutality, counterbalancing simultaneously the ideas of death and a diversion.⁶
REFERENCES


2. Ibid., p. 97.

3. Ibid., p. 97.

4. Ibid., p. 5.

5. Ibid., p. 5.

6. Ibid., p.145.