

Partition Theme in Chaman Nahal's Azadi and Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan

Dinesh Kumar

Asstt. Prof. of English Dyal Singh College, Karnal
Dineshkarnal1@gmail.com

Abstract

Without any shadow of doubt, the theme of partition is one of the leading themes in Indo-Anglian fiction. There are number of Indian writers, males and females, Hindu as well as Muslims and even Sikh novelists who have contributed a great deal to the development of partition theme. Hindu novelists like Chaman Nahal, Manohar Malgonkar and many more; Sikh novelists like Khushwant Singh, Raj Gil, H.S.Gill and K.S.Duggal whose contribution in noteworthy in the arena of partition fiction; and the contribution of Muslim novelists lie Attia Hussain is worthy of detailed consideration, all have their collective contribution in the field of partition theme.

The theme of partition is one of the most recurrent themes in literature, particularly in the Indian Writing in English. Various writers have contributed a great deal to the development of this theme, and Salman Rushdie, Khushwant Singh, Manju Kapoor, Bapsy Sidhwa, Manohar Malgonkar, and various Sikh novelists including Kartar Singh Duggal, Raj Gill and H. S. Gill all contributed a great deal to the development of partition fiction. Apart from it, some Muslim novelists like Attia Hosain and others' contribution is also noteworthy in this direction. Khushwant Singh is one of the leading figures among the of partition fiction writers. Without any shadow of doubts, we can assert this fact that he is a versatile genius-a novelist, short story writer, essayist, historian as well as a reputed journalist. In his novels, we get an authentic and realistic portrayal of society and history, political and religious behavior of the contemporary people. His novels present the dilemma and frustration of the people who were torn because of partition. His masterpiece, Train

to Pakistan portrays beautifully the horror of the partition they were suffering from. This novel delineates the tragic tale of the partition due which the formation of India and Pakistan took place, and that is still remembered as the darkest chapter in the human history. Khushwant Singh vividly portrays the pain and suffering as they were uprooted from their native lands and it was certainly a very painful experience for the people of both countries.

Train to Pakistan is a beautiful castigation of the Post-War 11 in the Indian Writing in English which was originally named as Mano Majra which was the name of village. Due to the partition, people were uprooted from their respective countries and they had to search new places to establish themselves with tension ridden minds, they were totally unplanned about their new destinations. The partition was the result of the communal suspicion sown by the leaders. The sub- inspector was enraged at the ignorance of the leaders in Delhi about the



brutal act in Punjab done in the wake of partition.

The partition ushered in a period of inhuman violence. Train to Pakistan certainly portrays the life of the frontiers between India and Pakistan that had become the scene of rioting and bloodshed. The communal harmony between the Muslims and Sikhs, existing for centuries, was shattered by a series of tragic events. Death- the result of man's cruelty- overpowered the trains, and disturbed the age- old harmony of the Muslims and Sikhs even in the peaceful villages. The novel explores beautifully the story of one such village, Mano Majra, where the traditional bond of friendship and good will was ruptured by horrible events as the village became a battlefield of conflicting loyalty. The magistrate and the police failed to stem the rising tide of violence. Complete anarchy was let loose and human goodness and innocence were drowned into the tide of violence and hatred.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* delineates the psychological consequences of the partition. The present novel focuses the attention of the readers how the ugly event caused havoc in the minds of the people and highlights the predicaments of the souls, shattered by the unprecedented tragedy. The novel makes a moderate attempt to diagnose the malady , leading to the inhuman catastrophe. It criticizes vividly the Hindus and Muslim leaders responsible for the partition and the bloodshed that dazed everyone.

The masses are shown as the mere puppets in the hands of the clever, selfish and power hungry politicians who exercised profound influence on the thoughts and deeds of men during those fateful days. Violence, the result of mad communal frenzy, has been objectively

depicted. *Azadi* stresses how the mildest of man was spurred on to engage himself in the ghastly acts of violence. Even an ordinary tradesman, Abdul Ghani, was transformed into a Muslim Leaguer. He, like million of others, was misled by the crafty politicians, hungry to grab power. The novel shrewdly unfolds the conspiracy of the politicians, but amidst the horrible scenes of inexplicable violence, it also indicates the rebirth of, and hope for , a new guilt-free identity; the appalling misery must have meaning.

Azadi portrays beautifully the horror of partition, the colossal violence that still haunts the Indian psyche. It concentrates on the exodus of millions of refugees from Pakistan, and on the aftermath of the partition. The novel is very suitably divided in to three parts: Part 1, The 'Lull': Part 2 'The Storm' ; and Part 3' The Aftermath'

The merciless killing of the stray dogs shows the cruelty of British soldiers. The reference to Jallianwala Bagh spotlights the inhuman acts of Britishers. Nahal points out satirically that the killing of dogs for their crime was an act of inhumanization. But, in the changed times, the sergeants went only after the dogs. Lala Kanshi Ram saw the precision of the British Raj in as small an act as the killing of the stray dog and felt that there "indeed was no Raj like the Angrez Raj"¹

Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in Ganges* concentrates upon the painful drama of the partition comprehensively and suggestively. The novel depicts powerfully the horrible development resulting in the partition, the triumph and tragedy of the hour of freedom, the screams of the victims rent the morning air, the dawn of freedom greeting the sub- continent in the pools of blood, the barbarous cruelties



heaped on me and women, catcalls of the crowd and innumerable women being carried away naked, struggling and screaming at the top of their voice. The Muslim fears of being ruled by the Hindus in the absence of the British rule in the country where they had been the rulers, their notion that the Hindus were more dangerous than the foreigners and ought to be their real target and their subsequent striking at them, their struggle for a safe homeland separate from India leading to the partition, and the terror of pity of it- all these form the content of the novel. *A Bend in Ganges* powerfully explores the freedom struggle of the Indian Nationalists, the mad and misleading communal frenzy, the Japanese invasion of the British territories in Asia, the bitterness brought about by the partition, the massive exchange of population and the cruel and shameful acts caused by communal hatred. The atmosphere of the country became vicious and hell was let loose. The novel dramatically depicts in great detail, what is stated briefly in the , ‘Author’s note’:

What was achieved through non-violence, brought with it one of the bloodiest upheavals of history: twelve million people had to flee, leaving their homes; nearly half a million were killed ; over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated.²

Of late three Sikh novelists- Raj Gill, H.S. Gill, and K.S.Duggal- have dealt with the theme of partition comprehensively in *The Rape, Ashes and Petals and Twice Born Twice Dead* respectively, though none of them emulates Nahal and Khushwant in this regard and convinces any striking reality. Raj Gill’s *The Rape* explores the theme of partition quite competently. It reveals the selfishness of the political leaders, criticizes the British for their policy of “Divide and Rule”, shows the religious

fanaticism leading to mass violence and shameful acts, holds both the Hindus and Muslims equally guilty for the ghastly events, and communicates the novelist’s vision of life at the time of partition. The dehumanized society of those terrible times and the unforgettable scenes and sights of the tragic historic event have been fully delineated in it.

The novelist scrutinizes the factors responsible for the partition of the country. He criticizes the politicians of all kinds and communities, responsible for the division of the country and for the shameful events that followed it; he does not spare any leader or party- Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Master Tara Singh, the Congress and Muslim League- all become the subject of criticism. The author says in this connection:

Partition of the country had become an established fact. Lord Mountbatten had manoeuvred to bring around the Congress leadership to agree to the partition formula using the native people of an Indian Civil Servant V.P.Menon. The Congress had bit at it avidly just as the Muslim League had succumbed to the temptation. The original demand of the Muslim League was declaring of the Muslim majority provinces as Pakistan. What they had to settle down to in the end was division of such provinces, mainly the Punjab and Bengal ³

Attia Hossain’s *Sunlight on Broken Column* mainly studies the psychological crisis in a Muslim home caused by the partition. In an amazingly impartial way the writer surveys the scene of national struggle, and looks in to the genesis of the creation of Pakistan, a neo-paradise for the Muslim. In a very clear tone, she finds the Muslim fanaticism contributing tremendously to the demand of partition. She accentuates that the division of Ahisama , a



happy home at Lucknow. The members of the once integrated house stood split and divided. Saleem and Nadira went away to Pakistan and unfortunately it became impossible for them to visit their home in India. She focuses on the impact of the partition and finds it to be an extremely tragic phenomenon. Her picture of the whole development is saturated with emotional and psychological tortures.

References:

- [1] Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*(New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann,1975)p.14
- [2] K.R.Srinivas Iyenger, *Indian Writing in English* (Bombay:Asia Publishing House,1973)p.433
- [3] Raj Gill, *The Rape*(New Delhi:sterling publication Pvt. Ltd.,1974)p. 57