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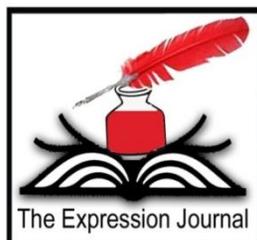
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PARTITION LEADING TO BLOODSHED AND COMMUNALISM LEADING TO INHUMAN CATASTROPHE AS PICTURED IN *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN* AND *AZADI*.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This paper neatly examines India's rich and varied culture that has survived the test of times has always been a source of wonder to the Western minds the novels *Train to Pakistan*, *War and Peace*, *Farewell to Arms*, *Azadi* and *The Naked and the Dead*. It also throws light on the violent and uncure incidents that followed the partition of India on the communal basis and it focuses on the shock, violence, loss of human dignity and the play of bestial that the partition bred. The partition of India is an incident that concerns our immediate post of which many of our contemporaries have vivid recollections. The causes course and effects of the incident have become part of history. As such, no novelist could have given a new twist to happenings. Communalism as such is a very sensitive topic for fictional delineation. The partition novels abound in starkly realistic and frequently disturbing descriptions of riots, bloodshed, mass rapes and other horrors. Present paper is an attempt to analyse the bloodshot and communalism in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chaman Nihal's *Azadi*.

Key-Words

Partition Literature, Violence, Culture, Fear, Bloodshed.

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What is universally understood is that a great national experience generally serves as a great reservoir of literary materials as can be seen from the literature of many countries. It is well-known to all that the American Civil War, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and even the two world wars gave birth to the birth of such notable novels as *War and Peace*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Farewell to Arms*, *The Naked and the Dead* and *Dr. Zhivago*. Likewise, the partition of our country in 1947 did provide the solid ground for the production of a number of novels with a focus on real and fictions incidents connected with the division. Man's inhumanity to man has been a favorite subject to the writers the world over and the partition-novelists in Indo-Anglian literature have succeeded in varying degrees to bring out the shock, violence, loss of human dignity and the play of bestial that the partition bred.

Honestly speaking, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Manogar Malgonker's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Attia Hossain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Rag Gill's *The Rape*, Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* are some of the notable novels which beautifully portray how the two communities the Hindus and the Sikhs, stooped to detestable inhuman activities levelled against each other, and bathed in the blood of their own fellow countrymen, inspite of their relentless fight against the British to reach the target of achieving freedom almost without bloodshed out of these novels, mention might be made about the two novels namely *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh and *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal While the theme of communalism is dealt with rather casually by other novelists, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal treat it seriously in its varying aspects. Seriously probing deep into this nationwide phenomenon so as to trace the essential roots of this national cancer, both the novelists are found projecting a positive view of life, upholding the eternal values of human endurance, dignity and optimism, winning over narrow considerations of caste, religion and selfish motives.

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Truly speaking, India's rich and varied culture that has survived the test of times has nurtured on the rock basis of tolerance and magnanimity could never afford any acts of narrow sectarianism or selfishness. The spiritualism, art, architecture and the way of life of the Islam got into our national consciousness and came to exist side by side with the traditional Indian way of life. The teachings of Jesus Christ also received a tremendous welcome from the people of this soil. Great religions of the world like Buddhism and Jainism sprang from this land and spread to other countries, ascertaining the need for leading a worthy life, guided by the principles of spiritualism, perseverance, Compassion, tolerance and forgiveness. Despite all differences, there is a Common element in all religious experience, a Common foundation on which rests its faith and worship. In *The Spirit of Prayer*, William Law points out that the differences of religions are on the surface. In this words,

“..... there is but one possible way for man to attain this salvation, of life of God in the soul. There is not one for the Jew, another for a Christian and a third for the heathen. No, God is one, salvation is one and the way to it is one.....” (p. 173)

What is said and disheartening to note that despite all these teachings of the great seers and sages, communal disharmony resulting in large scale massacres and acts of vandalism have disrupted the peaceful co-existence of Indians through the Centuries. Lord Buddha, being fully Conscious of these clashes of ideologies, exhorted his followers to rise above all narrow concerns to attain enlightenment, while Kabir, the fifteenth century apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity tried his best to bring peace among warring Hindus and Muslims. It is quite unfortunate to note that vested interests did a lot in making use of religion as their potential weapon for achieving their selfish ends and the illiterate masses often danced to their tunes, without knowing the fact that they were digging their own graves such set backs are the real retarding forces that hinder nation's progress at all levels.

The bane of Communalism has always posed the greatest threat to Indian's national integration for the Hindu majority looked upon the Muslims as mainly invaders and settlers. The Muslim rulers, especially those who came after Akbar the great, paid little attention to religious amity and hence the gap had wintered over the Centuries. The political and economic disparities between the two communities added complexities to their social and religious differences. The Hindus had acquired an edge over the Muslims in services, trade and industry owing to their superior English education and their competence to adapt themselves to the new situation” (Hunter 176) Despite the strong cultural and ethnic codes that bound these two communities together, their separate religions had little in common. The Islam propagated monotheistic faith where as polytheism was the accepted faith of the Hindus. The Islam looked down upon idol worship which formed an integral part of the daily life of a sacred animal. The Muslims on the other hand had no such considerations and often included in the slaughter of cows which earned them the wrath and indignation of the Hindu majority Language also had come to play a major role in widening the rift between the two communities. The Hindu-Urdu controversy had a great impact on the communal relations amongst the intellectuals of the two communities. This controversy can be traced back to 1867 when Sir Syed Ahammed Khan urged the Muslims to

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organize themselves to protect their language” (Zakaria 294)

The country got divided into two district political camps, once the request for separate electorate for Hindus and Muslims got officially sanctioned. The establishment of separate electorate worsened the prevailing mutual distrust and hatred of the two communities. The formation of the Muslim League and the separatist attitude of the Muslim minorities enraged the Hindu majority. Gandhiji was fully conscious of the mutual distrust that had come to exist between the two communities. He was also conscious of the fact that there was no immediate cure for this malady. He writes thus:

“I know that there is much, too much distrust of one another as yet. Many Hindus distrust Mussal man’s honesty. They argue that without the British, Mussal man’s of India will aid Mussal man Powers to build a Mussalman Empire in India. Mussasl mans, on the other hand, fear that the Hindus, being an overwhelming majority, will smother them” (p. 92)

He was convinced that the dream of a free India could only be realized when “Hindu, Muslim and Parsi brethren feel that they are all one” (p. 326) unfortunately Gandhi’s efforts to forge complete unity between the two communities could not bring forth the desired result as Hindus and Muslims “retained their separate entities and could not merge with each other to create a strong nation” (Choudhri 16). Gandhiji understood that the freedom of India is futile unless and until the different sections of people cast away their intolerance and inhabitations. He pleaded for a change of heart and for the freedom from all bitterness before one could ask the British to go away. The partition of the nation was brought about most abruptly and without any thought of the possible repercussions. The communal holocaust that came in the wake of partitions was quite an unexpected development for the authorities. The authorities who were entrusted with the duty of putting out the communal frenzy often turned partisan and as a result, a large number of innocent men, women and children had to succumb to the communal hatred.

The violent and uncurl incidents that followed the partition of India on the communal basis will ever remain a blemish on our long tradition of religious amity and peaceful co-existence. The down of the long cherished freedom witnessed the bloodiest ever up heavily in the history of human race and shocked the civilized people of the world over. Naturally enough, a number of creative writers in Indian-English took upon themselves the task of fictional delineation of the horrors that accompanied the partition and the subsequent transfer of population. Though they might differ from one another in their treatment of the theme and the depiction of the social, political and psychological implications of the incident, they all seemed to agree on one point that the partition was a heinous crime perpetrated by unthinking bureaucrats and enacted on the conscience of a nation most arbitrarily. Most of the Indian-English novelists writing on the theme of partition had occasions to encounter real life situations in which they were witnesses to the in human acts of religious fanatics.

Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* presents how the terrorist movement designed to oust the British from India, degenerated into communal hatred and violence and how the emphasis from the struggle between Indian nationalism and British colonialism shifted unfortunately to the ferrous and malicious hatred between the Muslims and the Hindus. In a

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powerful way, the novelist narrates the struggle of the Indian nationalists, the mad and misleading command frenzy, the triumph and tragedy of the hour of freedom, the screams of the victims mending the morning air and the dawn of freedom greeting the sub-continent in the pools of blood.

In *The Dark Dancer*, Balachandra Rajan artistically analyses the various factors leading to the partition and the subsequent tragedy, and *Sunlight on a Broken Column* presents a perspective on the partition different from other novels. Raj Gill in *The Rape* traced the political and historical background of the partition while Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead* is a vigorous plea for compassion and amity in a world torn apart by narrow communal and sectarian considerations.

Critics have acclaimed Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chawan Nahal's *Azadi* as the best novels ever written on the theme of partition. *Train to Pakistan* published in 1956 was the first novel written in English on the theme of partition, purely noted for its strong symbolism and exquisite characterization. R.K. Dhawan observes.

"Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* is an epoch-making book which describes not only the terror and Tumult that accompanied, "impact darkened, The attainment of freedom in 1947 but does also envisage man's azadi or freedom from beast lines, from moral, psychological and spiritual malady" (p. 126)

These novelists seem to endorse the view that racial hatred and separatist politics can, in its turn, brew only mutual hatred and in human trends. These novelists invariably portray characters who could soar high above narrow communal interest and establish the dignity of human bonds. Saros Cowasjee, while tracing the excellent work done by these novelists, feels quite optimistic that in the coming years more and more creative writers will be attracted by "the fictional and dramatic Potential in the theme of partition and more novels are sure to appear in the coming years" (p. 29)

Azadi which won Chaman Nahal the Sahitya Academy Award in 1977 is a novel directly concerned with the partition and its after matter. It does critic the Hindu and Muslim leaders responsible for the partition and the bloodshed that dazed everyone. Chamen Nahal was forced to flee to India following the Partition. His own position of 'a forced exile' tormented his self in his mature years. He thus expresses his purpose behind the creation of *Azadi*:

"I have always rejected the two-nation theory; the creation of Pakistan in no way solved the problem of the minorities. And till this way I pine for the city in which I was born and raised. I see this as the typical yearning of all involuntary exiles. Hence I wrote *Azadi* as a hymn to one's land of birth, rather than a realistic novel of the partition" (p. 40)

The story of *Azadi* is related to certain historical events of great importance and their impact on ordinary people making a moderate attempt to diagnose the malady, leading to the in human catastrophe. The novel centers round the fortunes of Lala Kanshi Ram, a wholesale grain merchant of sialkot. Lord Mount Batten's announcement on June 3, 1947 with regard to freedom and partition of the Indian sub-continent came as a thunder bolt upon the peaceful life of Kanshi Ram. The Muslim dominated and the city of Sialkot soon became unsafe for the Hindu minority.

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Kanshi Ram is forced to flee the city with other Hindu and Sikh families. The sporadic acts of murder, looting and arms subsequently explode into massive and organized violence by the Muslims. Kanshi Ram, his wife Prabha Rani and their only son Arun joined the foot convoy on their way, they got subjected to untold miseries and hardships. They had to witness the death and rape of many near and dear ones. At last, they reached Delhi, where in the face of severe ordeals they settled down to begin a new life. K.R.S. Iyengar observes:

“Nahal concentrates on Lala Kanshi Ram’s family, but the mind can and does, like a computer multiply the horror and pity a million fold and try to get at the measure of the total holocaust” (p. 750)

The people of the frontier states, especially the Punjab had the real taste of partition – not as a geographical division of the main land, but as a sharp knife cutting across the age old amity and tradition that had bound the Hindus and Muslims for generations. They had even come to share the visuals and festivals of the two religions, irrespective of their own religious loyalties. Religious differences seemed to melt away forming stable personal relationships among people of the two communities. Nahal portrays the intricacy of Lala Khanshi Ram’s family with that of Choudhri Barkat Ali. It is quite significant that Choudhri Barkat Ali’s loyalty to his friend is not in the least affected by the frenzy of his own fellow Muslims. Narrow – minded sectarian ideas have no place in his mind. He knows that “God of the Hindu as well, and if they preferred to worship him in another form, that preferred to worship him in another form, that was their business” (Azadi 96). Choudhri Barkat Ali is a strong critic of religious fanatics. He is the right man with the right kind of ideas. Nahal maintains remarkable impartiality in narrating the ugly incidents following the partition. He puts the blame squarely on the warring communities. While the Hindus suffered in the burning West Punjab, the Muslims too were in miserable plight in the eastern part of Punjab. The Hindus felt unprotected and forlorn in the declared land for the Muslims. The leaders were hollow and uncertain and the government did appear to be against the people. Kanshi Ram felt bewildered at the strange inaction of the government in preventing violence. He thus tells Arun:

“If unwilling, the Government is a party to murder. If capable, we Indian, had no right to ask for freedom” (Azadi 124)

The news of the partition was taken differently by the different communities. While the Hindus and Sikhs read their doom in the announcement of the partition, the Muslims were jubilant and gay. They went wild with the news. They celebrated it by exploding fire crackers. The noise and light of their crackers tormented the Hindu and Sikh population. The Hindus were asked to guard themselves their dear ones and even property against the possible Muslim attack. There was acute fear and confusion among them. The Hindu shops got looted and the Hindu deputy Commissioner who had handled the situation with a firm hand was shot dead by his own body-guard. The communal elements in the government were really fanning the flames of communal hatred. The newly won freedom results in the conflict and bitterness between the two lovers, Arun and Nur who get shattered in love because of the partition and communal violence everywhere. Nahal fully succeeds in establishing the true dimensions of the events that

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accompanied partition, showing their physical as well as psychological impacts on human life. The focus is very often on the loss of personality caused by this tragic event rather than an irreparable material loss, the characters undergo great psychological charges as they pass through gruesome calamities. Kanshi Ram himself felt and said thus:

“..... standing before tunnel, where he could not see the other end. How long was the Tunnel? And it all looked so unnecessary, so super fluous, to him-what they were going through” (P 369)

Nahal brilliantly portrays how the religious faiths of people are but to test by an impending calamity and how compromises are made for the bare, basis need to survive. Gangu Mal, decides to embrace Islam just for the sake of retaining his property in the city. He considers material comforts above family relationship. *Azadi* thus presents a great historical event in terms of its full human implications seen and felt through the lives of a few individuals. In the end, Lala Kanshi Ram learns to transcend narrow communal considerations and his mind is ruled by pity, compassion and love. The hardships that he faces in Delhi increase his moral responsibility and he feels sorry for the death of Gandhi. K.S. Ramamurthi comments thus:

“Khanshi Ram’s individual consciousness has in the end matured and developed into a national consciousness, rather a purely humoristic consciousness” (p. 133)

The novelist has taken particular care to portray the true dimensions of the events that accompanied the partition, showing their physical and psychological impacts on human life. Hence the novel brings out not only the irreparable material losses but also the loss of personality caused by this gruesome historical event.

Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* is both grim and pathetic take of individuals and communities caught in the while of partition. The ‘train’ signifies the continuity and dynamism a life serving as a vehicle for bringing forth togetherness as opposed to alienation and separation. It is a symbol of hope and peace for the refugees, who are all fully dependent on the train as it is their only ray of hope to a promised land. Likewise, life in Mano Majra is somehow inextricably associated with the passage of trains. It is a veritable almanac and time guide for the people of Mano Majra in normal times. It is curious to note that the first disruption to the peaceful life and communal harmony in the village in the arrival of the ‘ghost train’. In the words of a Vasante A Shenhane, “the train in the novel is a dual symbol. On the have, it symbolizes life and action; it stands for death and disaster on the other” (p. 69)

The story centres round the destinies of the people of Mano Majra, a border village with a river fringing it and railway bridge spanning the river. Though the frontier between India and Pakistan turns a scene of rioting and bloodshed, everything is quiet and normal in Mano Majra. Partition does not mean much to them. The arrival of the ‘ghost train’ at Majo Majra from Pakistan carrying the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs creates a communion, triggering off mutual suspicion and distrust between the Sikhs and Muslims of the village. Religious fanatics from outside plan a large scale massacre on the train to Pakistan, the train that is to carry the Muslim refugees of the village. The timely action of Juggat saves the train and the passengers from danger, but he himself gets killed in the attempt.

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Mano Majra consists of about seventy families and Lala Ram Lal's is the only Hindu family the general atmosphere prevailing in the village before the arrival of the 'ghost train' is idyllic in so far as there are no religious disputes or communal tension. The peel tree in the village is a symbol of the religious a unity and brother hood that behind the villagers together. They are fully ignorant of the newly gained freedom or of the division of the country on communal basis. The Mano Majrans are mute victims of the inhuman activities perpetrated on them by indifferent bureaucrats like Hukum-Chand and the Sub-Inspector of Police. Both of them nurture communal feelings at heart and have no compassion left for the helpless refugees. The novelist purposefully highlights the solidarity of the village folk that, in times of peace transcended narrow communal considerations. In this rural society, "everyone in the village was a relation; loyalty to the village was the supreme test". It is this strong bond of mutual respect and affection that prevented violence in the village even when other parts of Punjab were sweltering in communal frenzy. Even though meet Singh cannot boast of any formal educational background, he appears in the novel as the messiah of peace, non-violence and universal brotherhood. He represents the tension-free and hatred-free life of the Mano Majrans when he says:

"Everyone is welcome to his religion. Here next door is a Muslim Mosque. When I pray to my Guru, uncle Imam Bakshi calls to Allah..." (TP 35)

Khushwant Singh intended the novel as a realistic delineation of the partition, that he himself had come to witness. The Shameful incidents of those days completely shattered his belief in the innate goodness of man. For the First time in his life, he came face to face with the beast lines, cruelties and the evil inherent in human beings. He felt and said:

"It was time one exploded this myth of the innate goodness in man there is innate evil in man... And so I just wrote about it" (p. 54)

To conclude, the partition of India is an incident that concerns our immediate post of which many of our contemporaries have vivid recollections. The causes course and effects of the incident have become part of history. As such, no novelist could have given a new twist to happenings. Communalism as such is a very sensitive topic for fictional delineation. The partition novels abound in starkly realistic and frequently disturbing descriptions of riots, bloodshed, mass rapes and other horrors. The partition novels invariably convey the message there the partition of the sub-continent on communal basis was affected abruptly and most arbitrarily and that it was the politicians hunger for power combined with the indecent haste of the British which brought about the tragedy. Novels like *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* have treated the partition and its aftermath comprehensively. Both Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal made it dear that the communal flare ups had a rather lengthy incubation period. The partition only triggered up the mutual hatred and disgust that were kept on the leash by the iron hand of the colonial rulers. In brief, *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* stress the continuity of life in spite of harrowing experiences.

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