

ISSN 0976 - 8165



THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English

DECEMBER 2019 VOL.10, ISSUE - 6

10th Year of Open Access

— Editor-In-Chief —
Dr. Vishwanath Bite

www.the-criterion.com



AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

www.galaxyimrj.com

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*: A Saga of the Crazy Fallacy of Two-Nation Theory and Holocaust of Communal Frenzy

Dr. Madhavi Solankurkar

Associate Professor,
Rajarshi Shahu Arts & Commerce College, Rukadi,
Tal. Hatkanangale, Dist. Kolhapur, (M.S.)

Article History: Submitted-08/12/2019, Revised-24/12/2019, Accepted-25/12/2019, Published-31/12/2019.

Abstract:

The crazy fallacy of the two-nation theory has been fully exposed in the novel 'Azadi'. It shows how the quest for a safe homeland had uprooted the masses of humanity. The narrative brings to light the large-scale seriousness of political decisions of partition and subsequent human tragedy of slaughter and destruction. Nahal shows how the outgoing rulers dragged the nation to utter chaos and confusion. Far from Swaraj providing wide-spread happiness, the partition brought disaster to many individuals and communities. The hasty implementation of the plan of partition without much foresight, farsightedness and the much needed preparedness at several levels, led to an unprecedented holocaust of communal frenzy. Before the people could realize the political and social implications of the partition, they were swept off their feet by a wave of violence that swiftly became a tide. Hundreds of people were killed, raped and butchered on either side of the border. The novel challenges the theme of partition of India wherein the great Indian political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah are presented in a slightly unfavorable manner.

Keywords: partition, two-nation theory, communal frenzy, human predicament.

Azadi portrays with a bold and unrelenting realism the brutal story of political hatred and violence during the turbulent and fateful days that preceded and followed the partition of British India when the communal frenzy and a passionate zeal for self-expression were fuming and fumbling within the mass. Chaman Nahal's objective in this novel is to expose and explore the world around him and to present in it all its naturalistic setting. *Azadi*, one of the best of the Indian-English novels written about the colossal

tragedy of partition which accompanied Indian Independence in 1947, has been translated from English into eight languages - Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, Malayalam, Kashmiri, Hungarian and Russian. It is one of the rare tragic narratives in Indian History. *Azadi* is a horrendous story of one country being partitioned into two countries, India and Pakistan, through the narrative person Lala Kanshi Ram, a well-to-do Hindu grain merchant and his family. The narrative brings to light the large-scale seriousness of political decisions of partition and subsequent human tragedy of slaughter and destruction. The present paper aims at pointing out the novel's success in its aims of depicting the agony of a whole great country and at the same time aims at pointing out how it helps to find out some meaningful sense of our common humanity.

Chaman Nahal, the Sahitya Akademi Award winning Indian novelist, was professor of English at Delhi University; a fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge University in U.K; visiting Fulbright Fellow, Princeton University, N.J; and a lecturer in several universities in the U.S.A, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, Canada, and North Korea. He was born in Sialkot (Formerly in India, now in Pakistan) and his *Azadi*, that starts out in the bazaar lanes of Sialkot is a semi- autobiographical novel. *Azadi*, now a part of 'The Gandhi Quartet' received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977. It also received the Federation of Indian Publishers Award for creative writing the same year.

In its dexterous anatomization of the real and its penetration beneath the inhuman bestialities of life to the human factor of love and sympathy, *Azadi* is a unique artistic rendering of the gruesome and vile. With the main focus on one Hindu family, it describes the break up of communities, loss of life and material wealth, and the despair suffered by so many people which eventually leads to the mass exodus from one new emerging country to the other, from Pakistan to India and vice versa, based on the religion of the refugee. Chaman Nahal hides behind the body of his novel, and at the same time voices his opinion through the narrative voice of his characters. An account of numerous details surrounding day-to-day life with all its political, social and religious import is put forth through Lala Kanshi Ram, the principle character of the novel. Lalaji is the representative of all the refugees who had to leave for India, had to undergo tremendous sufferings for no fault of theirs on a result of political conspiracy of partition.

Chaman Nahal does not arraign any particular party or community. He finds both the Hindus and the Muslims equally responsible for the inhuman deeds. He puts the blame squarely on both the racial fractions. The novel is a tragedy of human situation. *Azadi* seems to be a unique novel. Its uniqueness is of threefold nature. First, it tells more of truth about partition than any historical study; second, it helps us to know and understand other people, to find some meaningful sense of our common humanity; and third, it provides with clear-eyed insights into human nature and defines Chaman Nahal's vision on a novelist very clearly. Nahal shows how the outgoing rulers dragged the nation to utter chaos and confusion.

The crazy fallacy of the two-nation theory has been fully exposed in the novel. It shows how the quest for a safe homeland had uprooted the masses of humanity. Non-violence was thrown to the winds. Religion was now found to be hollow and shorn of all moral values. The novel's appeal lies in Chaman Nahal's ability to weave the catastrophic incidents into more serious, heavier theme. Basically it is a semi-autobiographical novel of Chaman Nahal. The novel begins on the third June 1947 with the people of Sialkot (place of birth of Chaman Nahal) learning about the Viceroy's announcement of partition as a result of which two free nations were created - India and Pakistan. The story begins in the house of Bibi Amar Vati, a rich landlady. It is centered round the family of Lala Kanshi Ram. Other characters in the novel are somehow or other connected with Lala Kanshi Ram. For over twenty years he had been an ardent member of the district Arya Samaj who boasted of an upright moral character, and was a Khandani, a worthwhile citizen. Urdu was the first language he had learned to read and write. "His own language was Hindi, or so it was supposed to be" (13). He had a wife - Prabha Rani - a typical Hindi woman, a daughter Madhu Bala already married and living in Wazirabad and a son Arunkumar who was a collage student. His family had very good relations with others tenants of Bibi Amar Vati and Lalaji was greatly respected by the people in the town. On the day on which Viceroy was to make an announcement the entire population in Sialkot (In fact the entire Hindu and Sikh population in Pakistan) had their fears that "Everything will be ruined in Pakistan is created" (39), and they "Will have to leave. That is, if Muslims spare their lives!" (41). But people were certain that Gandhi would never let slaughter and butchery happen. For the people "Gandhi was not

only a politician, he was a saint. He had his inner voice to satisfy, too. Would that nagging voice of his let him accept the slaughter of so many? That's what it would mean, if Pakistan did come into existence. And Gandhi was shrewd- surely he saw it all. He wouldn't give in to such butchery" (49). People believed that if nothing else worked, his fasts unto death would do. They believed in his "Shakti, an inner power" (50). Lalaji and Prabha Rani had their own fears, though: "They had just come into that maturity of age when they could sit back and relax. Madhu Bala was married; Arun was preparing for a job. They had everything, as the things go. They had even bought land and were thinking of building a house. And now to be pushed out of that safe little nest, in the name of freedom" (41). Lalaji's family, like other people of Sialkot, refuses to believe that they now have to move. Nahal shows Lalaji the Hindu, Barkat Ali the Mohammedan and Teja Singh the Sikh shared the same Punjabi culture and language, and considered Sialkot their homeland. The feelings of the people exploded as soon as Nehru's broadcast was over. The entire tenor of living had changed after the Viceroy's broadcast. Sardar Niranjjan Singh, the young and volatile Sikh, felt "to take out his sword and hack Nehru to pieces." (66). It was betrayal for them. The very night the Muslims in the city started celebrating. There were huge fire-crackers, then illuminations and late in the night came procession. They were celebrating the acceptance of Pakistan by the British; they wanted to make the meaning of that acceptance apparent enough to Hindus and Sikhs. The procession signaled the horrible things to come. Earlier both the Hindus and the Muslims believed in the unity of all religions - God was great and Muhammad was his Prophet. There was love, friendship and brotherhood among them. But now they were torn in their minds between many different emotions: "Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan were coming into an estate; as was Nehru. Why else would they rush into azadi at this pace- an azadi which would ruin the land and destroy its unity? (This was) the game of which... millions ... were only victims" (96). Nahal has rightly pointed out the feelings of the people. Thus the novel becomes a powerful exposition of one of the most moving and violent events of contemporary Indian history.

Far from Swaraj providing wide-spread happiness, the partition brought disaster to many individuals and communities. The hasty implementation of the plan of partition without much foresight, farsightedness and the much needed preparedness at several

levels, led to an unprecedented holocaust of communal frenzy. Before the people could realize the political and social implications of the partition, they were swept off their feet by a wave of violence that swiftly became a tide. Hundreds of people were killed, raped and butchered on either side of the border. Many cities of the Punjab had been aflame for months; there were large scale killings and lootings in Lahore, Gujarat, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Abmala, Jullundur, Rawalpindi, Multan, Ludhiana and Sargodha; and in their excitement, the Muslims of Sialkot broke loose and on the twenty fourth of June they killed a number of Hindus. Then it became almost a daily ritual. More than murders, it was the fires that were frightening and demoralizing. One day, late in the evening, a strange howl spread in the city that the Muslims from the eastern part of the Punjab had been attacked and driven out of their homes by the Hindus and the Sikhs. That night the first massive violence occurred in Sialkot, and Mohalla Dharowal was looted and burned down. People started running to the 'Refugee Camp' for seeking shelter. After the first massive violence, each night systematically one Hindu Mohalla in Sialkot was burned down. There were hair-raising happenings in the Punjab and Bengal - murder, arson, rape. One afternoon Lala's grain shop was looted. Everyday hundreds of refugees from India continued to arrive with tales of terror and disgust. Whatever was happening in Sialkot, things very much like those were happening on the other side too. It was not the collapse of Congress Muslims in Pakistan; apparently it was the collapse of Congress Hindus in India also. When refugees with stories of personal misfortunes landed in Pakistan, the politicians used them to their advantage to fan up further hatred. Trains had been as much victims of violence as individuals. Many of them were stopped on the way and the passengers were butchered. Lala Kanshi Ram and other tenants of Bibi Amar Vati had to leave their houses for seeking shelter in Refugee camp as Chaudhari Barkat Ali had a news that their streets was to be looted and burned that night. Life was misery everywhere.

The novel challenges the theme of partition of India wherein the great Indian political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah are presented in a slightly unfavorable manner. No tragedy was an isolated tragedy those days; it hurt each one of them, since the range and dimension of the blow was applicable to them all. Referring to the colossal tragedy that accompanied the dawn of freedom, the country's vivisection,

and the holocaust in which half a million people perished and some million were uprooted from their homes, Durga Das writes: "Hardly had the echoes of 'Jai Hind' died in the capital than the nation was plunged in sorrow as reports came in hourly of millions of refugees on the march and dreadful carnage on both sides India-Pakistan border. About ten million people were uprooted from their homes and another half a million massacred. Thousands of women and girls were kidnapped and raped on both sides" (Das: 1973:263). The train from Wazirabad was stopped near Nizamabad and Hindus and Sikhs in the train were singled out mercilessly slaughtered. In the train, people were divided into sections, into separate compartments, and they were butchered before they had the time to offer resistance or receive help. Same was the case with the foot convoy. When the convoy left Parsur, the attack came soon afterwards. Hundreds of refugees were killed in the attack. The Muslims carried away a number of young refugee girls with them. The second attack came when the convoy was moving from Qila Sobha to Norowal. In that attack over two hundred Hindus and Sikhs were killed, many women were abducted and several hundred were wounded. Nahal's description of this attack is really horrifying: "They found the road littered with articles, discarded turbans and female headgear, shoes, umbrellas, sticks, and cans of foods. ... dead bodies were lying all over ... Most of the dead lay fully dressed. Only a few women lay with their breasts exposed, with a dead child next to the breast. Most of the children lay with their faces downward. The men lay on their backs or on their sides, their mouths open. Some women lay doubled up like bundles. While there were splashes of blood on the ground, and in a few cases on the tree trunks, the bodies were relatively clean. Only their unnatural postures gave out they were dead" (287). These facts are used in the novel to provide big canvas or backdrop to highlight the drama of life; to highlight the plight of common people caught in the flux and upheaval of the time. Thus part II 'Strom' describes the difficulties and miseries that fell on the foot convoy of the refugees. Nahal shows that the concepts of a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan, which the British gave birth to and nurtured during the thirties, divided the two close-knit communities, the repercussions of which were the large-scale communal riots in various parts of the subcontinent. Further the brutal and inhuman nature of man is exposed by Nahal:

A number of abducted Hindu and Sikh women were in their custody. Many of the kidnapped women disappeared into private homes. A lone Muslim dragged a woman away, and kept her for his own exclusive use. Or he took her with the consent of other Muslims, converted her to Islam, and got married to her. The rest were subjected to mass rape, at times in public places and in the presence of large gatherings. The rape was followed by other atrocities, chopping off the breasts, and even death. Many of the pregnant women had their wombs torn open. The survivors were retained for repeated rapes and humiliations, until they were parceled out to decrepit wrecks – the aged, the leftovers who couldn't find a wife, or those Muslims who wanted an additional wife. In the meantime more women were abducted and the cycle was repeated over again (293-94).

The strain of these riots was very much demoralizing and much physically and mentally tiring. Both the Hindus and the Muslims suffered for no fault of theirs. Rioting, looting bloodshed and murder highlight the brute quality in human beings. The novel gives a heart-touching picture of the miseries and disillusionments the young men had to suffer as a result of partition. The young men's dreams suddenly dissolved into nothingness. Arun had a love affair with Nur, Barkat Ali's daughter. Their classmates had long known of their romance, but after the announcement of Pakistan they had both become suspect. He was now a 'Hindu' boy carrying on with a 'Muslim' girl. Arun had to leave Sialkot for India leaving behind his dear Nur. Arun, Nur, Chandani and millions like them became the victims of the game and conspiracy of politicians.

Through the description of the parade of the naked Hindu women by the Muslims, Nahal has rightly pointed out the brute and savage quality in human beings:

There were forty women, marching two abreast. Their ages varied from sixteen to thirty, although, to add to the grotesqueness of the display, there were two women, marching right at the end of the column, who must have been over sixty. They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits. So were their pubic regions.Only the breasts and hips gave away the age. The women walked awkwardly, looking only at the ground. They were all crying, though their eyes shed no tears. Their faces were formed into grimaces and they were sobbing. Their arms were free, but so badly had they were used, so

wholly their spirits crushed, their morale shattered, none of them made any attempt to cover themselves with their hands. The bruises on their bodies showed they had been beaten and manhandled. ... Along with the procession moved a river of obscenities – foul abuses, crude personal gestures, spurts of sputum, odd articles ... ‘rape them.’ ‘Put it inside of them.’ ... Many men in the front rows of the crowd lifted their lungies to display their genitals to them (296-97).

Azadi pictures the uncontrollable and unimaginable violence, destroying the atmosphere of brotherhood, harmony, trust and love and creating hatred and disgust. The novel points out how the basic instincts rule the human race and how we are basically prone to some basic weaknesses.

Man turns brute when his inner restraint is lost. Whatever the Muslims did to the Hindus in Pakistan, the Hindus did it to them in India. Indian soldiers – like their counterparts in Pakistan - had failed to protect the Muslims. The Hindus killed thousands of the Muslims without reason, raped their women, and drove them out of their homes. Their whole mode of life had been changed – no, destroyed by the partition. There was not a single family which had not been hit in some manner, and the refugees were totally dispirited. There were many wounded, but there were no stretchers for them. They just limped along, using stopgap bandages on their wounds. Those who could not walk were carried by their relatives on their backs. It was really a pitiable sight of the demoralized mass of humanity. Nahal's treatment of brutal atrocities committed on either side of the border is characterized by artistic objectivity and detachment. He exaggerates nothing.

The novel remains the most forceful and exquisite of the creative works born out of the agonized torments and travails of body and spirit as it provides with clear-eyed insights into human nature. It also helps us to discover the meaning of blood relations through the story of Lala Kanshi Ram. His family had a few relations at Amritsar. They knocked at their doors, but discovered that they were not welcome. The relations smiled. They said they were happy they had safely got out. Some offered them tea, some offered food; yet none offered them shelter. Whatever practical help they did receive was from private, charitable trusts. The government itself was ill-prepared and ill-equipped to handle them. Partition turned them into wandering gypsies. The people felt so exposed, so naked and so defenseless, as never before in their lives. Partition affected the lives of

the people in a touchingly poignant way. Pointing to it Nahal writes: “From the time Lala Kanshi Ram set up a little shop, he had stopped wearing a turban. A turban was a sign of respect, of dignity. He had no dignity left. He now wore a forage cap. Or he sat bare-headed, advertising his humble position to the world” (366). The partition leaves him heart-broken and forlorn. His wife Pratha Rani enters a different cognitive region. Partition affects the old persons like Sardar Jodha Sing differently. Here Nahal writes: “His reaction to the partition had been typical of the men of his age: he had gone utterly mute” (243).

Nahal with his remarkable ability shows how the events led to tragic and terrible psychological consequences. He plunges deep into the inner recesses of the victims and points out the influence of the bloodiest upheaval of history. Nahal makes us to go through the mind of Lalaji and his thoughts at the end of the novel and helps us to understand the consequences of the storm caused by the partition. People like Lalaji looked crestfallen, as if Gandhi’s death was a personal loss for them. But there were some people like Bibi Amar Vati who took Gandhi responsible for bringing misery to them as they thought it was Gandhi who sanctioned partition. But what impressed Lalaji was the pride with which each man stood. In pre-independence days, they were self-conscious, but today the men stood in pride, evenly balanced, firm, sure of themselves. He felt he was unrestricted now, he was untrammelled. However, lying on his bed late in the night, he thought differently of it: “But was he really? What of the loss of personality he had suffered? What of the material losses?”(369). He saw years of bleakness before him, years of desolation. He saw himself standing before a tunnel, where he could not see the other end. He blamed the harsh, rude men who decided his future. These were the feelings of the men and women of the time and Lala is only representative of them all.

Nahal is successful in showing his readers how millions like Lalaji, Prabha Rani and Arun had to undergo tremendous sufferings for no fault of theirs as a result of political conspiracy of partition. There was another ruin caused by azadi. Lala had lost the ability to communicate with his family. He couldn’t establish a contact either with his wife or with his son. The affection was there. The concern was there. Their respect for him was there, too. Yet the contact was broken. Something had driven them apart. Arun, too, wanted to sit up and speak to his father, but he couldn’t. He, too, felt a wall between

them, a hostility of a kind, he didn't know for what. Prabha Rani, too, was caught in the same snare. She had lost the ease that was between them, and had become confined to her single self. They were not able to fathom their minds and felt restless about it. The three of them lay fully awake not being able to talk to each other and feeling guilty about it. Sadness weighed on their hearts, and each felt stifled, crushed. The bond between them was completely broken. The theme of the novel with all its emphasis on partition does not become a political propaganda like Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*.

Nahal has presented in the novel the predicament which can be experienced all over the world, since human culture follows the same patterns in all ages and at all places. The power Nahal displays in his sympathetic human involvement, his ability to show that in spite of wide differences in social customs and rituals between India and the West, Man is Man wherever you find him. Nahal, in his unique style, presents the partition with deeply moving scenes and events where the participants are not big persons but small villagers guided by elemental passions. There is a fine presentation of universal human concerns and natural human relationships through the simple, lucid, meaningful and colloquial language. Since it appeals to human heart, it shall never lose its relevance. It connotes various levels of meanings in terms of human relationship and human predicament. Nahal shows how religious differences are created and deliberately fostered. It is "a nightmare with an exciting finish" (Iyengar, 1973:501) The novel also carries a very powerful message that in spite of whatever the change people accept their loss and adjust to their new environment. *Azadi* has a vast sweep of imagination but reads like real events happening around the partition of the country. Nahal's talent for fusing concrete observation and imaginative insight, the realities of everyday existence and the abstractions of politics and region confirm his reputation as India's finest English language novelist. R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand portray the photographic reality, a reality that is artistic but Chaman Nahal is interested in stark and naked realism of life and thus comes closer to the French socialist realists like Balzac.

Works Cited:

Das, Durga. *Curzon to Nehru and After*. Delhi: Rupa & Co. 1973.

Iyengar, K.R. Srinivaas. *Indian Writing in English*. Bombay: Asia. 1973

Nahal, Chaman. *Azadi*. USA: Houghton Mifflin Company Boston. 1975.

Sharma, K.K. "The 1947 Upheaval and the Indian-English Novel". R.K. Dhawan, ed.,
Explorations in Modern Indo-English Fiction. New Delhi: Bahri, 1982.