

ISSN:0976-8165

THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English



Vol. 7, Issue-I February 2016

7 YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

www.the-criterion.com

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ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

www.galaxyimrj.com

Partition and Its Relevance in Contemporary Society

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Abstract:

Partition resulting from the dominance of communities over others has never made the dreams of people to be on the right track. Everything changes but not the life of people who are always in search of leading their lives peacefully. Societies are divided having a number of reasons that are never followed afterwards. Such division creates profound wound on posterity that takes decades to heal. Decades passed but still we are not able to come out of the trauma of partition resulting the deaths of lacs of people. Friends of past are the enemies of present spreading venom against each other. The mistakes of past are still our principles on which we try to run our societies. They will never unite us but will build bigger walls day by day. As a result we have to witness same kind of division from which we had gone through a decades ago.

Keywords: Partition, trauma, religion, culture, hate and contemporary society.

The partition of India has been the single-most outstanding event in the recent socio-political history of India. It had wide and far reaching impact upon the political, social, cultural and emotional life of particularly the northern states in India. It invoked the interest and sensitivity of many writers during the immediate post- partition years. Amongst them Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal and Bapsi Sidhwa stand out prominently. Interestingly memories of this event continue to stir the imagination of some of our writers in India and abroad. Many of them have used partition as the background to their narratives.

Each writer has his own individual sensitivity and approach to this major national upheaval and tragedy. Hence the partition novels which I have attempted to analyze present a different perspective on the theme of partition. There are, however, some common factors which fired the imagination of every author. All the novelists concede that the division of the subcontinent was the biggest blunder in the history of mankind. It was more tragic as it was a deliberate, man-made tragedy and not a natural calamity. When the subcontinent was divided, Hindus and Sikhs fled from their lands and their homes, farms, factories which were appropriated by others in the name of allotment. They were served from Pakistan. Likewise many Muslims were uprooted from their soils in India. It is a contentious issue as to who are

responsible for partition. But one thing is sure that partition brought havoc to millions of people on either side of the border. The violence it unleashed by the hooliganism of a few fanatics worsened our social sense, distorted our political judgments and deranged our understanding of moral righteousness.

Hindus and Muslims were natural rivals in this subcontinent. When an interim govt. was constituted, some members from different pockets of society were selected to form the govt. That was the turning point when leaders started harboring ambitions. They felt that after independence they would enjoy power in future. Previously Mughals had ruled over the country. Now the Muslims couldn't tolerate that they would have to live under Hindu rule. This is aptly manifested in Attia Hussai's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* where she has given expression to Muslim fears. Some Muslims even felt that it would be better to be governed by the British than the Hindus. For people like Saleem the concept of Pakistan 'a new paradise for the Muslims,' served as good escape from all fears. The author expresses a sense of belonging and wishes to die in the ancestral land of his forefathers. The author emphatically holds the view that despite such minor lapses, the contribution of Muslim in India's freedom struggle was equally remarkable.

Azadi is a memorable representation of the problems encountered by the different racial groups while crossing the border. The book excels other partition novels as Chaman Nahal is the only writer to show the real impact of the forced migration on the victims. He understands Punjabi ethos very well and convincingly exhibits the psychology of the tormented migrants. The narration takes the readers on a nostalgic trip down memory lane .partition has traumatizing effect on the mind of Lala Kanshi Ram who suffers endlessly on his Journey from Sialkot to Delhi in the wake of partition. The fears and anxieties of the uprooted people, their mental torture and emotional trauma as well as the physical magnitude and intensity of violence all are reflected in the novel through Lala Kanshi Ram, his wife Prabha Rani, his son Arun and others. The love affair between Arun and Nur also comes to an abrupt ending as Arun goes with his parents to Delhi. Lala Kanshi Ram's hatred for Muslims springs from Madhu's brutal murder. But when he witnesses the same kind of atrocities against Muslims in Amritsar he ceases to hate them. Suffering and humiliation faced at the hands of an indifferent and callous administration embitters Lala against the whole system and he and his family lose their ability to communicate with each other. Nahal has thus succeeded in giving expression to the plight of millions of people who were in a similar situation when the communal riots broke out after the announcement of partition.

Both Chaman Nahal and Bapsi Sidhwa blame the political leaders responsible for such an unprecedented tragedy.

Bapsi Sidhwa too examines in her novel, *Ice-Candy-Man*, the inexorable logic of partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism spared by hardening communal attitudes. The communal frenzy has a distorting effect on people and leads to feelings of suspicion, distrust and susceptibility to rumours. The impact of partition, its psychological consequences is aptly illustrated by a precocious eight year old Parsi girl Lenny, the narrator of the novel. Even this small child feels insecure in Queen's Garden. All the elders- Masseur, Butcher, Ice-Candy-Man, Sher Singh and Ayah Promise and urge to each other to be away from communal strife. Ironically it is Lenny who senses the ensuing danger when she interacts with a group of Sikh children. When the child tells that she is a Parsi, the Sikh women express amazement at the discovery of a new religion. The child Lenny learns the bitter truth that segregation has started taking place. The author narrates how this indifferent attitude of different communities leads to contempt followed by communal violence and bigotry.

For *Ice-Candy-Man* revenge becomes the major motivation. He believes in the rumours of a train full of dead bodies of Muslims coming to Lahore from Gurdaspur. Sher Singh, a Sikh friend of *Ice-Candy-Man* is, therefore, looked down upon as an enemy and he has to flee from Lahore.

Bapsi Sidhwa uses images and allegory as an effective literary device to depict the trauma of partition. The shrieks and shouts of fanatics make Lenny fearful and she is haunted by many nightmares like the roaring of the lion in the zoo. She feels the fiery sensation on her face and it seems as if her flesh and cloths will catch fire. Thus the frightening impact of violence is conveyed effectively. And the author delves deep into the naked realities of post partition riots. On the contrary Attia Hussain does not depict the events of partition, its massacre, and violence in detail. Bapsi Sidhwa also surveys the fears of Parsi community for whom partition sparked off an impulse for migration from their homeland.

Most of the novels record the reign of violence that characterized the period and provide a sad, telling commentary on the breakdown of human values. The unprecedented violence on mass scale shows as if hoodlums were waiting for an opportunity to strike. Thus the authors have exposed dualism that existed in the society.

All the partition novels are replete with examples of benevolence and good will, of men who refuse to compromise with their values even in the face of extreme provocation. Many instances in these novels thus help to enhance our understanding of different shades of characters, of certain nuances of attitude and behavior as well as their sensitivity.

Many authors also raise an important issue whether there should have been sufficient preparation of society to enable them to face and manage partition. Perhaps the tragedy might have been averted if people had been a little considerate, patient, rational and sympathetic.

The bitterness of partition and its consequent fallout get implicitly manifested in India-Pakistan relationship which continues to be ridden by all kinds of suspicions and doubts with regards to each other's integrity and sincerity. Therefore, to look at partition as an event in the history, as a happening in the past, is very limited and narrow view of the event. The emotional and psychological divide continues to affect our attitude continually. Therefore, we are still facing the repercussion of partition and are not able to come out of this trauma.

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