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Re-inventing Narrative, History, Myth, Politics and Women's Place in Kamleshwer's *Partition*

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Abstract:

In this paper, I attempt to reinterpret the history of partition and bring out the distorted realities and truths by the colonial masters. Kamleshwar beautifully scores the dismantling of power through centuries, how political boundaries were demarcated crafty by the British regime, the instigation of religious conflict during partition, and partition as a never-ending political condition that happens due to the selfish interest of people in power. The novel exclusively tries to explore love as the only panacea for people whose lives have been torn apart. Nameless characters successfully record the dilemma of women survivors at the margins from both countries and provide a fresh outlook through magic realism.

Keywords: Kamleshwar, History, Partition, Politics, Female-suffering, Religion, Violence.

Kamleshwar has been a prominent voice in Hindi Writing and holds a special place in Indian literary horizon and Cinema. He has experimented with various genres of writing and left a deep impression on his audience. His imagination was unparalleled and infused with wit and sentiments. He was born in 1932 in Manpuri District in Uttar Pradesh. He received his Master's degree in Hindi Sahitya from the University of Allahabad and was a pure genius. His

films like *Aandhi*, *Mausam* Mr. Natwerlal, and *Rajnigandha* have set a standard and brought considerable change in the world of Hindi Cinema and TV serials. His understanding of politics and history was deep and the result of his extensive research and study. His curiosity to write a novel like *Partition Kitne Pakistan* reflects his undaunted spirit to deal with one of the most controversial issues in Indian history. His debate with various historical characters and his timely intervention and arguments with various historical characters show his impeccable wit and satire. Looking back into the time machine of history and his attempt to find out the real truth to create a more humane society reflects his dedication and concern for the nation. Many of his stories are infused with impeccable wisdom and prove that he is a true messenger of peace and harmony. Kamleshwer plays the role of a perfect satirist and candidly questions and criticizes colonial policies and malpractices.

Adeeb becomes an eponymous narrator who reinterprets religion, myth, and history and tries to wipe out fog from the opaque lens of time. He also records the false evidence presented by historians and examines history in a clear light in order to bring harmony in society.

He presents a clear picture of people living in harmony before partition. They were living in peace in small villages across undivided India. Surprisingly the news of the partition has left a tremor among people and bereft them of their assets, relations, and happiness. Millions of people become homeless. All of a sudden world had been changed and so was their fate. Heart-wrenching tales of Armita Preetam's *Pinjar* are examples of devastation, displacement, dislocation, abduction, and forced marriages that occurred to numberless women during partition. Violence in various forms was imposed on women across borders. Masters became servants, friends became foes. Women, children, and older citizens were forced to leave their land and behind it, they were leaving the graveyards of their ancestors, their temples, gardens, fields, and cattle for unknown destinations. The story of exquisitely beautiful Surjeet Kaur of Multan, roaming with his comatose son on his shoulders, Buta Singh seemed to be a mangled

corpse, and Vidyas' Tonga lost in oblivion until Mahmood discovers it with his magical vision moves our heart. Kamleshwer writes these characters are not solitary figures; millions like them share a similar destiny or worse.

He left a clear message that one should learn from history. Partition was conceived and designed by the colonial diplomats and was imposed on Indians, only to unsettle the peace and harmony of the people in undivided India. We should forget it like some haunted dream. India and Pakistan should both reflect on their shared tradition and culture rather than their differences. Political leaders and religious fanatics have always instigated the sentiments of the people for their selfish motives and to satisfy their false egos. Therefore, the message is clear that all extremist forces should be condemned and hatred should be suppressed through love and care. Hence it is the responsibility of the people to develop mutual understanding and stop fighting on trivial matters. Kamleshwer's insight into history is deep and penetrating. Adeeb read out an excerpt from the newspapers about the recent conflict in Kashmir and Kargil and then he added how Pakistan had violated the treaty of 1972. Adeeb provides an interesting account of Tretayuga, Mahabharata, and Aryan culture.

He simply argues that Aryans were not aggressive. Had they been indulged in war and violence they would not have been able to create a glorious tradition of culture. He defies the myth regarding the advent of Aryans and says that there is no sign of invasion otherwise composition of the great Vedas would not have been possible: "...there is no evidence to suggest that a community, which had faced invasion, had composed anything that could match the constructive charm of Vedas. Such works can only be written during times of peace." (VI-Kamleshwer)

Kamleshwer began his writing amid the turbulence of May 1990. He chose a secluded place at Jhajra Forest Rest House near Dehradun. Kamleshwer believes that sometimes we tend to

develop prejudiced perspectives about different races, religious sects, and tribes. However, the truth is something else. His encounter with a native tribe of hills in Dehradun, who persuaded his grandson Anant to see the deer and bears changes his perspective. Such encounters dispelled his misconceptions that these tribes are blamed for human sacrifices. There is no particular hero in *Partition (Kitne Pakistan)*. Kamleshwer rightly says that while writing this novel there were two compulsions in his mind. There was no hero or villain. So, he made Time the protagonist.

Kamleshwer's stories deal with human values and human relations. As humans, we all are interconnected and share human distress such as loss, pain, and betrayal. After India got its freedom from years of slavery there have been major social, economic, and political changes. Literature too went through a major change. Films like *Aandhi*, and *Mausam* depict contemporary reality and change. Partition has paved the way for distrust and hatred. Economic instability and the fight for existence become the root cause of disharmony.

Kamleshwer has portrayed a vivid description of partition through the character of Nashiban in his debut novel *Luete Hue Musafir*. Nashiban comes from a Muslim family and protects the rights of Hindu children. She stops their conversion on human values. She believes in religious equality. Kamleshwer has written more than three hundred stories. Similarly, Bhishma Sahani in his magnum opus *Tamas* deals with the double standard of the British officer Richard who cleverly plays with the sentiments of the people during partition and utters that neither this country belongs to me nor the people. Let the tide of violence loose upon them so they will be a witness to never-ending animosity. Terror seemed to be the focal character of this novel. Selfish people and religious fanatics have aggravated the religious clash. Mountbatten has successfully created a favorable situation of partition. The lives of millions of people were compromised. Pakistan was created and peaceful cities, towns, and villages across India swept into frenzy and violence. It reminds the lines of Matthew Arnold in *Dover Beach*: "Ignorant

armies clashed by alarm Amrita Preetam in her poem writes that the land of Punjab has been replete in blood.

Kitne Pakistan began with the love story of Vidhya and Adeeb the two scholars from the University of Allahabad. They exchange their unsaid love during they change their trains for their hometown. The unfulfilled love of the protagonist made him a constant wanderer through the Milky Way of time. Vidya's fallen handkerchief is symbolic of his fallen hope. Whenever he passes the Kanpur station, he still feels his urge for a reunion with his soulmate Vidya. Partition has created a great width between the two. Vidya's tonga disappeared soon after her ring ceremony in Delhi. Vidya's story is shrouded in mystery Mahmood restores it with his special vision. In Mumbai, Adeeb had established himself as an editor where Mahmood is an assistant. Adeeb received a letter from Vidya and was lost in her memories. This flashback narrative of the novel imbued with magic realism. At once Mahmood also makes a long leap into history and provides detail of myth and history. Adeeb and Mahmood alternatively become a mouthpiece for the fateful incidents and events that happened in history. He argues with Adeeb and keeps on questioning until he comes to a reasonable conclusion. Debate and discussion between Adeeb and Mahmood, between Adeeb and various representative figures around the world, are full of surprise and information. How history is misconstrued, and how facts are distorted by historians for their personal vengeance, is beautifully woven through the narrative. "Mountbatten Sahib, real history is not the version written by an imperialist power." (272) Says Adeeb. Like a timeless traveler, he provides an account of injustices done to the common man in history in the name of religion and tries to find a panacea for the wounded history.

Partition was created in overnight, invisible though on the geographical border but bloodshed and massacre followed by it broke the dreams of millions of people across the country: "all around the country, rituals of celebration and mourning were being observed. No one knew

where exactly Cyril Radcliff's line had ripped the land in two.”(324) They were forced to leave their home irrespective of religion. The happy life of Banno and Mangal has been changed by the faith of the newly born nation...it was the worst of the time it was the best of the time. Kamleshwar like Amrita Preetam, Sadat Hasan Manto, Atiya Husain, Khushwant Singh, and Shauna Singh Baldwin explores different layers of stories replete with blood and tears. All of them have gone through the same agonizing experience. History/ Time/ Kal is presented as a witnessing agent.

Kamlesher seems to present an unbiased history of India. According to the writer, the history that is recorded under duress can never represent the historical truth. (264)

His perspectives seem to be based on his liberal vision. In a country like India where peace and bonding are inevitable, he provides a fresh outlook to evaluate all the emperors, kings, invaders, and politicians in a new light. The authentic history he felt is engraved on the hearts and minds of the people. It's still a matter of debate what was Kamleshwer's real motives behind writing this novel. He seems to frame a new vision and evaluate all the characters without having any prejudiced notion of religion. Kamleshwers attempts to summon all the leaders, and dictators in his courtroom who ravaged human civilization due to their selfish motive and their will to power rather than any other interest. At the same time, he calls upon innocent voices that have been suppressed and killed. They all demand justice. He also gives them the freedom to express their own side of the truth. However, the novel seems to be an interesting debate on time, history, and fickle human fate intangibly associated with this. They all seem to be liberated from the guilt of their sin and surrender before the Adeeb. Nothing is left from the eyes of time, be it stories of Pharoah, Hitler, Mussolini, Aurangzeb, Babar, Akbar Shahjahan, and grave mistakes made by Jahangir. As if all the characters seem to take a dip into the cauldron of history, they stand there to plead to justify their version of the truth. before Aurangzeb India was a nation where there was no space for religious hatred. However, it was

occasionally invaded and wounded by the plunderer for their selfish interests. No one has tried to change the philosophy of religion more than Aurangzeb. Shibli Nomani is blamed for unnecessarily providing religious coloring to Aurangzeb. The events compel Adeeb to dive into the annals of the history of the world and particularly of India. The novel proceeds in terms of debates between the voices of dead dictators, historians' emperors, and commoners who were massacred raped, and killed. The narrative records the events from Tretayuga, till the modern period and unfolds the crisis that the country faced in each successive age. The uniqueness of Kamleshwer's partition lies in his extraordinary grasp on detailing the history. women's bodies were regarded as mere territories to be captured and assaulted by the rival communities and sometimes both. The history of partition is very deftly woven with the personal experience of Adeeb and his relationship with Salma. Women were considered symbols of the male ego and their defilement by the rival's suppression of the male ego.

The Mughal search for absolution was, on each occasion, driving by a deep sense of remorse that sprang not from Arabic Turkish Tartar or Afghan soil but was rotated in Bharat self(196)

Akbar seems to be a noble soul, the manifestation of Babar and Humayun's accumulated feelings of remorse. Kamleshwar writes it is discrepancy between religion and reality that lays the foundation for the many Pakistan. Kamleshwar Believes that men like Shibli Nomani has instigated the religious strife in India and Pakistan. The author feels that not only religion but political fanatical zealots within religion are the root cause of conflicts. The crux of the matter is that Islam is battling with its own zealots (196) Naim court on Ziaul Hauque Pakistan would be no more of Islam if seized to exist the pillar of its existence..... Must die out but race and ethnicity never do Salma call him a man with a filthy mind who wants to imprison the noble religion within the narrow confines of Pakistan's border. Jinnah is accused of being a puppet in the hands of colonial masters. His repeated visit, his political exile to London and his meetings with Tory leaders hints at his dubious indulgence in conspiracy with Mountbatten. “

...Churchill had already laid the plains for India's partition. ...you(Mountbatten) were sent as viceroy to execute it!(280) Adeeb reaffirms--" *Just as your agents made twenty pages of the Babar Nama disappear, your nation and its historians connived in obscuring those three crucial years of Jinahh Sahib's sojourn in England*"(281)

Conclusion

Kamleshwer has presented a vivid range of characters whose body remembers indelible scars: one such character is the nameless woman who is raped repeatedly by both, the soldiers of her own country and the invaders. *There emerged long lines of young women whose wombs bore the bloody traces of rape these women were soon transformed into walking corpses kamleshwer*(342)

The life of Buta Singh and his *retpari* Zainab was once again destroyed by the partition. He changed his religion and got a new name. He also renames his daughter Sultana. Despite all his attempts, he could not reunite with his wife in Pakistan: " *The railway station where he had jumped onto the tracks with his daughter to commit suicide is still there. Buta Singh's corpse with Sultana in its arms waders like Toba Tek Singh.* (323) The love story of Buta Singh and her beloved opens up a new world of suffering.

The heart-wrenching tale of Vidya's abduction and rape by the boys of her community and her final journey from India to Pakistan as a wife of Nadim Khan opens up a new face of violence: " *Begum pari had no complaints about life. Everything seemed acceptable now horror in her hometown of Fatehgarh, death standing before her on Rohtak road...and now, her future in Lyallpur. Everything seemed safe and secure.*" (338)

Literature redefines women's restricted place and space which has always been a focal point in history. Since time immemorial violence has perturbed the psyche of women as wars have

been fought on her body. Salma is such a character who becomes a prominent voice in scoring the suffering of many women during the partition. She has played a vital role in directing the dialogues and tries to show a clearer and more realistic picture of the partition. Nameless women repeatedly bear assault and rape by the invaders and the soldiers of their own country they use them like sex toys and force them to give statements in favor of the army the brutality and shameful behavior of soldiers can boil the blood of any normal person. The woman utters in dismay....who after all was the real enemy? Nevertheless, Kamleshwar compares the rape of the nameless woman with that of Cassandra by Ajax after the victory. And writes ---"Even Apollo had wanted to possess that eternal virgin"(113) It is evident that even mythical women had been victims of rape and violence during war.

The narrative is a perfect blend of real and imaginary. Like Salman Rushdie, the novelist has created a wonderful world full of magic and reality. Not only do human characters turn the pages of time recorded in history but Rivers also unfolds stories of kings and queens. 'There is little that I missed,' The river replied. ' let us turn the pages of time and I will tell you what followed next.

Sir I am Kalyug the Adeeb was taken aback he could not believe his eyes you are Kalyug? But you were time... The keeper of hours and moments to suit their convenience, men of wisdom changed my name... (228) However, it is mentioned by the novelist that liberal forces who want to establish peace and justice are always replaced and suppressed by extremist forces. He gives an account of the secular vision of Darashikoh and how his failure became the sole cause of partition.

...I am waiting to tell this court the story of my unfortunate son Dara. It is evident that Dara was captured and killed by Aurangzeb. Thousands of people who supported Dara were killed by Alamgiri sword of power and ambition.(229)Culture sighed.

sword of power and ambition slashed through the lives of thousands of people who had been living ...however, the novel provides us new outlook to look back to history and find out the real causes of partition and how to bridge the gulf between the Pakistan and India. Adeeb's quest for true love remained unfulfilled.

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