

A Study of Indian Subcontinent Partition Literature in English

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Abstract:

The anguish and suffering endured by the people of the Indian subcontinent found expression in partition literature published in numerous languages by authors from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. "This stain covered day break, this night bitten dawn," famous poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz mourned about partition's brutalities and horrors.

This is hardly the daybreak we were hoping for." Muslims in India went to Pakistan, while Hindus and Shikhs in Pakistan migrated to India, leaving everything behind, including ancestral houses, traditions, and culture, and became refugees with empty hands. Women were the most vulnerable victims, being raped, tortured, sexually molested, and abducted by men from opposing groups in the name of religion. This tragedy of partition gave birth to a new literary genre known as "Partition Literature" in practically all Indian subcontinental languages, most notably Hindi, English, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Telegu, and other vernacular languages spoken in the subcontinent. Within the confines of its modest scope, this study will attempt to remark briefly on partition literature in English.

Keywords: Partition literature, historians, demography, desolation, chroniclers, and genocide

Introduction:

British dominion over the Indian subcontinent lasted for a long time. However, persistent and protracted waves of Indian independence movements spearheaded by native, educated people practically forced the British Government to leave this subcontinent permanently, giving Indian government sovereignty. However, prior to expatriation, they erected an invisible wall between adherents of the two main faiths, Islam and Hinduism. Partition was the clear result of this bigotry. One of the historians' most important responsibilities is to document all of these facts so that future generations can understand the real story of oppression and genocide and, after applying the lesson, present a sound future nation free from all forms of discrimination and oppression. However, historians nearly never capture the intricate complexity and sheer magnitude of the Partition catastrophe. In order to prevent them from being kidnapped and mistreated by males from another group, the statistics did not accurately describe the feelings that the ladies must have had when they drowned themselves in the wells. Historians' statistical assessments fail to convey that the majority of ordinary people chose India or Pakistan due to a sense of fear rather than politics or religion.

The identity crises that innocent individuals went through when families were split up—husbands

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from their spouses, siblings from sisters, and parents from their children—are not described in historical records or narratives. The miseries of the women who remained the worst victims of the tragedy of division were not adequately depicted in history. Literature examines the thoughts, feelings, and sentiments of the persons engaged in the event, either directly or indirectly, while history solely incorporates or provides facts and data. Unlike literature, which describes people's experiences by delving deeper into their thoughts and emotions, history just depicts the obvious aspects of human nature. In this sense, literature is a reflection and portrayal of the pain, suffering, and challenges that individuals encountered during the tragic partition, while history is only a recorded account of the division of the world. Ordinary men and women are often overlooked while history documents and conveys information about the leaders and other significant persons of the era. However, literature examines the lives of normal, everyday people who are marginalised. Literature is people-centered, history is state-centric and patriotic. History only tells the partition tale from one side of the conflict and focuses mostly on the development and victories of the people's battle for independence. However, literature primarily examines the tragedy of partition and gives voice to the plight of mistreated women, men, and children.

Literature explores what history neglected. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that literature, in addition to the historical mission of collecting information about the division, plays a significant role in entering the human mind and analysing its pain, misery, and signs of oppression. A new literary genre known as "Partition Literature" has emerged as a result of the tragic partition, and it is spoken in almost all of the Indian subcontinent's vernacular languages, including Hindi, English, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, and Telegu. Pathos is a constant feature in all of their literary works, and the common themes among their literary titans were cruelty, violence, prejudice, community riots, arson, exploitation, kidnapping, rape, murder, and so forth.

The terrible circumstances surrounding division were portrayed differently by the authors of the literature on partition than by the historians. Their writings captured the anguish, pain, and human suffering caused by the division. The topic of partition has been the focus of literature by authors such Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Amrita Pritam, K. S. Diggal, Saadat Hasan Manto, Nanak Singh, Asmat Chughtai, and others. Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" in English, Khushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan," K. A. Abbas's "Inquilab," Bapsi Sidhwa's "Ice Candy Man" and "Bribe," Yashpal's "Jhoota Sach" in Hindi, Bhishma Sahani's "Tamas" in Urdu, Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories like "Toba Tek Singh," "Adkhri Salute," "Titwal Ka Kutta," "Khol Do," and "Thanda Gosht" in Urdu, and other works by various writers in different languages gave insight into the struggles that regular people faced and endured in this nasty struggle for power and politics. I will attempt to provide a quick analysis of some English-language partition literature in this piece.

Discussion:

After independence, the pain caused by the subcontinental division of India continued to be a significant theme in Indian writing. The majority of authors saw independence as a delusion of security because it gave neither joy or food, much as Bengali writer Nazrul Islam claims that Swaraj

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delivered no food for the needy or because it split India.

The communal holocaust touched the whole subcontinent and is still very much in people's memories. Since the partition had a direct impact on Bengal and Punjab, these two regions' authors conveyed their greatest sorrow over it. Kushwant Singh's 1956 book "Train to Pakistan" was the first to depict the trauma of partition. Through it, he exposed the hollowness and futility of genocide, highlighted the pointlessness of bloodshed, and outright denounced the partition of India. Given that it was customary to take down a man's pants in order to determine if he was a Muslim or a Hindu during the period of partition, he described the events and situations that occurred accurately. In "Train to Pakistan," his book, a circumcised guy remarks:

"Where on earth except in India would a man's life depended on whether or not his foreskin had been removed? I would be laughable if it were not tragic"

As a result, Singh portrays a state of insanity in which individuals behaved irrationally during the partition. It is evident that a person would inevitably act in such a bizarre and crazy manner if he consumes the poison of communalism and hate. The hamlet of Mono Majra, which is situated close to the Indo-Pak border on the banks of the Sutlej River, serves as the focal point of the storyline of this book. For generations, there was peace and tranquilly among the Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu populations.

The village's means of subsistence were reliant on railroad-related activity. The train's commotion continued throughout the evening. One day, a train of Hindu corpses came from Pakistan. The villagers were restless and mistrustful as a result.

"People barricaded their doors and many stayed up all night talking in whispers. Everyone felt his neighbour's hand against him, and thought of finding friends and allies."

The local goon Jugga, who was madly in love with Nooran, was incarcerated at the time. They had a kid, but Nooran refused to send her boy to a camp for refugees in Pakistan since he was Sikh and would not be welcomed there. The villagers were living in harmony until one day a few young people got together in the Gurdware and gave ferocious speeches demanding retribution for rape, murder, murders, and looting. The community was thrown into disarray, and the locals decided to block the train that was transporting Muslim refugees by extending a rope over the bridge. They then concocted a scheme to burn the train and murder Muslim passengers. Hukum Singh released Jugga from prison. Since his beloved Nooran was also on the train, he cut the rope in spite of being fired in order to rescue her. In spite of all the difficult circumstances, Khuswant Singh managed to maintain the eternal love between a man and a woman in the book. By showing love to be victorious in the end, he conveyed to readers the message that literature should only focus on the places where history documents a fragmented truth rather than delving into the murky recesses of human psychology.

The song "Ice Candy Man" by Bapsi Sidhwa similarly captured the mood of the day. The brutalities of division served as the basis for this novel's plot as well. The protagonist of "Ice Candy Man" is Lenny, a little Parsee girl who saw the horrors and atrocities of partition. Shanta, a maid who worked in this

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Parsee girl's home, was courted by many men. Among them, Dilnawaz (the Ice Candy Man) and Masseur competed with one another to earn her affection. Lenny was receiving natural love and care from the maid. The city of Lahore was a peaceful, harmonious place. People were leading happy, loving lives up until the news of the division broke. Every bit of harmony and calm was broken. The Masseur was slain by the Ice Candy Man out of pure jealousy and hate. Then one day a train carrying dead corpses and bags full of breasts arrived from India. Because Dilnawaz's sister was also slain in this tragedy, he became disgusted with and hateful to all Hindus. He participated in violent and savage acts with the protestors. Forcing the maid he loved so much into prostitution only because she was Hindu, he even snatched her. Later, he married her, but not until Lenny's family helped keep her out of prostitution and sent her to refugee camps in Amritsar, India. The most pitiful and unsettling feature of the division is that individuals who had coexisted peacefully and lovingly as brothers for generations turned into enmity, bloodthirsty rivals who even harassed women in their communities. The laments of Lenny in "Ice Candy Man":

"The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot. I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire. I start screaming, hysterically sobbing... how long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months?"

To a little youngster, the world seems to be burning as a result. People started lynching one another, prejudice spread, and people started going crazy. Almost all works of partition have represented all these characteristics in a terrible manner. After learning that his sister had been killed, Dilnawaz, also known as the "Ice Candy Man," went insane and began exacting vengeance on all Hindus. "I want to kill someone for every breast that Muslim women have cut off," he bellows. The worst victims of the division continued to be women. They experienced many forms of brutality, torture, humiliation, and cruelty. Women with their breasts cut were taken from them, sexually assaulted, raped, and murdered on trains. The simplest method to get vengeance on the opposing group was to take advantage of their women, who were mostly the victims. They even give up their virginity and decide to become prostitutes or commit suicide. In "Train to Pakistan," Kushwant Singh exposes the absurdity of cultural conventions and social conventions. On the fourth day after Sundari's marriage, she and her husband were travelling to Gujranwala when their bus was assaulted by Muslims. The vicious crowd stripped her husband nude and sexually assaulted her. Thus, when historical events fall short of clearly illustrating this reality, partition literature attempts to do so. Many authors were so horrified and disheartened by the brutality and horror of the partition that they creatively depicted the genuine tales of violence of the partition without adopting sides and equally blaming the communities and the country. The most remarkable illustration of neutrality may be seen in Krishan Chander's "Peshwar Express," where the author presents a balanced count of the men, women, and children who were killed, representing both populations. Not only did female authors examine the predicament of regular people, but they also expressed pain and sorrow for the victims of the tragedy of partition.

"After the Storm" by Attia Hosan portrays the struggle of women and children to survive amid the misery that their male counterparts have unleashed upon them. Bibi, a little, frail, childlike woman with worried eyes and a grin on her face, is prodded into talking about her history. She had been

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robbed of her childhood. She couldn't remember her early years, and her memory couldn't bridge the memory gap between the camp where she was raised and her adoption. However, perceptive readers would know from the narrative that Bibi is an orphan devoid of spirit. Krishna Sobti captures the fear and horrors ingrained in a young child's imagination in "Where is my Mother." "I want my mother, where is my mother?" she continuously begged and asked the Baluch-Yunua Khan (Dr. Raju J Patale, 36). Her heartbroken and agonised wail evokes the pain of the children who endured the division. Therefore, it is unavoidable that children were traumatised and exploited during the partition crisis in addition to adults.

Conclusion:

The blatant savagery of this infamous event known as partition has been the subject of several publications across the Indian subcontinent. All of these texts cannot be covered on this little canvas. The theme of the Indian subcontinent's division into two nations based on religion is depicted in a number of works by Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani authors. These include Raj Gul's novel "The Rape," H. S. Gill's "Ashes and Petals," Alamgir Hashmi's "Clear Light of Day," Gurucharan Das's "A Fine Family," B. Rajan's "The Dark Dancer," Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children," K. A. Abbas's "Inquilab," and many more.

Therefore, these authors' roles go beyond just documenting this catastrophic event piece by piece to include delving deeply into its underlying causes and illustrating the misery it brings to mankind. In this sense, literature has a significant impact on keeping the next generation from joining the dusty dance of death, something that history does not accomplish.

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