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DERANGEMENT OF HUMANITY: A REPERCUSSION OF PARTITION IN SA'ADAT  
HASAN MANTO'S *TOBA TEK SINGH*

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ABSTRACT

The holocaust that followed in the wake of the Partition of the country is considered one of the bloodiest upheavals of history that claimed innumerable innocent lives and loss of property. The Partition of India and the violence it generated disillusioned people on the either side of border.

This horrifying image has been persistently portrayed and narrated in various movies and serials in the subcontinent time and again. Even writers like Khushwant Singh, Bisham Sahni, Chaman Nahal Salman Rushdie and Manto have given voice to the inexorable, fervent and beastly behaviour of mankind on the eve of India's independence. Manto was greatly touched and shattered with the division and portrayed the events in *Toba Tek Singh* from the point of view of the people like Bishen Singh whose minds were derailed and deranged.

Manto captures the atmosphere where the natives were uprooted with a horrible experience. They were compelled to give up their belongings and homes with all their cherished sweet memories leaving behind. Moreover, they were forced to rush to a land which was not theirs, almost an alien to them.

Through the story *Toba Tek Singh*, Manto exposes political hatred, violence, and of mass passions during those turbulent and fateful days that preceded and followed the Partition of the British India resulting in the destabilized mental make-up of its victims.

Keywords: Partition, derangement, holocaust, hatred, violence.

Whether it was a result of thoughtless politics or natural saturnalia of the either side individuals during partition, cannot be categorically affirmed. However, it is a bitter truth that one of the most upsetting incidents of the 20<sup>th</sup> century world history that claimed millions of lives in the subcontinent is the partition between India and Pakistan. It was not just a division of landscape but a slicing of live hearts who were erstwhile beating cordially like in brothers and comrades. It created an ever-widening chasm between man and man endangering even the future generations. The breach of cross border trust was so perilous that even animals were treated as quintessence of religious faith and individual distinctiveness. The trauma was so horrifying that even today elders cannot stop tears and blubbing while educating the haunting sentiments of the time.

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violence it generated disillusioned people like Khushwant Singh enough to conceive the idea of writing a novel to express their mental agony and inner conflict. Singh narrates:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. The division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country---I had believed that we Indians were peace-loving and nonviolent that we were more concerned with the matters of the spirit. ---After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world. I decided to try my hand at writing. (Singh, Guest of Honour Talk, 1964)

This image has been persistently portrayed and narrated in various movies and serials in the subcontinent time and again. Even writers like Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Chaman Nahal Salman Rushdie and Manto have given voice to the inexorable, fervent and beastly behaviour of mankind on the eve of India's independence. Manto used to say, "If you are not familiar with the age in which we live, read my stories". He was so devastated and grieved over the division or *taqseem* that he could not make up his mind for two different names- India and Pakistan, for the same terrestrial. He himself asserts:

For three months, my mind was incapable of making any decision. It seemed as though several films were being screened simultaneously before my eyes... I could not be sure where I was. Lost in thought, I kept sitting on the chair all day long." (*Dastavez*, Manto, 108).

He poignantly gives aperture to these sentiments in his stories. Along with other diversified themes, his powerful stories deal with pangs and anguish of Partition of India. He confesses:

I dived into that ocean of blood shed by man of his fellow man, and selected some pearls [out of them], recording the tireless ferocity with which man had shed the last drop of the blood his brother, recording the tears shed involuntarily by some who could not make out why they could not say goodbye to their inherent humanity" (*Yazid*, Manto, 175)

Manto's *Toba Tek Singh* is a masterpiece loaded with the insane eccentricities of human being during the historic division. It narrates the pathetic tale of individuals and communities caught in the swirl of Partition. It portrays the plight of fragmented and tortured souls which craved eternally for their identity on the one hand and unification with their dear ones on the other. The people got deranged and destabilized after the demarcation of their beloved land, ethos and grand past. They were not ready to bid adieu their lovely ancestral homes irrespective of the fact whether it is governed by a Hindu or a Muslim Government. Strange enough, the fate of millions of people was decided by the selected ones in the name of government and that too in an instant and arbitrary way. Even the lives of the lunatics quivered at the alarming bell of the Partition. Thousands of people erstwhile passionately engrossed in freedom struggle, were now struggling in asylums to locate particular places in new configurations. Ironically, these lunatics appear to teach a lesson to their so called 'sane' chaps. They got confused over the issue of Hindustan-Pakistan and their insanity became more prominent. Once a lunatic perched on a tree and ceaselessly expressed his thoughts on this issue. When the guard asked him to descend, he rather climbed up higher and declares, "I want to live in neither Hindustan nor Pakistan... I'd rather live on this tree." (Assaduddin, 214)

The central protagonist of the story, Sardar Bishen Singh is a landlord from Toba Tek Singh who gets deranged and admitted to the asylum. He is not at all aware about the outside world or even the passage of time. he just utters, "*Opar di gurgur di annexe di bay dhiana di mung di daal of the laltain.*" (216-17) However, he never forgets his native land- Toba Tek Singh and restlessly moves on his legs without bothering to slumber for years. Though he is mad yet he misses his people, his sense of belongingness in asylum:

He longed for his people, who used to give him solace and bring fruits and clothes. If he had asked him where Toba Tek Singh was, they would have certainly told him whether it was in Pakistan or Hindustan, for he believed that they came from Toba Tek Singh where he had his lands. (Assasuddin, 217)

The Partition created an atmosphere where the natives were uprooted with a horrible experience. They were compelled to give up their belongings and homes with all their cherished sweet memories leaving behind. Moreover, the victims were forced to rush to a land which was not theirs, almost an alien to them.

In addition, the victims of the holocaust from asylums too were exchanged from either side of the border. Though it was undertaken to reduce the pangs and anxieties of the sufferer yet it could not prove so for all like Sardar Bishen Singh. Before the exchange programme, Fazal Deen, a Muslim friend of Toba Tek Singh visits Bishen Singh and along with other information he gives homemade sweets to Bishen Singh. However, Singh simply hands it over to the guards but asks him the persistent question, "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" The exchange scene at Wagah border was quite heart rendering as most of the lunatics were against this exchange. They were unable to realize the logic behind it. Some of them haphazardly raised the slogan- "Pakistan Zindabad" and "Pakistan Murdabad." For official formalities, when Bishen Singh was inquired, he plainly asked, "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" ... In Pakistan or in Hindustan?" (219) This categorically asserts that Bishen Singh was in love with his Motherland not with religious conviction. When the official on duty laughs and declares that Toba Tek Singh is in Pakistan, Bishen Singh leaps and runs back to his Pakistani companions instead of crossing the border. When the officials tried to move him forcibly to the other side, he stood firmly on the ground and submerged with the space which he himself evolved beyond national frontiers, devoid of identity and religiosity:

Just before sunrise, a sky rending cry emerged from the gullet of Bishen Singh, who till then had stood still and unmoving. Several officials came running to the spot and found that the man who had stood on his legs, day and night for fifteen years, was lying on his face. Over there, behind the barbed wires, was Hindustan. Over here, behind identical wires lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of land that had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh. (220)

Thus, the story Toba Tek Singh is a brilliant and realistic story by Manto which exposes political hatred, violence, and of mass passions during those turbulent and fateful days that preceded and followed the Partition of the British India resulting in the destabilized mental make up of its victims.

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