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**PARTITION NARRATIVES:
TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AND CRISIS OF HUMAN VALUES**

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ABSTRACT

I have made an attempt to examine critically two works i.e Sadat Hasan Manto's short story "Toba Tek Singh" and Chaman Nahal's award winning novel *Azadi*. Partition narratives highlight the traumatic experiences of the people and uses metaphors to communicate the dislocation of millions of migrants. Sadat Hasan Manto uses madness as a metaphor to communicate a sense of incomprehension. According to Ravikant and Tarun K Saint "Indeed the term "madness" itself has a privileged status in the discourse on partition" (XVI Translating Partition). Chaman Nahal depicts the horrific instances and situations faced by the migrants during partition. *Azadi* means freedom, but a common man has to pay heavy price for no fault of his own. They are victimized by the situation and are transformed into brutal murderers.

Key Words: partition narratives, dislocation, metaphors, traumatic

I

Partition is a concept which has various forms in terms of meaning and interpretations. Partition is not just a geographical division which divides one country from the other but also a line which demarcates our feelings, emotions, and most importantly sentiments. Literatures as a genre has always been influenced by partition as it a significant part of our history and culture. The Indian independence movement, the partition of India and its aftermaths have very aptly been represented in the various genres of literature especially in fictions of various partition novelists. Many novelists have been influenced by the theme of partition to depict the socio-political scenario during the independence. The year 1947 is historic in its own terms the departure of the British from the Indian Subcontinent led to the creation of two independent countries. The division was based on the 'Two Nation Theory'. It was believed that Muslims and Hindus cannot live together as one nation since both have distinct social, cultural and religious identities. But the partition of the country brought along with it the unprecedented horror.

Suddenly, the people felt threatened. Thousands of people were being uprooted from their own native land. The people suffered from physical as well as psychological trauma. The national leadership and political parties failed to establish peace and harmony among nations. The partition literature reflects the pain, suffering and tragedy of both the community. In the present paper I have discussed the writings of some

renowned authors like Sadat Hasan Manto's *Toba Tek Singh*(1955) and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. Through their writings these authors have depicted the harsh realities of the partition and how it changed people live forever. The plight, the horror, the suffering of a common man was beyond one's imagination.

II

Toba Tek Singh is a short story written by Sadat Hasan Manto and published in 1955.the story is a powerful satire on the relationship between India and Pakistan. Sadat Hasan Manto is known for his writings which showcase the intense panorama of the partition. He himself had witnessed partition and was uprooted from his native land Sambrala some miles away from Amritsar. *Toba Tek Singh* is a representation of his own traumatic experience where the characters are insane but have the ability to question the so called sane or wise men. Sadat Hasan Manto uses a sarcastic tone to reflect the true image of the society. There was a phase in his life when he almost got himself admitted to a mental asylum due to depression. He locates his story *Toba Tek Singh* in a lunatic asylum. It highlights the political absurdity of the partition through the world of insane. After partition, suddenly the land known for its diverse cultures and traditions living peacefully transformed into a land of loot, murder, rape, abduction and madness. *Toba Tek Singh* is a story that deals with the theme of partition which leads to alienation. Bishan Singh who belongs to a small village in Punjab named Toba Tek Singh is unable to bear the reality of partition. He, although, insane could not resist the fact that he has to forget his native land and cross the border. Hence, he prefers to die in a no man's land rather than accepting an unknown country as his own. This mental asylum is much better than the outside world where people kill each other for their materialistic gain. But these insane have the feeling of brotherhood and love for each other. Therefore, one of the mad man who had climbed tree comes down and with tears bids farewell to his friends. "After much fuss, when his fits ebbed, he climbed down, and hugging his Hindu and Sikh friends, began to cry. He was saddened by the thought that they would go over to Hindustan, leaving him here" (214).

Bishan Singh always spoke something mysterious "upper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal the laltain"(215). Guards said that he had not slept in fifteen years. But the day he was forced to cross the dividing line towards India, he stood in no man's land on his swollen legs and gave up his life "in between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh" (220).

III

Another story related to partition was Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. It deals with the story of Lala Kanshi Ram and his family who face the harsh realities of partition. Chaman Nahal received the Sahitya Akademi Award for Literature on his *Azadi*. Lala Kanshi Ram, a tradesman of Sialkot was forced to migrate to India. His daughter, Madhubala and son-in-law fall victim to the communal frenzy. His son Arun has to be separated from his beloved Nur. After the announcement of the partition they no more shared the same relationship. "He was now a 'Hindu' boy carrying on with a 'Muslim' girl" (73).

Till the end Lala Kanshi Ram had the hope that Sialkot might never go to Pakistan but soon his hopes and dreams were shattered. Both Nur and Arun were madly in love with each other. He was even ready to embrace Islam to be with her. Nur insists Arun to become a Muslim for her love:

"Because I'm a girl and am defenceless and cannot force my will on my family and because you're a man, more independent than me, and I expect you to defend me and make sacrifices for me, that's why"? (78)

But in spite of this traumatic and painful experience, Lala Kanshi Ram declares " I have ceased to hate... I can't hate the Muslims anymore...we are all equally guilty...We have sinned as much"(298). He declares : Whatever the Muslim did to us in Pakistan, we are doing it to them here" . He was a staunch believer of Mahatma Gandhi who believed in equality and humanity.

Chaman Nahal depicts the tragedy of the countless human sufferings as an aftermath of partition. The characters in the novel belong to various religion and community. Lala Kanshi Ram's best friend was

Chaudhary Barkat Ali and his son Munir was Arun's best friend . Arun was in love with Munir's younger sister Nur. The announcement of partition failed to draw line between the hearts of these families. Lala Kanshi Ram is the representation of millions of sufferers like him during partition. Nahal's ownlife experience in Sialkot at the time of partition inspired him to write the novel. He himself acknowledges the autobiographical nature of Azadi by calling it "... a hymn to one's land of birth, rather than realistic novel of the partition"(Nahal 10). Azadi is a novel that questions the real meaning and significance of such freedom which brings with it the pain and sufferings of millions.

Very soon the city of Sialkot turn into a riot-torn city and the Hindu Mohallas are burnt down by them. Lala is deeply disturbed, when his shop is looted by Muslims. He is not ready to move to the refugee camp set up by the government. He is shattered with the thought of being uprooted and thinks " I was born here, this is my home-how can I be a refugee in my own home? (108) the feeling of displacement and migration is rather a painful experience for him. Compelled by the insecure atmosphere, Lala, his family and his neighbours move to the Refugee camp.

But his suffering does not end there; rather it increased when he heard the news of his daughter and son-in law's death. Lala is angry with the leaders for their failure in maintaining peace and security for the migrants. Facing a series of tragic incidents Lala and his family reaches Delhi where several other problems await him. Initially he finds it really difficult to get an accommodation for him. But gradually, finding Delhi relatively better than Sialkot, Lala begins to adjust himself to the life of Delhi and make a new beginning. The greatest problem he faces here is his sense of loss of his identity. Who is he and what he wants? But later he realizes that life has to go on and forgiveness is the only way to recover one's sanity, humanity and to live in peace with oneself. The novel ends with a ray of hope and regeneration.

To conclude partition narratives have emerged as a distinctive fictional form, more in interpreting the complex human relationships as a result of the partition of the larger sub-continent into two countries. It is not actually the geographical aspects which determine the nationhood, but along with it, a number of issues contribute to the complexity of human experiences. The crisis of identity and the question of the discovery of the self of the protagonist with reference to religion and culture are taken up by the writers to develop the complex form of the work. In doing so the nation's history is rewritten and redefined with the help of the writer's own imagination, inhibition and innovative skills. From the point of view of new historicism, history is never objective and it is exclusively subjective, because history is filtered through the lens that the creative writer wears. Furthermore, "the historicity of the text" and "the textuality of the history" are blended in an artistic way.

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