

## Human Values in Toba Tek Singh

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### Abstract:

Human values and literature are strongly interconnected. Human values sustain peace, harmony, and unity. Human values foster a common culture of friendliness, mutual respect, and loyalty. Identification, inculcation, and implementation of human values are essential. Literature reflects human values via different genres. Literature transmits and promotes human values. Literature fosters empathy and encourages moral values. The works of literature picture social, moral, and ethical norms, and also reveal the inner values. Literary works that encompass values such as love, identity, compassion, integrity, loyalty, peace, and truthfulness. The present research paper examines the themes of love, compassion, madness, and identity in the short story *Toba Tek Singh* by Saadat Hasan Manto, which was published in 1955. Manto portrays how the partition divides men, causes forced relocation and creates identity crises between Hindustan and Pakistan. The protagonist Bishen Singh, called Toba Tek Singh, is the incarnation of the quest for identity, love, and integrity. The short story is set against the backdrop of the great partition of India in 1947. The setting of the short story is a lunatic asylum. The story ends with the death of Bishen Singh between the borders of Hindustan and Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Values, Compassion, Identity, Integrity

### Introduction:

The objective of the present research paper is to locate love, compassion, and the question of identity in *Toba Tek Singh* by Saadat Hasan Manto. The meaning of the term 'value' is essential to explore the presence and its significance in the short story under study. The word 'value' originates from the Latin word 'valere', which means to be of worth. According to Eduard Spranger, human values are "The constellation of a person's view of the world." (Sthapak, p.6) Values are the beliefs that a person holds about things and aspects of life. "Human values may be defined as the standards or codes for conduct which are guided by conscience, according to which a human being is supposed to shape his life pattern by integrating his beliefs, ideas and attitudes to realise the aims of life." (Sthapak, p.6) Dr B.K. Sthapak classified values as political, territorial, religious and spiritual. According to Dalai Lama, "We are all by nature, clearly oriented towards the basic human values of love and compassion. We all prefer the love of others to their hatred. We all prefer others' generosity to meanness. And who is there among us who does not prefer tolerance, respect and forgiveness of our failings to bigotry, disrespect and resentment?" (Sthapak, p.12)

Sadaat Hasan Manto is a prolific Urdu writer who was originally from Punjab and later moved to Lahore. The protagonist of *Toba Tek Singh*, Bishen Singh, who had been a wealthy landowner in a village of that name, reflects the identity, compassion, love, and integrity. The present short story canvases Bishen Singh's identity struggle. The story realistically portrays the psychological consequences of the partition. Forceful migration and dislocation had traumatised the people. Religion was the major criterion for the displacement of the people. Manto delineates how insane people, unaware of the partition, have now become Hindus or Muslims. Their feelings, emotions, love, compassion, and internal attachment to their native places are meaningless.

The narrative opens with a scene of the partition, ridiculing the political leaders of India and Pakistan. The story starts in a lunatic asylum in Lahore. The lunatics are unaware of the social, political, and geographical changes that have occurred outside the asylum. The short story realistically depicts the forceful migration of the people, which uprooted them from their homes, cultures, and identities. The governments of Hindustan and Pakistan decide that Muslims should reside in Pakistan and non-Muslims, including Hindus and Sikhs, should relocate to India. Manto vividly describes the impact of this partition and mass migration on the people like Bishen Singh, who are ignorant of independence, partition, and the exchange of Hindus and Muslims. The governments of India and Pakistan also decided to exchange Muslim prisoners in India for Hindu and Sikh prisoners in Pakistan. This decision creates chaos and confusion in the mental asylum. The story vividly portrays the value of compassion. The authorities or the governments of India and Pakistan do not have any sympathy or compassion for the lunatics. For them, they are just objects to be exchanged like all other resources.

Manto, in the opening paragraph, sarcastically writes, "Two or three years after the partition, it occurred to the governments of Hindustan and Pakistan that, just as they had exchanged civilian prisoners, they should exchange lunatics confined in the asylum as well. In other words, Muslim lunatics interred in the asylums of Hindustan should be sent to Pakistan, and the Hindu and Sikh lunatics confined in the asylums of Pakistan should be handed over to Hindustan." (Manto, p.36) Further, he writes, "Anyway, the decision was made by the wise". (Manto, p.36)

The news of the exchange of the lunatics disturbed the lunatics in the Lahore asylum. They could not understand the notion of Pakistan. The value of love, identity, compassion, and integrity is presented through minor characters. The news of the exchange of the lunatics broke them inwardly. Manto narrates an abrupt change in the behaviour of the lunatics in the asylum. They could not figure out the notion of partition and in what sense it is related to their forceful shifting to an unfamiliar place. A Muslim lunatic who had been reading *The Zamindar*, a newspaper, asks, "Maulvi Sahab, what is this Pakistan?" (Manto, p.36)

A Sikh lunatic is worried about the language. He feels they should not be sent to Hindustan as they do not speak their language. One Muslim lunatic died in a frenzy while shouting slogans. The lunatics do not know the location of the new nation. One insane person became more insane as he could not solve the puzzle of Hindustan and Pakistan. He prefers to live in the tree rather than in Hindustan or Pakistan. "I want to live in neither Hindustan nor Pakistan..... I'd rather live on this tree" (Manto, p.37).

One Muslim lunatic who used to bathe fifteen or sixteen times stopped this habit. Manto has used madness to showcase chaos in the absence of love and compassion. The lunatics love their asylum, and they do not want to abandon it. The separation from other lunatics is unbearable for them.

The lunatics have deep compassion, love and attachment for their asylum and companions there. A Sikh lunatic was saddened by the thought of leaving behind his Muslim friend. The lunatics are against displacement. They do not want to get uprooted from their homes. A Hindu lawyer does not want to leave Lahore, though his beloved lives in Amritsar. Manto describes, "But he did not want to leave Lahore because he thought his practice would not flourish in Amritsar." (Manto, p.38).

Bishen Singh, the protagonist, has spent fifteen years in the asylum. In the asylum, he used to listen to the talk about the exchange of the lunatics. The discussion about the partition and the exchange of the lunatics disturbed the harmless, strong man, who had not slept at night or during the day, had not lain down for fifteen years, and was saddened by the news of the exchange. He does not want to move from his village, Toba Tek Singh. He questions other lunatics about the prospect of Toba Tek Singh.

Bishen Singh used to ask other lunatics about the location of his village, whether it is in Hindustan or in Pakistan. Agitated Bishen Singh waits for a regular 'visit' by his kinsmen. Manto describes, "He longed for his people, who used to give him solace and bring fruits, sweets and clothes. If he had asked them where it was in Pakistan or Hindustan, for he believed that they came from Toba Tek Singh, where he had his land". (Manto p.40). Bishen Singh wants to belong to only Toba Tek Singh, his village none other place. Bishen Singh even begged Khuda, one of the lunatics, to pass the order to finalise the location of Toba Tek Singh.

Bishen Singh is deeply obsessed with home. This obsession stands for the love that people have for their home or village. Dr Asit Panda writes that his obsession with finding his home symbolises the deep-rooted connection people have with their land and the disorientation caused by the arbitrary division. The search for identity and allegiance in a world that has been turned upside down is poignantly symbolised by Bishen Singh's journey to locate his hometown, Toba Tek Singh." Bishen Singh is a symbol of the people who long for identity, love, and compassion. He prefers death but does not compromise with integrity.

*Toba Tek Singh* illustrates the love between the father and the daughter. Bishen could not recognise his daughter, Roop Kaur. She feels sad for her father and used to cry on every visit. Fazal Deen, Bishen Singh's friend, believes that Bishen Singh would go to Hindustan and meet his daughter and other relatives. He sends a message to Bhai Ballbir Singh regarding the buffalo. Bishen Singh asks Fazal Deen about the location of Toba Tek Singh. "Then he asked Fazal Deen, "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" Fazal Deen replied with alacrity, "It's where it always was." Bishen Singh was persistent. "In Pakistan or in Hindustan?" Bishen Singh is deeply attached to Toba Tek Singh. He belongs to Toba Tek Singh, neither to Hindustan nor to Pakistan. Partition separates the people physically and geographically but emotionally, they are deeply connected. Fazal Deen's concern for Roop Kaur and eagerness to give a message to Bhai Ballbir Singh showcases value of compassion. Manto depicts the feelings of love and compassion in the heart of the people before the partition.

On the day of the exchange of the lunatics Bishen Singh repeated a question about the location of Toba Tek Singh, which persistently harassing him. He ask. "Where is Toba Tek Singh? ..... In Pakistan or in Hindustan? (Manto, p.43) The moment he got the answer, he stood firmly between the borders of the two nations. The death of Toba Tek Singh suggests human values such as love, identity, compassion and a feeling of belongingness are basic cravings of every human being.

**Conclusion:** The end of the story encapsulates that the values of love, compassion, belongingness, and identity are essential for the survival of human beings. The death of Bishen Singh in no man's land indicates the fate of the people who could not occupy a place in society, as society does not respect basic human values, which make life meaningful and worth living. The partition is not just a geographical or political divide, but it also forces the suppression of inherent values. Absence of values of love and compassion for other people resulted in to displacement, sorrow, and

even death. Bishen Singh's love and integrity for Toba Tek Singh, and his tragic death highlights the significance of values.

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