

Partition Trauma and Human Suffering in the Short Fiction of Saadat Hasan Manto

Akhtar Shuakat Shah¹, Dr. Manisha Annasaheb Gaikwad²

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¹(Research Scholar)

²(Research Guide),

^{1,2} Department of English & Research Centre, Mahatma Gandhi Vidyamandir's Loknete Vyankatrao Hire Arts, Commerce & Science College Panchvati, Tal-Nashik, Dist-Nashik, Maharashtra (India)

Email:

professorakhtarfaraz57@gmail.com

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Address for correspondence:

Dr Pradip B. Gaikwad
Associate Shah Akhtar Shuakat Shah
(Research Scholar) Department of English & Research Centre, Mahatma Gandhi Vidyamandir's Loknete Vyankatrao Hire Arts, Commerce & Science College Panchvati, Tal-Nashik, Dist-Nashik, Maharashtra (India)
Email:
professorakhtarfaraz57@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper focuses on how Partition trauma and human suffering are portrayed in the short fiction of Saadat Hasan Manto. To examine the themes of violence, madness, and loss of identity, it uses three significant stories, namely, "Toba Tek Singh," "Khol Do," and "Thanda Gosht. In 1947, the Partition of India resulted in the massive displacement and psychological trauma which Manto expresses through simple and straightforward narration. His narrations show how regular people feel disoriented, morally unstable, and emotionally hurt under severe circumstances. The paper states that the realistic style and the use of minimal narrative technique helps Manto to depict the human suffering and the decay of social values. His work provides readers with a challenge by showing harsh realities without hyperbole. The stories by Manto are even still useful in realism of the modern times in matters of migration, conflict and identity.

Keywords: Partition, trauma, human suffering, Manto, identifying, violence.

Introduction

The division of India in 1947 is the event that has been the most violent and was the most disruptive in contemporary history. It led to the displacement of close to 14 million individuals and caused communal riots. Thousands of people were killed, and numerous others were psychologically damaged in the long term. They separated families and divided communities that had coexisted over a long time. When political leaders concentrated on the establishment of two countries, people were unable to handle immediate loss and indeterminacy.

One of the most prominent figures in literature who managed to express these realities is Saadat Hasan Manto. He never showed Partition in nationalistic or ideological prism as many other writers did. He instead emphasized on personal suffering. His narratives mirror the suffering, disorientation and helplessness of common individuals. The paper will examine how Manto portrays trauma in three stories, bringing out the emotional and psychological aspects of Partition that can still be felt up until now.

Trauma and Literary Presentation.

Trauma does not simply happen physically. It entails severe mental disorder which has an impact on memory, identity and emotional stability. The trauma theory states that people are not always capable of processing traumatic events at the moment when it takes place. These experiences come back afterwards in fragmented forms like flashback, silence or abrupt emotional response (Caruth, 1996). It is challenging to translate trauma into traditional forms of narration.

The trauma that was caused by partition was complex and involved violence, displacement, and identity crisis. There was the compulsion to leave their homes and start their lives in new places. This brought a feeling of loss and dislocation (Pandey, 2001). In literature, the experiences are a major concept that is expressed in fractured stories and symbolic behavior.

The same is the case with the stories of Manto. He does not give explanations in much detail, instead, he dwells on short, but strong moments. His characters do not necessarily talk about their pain, yet their behavior demonstrates profound emotional disturbance. In this way, the readers will learn about trauma indirectly, which makes the experience more dramatic and real.

Absurdity and Madness in Toba Tek Singh.

Toba Tek Singh uses the bizarre backdrop of a mental asylum to criticize Partition. The move to swap prisoners between India and Pakistan brings out the absurdity of political boundaries. The characters find it difficult to make sense of these changes, just as it is the case with the ordinary people.

The repetition of questions by Bishan Singh regarding his hometown is a more profound identity seeking. He is unable to find a straight answer which indicates the arbitrariness of the new boundaries. The asylum itself is the source of an image of the lost sense of logic and stability in the society.

The prisoners are considered mad, yet this group of people seems to be more in touch with reality than the officials.

The climax of the story is especially strong. Bishan Singh succumbs to death in a no-man land. This no-man land is an indication of his loss of identity and belonging. Manto applies irony to demonstrate that, in a world that is polarized by irrational choices, madness is some kind of truth. The narrative shows the manner in which Partition not only interrupted geography, but human meaning as well.

Gendered Trauma and Violence in Khol Do.

Khol Do gives one of the most upsetting accounts of violence during parting of India. It is the story of an old father, Sirajuddin, who is trying to find his lost daughter, Sakina, in the pandemonium of migration and communal riots. He is desperate and turns to the aid of a group of men who are willing to assist him in finding her. Nevertheless, this story is revealed as a sad betrayal as these people who were supposed to save lives are the perpetrators of violence.

Manto employs a reserved and minimalist discourse to describe sex violence. Rather than offering direct descriptions, he creates an impressive and terrifying scene in the climax of the story. A doctor arrives at the hospital requesting to open a window by saying 'khol do' when Sakina is discovered and is taken to the hospital. Sakina, in her turn, unnecessarily loosens her clothes. This act indicates that she has been sexually abused several times. The lack of narratives helps to enhance the effect, compelling the reader to address the brutality in an indirect, but effective way.

The gender aspect of violence in Partition is also brought out in the story. During communal conflicts, women bodies turned into places of domination, retaliation and humiliation. This was the experience of Sakina and the experience of many other women who were abducted, raped and displaced (Butalia, 1998). Her automatism is a sign that she is highly psychologically traumatized, and the lines between order and transgression have broken. She is no longer a conscious or an agentic person, demonstrating how violence has destroyed her identity.

The disintegration of moral and social order is another event revealed by Manto. The men who come to her aid take advantage of Sakina and it is a manifestation of how trust fails when violence is at its peak. The narrative questions the concept of heroism and defense, showing how easily people can turn into rapists during the state of anarchy.

Manto portrays trauma in two forms: physical and psychological, through Khol Do. He shows that violence does not stop with the act itself and it goes on to affect the identity and behavior of the victim. The narrative stands as an effective criticism of gendered violence and how the effects of Partition on the lives of women have continued to be felt over time.

Guilt and Moral Collapse in Thanda Gosht.

Thanda Gosht" is a dark study of guilt and moral disintegration in the Partition of India. The plot revolves around the character of Ishwar Singh who admits to his lover that he was involved in communal violence. He confesses to murdering a family in riots and he later tries to rape a young girl only to find out that the girl is already dead. It is the point of the story that changes the direction of the narrative as it shows the psychological impact of his actions.

Manto does not concentrate on victimhood but the state of mind of the perpetrator. The fact that Ishwar Singh is physically incapable of showing physical performance speaks of his psychological instability and intense guilt. His body is in reaction to the terror of what he has done and it displays the impact of violence not only on the victim but on the perpetrator. This description disproves the notion that perpetrators are not affected by their acts.

The novel reveals the breakdown of the moral principles at Partition. In a normal situation, people will adhere to moral limits. But in the confusion of communal violence such lines are erased. The behavior of Ishwar Singh reveals the fact that even ordinary people are able to decide to be most brutal when the social order collapses.

Manto does not make moral judgements but he presents the situation in a stark realism way. He does not excuse the actions of Ishwar Singh but he also gives the reader the chance to see the psychological conflict that ensues. The story makes the readers answer awkward questions of human nature and duty.

The main character of the story is the picture of the dead girl. She is a symbol of utter dehumanization when a human body is turned into an object. This is an indication of the level of violence in Partition, as people lost their dignity and identity (Kumar, 2015). The moment of realization by Ishwar Singh brings about a shock where the reality of moral awareness comes out after the violence has been committed.

By Thanda Gosht, Manto introduces the issue of trauma as multi-layered. He demonstrates that psychological effects caused by moral deterioration are long-term. The narrative brings out the effects of violence, which does not only end lives but also the conscience of the people involved in such acts leaving behind a trail of guilt and misery.

Manto reveals this metamorphosis very subtly. He does not condemn the character but gives the readers a chance to comprehend his internal struggle. There is also dehumanization brought out in the story. The girl is being treated like an object and not like an individual. This is a representation of the dehumanization of Partition (Kumar, 2015). Through the story, it becomes evident that both the perpetrators and the victims of trauma have long-term psychological impacts.

Identity and Displacement

Partition was a significant identity crisis. Instead, people who had resided in a single place over the generations were forced to migrate and acquire new national identities. This abrupt transition brought about disorder and instability.

The stories of Manto demonstrate that identity is not static but it keeps on changing. The criteria of borders are arbitrary because Bishan Singh is unable to tell his nationality. Sakina is deprived of a sense of self because of the trauma, and Ishwar Singh, loses his moral identity and is torn between guilt.

These illustrations demonstrate how Partition interfered with individual and interpersonal identity. People were changed into religious groups and their individual backgrounds were not taken into consideration (Pandey, 2001). There was also the isolation of emotion, caused by displacement. Individuals were not connected with the past and were in doubt of the future.

This is the experience that Manto captures to his characters where the identity is shaped by memory, place and relationships. When these factors are distorted, people feel the profound sense of loss.

Narrative Style and Realism

The style of narration used by Manto is important in expressing trauma. He speaks straightforward and does not employ elaborate literary styles. This renders his stories simple and startling.

His realism is also manifested through his concentration on ordinary characters and common situations. He does not give dramatic events as they happen to be. This style makes his stories more realistic.

Manto does not also judge morally. He does not lead the readers to a certain interpretation. On the contrary, he gives events and leaves it to the readers to make their own conclusions. This brings about an increased emotional involvement.

The sudden termination of his stories shows the unprocessed state of trauma. No clear closure exists, similar to the fact that trauma in the real life does not have easy solutions. The complexity of human suffering is well captured in his style.

Comparative Analysis

The three stories that are examined in this paper are of various dimensions of Partition trauma. All the stories are dedicated to a particular point but lead to the greater overview of human suffering.

The madness is used in "Toba Tek Singh to emphasize confusion and loss of identity. Khol Do is a song about violence and womanhood suffering. Thanda Gosht deals with the theme of guilt, and moral breakdown.

Regardless of these variations, the stories have a common set of themes. They demonstrate the falling apart of society and destruction of human relations. They also bring out the psychological effects of violence.

Manto gives a complete picture of Partition by offering various interpretations. His narratives go hand in hand to give a full picture of trauma and suffering.

Contemporary Relevance

The themes that Manto explores in his stories are still significant nowadays. People in the world are still affected by migration, displacement and conflict. In other parts of the World, refugee crises can be seen to share the same experience of loss and confusion of identity.

The work by Manto assists the readers in realizing the human cost of such events. His narratives promote compassion and sensitivity. They serve to remind us that the political decisions that we make are made by real people with feelings and experiences.

The way he describes violence and trauma is also ethically questionable. It makes readers think about human actions in the extreme cases. His work remains an influential source of literature and academic work, thus being a significant element of modern-day discourse.

Conclusion

The short fiction by Saadat Hasan Manto is one of the most eloquent illustrations of the trauma of the Partition and the sufferings of human beings. His narratives reproduce the emotional and psychological effects of violence, displacement and loss of identity.

He is able to disclose the harsh realities of Partition using simple language and through realistic narration. His writing is not exaggerating but is human-oriented. This makes his stories effective and significant.

The contribution made by Manto to literature is great. Readers and scholars still find his stories relevant. They are a reminder of what human suffering can be as a result of conflict.

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