

Healing and Psychological Impacts from Socio-Emotional and Traumatic Event of Independence Movement

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Abstract: -

The partition of India has been the most remarkable and momentous event in the history of Indian subcontinent. Its impacts were diverse on different people, including women and children. Significant events like, Partition of India, usually inspire artists and writers to record such great events in the history and also portray artistically in literature. People saw not only outrageous bloodbath but also it showed totally inconceivable horrible events that wedged the mind, body and soul of not only the victims of violence but also of those who eventually either witnessed or heard the stories post these occurrences, thereby affecting the people socio-emotionally. What the human history witnessed was mass migration, hustle and bustle of rapes, abduction of hapless women and children, in addition to causing spread of hatred and scare from the other community that hovered all around petrifying not only the human beings but also the surroundings, leading to terrible psychosocial factors. Needless to say, that the level of awful experience that people underwent during the period was surprisingly bitter and unimaginably cruel. Apart from the psychological state of the victims which got impacted, there were many who did not lose their calm but fought bravely and came out thriving. They demonstrated their strength and did their level best in re-constructing and rehabilitating their lives fighting with all the adversities while withholding and suppressing the toxic pains and torture that they went through, thereby creating a work-life balance in their lives.

The prime emphasis of the paper is to discuss and compare between the two famous authors Saadat Hasan Manto and Gulzar, who through their starkly unique styles describe and portray the darkest events of period, besides making the people aware about the difficult times that people went through. The paper will, while taking into account three texts, 'Footprints on the Zero Line' by Gulzar, 'Suspected Poems' by Gulzar, 'Vanity Bagh' by Anees Salim and 'Mottled Down' by Saadat Hasan Manto; look into the atrocities that the Partition 1947 created for both the communities, thereby analysing as to how the people (both victims and victimizers) underwent through depression, trauma, later towards formation or re-formation and rehabilitating themselves gradually strong by illuminating the fire of determination within and trying to re-create what was lost in the horrifying fire.

Keywords: - Partition, survivors, struggle, artists, trauma, hope, re-creation, depression, rehabilitation, psychosocial factors, socio-emotional trauma.

Introduction

Many writers have written and researched over Partition Literature. While they researched and expressed their views, the only material aspect which emerged in their writing and which had greater focus was the sufferings, trauma, depression besides agonies and disturbed psychosocial factors of the victims as well as the survivors. The researchers, earlier, have been limiting their analyses of the gruesome event only towards the negative side, highlighting what bad impact it created to the country and its people. But this present paper will try and focus on how both the authors despite writing and highlighting the real struggle and trauma of the people, have always tried to make the people aware of the atrocities that occurred with the only aim to not to repeat the same in future. The authors while stressing upon the difficult psychosocial factors that people had during the period, also put light towards the exemplary resolve that people had in order to re-create and rehabilitate themselves from the ruins to which they have been thrown upon.

Saadat Hasan Manto and Gulzar both have been the survivors of this atrocious event and went through a lot of psychological and socio-emotional trauma during and after the period. Both in their interviews have said that they would have nightmares of the tragic events that they had seen during the time and thus to come out of that, they

had to do something fruitful, not only for themselves but also for the people around them. And, hence, both took down to writing their experiences in their own unique styles with the only hope that it will rehabilitate not only themselves but will also give some kind of motivation and direction to world around them.

This, however highlights to a yet another fact that an extensive volume of Partition Literature comes out from the real-life stories of the people who themselves went through it.

FOOTPRINTS ON THE ZERO LINE and SUSPECTED POEMS

To begin with, Gulzar in one of his interviews with Sukrita Paul Kumar recounts that he had cried a lot and for around twenty-five year he would have nightmares, making him to wake up in the middle of the night being scared and petrified, and which made it difficult for him to go back to sleep again, as again those nightmares will hover in his dreams. He states that the fearful images from the Partition had settled deep into him. And thus, to come out of that fear, he started writing all that he had experienced during the time. “The purging happened slowly, not in a gush. I took my time and did not write about it all at once. I may not have written short stories if it had happened that way. I took my time even to get a hold over my medium of expression.” (Interview with Gulzar by Sukrita Paul Kumar, *Footprints on Zero Line* by Gulzar, 186-187)

The above personal experiences of Gulzar, which he articulated during an interview with Sukrita Paul Kumar very clearly depict the role that history plays in both impacting the personality of an individual and hence giving him/her an opportunity of purging out with all that is there inside through different literary styles, which ultimately helps one to regain their normal self. There have been, thus, many such similar writers in the literary field, like Amrita Pritam, Saadat Hasan Manto, Rahi Masoom Raza, Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, etc. to name a few, who have been the close witnesses to the harsh times of partition and who in order to come to terms with their own selves penned down their experiences into different and unique styles, that have very beautifully voiced the mayhems that occurred during and after the 1947 Partition.

These literary creations whether in the form of poetry, short stories, novellas or novels; apart from helping the writers in purging out their horrific experiences also served in letting the coming generations know about the actual accounts of the Partition riots that occurred across and within both the newly formed countries, which history failed to do. Both literature and history can therefore be said as playing a complimentary role to each other, wherein when one facet fails to highlight something, the other very beautifully and in its own unique manner draws attention to the unsaid and abridges the gap.

One of the artists who too has expressed his heart out is Elie Wiesel who himself was the sufferer from the times of Holocaust war which took place between Nazis and Jews during the Second World War in the year 1945. He also wrote a memoir titled ‘Night’, accounting the atrocities which the Nazis inflicted upon the Jews while forcing them to live in the concentration camps and pushing them into the gas chambers to die a dreadful death. And hence, while writing the preface to the novel the author very explicitly writes that in order to give meaning to his survival from the atrocities of Holocaust he wrote this testimony, which in a way helped him in changing his life, believing that it was his moral responsibility to thwart the enemy and his dreadful actions from relishing one final success by letting the crimes to be deleted from the human memory. He further says, “I believe it important to emphasize how strongly I feel that books, just like people, have a destiny. Some invite sorrow, others joy and some both.” (viii, *Night*, Elie Wiesel) He himself agrees that this very book which he previously was not even planning to write, brought out an influential transformation in the public’s mindset. It is because of this book and many other more that the topic of Auschwitz became a part of the mainstream culture. There are many films, plays, novels, international conferences, exhibitions, annual ceremonies with the participation of the nation’s officialdom. The most striking example is that of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C; which has received more than twenty-two million visitors since its inauguration in 1993.

Coming back to the gory event of the Indian subcontinent of Indo-Pak Partition which took place in 1947 and which is also sometimes equated with the 1945 Holocaust because of the gruesome bloodshed and atrocities occurring during the period, also has led to the creation of an ocean of texts, films, conferences, exhibitions etc. so that the future generation does not remain aloof from what must have happened in the past. Also similar to the holocaust event the Indian government also built two Partition Museums, one at at the Town Hall, Amritsar, and

the in the capital city, Delhi, near the Parliament House; to pay tribute to all those innocents who lost their lives and to the resilience of all those millions who rose and rehabilitated from the devastation of Partition to rebuild their lives and our nation.

“The sad reality is that often history in our textbooks and museums focusses on the history of nation states and leader; the focus is on wars, and kings and governments. But rarely do we find histories that look at the *people*.

I have had the immense privilege of being part of a community movement in the last few years to create the world’s first Partition Museum – and the create it as a *People’s Museum*. What this means is that we use people’s own voices, their artefacts, letters, photographs to tell history.” (xi-xii, Introduction, *Divided by Partition United by Resilience*, Mallika Ahluwalia)

The same has also been the thinking of many writers of Partition, who focused on the real voices and experiences of the people who suffered. ‘The Other Side of Silence’ written by Urvashi Butalia, ‘Borders and Boundaries’ written by Ritu Menon, and many other more such books are an example of such a thinking wherein the author(s) focused on the common people.

Vanity Bagh, the novel, written by Anees Salim, is one such novel that besides focusing on the after effects of the partition, gives a glimpse of the kind violence, animosity and acrimony that took place during the 1947 partition and has been continuing thereafter. Here the protagonist, named, Imran Jabbari, narrates his story about how he was imprisoned for the crime of scooter blasts in the neighbouring colony named Mehendi. The story revolves around an imaginary place called Mango Bagh divided into two colonies, named, Mehendi and Vanity Bagh, where both the colonies were Hindu and Muslim dominated respectively; and hence there was a war between the two. Both the villages were at war with each other for one or the other reason. Even the world cup match between India and Pakistan had the reason to put them at war with each other. It could be said that Vanity Bagh was a tiny Pakistan as all the people living there were very much obsessed with the famous personalities of Pakistan, who were successful in their professions, so much so that every person living there possesses one of those names.

“*Since the Partition, Vanity Bagh has been at constant war with Mehendi, though the riots following Pakistan’s world cup victory had given the enmity a new dimension that even the upheavals of 1947 could not bring out.*”

Imran Jabbari, the protagonist of the novel wanted to become as famous and powerful as one of the members in their village, named Abu Hathim, who was an established Don there. The Don was losing his family members one by one to his enemies yet he was the Boss and he continued the perpetration of his criminal activities and felt extreme satisfaction with his engagements. Thus, truly inspired by the Don, Imran Jabbari, is an aimless young man living in the town called Mango bagh, an imaginary city that could be anywhere in India. His gang called Five and a Half Men, which is composed of six young men, all of whom bear the names of Pakistani politicians out of whom one is mute, so he’s considered the half. The gang is formed with the mission of orchestrating and executing certain tasks like those of murdering or kidnapping people to fulfil an ambition similar to that of Abu Hathim, exactly falling in his footsteps. For these five and half men: Imran, Zulfikar, Jinnah, Zia, Navaz Sharif and Yahya; indulgence in these activities was a thing of adventure and heroism and they felt a kind of pride and satisfaction by murdering, kidnapping or terrorizing people.

Anees Salim, through this novel is trying to bring to the fore people’s mentality, that highlights as to how indulging in the acts of violence creates a heroic trait in them. People think that by doing violent acts and by terrorizing people; they become heroic for their society and hence it is a thing of honour and respect. He also tries to tell the readers that although it has been a long time since the partition of 1947, but still there are places where people have divided themselves and their areas on the basis of Hindus and Muslims, and hence continue to fight.

The feeling of Imran for pampering and pandering the terrorist activity is akin to the investigations of the psychologists, like John Horgan, Max Abrahms, and Randy Borum to name a few, who have come to the conclusion that the people who become terrorists tend to suffer from anger; alienation; thereby believing that engaging in violence against the State or the people of State is not immoral; and that joining a movement offers social and psychological rewards. (Understanding Terrorism, 60)

Through this novel, Anees Salim crafts a satire on the Indian Society through the mockery of the acts of terrorism in which his characters have indulged themselves. Salim, through this novel wants the people to be aware of the darkest realities of the society and hence aims that may be by reading this work people will try to change themselves. By creating an imaginary place like Vanity Bagh, he is actually trying to make the people aware that though it has been a long time since the partition but there are people not only in India but all around the world who still have not forgotten the injustice that was done to them and hence are burning with anger and frustration. These people have made a particular mind-set for themselves which defines the boundaries of who is a friend and who is an enemy. For them it is a concrete belief that the person of the other community is the enemy of the other and all that is needed is to attack him or her; words of love and care are not meant for that 'other' community.

Salim has taken a very serious topic as a subject of his novel, with the aim that it might make people realise as to what they have done till date in the name of justice. But the uniqueness lies in the style of his writing in which he has turned such a serious issue into a farcical joke and hence instead of narrating the whole novel into a serious document accounting the harsh atrocities inflicted over the innocents; he tells the story at the surface level without going deep in describing the inhumanity and into the facts and figures of the dead and the injured.

Gulzar's thinking is also of the similar nature and it is because of this reason that his poems, short stories and a recently published novel titled, *Two*, are based on the highlighting the pain of the sufferers, with the hidden motive of making the coming generation know that though an event as bad and horrific like Partition did happen in the past but we have also moved on with those sufferings so as to make the future delightful and smooth.

Each of Gulzar's poem and short story is so beautifully carved that it captures magnificently a panoramic image covering the chaos and cruelty from 1947 till date; covering "the extent of the Partition experience, from the harsh brutal reality of the gory events of 1947, to the wars that were fought between India and Pakistan, to the communal ill-will and mistrust that was bestowed as a bitter legacy of the batwara, coming up to the consequences of that ill-will that continue to be felt most accurately in the state of Kashmir." (202, *Footprints on Zero Line*, Gulzar) It can be said that for Gulzar, because of the kind of poems and short stories he has written, Partition was not only been an act of compensation or merely a separation, a historical incident that was located in a certain time and place; rather for him it is an *opus de profectus*, a work which is still in progress.

His one such poem, titled, *I Have Seen This Scene Before*, exquisitely communicates such a theme of enmity still hovering in the hearts of the people which gives rise to religious fundamentalism. The poem talks about different events of violence that have occurred in the past due to the communal differences people had in them, whether it was Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in Amritsar in 1919 or Lahore's Freedom Struggle in 1936 or the riots that occurred in 1942 in Allahabad or the year 1992. With each historic event, Gulzar ends the stanza highlighting, 'I HAVE SEEN THIS SCENE BEFORE'; reiterating that years, days, months or the places may have changed but the situation of blindly killing one another in the name of religion has been always the same. The innocents have died and still are dying.

Another such poem, which echoes on the same theme of hatred which still bears in the hearts of the people is, *Use The Diversion*. The poem while talking about the riots occurring in a place, where Hindus and Muslims are hungrily roaming in the streets to find their prey for killing, an image of the board standing just near to the pothole proclaiming: 'Work in Progress, use the diversion', has very beautifully been captured by the poet; which functions as a metaphor to the whole dire situation of riots that are going around in the area.

Apart from having written such poems, the poet has also authored poems that emphasise on the process of cooling off of the toll which a history like Partition had over the people. In one of his interviews with Sukrita Paul Kumar, Gulzar says that the borders of India and Pakistan are gradually becoming softer and things are slowly stabilising and coming back to normal. Though the two communities have just taken a few baby steps to come towards each other and be together and hence is a bit slow which if seen from a wider distance may seem that as if there has been no progress at all. He says that though the progress has been slow, he has seen and felt the progress of development been happening in the last seventy years, "Forty years after Independence, I felt gloomy and did not see much change; at fifty, I saw a silver lining, and today, after sixty years, I feel confident that we are moving

forward because today's common man is far wiser. He cannot become an easy victim to the designs of the politician." (196, *Footprints on Zero Line*, Gulzar)

Gulzar in every poem and story of his, endeavours to assess and recollect the things lost behind and for that his works makes use of not only dreams but also scenarios touching the facts. He analysis the moments of division of two nations – costs that range from the political to the psycho-emotional for the ones who suffered by the natives of two sides. As a result of his analysis, what one can see is the reflection of partition memories through political understanding envisioned through the poet's eyes.

The beautiful images drawn like the taste of last year's gur on one's lips, in the poem, *A Knock*; the thought of leaving behind a paper boat on the sea in Karachi in the hope that one day the winds will change their course and will find its way back to India, in the poem, *Ramzan*; the dream or the imagination of crossing the borders and hoping to revisit the loved ones and to listen to the poetry of ones favourite poets from across the borders, in the poem, *Eyes Don't Need a Visa* and *Zindanama*; depicts the belief that artists or people from across the borders on both the sides and their love for their countries, in the poem, *Compatriot* – are some of the images that bring out the hope of togetherness between the two communities.

It comes to the fore, through the writings on Partition by Gulzar Sahab, that people have always been willing to believe that their loved ones had been just merely lost and can never go forever. His writings being different from many Partition writers, are not interested in recounting the events that led to the division of the subcontinent, or putting them in the labels of 'cause' and 'effect' or even putting a blame; rather he is interested in peeling back layer upon layer, the silence that had settled upon the lives of those most affected by the event.

What one can envision through the foregoing is that out of many texts available touching upon the fundamental and a natural consequence of the Partition, much less has been written on this historic event of South Asia.

Gulzar, who has written and portrayed the trauma of partition so extensively, now is just hopeful that though the Partition did divide the land but it can never continue dividing the people of its country. Countries can be divided, land can be divided, roads can be divided, but you were dividing the people, you were dividing cultures; these cannot be cut. How will you Partition the air? The trees that were divided will grow again, and their shadows will fall on one side of the border in the morning, and the other side in the afternoon. There is no use in cutting shadows." (69-70)

Conclusion

After having read and analyzed both the authors in-depth, it can be concluded that though the writing style of both the authors is starkly different from each other, the main aim of both have been the same and that is, to make the people aware of what wrong it had happen in the past and how people today should learn from the past and hence should not repeat the same. While Manto used satire and dark humor in his writing to make the people aware of the darkest part of the history; Gulzar on the other hand, had been a little soft and hopeful that though country was divided but the possibility of healing and rehabilitation had always been there within the hearts of the people. His style of writing has always been reflecting towards the hopeful side; turning despondency into hope and believing deep within that one day both the communities will forget all the differences and will live together peacefully with love deep within their hearts.

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