

## ENGLISH SHORT STORIES LAMENTING SAGA OF COMMUNAL BARBARISM AND OXIDIZATION OF HUMAN VALUES

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### Abstract

*The three volumes of Stories about the Partition of India scrutinize various factors affecting the partition of India. These stories provide an insight into the inner realities of the dislocate life of Indians. Many stories of these volumes are like terrorizing records of ill-fated period of the partition. These stories without ideological blinkers or sentimentality or illusions, depict evil and monstrous period in which the supporting norms of the society were erased. Stories deals with the various problems- traumatic experiences, sense of being uprooted from the soil, sufferings of women and children, politician and political strategies as the cause of the partition and last exploring partition as a greatest historical mistake. All these stories provide an eye-view of the holocaust of the partition. They analyze the cause of evil which lie in the soul of man, social circumstances and political strategies. These stories motivates human race to discover noble ways to live life and to avoid communal conflicts. By narrating a painful saga of rusted psychological, social and moral values of human beings, Alok Bhalla makes his readers conscious about precious human values.*

**Key words:** Irrational communal conflicts, traumatic experiences, prowl instincts, Ravanic spirit, hijrat,

The partition was blood curdling event. Annihilating violence and death of distressed people. Many people tolerated unutterable atrocities without any fault of their own. The story, *Toba Tek Singh* by Saadat Hasan Manto ironically evinces that partition inflicted pain to rational as well as irrational human beings. It highlights helplessness of mentally unbalanced patients by transporting them to Hindustan or Pakistan. It seems very funny that those who were ignorant of their own identity and existence were also exterminated. It could not make any difference whether they lived in Hindustan or Pakistan. The event of the partition confused them in such a way that they could not make out that without moving from refuge how they became part of Hindustan or Pakistan? All lunatics though did not understand the mysterious event of the partition, yet their disapproval was obvious in their peculiar manners, for

example, one lunatic resolved to live on a tree rather than to live in Hindustan / Pakistan. A Muslim lawyer who became insane also condemned the division of the country. The disapproval by the lunatic's points out the fact that even lunatics sensed that nobody would get anything from division, yet the so called intellectual people failed to determine destruction in division. It is very tragic that inspite of having sound mind, intellectuals foolishly searched for prosperity by the division.

Ved Rahi in *Death* exposes death of human relationship caused by communal unconsciousness. Salim and Madan had persistent trust on each other but sense of betrayal created break in their relationship and they got separated. The partition split apart all human beings who were earlier bound by emotion and trust. Krishan Chander in *Peshawar Express* narrates threatening events which occurred in the partitioned Punjab. The trains which were used for transportation of human beings, now during the partition are used to dump dead bodies. The partition damaged Punjab, the beautiful land self-indulgent in golden wheat. This beautiful land lost charm, Hindus and Muslims who celebrated Baishakhi together for centuries, now played with blood of each other as if they had found a new way of celebrating Baishakhi. During the partition it seemed that human being ceased to be human and behaved in worse manner than beasts. Mohan Rakesh in, *The Claim* highlights that emotional loss is irreparable. After the partition victims filed claims to get compensation for the loss of their property but there were people whose loss was irreparable. Sadhu Singh, a tonga driver's case was one such case. Sadhu Singh lost his family during the partition. His wife was killed by rioters. He then was left with only a horse and a tonga to earn a small amount. Sadhu Singh was puzzled at the thought of what claim could he make? He could not decide whether he could make the claim of joy that he relished in warm company of his family or could he make claim for soothing smell of his native land's earth ? Emotional loss is indeed major loss once it is lost it is lost for ever, no claim can help get compensation.

In *Filth*, Amrit Rai by presenting mask of hypocrisy, denotes the death of humanity and the rise of beastliness. Roop Kishore Saxena (a lawyer) Harbans Singh (a General Manager), Purushottam Das Khatri (a shopkeeper) and S. S. Raman pretended to be gentlemen and followers of Mahatma Gandhi. They were fraud. They captivated evil deeds and riots. After partition, prowl instincts of barbarism in human beings played havoc. That's why putting humanity aside a few listened stories of death and women's dishonour with epicurean delight. Amrit Rai to expose death of human instincts and rise of bestiality; causatively remarks:

Its being rumoured that there will be a new animal in the Calcutta Zoo next year. The news papers have not yet published the details about its shape or colour but I have a feeling that I have seen it somewhere. (Bhalla Vol.3 118)

Ramesh Chandra Sen in *The White Horse* brings out the agony of animals. Unfortunately like human beings, animals also suffered during partition. The White horse was earlier a race horse but after the partition it became hackney cab's horse. A

Hindu Coachman looked after this hackney cab's horse. By mistake this horse came into Muslim's area. The horse's arrival filled the children's hearts with joy but its arrival was condemned by a few. A few soldiers mercilessly shot it dead. For soldiers, horse's crime was that, inspite of its being a Hindu's horse, it had encroached the Muslim's territory. It is very shameful that communal frenzy overwhelmed people in such a way that they did not leave even innocent animals. In *A Holy War* Yaspal shows negative effect of the partition on young and immature mind. Intoxicated by communal agitation, few people considered communal riots as a holy war. For such type of people communal war was holy and an essential ritual. Lahore's Sayyidmitta Bazaar and Gangu-ku-Gali became desolated after partition. Only Moolan Tai a Hindu widow and Fazzay a Muslim lived with his son Nasru. Nasru on being carried away by religious passion joined the acts of destroying Kaffirs. Nasru felt that to kill Kaffir is holy and they must collect rewards after killing them. So, when Moolan Tai rushed out of her house to save her life, Nasru chased her. Nasru felt that bundle might be containing a big sum of amount and the gold hoarded by her. Nasru, to grab gold, stabbed Moolan Tai, unfortunately on unpacking the bundle he found merely idol of Thakurji. If Tai had wished she could have saved herself by smashing Nasru's head with a stone idol. She preferred to die. It was not a stone idol for Tai, it was her 'Thakurji' a symbol of religion. Religion cannot be confined to narrowed sects of Hindus or Muslims. Hindu or Muslim are not religions, they are the different modes of worshipping the God. True Religion is 'Humanity'.

In the story *Tulsi Plant* Syed Walliullah cites example of Tulsi plant. As the tulsi plant cannot exist without care similarly indifference which hit the roof of into human relation, challenged human lives. As nourishment and destruction of tulsi plant is in the hand of human beings; similarly human beings require warmth and protection without which they would wither. During the partition human beings in want of warmth, sympathy, love and shelter withered. *Cold Meat* penned by Saadat Hasan Manto voices frustration on the part of married couples. It expresses voice of those who failed to accomplish higher aims of married life. Marriage in India is a pious and eternal bond. This pious relationship thrives on virtuous qualities of dedication, life long commitment and spirit of sacrifice without which relation stinks as cold meat. Bond of marriage becomes burden if it reduces itself to sensual pleasure. After the partition, frustration and fear blemished marital relationship. Life became disgusting object for many couples like Kulwant Kaur and Ishwar Singh. Ibrahim Jalees *A Grave Turned Inside Out* depicts hellish life of a victim of the partition. For a few people charm to live life vanished and no difference seemed to them between home and graveyard. Ayesha was challenged in her own home. Ayesha built a raw hut on the land which belonged to Municipality. Ayesha paid heavy price. She became a victim of carnal desire of Municipal Corporation employees. It is an shaming fact that God created earth for human beings to live on it; on the contrary a few people have take over this god given right. Saadat Hasan Manto, Ved Rahi,

Krishan Chandar, Mohan Rakesh, Amrit Rai, Ramesh Chandra Sen and Ibrahim Jalees - question our ethics by exposing malicious deeds. All these authors try to draw a point that hatred, irrational communal conflicts beget nothing but revenge and loss in return. After a long period of time even today struggles have not subsided. In the name of religion, conflicts burst out. To save religion at the cost of human lives is inhuman. Act of killing innocents is an act of building hellhole on pious earth.

During the partition, women were the worst victims and were mercilessly treated. They were treated not as human beings but as cattle. *Compassion* by Sadaat Hasan Manto is a compact and heart melting story which evokes compassion for father who helplessly witnesses his own daughter's dishonour committed by merciless rowdies. Sultan Jamil Nasim also exhibits volcanic lives of women who became victim. The author denotes devaluation of women taking place. As puppets are sold and bought for children's game similarly price was tagged on women for the ugly game of barbarians. Kartar Singh Duggal in *Kulsum* reveals bestiality and hypocrisy of men, of which women became victims. Kulsum a young engaged girl gets ruined by rioters who killed her parents. While roaming in search of shelter, Kulsum came across an old man. Old man promised to help her and to soothe her wounds but, he himself brings out her tragedy by violating her serenity. Jamila Hasmi in *Exile*, by using mythical connotation of Sita's sufferings, tries to voice her own story of sufferings. Sita fought against Ravana's spirit but few women during the partition surrendered to Ravana's spirit. During the partition there was no way to get rid of Ravana except death. The narrator's case was tragic. Grupal, a stranger, without any ritual, made her his wife. By killing her parents, he dragged her and made her wife to bear his and his mother's beatings. Ravana kidnapped Sita. In spite of her serenity Sita was compelled to select exile for second time. Like Sita, the narrator is also doomed forever by family members who considered her defiled. Instead of selecting exile for second time the narrator yields to evil. Out of fear, lest Ravana might cause injury to others, many innocent ladies like Jamila surrendered to evil. Suraiya Qasim in the story, *Where Did She Belong?* records loss of culture, humanness and respect for women. Rajendra Singh Bedi highlights root of women's dilemma in *Lajwanti*. Lajwanti was mercilessly and ruthlessly treated by her husband Sunderlal. Later on she was kidnapped and fell a prey to Muslims' carnal desire. During Lajwanti's absence Sunderlal realised his mistake. As an act of repentance he started rehabilitation camp for women. After Lajwanti's return Sunderlal started worshipping her as a 'devi'. Lajwanti disliked his way of idolising her. She wished to give vent to her sufferings but Sunderlal's treatment of her as goddess, suppressed her natural instincts. Loss of identity and individuality corroded her heart.

Migration from native land is painful. When the bond with native land severs pain becomes indefinable. Separation does not cause mere loss of shelter or existence; it causes loss of peace and sense of security which one gets fully in the lap of the mother land. Asif Aslam Farrukhi, in *The Land of Memories*, unearths memories of golden days of childhood and youth now buried in the native land.

Aslam Bhaiya felt a sense of alienation on having migrated from his motherland. His visit to his native land after many years filled his heart with immense joy and excitement. His children's hostile approach towards his ancestral land saddened him. Syed Mohammed Ashraf in *Separated from the Flock* brings out heart-grieving story of migration. Two old intimate friends Nawab and Sahib who got lost in the vortex of the partition, coincidentally met. After thirty years, they met on the lake when they came to shoot birds. Two friends visited the lake to shoot birds for their sport. Pangs of unhealed wounds caused by the partition prevented them for promoting violence by hunting and separating birds. Two friends felt that the partition was like a hunter. As a hunter separates birds from their mate by killing them, similarly the partition separated human beings. Birds seem very fortunate than human beings. Birds, who become victim of hunter's target, soon die on the spot. The partition did not kill all. It wounded them and caused such deep wounds that they do not get healed with time but fester. Umme-e-Ummara's story, *More Sinned against than Sinning* is about the destruction of the hopes of the migrants. Baba left his haveli and the native land in search of peace and stability. Without realising richness of culture and its emotional value he migrated from his native land. Migration was proved very painful and he realized. In search of security a few people launched fruitless war of destruction. A few people searched happiness and peace in the alien country but all fumbled in vain. The partition caused involuntary migration. Millions of Hindus and Muslims were forcefully uprooted from their ancestral homes. Pain of involuntary migration is severe. It is almost impossible to sow roots of existence in alien country. The pain of these migrants does not minimize by references either to the wanderings of Rama and the exile of the Pandavas, or the hijrat of the Prophet Muhammed. There is no universal pattern of sufferings leading to salvation in their migration. They are disorientated and hurt by the extermination of a world. The pain of being forcibly separated from their homes haunt them.

The storm of the partition wrecked human lives. In, vain communal war of the partition; innocent children underwent unjustified sufferings. Children who are as delicate as flower were nipped into bud before they bloom. Countless children wandered on being rendered as orphan. For children warmth of parents' love is quintessential. Attia Hosain in *After the Storm* depicts heart-rending story of a little innocent girl Bibi. The partition separated her from her parents at a very young age. Bibi without repenting for her misfortunes struggled to live life by selling flowers. By sharing flowers which are symbols of love and affection, she unconsciously did a mission to effuse hope and faith. Vatsayan's *Post Box* voices pain of a small child, Roshan who got separated from parents while migrating from- Lahore. Roshan became victim of the partition. During migration his father was killed, chacha was murdered and mother was abducted and murdered. Roshan in search of his parents wandered every where. He passed his days near Post-box. Holding a crumpled letter without address written to his father, he eagerly waited for the arrival of a learned person. He thought that a learned man could show him the way of sending a letter



without address. The partition demolished dreams and comforts of many children. It gave unimaginable shock to them. N. G. Gore in, *A Mouthful of Water: A Mouthful of Blood* shows change in outlook of people after partition. Udham Singh during his journey met a child Anwar in train, whose sweet and innocent talk perked him up. He saw his own son in Anwar. Within few minutes Udham Singh's bond of intimacy with Anwar grew strong in such a way that Anwar's thirst made Udham Singh restless. He rushed amidst hustle and bustle to fetch water for Anwar. He set at rest only when he filled his mouth with water. Unfortunately soon after the declaration of the partition, Udham Singh's love for innocent child took monstrous shape. Udham Singh who once filled Anwar's mouth with water same Udham Singh under fit of communal frenzy filled Anwar's mouth with blood by piercing kirpan in his tender heart, because he was a son of a Muslim. During partition nobody hesitated in killing innocent children. Children who are responsible citizen of future Hindustan then why they were barbarously butchered during partition? The partition of country not only gave birth to heaps of dead bodies but it also made children orphans. Children whose innocence effuse spirit of harmony and strengthen bond of affection were mercilessly treated. Their innocence, their dreams and their hopes were strangled by so called human beings.

A few edited stories of Alok Bhalla highlight the- partition as the cause of political strategy. Hindu-Muslims' animosity enabled the British imperialists to accomplish their aim of divide and rule. Bhisham Sahni in *The Train Has Reached to Amritsar* exposes that the partition was the game of politician who had their own axe to grind. It filled people with horror and panic in such a way that except violence, they did not find any other means. Communal riots filled people with insecurity. Passengers sitting in the train, going to Amritsar were also speechless by constant news of violence. News also depressed Babu sitting in the train. Babu throughout the journey seemed very calm and cool but suddenly overpowered by panic and violent passions who rushed out of the compartment of train, purchased iron rod and tried to attacked a Pathan. The partition was a damaging device, without comprehending unveiled desires of politicians common people added fuel to the fire. The partition was a game of political ruffian. The poor people struggling to make both ends meet, suffered without any fault. Mohan Rakesh in *God's Dog* exposes messy condition of government offices and carelessness of government servants. Their snail pace at work, corruption and bribery betrayed people's trust. A middle-aged man is the main character of the story who waited eagerly to get his application for the land sanctioned. After starving him for seven years, government allotted him a pit of three acres in which he could hardly bury the bones of his ancestors. He pleaded, begged but nobody paid heed to his requests. They thrashed him, and never called him by his respectful name but tagged a number 1226/7 as if he was a thing. On realising that government servants would never understand human language of politeness, old- man adopted threatening approach. Government's servants who did not pay attention to his kind appeal soon surrender to his threatening behaviour and completed his work

within five minutes for which he waited for nine years. After the partition, uncontrolled corruption made it almost impossible for simple people to survive with disciplined and kind behaviour.

Mulk Raj Anand pounces upon the government servants in *The Parrot in the Cage*. During the partition, sense of insecurity compelled people to leave everything. Rukmani also left her home. She was penniless. She had no paise even to buy grams for her pet parrot. The congress government had declared that victims of the partition would get compensation for their loss. She strived to get compensation but her dreams remained unfulfilled. Anand exposes government servants' indifference towards the common people's problems. Government made big promises to rehabilitate victims. They never carried out their promises. They kept account of the dead bodies but never cared for those who strived to survive. Virtuous qualities declined after the partition. Corruption, bribery, barbarism and violence ruled the land. Politicians made common people their pawns to fulfill their wicked motives.

The partition was a blunder. Countless Hindus and Muslims were massacred. Innumerable People were uprooted from their homes with nothing except the barest clothes. Far from solving the Hindu-Muslim problems the partition threatened peace and security and incited many problems. On evaluating stories one may discern that most of the writers disapproved partition. Kamleshwar in *How Many Pakistan?* shows that division of Hindustan and Pakistan heightened problems. For Kamleshwar partition was nothing but the division of man. He aptly remarks,

God! You don't know how many Pakistans were created along with the creation of that one Pakistan. In how many hearts in how many places? The creation of that one Pakistan solved nothing. (Bhalla Vol.2 173)

Disapproving the event of the partition, Ibne Insha in his *Pakistan* questions the core of tragedy. The partition caused birth of two separate countries. Hindustan and Pakistan widened the gulf between two countries and ultimately it resulted into division of Pakistan itself. Half of the portion was- allotted to East Pakistan and half of the chunk came in the possession of West Pakistan. These divisions were so complex that till today researches are made to trace real Pakistan, which has been lost in the jumble of several Pakistans. Questioning whereabouts of Pakistan and giving real picture of complexities, Ibne Insha poses very challenging question.

Punjab lies to the north of West Pakistan, Sindh lies to the South, India to the east and Baluchistan to the West Miyan, what about Pakistan itself ? Is it located anywhere? (Bhalla Vol.2 106)

Manik Bandyopadhyay in *Childishness* tries to show the partition as the result of the so called great people's childishness. Hindus and Muslims earlier shared sweets on auspicious, occasion. After the partition, they began to move with sour faces, as if it was compulsory for them to maintain distance. Tarapada and Nasiruddin were bosom friends and neighbours. After the partition, a separating wall was built between their houses. This separating wall created breach in their relationship too.

However, the two children, Gita and Habib of these Hindu and Muslim families remained aloof from this unnatural remoteness. It is an acknowledged fact that social atmosphere always affects the mind. After the partition, children were seeing nothing except riots. So Gita, Habib and other children were inclined to play the game of riot. All the children brought, from their homes, blunt razors and knives as their equipments to play the game. They wanted to play game perfectly like their elders. They were shrieking, sobbing and wounding each other like their elders.

During the partition people became so sensitive that even trifle quarrels of children used to flare up violence. Parents without understanding that their children were merely playing a game, made a big arguments. Soon police was called. All created a great hubbub and even got ready to launch a bloody war. It is very absurd that children played game out of innocence whereas foolish elders transformed that innocent game into riot. Children seem wiser than elders. Ibne Insha in *Our Country* emits anger against the event of the partition. He feels that creation of another country was a meaningless decision. He could not understand why when Sindhis, Bengalis and Punjabis were living harmoniously in Pakistan then there was no need of creating another country? Ibne Insha begs pardon of the sufferers on behalf of practitioners of the partition. He kindly confesses, 'Sorry, it was a mistake. We shall never repeat it again.' (Bhalla Vol.2 105) Saheed Suhrawardy who subsequently became the Prime Minister of Pakistan, considered the partition to be a big mistake. Nehru realized, very late of course, that the partition was a blunder. Patel too confessed later, that he should never have consented to partition. In fact all believed that the partition would leave a bitter legacy behind yet unfortunately, nobody could resist it. Bruised wounds caused by the partition still bleed and perhaps it would take centuries to soothe them.

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