

Trauma of Partition and Religious Intolerance in the novels *Train to Pakistan* and *Ice Candy Man*

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Abstract

The Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 is one of the greatest tragedies and it remains one of the most agonizing experiences in history. This Article aims to make a detailed examination of the trauma of partition mainly the religious intolerance in both the countries by the authors. The novels *Train to Pakistan* (1956) by Khushwant Singh and *Ice candy man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa had lot of similarities but had its individuality as well it speaks about how the characters in the story underwent the terrors of partition and the horror faced by the people and their anxiety. In *Ice candy man* the terror is portrayed through the eyes of a young girl Lenny, In Bapsi Sidhwa's novel man's beast nature is portrayed. Both the authors have displayed poignant scenes like massacre, riots, migration during partition, the two novels are similar to each other in the thematic level.

Keywords: *Postcolonial anxiety, trauma, migration, religious riots, identity crisis.*

Introduction

Train to Pakistan is a first novel by Khushwant Singh which was published in 1956. Khushwant Singh was one of a premium historical novelist, political commentator and a social critic. He was famous for his wit and wisdom and his works were engaging and interesting which made him popular. Indian novelist's works usually speak about the passionate awareness of life in India which contains social concerns like poverty, struggle for independence, tragedy of partition and the suffering of individuals. He is a well-known social realist; he depicts the partition of India with insight of history and the sense of horror faced by the people of the village Mano Majra, a village on the border of India and Pakistan both the Muslims and Sikhs peacefully coexisted. Partition and Independence did not really mean much to any of them until a horror incident

happened. One day when a train arrived from Pakistan which was found to be with dead bodies of Sikh people, it is then the village becomes a battlefield both the communities were killed, forced to migrate. This made the life of the man named Juggut Singh who is in love with a Muslim girl miserable and he is suspected of murder and is put in jail and among this riots his redemption was in his hands. This novel made Singh win the Groove Press Award in 1954.

Ice candy man is the third novel written by Bapsi Sidhwa in the year 1988. Bapsi Sidhwa was an American novelist of Gujarati Parsi Zoroastrian descent who wrote in English. Her writings mainly focused on the Parsi community and their problems, as the novel focuses on the partition and as Bapsi Sidhwa was a young girl during the time of partition here she describes partition through the eyes of a young Parsi girl Lenny about the conflicts of partition and the impact it had on the people. She has described the riots between Hindus and Muslims both being killed, women being raped the care taker of Lenny, Ayah being a Hindu how she was abducted, forced into prostitution, how the people were forced to migrate the sense of belongingness can be witnessed. The novel is similar to an autobiographical one as Bapsi Sidhwa was 8 years old at the time of partition and through Lenny she has achieved the depiction of partition with authentic description.

Psychological Trauma

In *Train to Pakistan* Khushwant Singh has portrayed the Hindu perspective of partition through the fictional village Mano Majra and the character named Juggut Singh man a Hindu and the protagonist of the novel, Singh through the character has shown how Hindus and Muslims were together before facing the harsh reality.

The riots had become a rout. By the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced, ten million people- Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs-were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. The only remaining oases of peace were a scatter of little villages lost in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Majra. (2)

The train is the main symbol used here to indicate the division between the two communities. When the train arrived with the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan, the Sikhs in the village canvassed and provoked to get into violence that is to blow off the train with Muslims when they return to Pakistan. The communities started becoming vengeful against each other, they killed each other. Juggut Singh was a dacoit but a person with good heart, he sacrificed himself by falling before the train to save his beloved Nooran a Muslim girl. Sundari the commissioner's daughter was killed by group of Muslim dacoits four days after her marriage terribly in front of her husband. In the novel terrifying conflicts between Hindus and Muslims how many innocent lives were lost, people lost their loved ones, forced to migrate, each one during the time of partition has undergone the mental traumatic experience which has been clearly portrayed through the characters.

Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. However, the writer objectively states, "The fact is, both sides were killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both were tortured. Both raped. (1)

Bapsi Sidhwa in *Ice candy man* has portrayed partition in a Muslim point of view. Once it was decided Punjab to be divided things started falling apart, once friends now became, foes both sides become hysterical started murdering, sexual assault of women, forced migration the constant struggle for identity can be witnessed. Train is the major element here like the train to Pakistan. Lenny says she was "born with the awareness of war" as she experiences every terrorizing events around her (31). The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot. I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire. " I start screaming: hysterically sobbing -- how long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months?" This shows the plight and suffering of a young girl she faced due to the brutal act of humans which she was not able to accept (139). Ice candy man gets all furious when he sees a train full of murdered Muslims and two sacks containing women's breasts he gets frustrated and wants to take out his anger on the Hindu women. He exclaims, "I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women (166)." This disturbing sight further makes him abduct Ayah above his feelings for her as she was a Hindu and forces her into prostitution, makes her convert to Islam and marries her. The urge for retribution turned him into a beast.

The characters in the novels and their trauma faced come under the theory of 'Historical trauma.' Historical trauma is the cumulative emotional harm of an individual or generation caused by a traumatic experience or event. The novels here focuses on the major historical event the partition and the unimaginable effects it caused on people as mainly it was based on the religious intolerance caused which made the scenario the unforgettable part in the history.

Conclusion

This article here is based on the partition of India Pakistan focuses on how these major writers of partition Khushwant Singh and Bapsi Sidhwa who lived during partition made their novels *Train to Pakistan* and *Ice candy man* a significant and a real one as the novels and their description of the harsh realities, the mental trauma each of the characters went through is clearly depicted which makes the readers emotional. The post-colonial anxiety is still visible till date between both the countries. The Kashmir conflict is a territorial conflict based on religious dissimilarity between the countries which started after the partition of India and Pakistan. Where India owns the most of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan has the lesser ownership. Jammu and Kashmir consists people of Hindus and Muslims, because of the religious intolerance and Pakistan wanting to have power over Kashmir the terrorists recently have invaded the Indian part of Kashmir and killed the non - Muslim migrants who were from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh mercilessly. This did not end with the killings of civilians but the army was affected too. Every single day the soldiers were killed and in a week almost 11 of them lost their lives. This incident shows how people even in the 21st century years after partition undergo the terrors due to religious conflicts.

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