

IN SEARCH OF HOME: PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AS THE QUIETUDE SUFFERERS OF PARTITION OF INDIA (1947)

Anyesa Paul¹, Dr. Reena Singh²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Amity University, Noida (Uttar Pradesh)

²Assistant Professor, Amity University, Noida (Uttar Pradesh)

Email- anyesapaul@yahoo.com

Received: 14 March 2020 Revised and Accepted: 8 July 2020

ABSTRACT: Partition of India resulted in massive barbarism. Partition of India resulted in at least one million deaths and created ten million refugees. The devastation encompassed not only huge property loss but also talked about the physical and psychological torture of people. The emotional pain of witnessing their home and family suffer made the people of that era embrace weapons to take revenge. The communal violence between Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus led to the largest battle ever. In the process of Partition we encounter the prime fact that women were the worst sufferers of such an event. Women were tortured, raped and maimed as well as ripped off their identity. Women faced tortures in different forms. Not only they were abducted and raped by the men of the other community but they were also not accepted back by their own families. The victors started to celebrate their triumphs on the bodies of women. This Paper questions the position of women at the time of Partition of 1947 who silently suffered all the blows inflicted upon them. They led a life which they never wanted and thus they became quite emotionless and silent in their approach to life. All these torturous events can make us term women as the quietude sufferers of Partition of India (1947). One can also term Partition of India (1947) as an event which led to the subjugation of women in the current century.

KEY WORDS- Trauma, Psychological Imbalance, Violence and Subjugation

I. INTRODUCTION

The geographical divide of India and Pakistan resulted in displacement and death. This act of divide benefited very few people at the expense of many. The creation of independent India and Pakistan came at a huge price. The communal violence between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs led to the largest exchanges of population ever. The novelists witnessed the Partition Turmoil themselves as Khuswant Singh was thirty at the time of Partition and Bapsi Sidhwa was a kid. Both the writers share the same theme of Partition turmoil in their novels. They also upheld their own unique mirrors to reflect upon the physical tortures and psychological outburst that became the order of the day when the division of both the nation was announced. They project a vivid picture of the separation of all the communities in the summer of 1947.

Khuswant Singh and Bapsi Sidhwa describe the horrific events with such details that the tragedy comes alive. They not only described the events in the political form but they also went ahead to talk about all the different kinds of tortures that took place in the human dimension. All these incidents bring before the readers a sense of horror, reality and believability. When we talk about the Partition narratives, we see that both the countries suffered in the worst possible ways. The trauma reached its peak when both the countries started to receive trains full of mutilated corpses. The train serves to be the main reason behind all these bloody massacres. The most affected area was the Punjab Province since it was divided into two halves. All these events lead to huge scale of migration from one city to the other to seek a peaceful life.

Women throughout the period of Partition are seen to be the worst sufferers. Women were attacked in a systematic way in Rawalpindi districts. Both the regions recorded mass scale of disturbance. Huge numbers of Hindu and Muslim women were killed. Women were tortured, maimed and abused to the point where they found it is better to kill them than to settle down for anything else. Two kinds of violence took place at the time of Partition. The initial form of violence was majorly done by the men of the opposite gender. In this case of violence, women were abused, tortured, raped and killed. The Primary motif behind this kind of violence is to show the opposite religion their place and also to pinch their honor. The second kind of violence that took place was something that was too hard to handle by any human community. These women who were raped and tortured by the opposite community were not accepted by their own families which lead to mass honor killing and suicides. The entire episode was so nerve wrenching that it was a pain to watch all these things happen with

such grandeur. It was the summer of 1947 that made us aware that in order to take revenge from any community or being, the best one can do is to seek revenge from the second sex of their community. Women were petrified at that point of time which not only leads them to settle down for a life of compromise but to also change their religion.

The Partition of 1947 gives us different kinds of account which can never be ignored. The severity of the situation can be gasped when the fuel kept to burn the bodies ran out resulting in an alternative where they had to bury the dead. All the people had been gruesomely hacked to pieces. A large number of bodies were buried in a pit near the Mano Majra railway station. With the onset of monsoon, the Sutlej River turned red with flocks of vulture hovering around it.

Lenny in *Ice Candy* man narrates that she was – “born with the awareness of war”. Ice candy man informs to his friend that everyone is dead and butchered and they are all Muslim. Most of them were young women. Only two gunny bags full of women’s breast were reported to have arrived. The only way the other community wanted to respond to the large scale torture and devastation that took place at that point of time. This act of violence on Muslim women leads them to inflict the same kind of blows on Hindu and Sikh women. Ice Candy man further exclaims that “I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women”. He satisfies himself later by kidnapping Ayah and forcing her to prostitute her body. The Partition narratives stand to be the biggest example for all kinds of violence that women faced at that period of time. To defile a women’s body was considered to be the best way to take revenge from the opposite community. The violence upon women was considered a means to hurt the sentiments of the other religion, country and family. Bapsi Sidhwa asks herself, “Why do they cry like that- because they are delivering unwanted babies”. It became a habit of the victors to celebrate their triumphs on the bodies of women while crossing all the limits of humanism. Ayah is kidnapped by Ice Candy man and the mob. She is forced to prostitute her body and also forced into having sex with the protagonist. He successfully strips Ayah of her identity as a woman and also as a Hindu. He keeps her in a kotha even after marrying her. Ayah tries to escape this situation but was not accepted by her family. Ayah will forever undergo this psychological and emotional outburst. Hamida is seen to suffer just like Ayah when she was kidnapped by the Sikh tribe. Men can never accept the fact of their women being touched by other men. Lenny who is a small kid is seen to be tormented by the wailings of a woman who has been saved and sent to the refugee camp.

Khuswant Singh talks about a young woman Sundari. She was going to Gujjurwala with her husband on the fourth day of her marriage. She is projected as a happy bride with red bangles and henna. The bus was suddenly attacked by the Muslims where her husband was dismembered before her eyes while she is gang raped. She did not take out any of her bangle. They were all smashed as she lay in the road.

Women of that era did every possible thing to save themselves from all these kind of tortures. Many women died trying to save their sexual violation, preserve their chastity, and protect their religious and family honor. Some women set themselves ablaze and sometimes all the women in the family committed mass suicide.

Urvashie Butalia’s “The other side of silence” records that 75,000 women were abducted from both sides of the border. She records some unedited transcripts of oral narratives by Partition violence survivors.

Pinjar by Amrita Pritam also records this same pattern of revolt where she is abducted by a Muslim family. She is not accepted by her family later. It is a story that narrates gendered violence of trauma and sufferings. It projects the plight of women, their struggle and sufferings due to the perpetrators of violence either in the name of culture, religion or social norm. It narrates the story of a young girl Puro by a man Rashid of rival religion in order to avenge the family enmity. Her transformation from Puro to Hamida also accounts for some serious social and psychological trauma. It highlights women’s sufferings, exploitation because of their dislocation and abduction during Partition.

Puro is projected as an ideal daughter who is obedient of her parents. Puro unquestioningly accepts her father’s choice Ramachand and dreams of a happy future until she is abducted by Rashid. She escapes from Rashid’s grip when her father declares that she will not be accepted back in the family as her chastity and fidelity needs to be questioned after the abduction. In this process we see Puro to completely ignore her happiness and obey her father. All this while, the major concern that stays with the readers is what about the identity of Puro. She is not seen to be happy in any situation. Puro is devastated to return to Rashid and lead a life of that of a skeleton. Puro tries to accept Rashid and his family but she fails to do that. She is seen to undergo many changes from within. Though Rashid tries to give her the comfort and love she desires but Puro fails to recognize it. We also see similar accounts of torture when Amrita Pritam talks about a girl being paraded naked in front of the whole town by the members of the opposite community. Kammo wants to escape from her aunt’s clutches when Puro comes

to her rescue and decides to help her. Puro is not allowed to meet Kammo as she is Muslim. Kammo was disowned by her father when she starts idealizing Hamida as her own mother. Taro is another character projected by Amrita Pritam where she is disowned by her family. Taro is seen to suffer from some unknown disease when she is rescued by Puro. Taro in order to survive starts selling her body and leads to prostitution. All these women characters undergo a wide range of psychological trauma as narrated by Amrita Pritam. It is quite evident from such a narrative the mere condition of women at that period of time. Puro was not only accepted by her father who started questioning her fidelity but Ramachand is also seen to disown his love for her later in the narrative.

Women were the prime source of satisfaction in the entire episode of Partition of 1947. All the writers project them to be the survivors of all kinds of emotional turmoil. The Psychological outburst of all these women gave voices to all the writers of that era to talk about this subject in the best possible way. The female body was considered to be a place where people can experiment with any kind of torture they want to. Women of that era never participated in the war but were subjected to all kinds of emotional and psychological trauma. The female body not only accepted the innumerable blows given by the other community but also had to undergo the psychological pain of not being accepted back by their families. It is quite evident that women were not only ripped of their identity but also they were made to suffer even after such tumultuous events. The only problem that should be recorded here is that women were not only deprived of basic happiness but were also not given proper recognition in the society.

The only question that needs to be questioned is the concept of Home in all these emotional turbulences. Women were not given access to a happy home and as such they remained in a compromising position throughout the partition era. They were neither treated right by their abductors nor were they accepted back in the family they belonged to. The entire point of questioning the partition era stands to be on the grounds of women happiness. The basic right of mankind is to seek a happy home which was not given voice at the time of Partition.

Women have always been subjected to all kind of harassment that one can endure. The legacy can be witnessed in the current scenario when a woman is not given her place in the society. Partition of India is an account of how a woman served herself to the society and also ignored their basic right of a happy life. It was quite evident from the entire massacre that took place during that period that women only sacrificed when they were least active in the slaughter game. One must truly understand that they were suppressed to such an extent when they started questioning their own existence. All the Writers have majorly talked about woman as a strong subject when they decided to talk about the Partition trauma. We see that the teachings of the episode of Partition still remain fresh in the minds of the people. In certain areas of India and Pakistan we witness women being projected as the silent sufferers. They are not given equal respect and position in the society. The origination of such an attitude comes from the historical year and still prevails in the society. One must understand the position of women and also help them to recognize themselves as a human not as an entity.

II. REFERENCE

- [1]. Sidhwa, Bapsi. *Ice-Candy Man*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 1988. Print.
- [2]. Singh Khuswant. *Train to Pakistan*, Penguin Classics. New Delhi Print.
- [3]. Pritam, Amrita.(2009),Pinjar: The Skeleton and Other Stories. Paperback.
- [4]. Pritam, Amrita. (2003), *The Skeleton and Other Writings*.Trans. Khuswant Singh. Mumbai: Jaico
- [5]. Butalia, Urvashi, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- [6]. Baldwin, Shauna Singh. *English Lessons and Other Stories*. New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 1996.
- [7]. Toni, Schmader and Katharina Block, December 2015, *ENGENDERD IDENTITY: Towards a clearer conceptualization of Gender as a Social Identity*. New York Print.
- [8]. Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979. Print.
- [9]. *The Nation and Its Fragment*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print
- [10]. Booker, M. Keith. "Beauty and the Beast: Dualism and Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie. *ELH*. Vol. 57 No. 4 (Winter 1990): 977-997. --- . *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie*. New York: G.K. Hall & Co: 1999.
- [11]. Baldwin, Shauna Singh. *English Lessons and Other Stories*. New Brunswick: Goose Lane Editions, 1996.
- [12]. Orient Longman, 1979. Print. New Delhi. *Nationalism and Colonialism in India*.
- [13]. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print. *The Nation and It's Fragment*
- [14]. Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Rout ledge, 1994. *Nation and Narration*. New York: Rout ledge, 1990.

- [15]. MEHTA, VIJAY, and BILAL AHMED GANAIE. "PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN PSYCHE IN SOME INNER FURY: WITH REFLECTIONS ON LOVE, MARRIAGE AND LIBERTY." *IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature (IMPACT: IJRHAL)* 1.4 (2013):25-30
- [16]. Dasgupta, Pritha. "Women alone: The problems and challenges of widows in India." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IJHSS)* 6.6 (2017): 35-40.
- [17]. Zidan, Ashraf Ibrahim. "Postcolonial Feminism in Margaret Atwood's Fiction." *International Journal of Linguistics and Literature (IJLL)* 2.3 (2013): 11-28.
- [18]. Haque, Syrrina Ahasn Ali. "The Heterogeneous Realm of South Asian Literature in Determining the Public Sphere of Partition." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IJHSS)* 5.4 (2016): 83-90.
- [19]. CHAKRABARTI, ASIT. "TRAUMATIC ESOPHAGITIS IN A CROSSBRED PIGLET-CASE STUDY." *International Journal of Applied And Natural Sciences (IJANS)* 5.2 (2016):69-70
- [20]. SHAMKHY, DR MAHMOOD SWADY, and DR MAZIN MOHAMMAD JAWAD AL-MUSSAWY. "OUTCOME ANALYSIS AND OUTCOME PROGNOSTIC FACTORS OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY IN CHILDHOOD." *International Journal of Medicine and Pharmaceutical Science (IJMPS)* 9.4 (2019):35-48