



**Epitome : International Journal
of Multidisciplinary Research**

ISSN : 2395-6968

Partition Literature: An Overview



Dr. Nagnath Ramrao Totawad

Associate Prof., Dept. of English,
Vivekanand Arts, S.D.Commerce & Sci.
College, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar- 431001.

Abstract:

Partition literature is one of the most important genres in the history of Indian literature. Since seven decades numbers of creative writers have been writing on the issue of partition of Indian - Subcontinent of 1947. It has been into practice since 1956 with Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan. Partition has been a most important theme in Indian English writing. The issue has been still fresh after the seventy years of independence. It's true that almost all the partition novels centre on women and the mass migration. The people have witnessed the mass deaths and bloodshed for the first time in the Indian History.

The wellknown writers like Khuswant Singh, Bapsi Sidhwa, Bhisham Sahani, Chaman Nahal, Attia Hosain, Saadat Hasan Manto, Amrita Pritam, Salman Rushdie, Manohar Malgaonkar, Deepa Mehta, and Govind Nihalani and so on have focused on the Indian Partition through the creative writing. The writers have focused on the issues in a very detailed and realistic way. The main issues were sufferings of women, scarification of people, interfaith marriages, mass migration and deaths of the innocents and so on.

Keywords: *Partition, migration, exploitation, kidnap, history, interfaith, sacrifice etc.*



ISSN : 2395-6968

All rights reserved.

RESEARCH PAPER

The partition of 1947 has not only divided the nation but also its power, land, people and so on. It's true that during partition only women suffered in a very large number. People though he may be Hindu, Muslim or Sikh felt proud to violate women. Women were the only object during partition through which male were taking revenge upon each other's women by kidnapping, raping or marrying. As a result many women had sacrificed, many abducted, many converted and many had accepted the abductors as their husbands and some forced into prostitution. Besides women exploitation, the partition literature also highlights the forced conversion of people from one religion to other. Many people, businessman, shopkeepers have to leave their belonging and migrate to unknown place. The people had to leave their parental land, businesses and properties and so on. It was the first time in the history of India the people had to leave their properties and migrate to unknown place. The people don't know their destination and future. During partition many people had lost their homes, children, wives and sisters. Women were the worst sufferers during the days of both the sides.

Shauna Singh Baldwin's novel, '*What the Body Remembers*' (1999) is a wellknown partition novel. The novel highlights the religious and political unrest during partition from 1928 to 1947. Besides the partition, the novel centers on a Punjabi Family. The Sardarji is an engineer in the Govt. Irrigation Department. He has a wife named Satya but they have no children. The middle-aged Sardarji decides to marry Roop, a young, Sixteen year beautiful girl for children. Being a second wife, Satya dominates over Roop. And Roop has no place and identity in the home. Meanwhile she gave birth to a girl and later a son which Sardarji handovers to Satya. Roop's situation is compared with the separation of people from their nation. Roop was also separating from her own children like the people who were leaving their own land where they have been living since long or by generations. Roop couldn't bear all this and leaves the Sardarji and his home. Sardarji couldn't bear the separation of Roop and goes to bring her back. Roop agrees to return but on one condition to live away from Satya. The separation of Roop from Satya is considered like the separation of India and Pakistan. Satya couldn't bear this and tried to



ISSN : 2395-6968

All rights reserved.

suicide but failed. Very soon Satya died of tuberculosis. The death of Satya and the freedom of Roop is highly symbolic in nature and compared it with the departure of Britishers.

Anita Rau Badami's '*Can You Hear the Night Bird Call*?' is a wellknown Partition novel. The novel centers on Sikh minority people, their loss and separation from their homeland. Nation disintegration, a mass migration, communal violence and women exploitation were the major issues during partition time. The partition or separation has created the thought among people of 'not belonging' though which was one of their own. The novel focuses on the lives of two women named Sharanjeet Kaur and Nirmal. Sharanjeet had lost her elder sister named Kanwar during partition. Later Sharanjeet married with a man who had proposed earlier to her sister Kanwar and migrated to Canada. The protagonist Sharanjeet tries to manage with the new ways in Canada at one side and couldn't forget the pain of her lost sister on the other side. The partition was the worst and horrific experience to all. During these days people were witnessing the long silence, political unrest and much insecurity. The women like Sharanjit only recollect their past and separation of their beloved without their fault.

Raj Gill's '*The Rape*' is also one of the partition novel which focuses on the communal violence, inhuman atrocities, killings of the people and rape & molestation of women. Gurgaon was the centre of communal violence. According to the novelist independence means burning of the houses, death of the women & children or making people homeless. Partition means ruthless inhuman and irrational violence happened at both the sides of the border. The novel, *The Rape* (1947) focuses on the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh relationships before and after partition. The title is much symbolic which highlights the rape of the motherland by the Britishers. The novel harshly comments on the Britisher's policy of '*divide and rule*'. The Britishers have divided the nation to fulfill their wasted interests. The communal violence among Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs was systematically contrived by the Britishers. Finally they succeed in their plan of dividing the nation and the sects, communities and regions.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* is also a well-known novel on partition. The title is highly symbolic which stands for the struggle for independence. The novel centers on the protagonist lala Kanshi Ram and his struggle for independence in the horror of partition. He was a grain



ISSN: 2395-6968

All rights reserved.

merchant in Sailkot and was happily living with his wife Prabharani and two children named Madhubala an Arun. Being a Hindu, Lala Kanshiram had a great respect towards Hindu culture and Vedic Philosophy. Being an Indian he loves the nation more and hates Britishers and their Government.

Shiv Kumar's '*A River with Three Banks*' is a well-known novel written against the backdrop of Partition. The novel focuses on various themes like partition, migration, love, hate, marriage, divorce, forgiveness, revenge and so on. According to the novelist the partition time was the most violent time in which many innocent men and women were killed. The only reason behind the deaths of such innocent people was that they belonged to other religion. The people were taking revenge upon each other only on the name of religion. Religion was the only issue of taking revenge upon each other. The people of all castes and communities who had been living together since many generations together became the enemies of each other in a fortnight. The novel focuses on the protagonist Gautam Mehta, a Hindu. He is an ideal man and a lover of humanity and peace. He has no importance of religion and he changes it like a cloth. He is a very versatile person; he became Christian to take divorce from his adulterous wife, Sarita. And he became Muslim to marry Haseena. According to him religion is like a cloth he or she wears. But it's true that man is the same and the land where he lives is also same so what is the need of communal or religious difference or the separation of the nation into two. He further states that the political interference is the only thing which is responsible for such great loss, violence, mass migration and deaths. The death of Abdul Rahim, Haseena's fathers in front of the Church is just out of religious hatred. The majority people were dominating on the minorities. During Partition majority religions like Hindu dominate on Muslim, while in some parts majority Muslim dominates on Hindu.

Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh is a classic text and film in the genre / field of partition literature. The novel set in a small village on the border of two emerging states. The writer has experienced closely the Pangs of partition and the great wounds & troubles. The film adaptation also bears the stamp (Pamela Rooks) of post independence India. The novel tells the horrible tale of migration of the people on religious grounds and in a very bloody manner. On the



ISSN: 2395-6968

All rights reserved.

other hand Rook's adaptation begins with the scene of the hanging of Alam Singh - the dacoit. The opening scene is presented in a flashback way / style which district magistrate Hukumchand knows. Train is the central motif in both the novel and film. The train is a symbol of the loss of humanity. It plays important role in the lives of the people of Mano-Majra.

Tamas by Bhisma Sahani depicts the small town in which how a community is manipulated on the basis of caste and religion is still exist. The novels and films based on the theme of partition highly present a realistic and lively picture of the time. Both novels and films remained objective and tried to express human nature and its capability of perpetrating cruelty and barbarism on its own creed. Partition, was the worst happening and the darkest episode in the Indian history. Partition literature considered as one of the most prominent genre in the post independent Indian literature in English. Numbers of well-known and creative writers have worked upon it. Bhisma Sahani's *Tamas* was originally written in Hindi and latter translated in English by the author. The novel highlights the larger part of divided state of Punjab. The adaptation of novel into T.V. serial by Nihalani expresses the trauma of Partition through *Tamas*. The art direction plays an important role in the adaptation. It makes alive the memories & milieu of India around forties. The novel *Tamas* is much superior in verbal narrative than the screen adaptation. In adaptation, we find some characters, incidents, additions and omissions (from text to screen). Nathu, a poor man of Chamar Community greatly shocked by the riots in the surrounding villages. Nathu's act of killing a pig unknowingly set the town in fire.

In short, the research paper entitled 'Partition Literature: An Overview' focuses on the partition saga through the novels. The paper broadly highlights the historical saga of partition and its effects. The partition of India was a grave blunder to divide India, the ancient country on the basis of religion. It's true that partition was an unforgettable event. The people who have been living altogether since many generations together suddenly forced to choose a country. The partition literature of the time mostly pre-occupied with the theme of the communal riots and of ethnic anxiety. Literature of this time highly presents the innocence and suffering of the people. The partition inspired many creative minds in India and Pakistan.



ISSN : 2395-6968

All rights reserved.

REFERENCES

- Gill, Raj. *The Rape*, New Delhi: Sterling, 1974, p.296.
- Nahal, Chaman. *Azadi*. New Delhi: Allied, 1988, p.124
- Kumar, Shiv.K. *A River with Three Banks*. New Delhi: UBS, 1998, P. 80.
- Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence. Voices from the Partition of India*. NewDelhi: Penguin Books India, 1998.
- Dasgupta, Subhoranjan. *Women's Trauma and Triumph*. *Transseuropeennes* 19/20(Winter 2000-2001): 175-85.
- Desai, Anita. *The Indian Writer's Problems*. Dhawan 1992, 223-26.
- Roy, Anuradha. *Patterns of Feminist Consciousness in Indian Women Writers*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1999.
- Roy, Sumita. *Paradoxes of Patriarchy. Feminist Motifs*. Dinesh 1994, 20-28.



ISSN : 2395-6968

All rights reserved.