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PAIN BEYOND BEING: RELOCATING TRAUMA, VIOLENCE AND MADNESS IN SAADAT HASAN MANTO'S SELECT NARRATIVES

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

Saadat Hasan Manto, a controversial figure of the Partition era, remains renowned for his penetrating portrayal of the traumatic narratives surrounding India's partition. A prominent figure in Urdu literature, Manto has left an unerasable mark with his penetrating portrayal of trauma and violence in the backdrop of the Partition of 1947. This research paper delves into Manto's iconic short stories – Toba Tek Singh (1955), Khol Do (1948), and The Dog of Titwal (1987) – to diagnose the multifaceted dimensions of pain, trauma, madness, and violence depicted in these short stories. The endeavor is an attempt to understand how trauma and violence were not limited to one particular being, rather it affected the lives of almost all beings (Man, woman, and animal). Toba Tek Singh, the Madman; Sakina, the raped woman and the dog of Titwal established the argument that the partition was not limited to a particular being. Through a deep analysis of narrative techniques, thematic explorations, and socio-political contexts, this paper further aims to unveil the deeper implications of trauma and violence in his works and revisit or relocate Manto's partition narrative.

Keywords: *Partition narrative, Trauma, Violence, Manto, Madness, Nationalism*

Introduction

> "Many of his short stories focus on the sense of despair and dislocation caused by the partition of Pakistan and India in 1947. Manto vividly recreates the anger and horrors of this period and the trauma of refugees uprooted and victimized by the delineation of arbitrary borders. As the characters in Manto's stories confront the ruthless inhumanity of Hindu-Muslim violence murder, rape and mutilation-their only conceivable response is madness." (Alter 91)

Stephen Alter observes the above statement in one of his essays entitled, "Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto." Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) was a renowned and controversial Urdu short story writer, considered one of the best storytellers of the twentieth century in Urdu literature. Known for his bold and realistic portrayal of human behavior, Manto delved into themes such as sex, violence, and the societal impact of events like the Partition of India in 1947. His works often depicted the harsh realities of life with unflinching detail, reflecting the collective madness and trauma prevalent during tumultuous times of partition. partition was the seed of many unsolved problems that India is still searching for.

In the backdrop of post-partition India, Saadat Hasan Manto's stories – *Toba Tek Singh, Khol Do* (Open it), and *The Dog of Titwal* (Titwal Ka Kutta) – vividly depict the tumultuous socio-political landscape of the time. The partition of India in 1947 led to widespread violence, displacement, and communal tensions. Manto's narratives capture the human suffering and psychological trauma inflicted by these historical events. Through his characters, Manto sheds light on the systemic failures and moral complexities of a society torn apart by religious and political divisions. His stories serve as a mirror to the harsh realities of post-partition India, inviting readers to confront the complexities of power, identity, and violence during social upheaval.

Manto's narrative techniques and stylistic devices are often employed to depict trauma and violence in his stories. Point of view, symbolism, imagery, and language are the weapons through which Manto employs a variety of narrative techniques and stylistic devices in his stories to evoke powerful emotions and convey complex themes. For instance, we can all the above-mentioned short stories. Through vivid imagery, Manto paints detailed portraits of his characters and their surroundings, immersing readers in the vivid landscapes of post-partition India. He utilizes dialogue to reveal the inner thoughts and emotions of his characters, allowing readers to empathize with their struggles and experiences. Manto's use of symbolism, such as the dog in "The Dog of Titwal," adds depth and layers of meaning to his narratives, offering insights into the human condition, societal dynamics, and forms of resistance. Additionally, Manto's exploration of madness, trauma, and violence is marked by a raw and unflinching honesty, challenging readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the human experience.

In the above-mentioned stories, Manto talks a lot about trauma, violence, and madness. He shows us how people get hurt, both inside and out, especially during hard times like when India got divided. Manto's stories paint a really clear picture of how scary and confusing things can be when there's a lot of violence and chaos going on. His characters go through a lot of tough stuff, and it's not just about getting hurt physically. They also feel really scared, sad, and lost because of all the bad things happening around them. Manto also talks about how sometimes people can act in strange or crazy ways when they're pushed to their limits. Through his stories, Manto wants us to see how violence and trauma can leave big scars on people's lives, and how important it is to understand and help each other through tough times. His stories also offer a critique of nationalism and jingoism, which is when people get too caught up in their love for their country and end up being aggressive towards others. Manto shows us how this kind of thinking can lead to violence and suffering, especially during times like the partition of India. Through his stories, Manto highlights the harmful effects of blindly following nationalistic ideas, like treating people from other countries as enemies. Here we can mention Rabindranath Tagore and his views on nationalism, which is a critique of the whole idea of nationalism and patriotism. Michael Collins in his famous article entitled, "Rabindranath Tagore and Nationalism: An Interpretation" Tagore implicitly points to the power of the national ideal to generate action and self-sacrifice when he claims that the problem with nationalism is that it teaches that, "the nation is greater than the people". (Tagore 3) He wants us to see that this kind of thinking only leads to more division and conflict and that it's important to treat everyone with respect and understanding, no matter where they come from. Manto's stories remind us to be critical of nationalist ideas and to work towards peace and cooperation instead of hostility and hatred.

Toba Tek Singh

In Saadat Hasan Manto's iconic short story "Toba Tek Singh," the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of the Partition of India in 1947, a tumultuous period marked by widespread violence, displacement, and communal strife. Through the character of Bishan Singh, a Sikh inmate in a mental asylum, Manto intricately weaves a tale that encapsulates the profound impact of the Partition, on individual identities and the blurred lines between geographical boundaries and personal histories. Bishan Singh, the madman represents not only thousands of victims who are confined within asylum but also millions of those who can not get out of their mental or metaphorical asylums.

The story reaches its poignant climax when Bishan Singh, caught amid the chaos surrounding the exchange of lunatic inmates between India and Pakistan, stands at the border of the two newly formed nations. The border symbolizes that he does not belong to any particular new form of state. As he refuses to move to either side, symbolizing his resistance to being uprooted from his homeland, Bishan Singh's fate becomes intertwined with the nameless stretch of land that lies between the two countries. Foucault argues that "where there is power there is resistance" (Foucault 95) This act of defiance and confusion mirrors the larger theme of displacement and loss experienced by countless individuals during the Partition.

Manto skillfully employs the character of Bishan Singh to highlight the absurdity and senselessness of the Partition, where individuals like Bishan find themselves trapped in a liminal space, neither here nor there. The ambiguity between Toba Tek Singh, the man, and Toba Tek Singh, the place, serves as a powerful metaphor for the disorientation and identity crisis faced by those affected by the Partition. The erasure of Bishan's identity as he becomes synonymous with the land he stands on underscores the profound psychological impact of the political upheaval on personal narratives. Manto's narrative technique blurs the boundaries between reality and imagination, inviting readers to contemplate the deeper implications of the Partition beyond the physical violence and displacement. The symbolic renaming of the land as 'Toba Tek Singh' signifies a transformation where geography and identity merge into a singular entity, reflecting the complex interplay between personal histories and nationalistic agendas. As the following piece suggests:

> "As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan" (Manto, "Toba Tek Singh"10).

As Bishan Singh's story unfolds, the reader is confronted with the harsh realities of a divided nation and the human cost of political decisions. Manto's portrayal of Bishan's resistance and eventual acceptance of his fate resonates with the broader theme of loss and longing for a sense of belonging that transcends borders. When Bishan cross the border, he asks, "Where is Toba Tek Singh? In Pakistan or in India?" (Manto 572) Through Bishan's character, Manto captures the profound emotional turmoil experienced by individuals caught in the crossfire of historical events beyond their control. Toba Tek Singh" stands as a powerful testament to Manto's ability to capture the complexities of human experience in the face of political upheaval. Through the character of Bishan Singh and the symbolic landscape of Toba Tek Singh, Manto invites readers to reflect on the enduring legacy of the Partition and the enduring impact it had on individual lives. The story serves as a poignant reminder of the human cost of conflict and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Toba Tek Singh is examined in detail, focusing on the themes of madness, trauma, and violence in the context of partition. Through an analysis of character development, plot structure, and thematic motifs, this section unpacks the layers of trauma and violence embedded within the story, revealing Manto's nuanced exploration of human suffering amidst political chaos.

Khol Do

Turning to *Khol Do*, this subsection delves into Manto's portrayal of gender-based violence and betrayal in the aftermath of partition riots. By examining the character of Sakina, the narrative trajectory, and the socio-cultural implications of sexual violence, this section elucidates how Manto confronts readers with the pervasive injustices and systemic failures underlying

communal strife. It is set in post-partition Lahore, and the protagonist, Sirajuddin, awakens amidst chaos and horror. He recalls his family, particularly his wife and daughter, who have been brutally affected by the violence of partition. As he searches desperately for his daughter, Sakina, he encounters a group of volunteers offering assistance to those in need. Eventually, Sirajuddin finds Sakina in a semi-conscious state in a relief camp hospital.

The phrase "Khol Do," meaning "Open it," takes on a profound psychological significance in the story. When Sakina hears these words, she responds passively and mechanically, a result of the trauma she has endured. This response can be understood as a form of dissociative disorder, where the individual feels detached from their physical and emotional experiences, almost disconnected from reality. Sakina's dissociative state is evident in her numb reaction to the doctor's request to "open it," as she mechanically complies after enduring repeated violations by the volunteers.

In analyzing power dynamics, Foucault suggests that where there is power, there is also resistance. In the context of the story, power is exerted over Sakina through the violent acts she experiences. However, her passive resistance is represented through silence. Despite her inability to actively resist, her silence becomes a powerful form of protest against the oppressive forces at play. The following lines cause goosebumps and it was a form of resistance as well,

> "I… sir, I…I am her father the words came out of his raspy throat. The doctor glanced at the body lying on the stretcher. He felt the pulse and, pointing at the window, told Sirajuddin, 'Open it!' Sakina's body stirred ever so faintly on the stretcher. With lifeless hands, she slowly undid the knot of her waistband and lowered her shalwar." (Manto 76)

Manto's story portrays the devastating impact of trauma and violence on individuals like Sakina. The phrase 'Khol Do' become symbolic of the violation she has endured, and her passive response highlights the psychological toll of such experiences. Despite her silence, Sakina's resistance is evident, challenging the oppressive power structures of the society in which she lives.

Tetwal Ka Kutta

Titwal Ka Kutta is an allegorical critique of nationalism and division in the post-partition landscape. Through an examination of symbolism, allegory, and thematic resonance, this section uncovers Manto's incisive commentary on the enduring repercussions of political borders and communal conflict, offering insights into the universal dimensions of trauma and violence depicted in the story.

Manto's short story "The Dog of Tithwal" paints a vivid picture of the trauma and suffering experienced by millions during the partition. The story begins with a serene depiction of nature, with pleasant weather and a tranquil landscape. However, this tranquility is juxtaposed with the underlying tension between the two opposing camps, symbolized by the equal height of the hills and the stony structure of the mountains acting as barriers between India and Pakistan. Nature is a powerful force throughout the story, influencing the soldiers' behavior on both sides of the mountains. Amidst this backdrop, Jamadar Harnam Singh's melancholic song is interrupted by the barking of a dog discovered by Banki Singh, the youngest member of the crew. The dog, named 'Jhunjhun' by the soldiers, becomes a symbol of the eternal question of helplessness and mercy between the weak and the strong.

The identity of the dog becomes a point of contention between the Indian and Pakistani camps, reflecting the deeply suspicious mentality of the two nations towards each other. Despite attempts to impose identities on the dog, it ultimately becomes a victim of the futile dispute between the two camps, tragically shot dead in the crossfire. The dog's fate mirrors the plight of millions who became victims of destiny during the partition. Manto uses the dog as a metaphor for resistance. The dog was a shame for both the soldiers. The dog's death, dismissed as insignificant, highlights the arbitrary nature of power and authority, as well as the inherent violence and cruelty of human nature. While commenting on the use of resistance Panchal in his paper wrote,

> "The form of resistance used in "The Dog of Titwal" is strikingly different from the form of resistance used in "Toba Tek Singh". The dog in "The Dog of Titwal" transgresses boundaries. He crosses the border dividing India and Pakistan so easily as if the border doesn't exist at all. On the contrary, in "Toba Tek Singh", Bishen Singh refuses to cross the border and questions the logic behind the partition - not only of territory, but also of people." (Panchal 95)

Through the story of the dog, Manto critiques the whimsicalities of independent nations and the oppressive structures of power that shape and dictate human lives. Drawing on Foucault's critique of traditional models of power, Manto raises important questions about the nature of freedom and obedience in the face of authority. The dog's plight serves as a poignant reminder of Manto's own experiences during the partition, highlighting the enduring legacy of trauma and suffering left in its wake. The ultimate message comes with the death of the dog,

> Terrified, the dog turned the other way. One of its legs had become useless. On three legs it had just about managed to drag itself a few steps in the other direction when Jamadar Harnam Singh aimed and fired. The dog fell dead on the spot. Subedar Himmat Khan expressed regret. "Tch tch…the poor thing became a martyr!" 'Jamadar Harnam Singh took the warm barrel of the gun in his hand and said, "He died a dog's death." (Manto 24)

Conclusion

Manto's biographer Jagdish Chandar Wadhawan sums up his condition in the following words: The harsh reality of the partition stood mountain-like before him. The India of his imagination, the united India, solid and whole, lay shattered before his eyes. Even in his wildest imagination, he could not have thought of such countrywide butchery, arson, and loot in the name of religion. Lahore, with which he was once so familiar now looked alien to him and its atmosphere foreign (Waadhawan 28) So, it is his

conditioning that made him what he is and his writings. However, the analysis of Manto's three short stories and reflects on their broader significance. By offering a nuanced analysis of trauma and violence in Manto's select short stories, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the human cost of partition and its lasting impact on South Asian history and literature. His short stories offer a poignant exploration of trauma, violence, and madness in the context of India's partition. Through vivid characters, evocative imagery, and unflinching storytelling, Manto confronts readers with the harsh realities of human suffering and the profound psychological scars left by historical events. As we reflect on Manto's enduring legacy, his stories are a powerful reminder of the importance of empathy, compassion, and understanding in the face of adversity. By highlighting the complexities of trauma and violence beyond mere existence, this section underscores the enduring relevance of Manto's works in understanding the human condition and advocating for empathy, compassion, and social justice in contemporary society.

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