

Historical Response to Indo-Pak Partition in literature

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Abstract

Partition of India illuminates the multiplicity life of human experience during the time of partition. It also challenges the arbitrariness of a nation and explores deeper issues of class, gender, religion, exclusion and the meaning of existence. It implies on the theme of partition only focusing on the brutality, violence and injustice done during that time. Partition in the Indian subcontinent caused an autocratic agony and turmoil that fragmented the nation due to brutal floating colonialism, empiricism and extremism. The partition of India resulted in the creation of two separate nations, India and Pakistan. The partition was accompanied by the violent displacement of millions of people, and the legacy of that violence continues to affect political relations between the two countries. The agony and agony of partition is not only felt by the people of the Indian subcontinent, but also finds its voice in partition literature produced in different languages by different writers of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The partition of India in August 1947 was the result of a political and social process that began in 1857 when the First War of Independence broke out against British colonial rule. But Pakistan was created by breaking India into pieces. These unexpected and unexpected events divided the Indian people along communal and religious lines. Therefore, through this paper, an attempt has been made to shed light on various aspects of people's lives during the partition.

Keywords: Social issues, hegemony, partition, racial discrimination, brutal violence, religion. Displacement, colonialism, genocide

Introduction

The very title of this paper “**Historical Response to Indo-Pak Partition in Literature**” needs a detailed discussion and explanation. The term ‘Historical’ is based on history, relating to or having the character of history in the past and reproduced in historical presentation. The politico-historical term **Partition** refers to real historical and political events that led to the vivisection of this great country in Indian subcontinent.

The literary term ‘novel’ [fiction] refers to a kind of literature that deals, presents and describes imaginary people, places and events in beautiful prose. The contradictory terms, ‘**fiction**’ and ‘**history**’ need explanation for better evaluation of this research study.

Etymologically, the term 'history' has originated from the Greek term '**Historia**' which means inquiry, interview or interrogation of an eye-witness and also reports of such actions? History denotes the science of the human past. In other words, it is used to designate the sum total of human activities in the past. But it is difficult to arrive at the precise definition of the term 'history'.

The term 'historical novel' or 'political fiction' or 'topical novel' can be applied for the partition novels. It is not easy to trace the origin of 'historical novel' in English but with publication of Sir Walter Scott's novels in the nineteenth century such 'genre' came into existence and with the passage of time the world literature was rich with classic historical novels such as *A Tale of Two Cities*, *War and Peace* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* etc. The Indian fiction in English selected for the research study are aptly categorized as 'historical novels' or 'political novels' and hence it will be profitable for the evaluation of the selected novels to trace the history of Indian fiction with reference to 'political fiction'.

This research paper is related to the Partition of India of 1947 was the division of British India into two independent dominion states, India and Pakistan. The dominion of India is today Republic India and dominion of Pakistan is today Islamic Republic Pakistan and the peoples of Bangladesh later in 1971. The legacy of that violent separation has endured, resulting in a bitter rivalry between India and Pakistan. **"When they partitioned, there were probably no two countries on Earth as alike as India and Pakistan,"** said Nisid Hajari, the author of **"Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's partition."**

The Partition: A Historical Perspectives

The Partition of Indian subcontinent- like the politico-historical events of the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the two World Wars and the great depression of America-was an event of great magnitude and significance that had far-reaching political, social, cultural, religious, economic and human impacts on Indian subcontinent. The historical process of partition and its holocaust had profound impact on contemporary culture, literature and history. This is the most cataclysmic event in the history of twentieth century India. The impression left on the minds of those who lived through those traumatic times persists to this day. The European continent and America witnessed historical events of huge magnitude that inspired great writers to produce famous novels: **A Tale of Two cities, War and Peace, Exodus, Farwell to Arms, and Lord of the Flies etc.** The Partition stirred the sensibility of men of letters inspiring them to write novels, poems, short-stories and dramas. Looking the cruel picture of Indians and Pakistanis of the 19th century during partition and the wave of mass migration of human displacement Indian writers were bound to write the literary works to point the real tragic picture of partition.

There are number of Indian writers, males and females, Hindu as well as Muslims and even Sikh novelists who have contributed a great deal to the development of partition theme. Hindu novelists like **Chaman Nahal, Manohar Malgonkar** and many more; Sikh novelists like **Khushwant Singh, Raj Gil, H.S.Gill and K.S.Duggal** whose contribution is noteworthy in the arena of partition fiction; and the contribution of Muslim novelists like **Attia Hussain** is worthy of detailed consideration, all have their collective contribution in the field of partition

The long fight for India's independence from the British Raj, which commenced with the Indian Mutiny of 1857, gained momentum after World War II. However, India's desire for self-governance was coupled with severe inter-communal disharmony. The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League could not reconcile their views, which further added to the chaos ensuing escalation of sectarian violence. So in the year 1947, when the British finally left India, the country was divided into two independent nation-states — India and Pakistan. Following this decision, millions of people were forced to leave their homes and move to the other state..

They could never have anticipated how this political move, which was far removed from their individual wellbeing, would turn out to be one of the worst man-made calamities of the 20th century. Houses were demolished and looted. A deluge of bloated and disfigured bodies impeded water flow in canals. Thousands of people lost their lives to ethnic violence.

Even if they made it to the other side, peace was hard to come by. Makeshift refugee camps became the breeding grounds for numerous diseases. The bloodshed that followed in the aftermath of Partition irrevocably marred the history of India.

Partition of Bengal

Bengal was the biggest province with a population of 78 million. It had a vast area and was an unwieldy administrative unit. The whole province was under one Lieutenant Governor who could not look after the administrative requirements of such a vast area alone. It was not possible for the Lt. Governor to go around the province whenever there was a dire need of such tours. Consequently a major portion of the province remained neglected due to its unwieldiness. In view of its size and enormous population it was felt that the province of Bengal should be divided into two parts in order to facilitate the administrative requirement of the vast area.

Lord Curzon became the viceroy of India in 1899. He was an able and efficient administrator. He undertook an extensive tour of the province of Bengal and felt that the province was too big to be administered effectively. The provincial Governors had already complained about the administrative difficulties faced by them in the large province. They had recommended the partition of the province in view of its size and big population. A number of partition proposals were viewed and discussed which, however, could not materialize. Lord Curzon decided to divide the province into two provinces. He prepared a comprehensive plan of the partition of Bengal in 1905 and sent it to England for approval. The British Crown gave approval to the partition plan and the province of Bengal was divided into two parts on 16th October 1905 named as Western Bengal and Eastern Bengal. The new province of Eastern Bengal consisted of Dacca as capital, Memansingh, Chittagong, Assam, Rajshahi, Khulna, Rangpur and Bogra as the constituted districts.

Reaction of Muslims and Hindus toward Partition:

In the combined province of Bengal the Muslims were a suppressed and dominated class of society. The Hindus had monopolized trade and Government services which aggravated the economic condition of the Muslims. The new province of Eastern Bengal brought happier prospects of political and economic life for the Muslims. The Muslims overnight turned into majority by the creation of the new province. The Muslims were 18 million out of the total population of 31 million in the new province. The partition of Bengal provided chances of great progress to the Muslims who formed the majority group in the new set up. The partition of Bengal provided them with a chance to rehabilitate their social position. They hoped that their social status would get a tremendous boost in the new province. The Muslims, therefore, expressed their utmost happiness over the partition of Bengal. They offered their gratification in a loyal way to the Government for taking a step for their social, economic and political uplift

The Hindus reacted toward the partition of Bengal in a hostile and violent manner. The Hindus could never support a move which was to bring prosperity and happiness to the Muslims.

The reasons for Hindu opposition to the partition were as follows:

1. The Hindus believed that they would come under the domination of the Muslim majority in the new province and their superior position would be downgraded to the inferior status.
2. As the provincial High Court and other judicial bodies were to be shifted to Dacca, the Hindu lawyers feared that their legal practice would be affected.
3. Since Dacca was to become the centre of journalistic and other academic activities, the Hindu press and media believed that from now onward the Muslim point of view would be projected in the newspapers and magazines. They also feared that their income would seriously be lessened.
4. The Hindu landlords, capitalists and traders did not like the partition as it was to put an end to their exploitation of the poor Muslims.
5. Before the partition of Bengal the Hindus enjoyed dominant position in the political sphere of the province over the Muslims. The new set up was to put an end to their superior political position and their political dominance over the Muslims will end.

The day of partition was declared as a national tragedy. Strikes were held throughout the country. The Indian National Congress also jumped in to support the agitation against the partition. The Hindu students put up violent demonstration against the partition. The Congress severely criticized the partition in its annual session of 1906.

The Hindus agitation soon turned into a violent reaction. The people disobeyed Government orders by refusing to pay taxes and rentals. Communal clashes erupted at a number of places which aggravated the law and order situation in the country. Bombs were thrown and foreign goods were boycotted. The train carrying the Governor of the Eastern Bengal was derailed and an attempt was made on Viceroy's life which failed.

Importance of partition Literature

Partition literature is relevant today because it's part of our country's history. Through the partition literature what we learned that the tragic incidents of people. When India and Pakistan divided the most affected people are those who have to go to a new place stay behind their loved and dear one's. Many literary exponents through their works immortalized the incidents of Partition. Our history textbooks barely capture the horrors of Partition. Personally speaking, I would like to expose its dark side for the first time only after joining in a PhD's program in English Literature at Raiganj University. State-sponsored history books in schools have been highly censored, so they don't talk about trains laden with decapitated bodies and limbs, brutal murders, and rape that accompanied the mass exodus. This is why we need to read Partition literature, as the monstrosity and emotional duress inflicted upon our people need to be documented and acknowledged, if not redeemed, since it's too late already. Why was Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer who lacked basic background knowledge about India, entrusted with the responsibility of deciding where and how to draw borders?

Partition literature interrogates when school history textbooks fail to pose the right questions. People who had never left their respective parishes were suddenly forced to pick one nation over another and migrate to lands unknown; leaving behind their kith and kin and everything they hold dear. While history textbooks often is an assortment of facts, thus mechanical in a way, Partition literature humanizes the anguish of the ones who got removed from their places of worship, who boarded trains hoping to reach "home" only to lose their lives to mass hysteria, and those who had to turn against their beloved neighbours to survive.

The Impact of Partition on Literature:

The partition of the Indian subcontinent was an event of such a great magnitude that profoundly affected human emotions and values to such a great extent that all creative arts and artists have come under its influence. So not only writers but painters, film makers and TV producers also have explored this event in their respective medium. So we have moving TV sagas like "**Buniad**" "**Tamas**", films like "**Garam Hava**", "**1942-The Earth**", "**Pinjar**", "**Veer Zara**" etc. They have been performed and produced to educate and appeal the audience about partition. But it is fiction that provides vast canvass to the creative genius to deal with the very complex theme of partition and this genre has attracted writers of all Indian languages .Vernacular languages have limited readership while Indian fiction in

English has the international audience and therefore it has drawn world wide attention of writers and scholars, critics, readers and serious students of Indian English fiction.

Since the province of Punjab was the first casualty of this unfortunate event and a major participant in this, the Punjabi psyche was naturally the first to respond to it in various literary endeavours. Nanak Singh's **Khoon De Sohle** (1947), and **Agg Di Khund** (1948) which is actually one novel in two parts, is chiefly concerned with riots in Punjab, especially in Amritsar at the time of independence. Communal hatred and its shameless exhibition are picturised truthfully in them. His other novels **Mazdhaar** (1949) and **Chitrakaar** (1950) also deal with the problems of refugees, that is a consequence of partition. Kartar Singh Duggal's **Nahun Te Maas**, translated in Hindi as **Choli Daman** (1968) also serialized and telecast on the Doordarshan, is a novel that interprets communal relationships distinctly, and shows hatred taking roots, and growing deeper.

In Hindi the list of the writers dealing with this theme is longer. They can be divided into two groups: those who dealt with the factors responsible for partition, and those who dealt with the event itself. Bhisham Sahni's **Tamas** (1973) deals with the pre-partition condition of India in the North West. Amritray's **Bij** (1967), Vishnu Prabhakar's **Nishikant** (1958), Bhairav Prasad Gupta's **Sati Maiya Ka Chaura** (1959), Bhagwaticharan Verma's **Bhule Bisre Chitra** (1961), Kamleshwar's **Laute Hue Musaphir** (1971), Yashpal's **Meri Teri Usaki Baat** (1974), fall into this group. While Ramanand Sagar's **Aur Insaan Mar Gaya**, Acharya Chatursen Shastri's **Dharma Purtra**, Yashpa's **Zootha Sach**, Gurudatt's **Desh Ki Hatya** are particularly concerned with the event itself

Apart from novels, the writers have extensively used this theme through short story form also in their writings. Though Partition offered a variety of subject matter, the majority of the writers chose to deal with violence of one kind or another – abduction and rape being particular favourites. The less gifted writers tried to excel in graphic description of women being physically abused and mutilated, and too often succeeded in making the painful nauseating. But in the hands of the masters, the theme of rape resulted in some of the most heart –wrenching stories ever written. Among these are Kartar Singh Duggal's **Kulsum**, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's **Revenge** and Saadat Hasan Manto's **The Reunion**.

Kulsum illuminates a moment of horror. In this story an old Sikh rapes a Muslim houri (whom he has abducted) for failing sexually to oblige his young guest, a schoolmaster. As the old man emerges from the hut tying his lungi, we find ourselves as dumbfounded as the girl, **Kulsum**. Her earlier plea to the schoolmaster, "Marry me first...I beg of you", repeated many times by hapless girl, takes on an added poignancy. Abbas's **Revenge** centers on a father craving for vengeance on seeing his daughter stripped, raped and mutilated in his presence. Nothing less than stabbing a Muslim girl 'in her naked breasts' would recompense him.

Review of Literature

A literature review or narrative review is a scholarly paper that presents the current knowledge including substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contribution to a particular topic. It provides an overview of current knowledge, allowing me to identify relevant theories, methods, and gaps in the existing research.

I have selected the research on Indo-Pakistan Partition over the English novels written by the Indian writers **Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines" (1988)** and **Khushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan" (1956)**. To prove the study I have collected data/materials from national level journal. It will be helpful to clarify the concept of both novels. Here I have mentioned some articles from state, national and international level journals as a review of literature in dissertation dealing with partition and its meaning, its effects on wealth, health, society, poverty of that time. My paper will emphasize on the reality of blood digester of depended India and real tragic situation of Indo-Pakistani division, communalism, communal riots, terrible cries of the plague, destruction of humanity, violence of forced sex, Muslim protest, fundamentalism, and the wailing image of burning India in Indian subcontinent. This research is based on Amitav Ghosh's **"The Shadow Lines"** to discuss the partition of West Bengal in Indian subcontinent and also the cartography, nationalism, communalism in Ghosh's fiction.

1) **"A critical Evaluation of Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan in Historical Perspective"** by **Menoti**. He has discussed the theme of partition, fusion of sex, humour, pain, misery events, darkness and bureaucratic functioning etc.

2) **"The Broken Mirror: Casualty of nation Building in train to Pakistan"** by **Marcie Panutos**. He has pointed out the reality of the partition of depended nation India. He has presented it as dangerous encounter of humanity.

3) **"Theme of Partition and Independence in Indian Literature in English"** written by **Naresh Garg**. The paper exposes the central theme of partition India and the condition during partition period.

4) **Gayatri Pandey** writes an article on the partition of India. The scholar wrote the article named, **"Symbolism in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan"**. The scholar studied in Khushwant Singh's novel **Train to Pakistan** in different point of view. The scholar makes a comment on scenes and its influence in the novel. In this paper scholar shows the symbolic elements with good reference. The scholar shows the heroism, self-sacrifice, loyalty and physical courage through symbolism. These elements show directly the dirty picture of partition.

5) The article **"Analyzing Partition: Definition, Classification and Explanation"** by **Brendan** is related to the research topic. The article is based on the definition of partition, its classification, explanation of partition in historical, geographical, cultural, political language, religious manner. In this article the scholar very specifically disclosed the theme of partition by using proper and particular word. Hence I have selected it as a literature review.

6) **"Social and psychological Trauma of the displaced : A Study of Partition of India"** by **Sukhbir Singh and Manmohan Singh Gill** who made the research based on the information of socio- economic and psychological condition of partitioned people of integrated India. In this article the scholar study the problems faced by the displaced Hindus and Muslims at the time of partition which was inspired the scholar to go through with the

project and motivated the scholar's way of thinking. Hence I have selected it as a review of literature.

Conclusion

All the novelists make it very clear that people belonging to the subcontinent were painfully conscious of their superfluous differences. They are completely oblivious to the act that they had common ancestors, history and heritage.

All versions given by the novelists under study convey that history has a moral. One of the major refrains in the novel is that in spite of the creation of the two nations a bond of oneness can clearly be discerned among the divided. Differences are always there whether religious, regional or others. It is wrong to make barriers out of them. Rather bridges have to be built as all hailed from the same stock. An optimistic note of prevalence of healthy human relations is sounded through episodes of love, compassion and friendship despite the chaotic conditions of violence, bloodshed and deterioration of human values.

The human dimension of the division of the subcontinent is well represented in the six novels analyzed for the dissertation. The study sincerely attempts to bring out the totality of the experience often missed by the historian. All the writers of Partition novels show us that in spite of the creation of two nations and after 1971 a third nation (Bangladesh), there is a bond of oneness among the divided, and a kind of nostalgia for the undivided past.

All writers under discussion have rightly emphasized the significance of communal harmony, common cultural heritage, peace and prosperity. They also lament the increasing threat to harmony. They rightly believe that communal unity in the Indian subcontinent will herald a new era of peace. They also believe that the loss of communal harmony is something that can never be compensated. Their fictional discourse makes it quite clear that no nation can make progress until and unless it has a very sound communal harmony among its citizens irrespective of their different caste, creed and colour. In fact Partition of India has divided the Muslims more than the Hindus and the other communities. Even today the Muslims are scattered in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The leaders advocating for Partition had very high ambitions for the prosperity that Partition would avail them, but it has never been fulfilled. By making use of history in their fictional creations, the writers selected for the study have not only narrated untold his/stories but have provided their versions of different events by re-narrating them in their works. By doing so with much success, these writers have given a purposeful direction and vitality to Indian English novels. Through this process, these writers serve as a bridge between Indian literature and world literature with their fictional contribution.

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