

Psychoanalytical Criticism of the Characters of Manto

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Introduction

Saadat Hassan Manto was born on 11th May 1912 in Paproudi village of Samrala in the Ludhiana district of Punjab. He was born in the Kashmiri Muslim family of barristers. By nationality he was a Pakistani writer and was one of the most influential person and a greatest writer in South Asian history. He was most read writer and also the most criticized person. His pen produced twenty-one short stories, one novel, and five series of radio plays, three collections of essay and two collections of personal sketches.

When he was in school he was not a bright student. And he failed numerous times in Urdu. And the irony is that he excelled in that language and today he is known as the master of Urdu language. In the age of 1933 when he was at the age of 21 he came in contact with the scholar Abdul Bari Alig which inspired Manto to find out the hidden talents he have and encouraged him to read the Russian and French writers. And so he started his literary journey by translating works of Russian writers Chekov and Gorky. He also translated the works of Victor Hugo and Oscar Wilde. Saadat Hassan Manto soon after translating, accepted the job of working for the Radio and he produced almost five radio plays and he then started writing about the social

issues prevailing. He used to live in the society which was outrageous and was full of darkness. He is used to live in a society which was full of crimes and darkness and grim situations. Manto himself said, “The phase of society we are passing through, if you are not aware of it then read my stories. If you cannot bear with my stories then make sure that for you the society is not bearable. The darkness in my stories is from the darkness of this society from where I come. There is no mistake in my composition which is defined other my name and if I actually do any mistake in my composition then that mistake is from the government and the rule we are living in. We are bending many ethics as per our comfort ability level, woman are being objectified and men are projected in a set way of life or in a certain way of living and this was not acceptable by Manto. And so he started writing boldly and the truth, which was distorted by the society, was revealed by him and this was the right he exercised of being a writer.

Manto was a very unique when we talk about his style of writing, approach or the themes he portrayed and this proves that he was an exceptional writer. He was writing in a bold way but he was aware of his responsibility and so he cannot be discussed as an irresponsible writer. The characters he depicted was from the society itself and he used to say that if anybody has any problem with his character than it is confirmed that he should be having the problem with the society. He took his character from the poor class people which is either born in the garbage or are born in the drains. He took these characters just to prove that even the bad or the lower class people have some of the goodness within them. And he also wanted to prove that the manners of the lower class and the upper class do not differ. His characters were very close to reality and could not be denied. Despite of projecting his women characters as dark he started projecting

them strong and sometimes even stronger than male. He used to say about his characters “Though my characters are bold and cunning but these are the characters which are hidden behind the tags of ethic, morality, culture etc. which is naked now”. He raised many themes like killing, slaughter and rape but the hidden themes he portrayed were of lust, depression, squalor etc. Many of the writings delve into the issue of depression, helplessness, being broke, irony and satire.

Many of his closed ones believed that he portrayed his own weaknesses in the story. He used to get out of his own weaknesses through his works. His main motive behind writing was to make the society aware of the prevailing conditions through the different questions raised by him in his work. He wrote many stories which were close from the reality and have a deep impression in our hearts. He was charged for the projection of obscenity in his works for 6 times. He was never convicted and he faced them bravely. He even answered every question he was asked by the critics judging his work. He was not able to take the partition of India and was heart broken by this decision. He migrated from Mumbai to Lahore. Though he became familiar with Lahore but deep down somewhere he missed Mumbai. He could not take the partition and took to drinking. He does not have a good earning because he was charged for so many times and somewhere his work got affected too. He took to heavy drinking and that too the alcohol he bought was never of a good quality. It was evident enough that he wanted to die. He was hopeless and depressed too. Six months before he died he wrote his own epitaph “Here lies Saadat Hassan Manto in whose bosom are enshrined all the secrets and art of short story writing. Buried under mounds of earth even now he is contemplating whether he is greater short story

writer or God”. Later on his sister replaced this epitaph and his tombstone now read as “Here lied Saadat Hassan Manto who still believes that he was not the final word on the face of the earth”. He was given many honours too. On January 18th, 2005, on the fiftieth anniversary of his death, he was commemorated in the Pakistani postage stamp. He was given the title of Nishan-e-Imtiaz on 14th of August, 2012 by the Pakistan government. On January 18th 2005 he was insisted on the postage stamp of Pakistan. He was a writer who never feared his own weakness or the world he is living in. He died after earning a lot of respect for himself and for his closed ones.

Destruction of Human Psychology

Saadat Hassan Manto wrote many different works which revealed the various setups of society. His writing was a metaphor of the society and he used satire to comment about the living of the society. Toba Tek Singh is one of his works which gives us the scenario of India and Pakistan at the times of partition. It was published in 1955 and was a greater comment at the society of those times. The morality and the humanist value start decreasing after the partition and Manto portrayed the darkness of human psyche in his works. This was his final work when he was facing financial problems, and a lot of social critics he earned after this work. It not only showed the influence of his own demons, but also that of the collective madness that he saw in the ensuing decade of his life. This was the work said to be inspired of his visit to the mental asylum. It talks of the toll the news of partition has on the inmates of institution and the ambivalent fate of the people around. This story talks about a Sikh person Bishen Singh and his personal dilemma which result him as a lunatic person. He somewhere was trapped in his mental and emotional experiences he was facing. In this short story not only Bishen Singh was being

projected but different other people who was seen as mad by the so called normal human being of the world. The partition of a nation was a wise decision by the wise man of the world? Does this partition would solve the dilemma inside the people? Does this partition was right from a humanist perception? Whatever it was the decision of wise people led to the partition and then the other decision they took was the shifting of the lunatics by the religion they belong to. One of the mentally challenged patients who used to regularly read 'Zamindar' a magazine or newspaper issue was asked by his friend "What is Pakistan?" He answered, "Pakistan is that place in Hindustan where the Knives are made. He replied this because he was up to date with the riots faced by both the nations. He knows how grim and dark the situations are. And so, his definition of Pakistan changed by the notion of his idea through the newspaper. Not only had the patients in the asylum but the soldiers were not even educated enough to define the partition or they can be termed as innocent. They just knew that a person divided the nations on the basis of religion but they never questioned that is it right to divide a nation on religion. A character is projected in a way that he does not want to go to India neither he want to go to Pakistan. And because of this he climbs on the tree. After sometime when his anger fades off he gets down and gets emotional when he get to know that he has to leave the Pakistani asylum and have to go to India. The wise and normal people when giving this decision does not have this emotional attachment towards the nation that was once secular enough to have all the people of different religion. They were secular and have the brotherhood feeling for each other and fought for the Independence of a nation and now just because of one imaginary line are fighting against each other. The mad are having this feeling of brotherhood which should exist in the behaviour of a

normal and wise man. Most of the lunatic person was not in the favour of this shifting and cannot understand the concept of detaching themselves and throwing them to different places. They do not want to leave the place they were familiar with for a long time. Bishen Singh who was concerned about his own place Toba Tek Singh on which he was born and who fetched him his earnings. He wanted to know that where his village is. Is it in India or in Pakistan? And when he was forced to shift he was not ready for it. Somewhere he shared the kind of belongingness with his place. He was familiar with his place and shared different memories. He cannot leave that place and go to somewhere just because he was from a different religion and that place is not for him now. A decision of the wise is being questioned by the mad too that his identity is being tattered by the wise. The sun does not shine knowing that the place is divided in boundary, the moon does not give light only to those places where Hindu exist. When the God cannot divide the people then who are we to divide. The division of states left the people with a great mess to handle and also they were left depressed and sad. They could not make peace with the decision neither they can happily accept the new place they were into.

‘Khol do’ another masterwork of Saadat Hassan Manto is the most famous and a story which faced lot of criticism. This story portrays the effects of violence during the partition of India. Manto kept the humanity before religion. He never believed that there are Hindu and Muslim on which the human being are divided. He just knows that the human beings should be judged on the basis of humanity. He depicts his character as human beings with all their wilderness and barbarity. ‘Khol Do’ is basically the story of a father Sirajuddin who started his journey from India after the partition with heavy heart and lost his daughter, Sakina, in his

journey and then his search start by keeping the death wife image in his mind. There are many instances which are there to prove that the wise are not able to take their responsibility. The train which started from Amritsar and arrived to Lahore was having many dead and injured people and some were in great mess and was running here and there. And this was because some normal people started this riot and believe that violence is the only way which can make them powerful and which is required to make things okay. Sakina gets lost in the ocean of the people migrating and Sirajuddin wants to find her as soon as possible. He wants that the daughter stays safe and somehow gets back to him. He cared about her this much that he was not ready to let the Dupatta of Sakina fall down and ran back to pick it up. And when the daughter is nowhere to be seen he is heartbroken and stressed. He asks the so-called helpful and good people to find her. And when she is found in a hospital and after hearing the words “Khol Do (Open up)”, she opens up the salwar she is wearing before the eyes of her own father. Her body is prostrated and injured. She is raped so many times that she mentally believes that the man who are surrounding her is there to rape her. Manto by this shocking and heartless end to a story shows how the truth is naked and this nakedness of the truth he depicted in his stories. He had the courage to write a self-critical thing and commented on the darkness of the society. The wise who are born to save the people and make people survive the every opposite situations aroused in a society are not doing their work well enough. They forget their responsibility and are walking in the path of crime. And this is the result of the partition. They now do not believe in the concept of brotherhood and neither goes they believe the concept of non-violence and this is projected by their doings.

Kaali salwar one of the short story by Manto describes the situations faced by the female Sultana and how her psychology changes by the situations she is facing. Sultana is a prostitute who with his love interest Khudabaksh arrive Delhi from Aligarh. Sultana who was a heavily earned and most famous prostitute when turns to Delhi and in Delhi she faces the decline in her income. She waits for few months but she gets frustrated when she could not get her customer. One day she meets a man Shankar who comes in a disguise of her customer. She finds something weird about her but could not find what. But as she finds that Shankar does not have anything to offer her then she asks him to leave. After sometime when she realizes that her favourite festival Muharram is knocking on the door and she has nothing new to wear then she request Khudabaksh to gift her a black Salwar. He was stressed too which no income coming from any source so he declined the request. But Sultana now orders him to get him the cloth. Next day she again meets Shankar and this time that meet was a healthy meet as they were comfortable now. Sultana asked him to gift her the black kurta which she is longing for. Shankar very well aware of his conditions at first resents but then accepts and promises her that she will get her 'kaali salwar' on the day of the festival. And Shankar asked her to give her earrings in return. She gets ready to give her earring and Shankar left. On the day of the festival Shankar came gain, gave Sultana the Black Salwar which Sulatan feels that resembles like the cloth she saw in the hands of Mukhtar. And in the end it got revealed that the earrings of Sultana were given to Mukhtar and the cloth was given to Sultana. This story raises many questions. Khudabaksh out of somewhere gets an idea that he should move to Delhi and without even asking Sultana brings her to Delhi. The women are objectified here. Other than this Sultana in her loneliness start

comparing her life with the trains and the engines and the sound. She was once very busy and ignored the small details of life but now she is so free that she wants to adore the every bit of her surroundings. She feels that the every bit of life surrounding her is there to teach something, it is there to support you and is there sometimes as your companion. Which cannot be done by a normal human being is done by non-living things. They soothe her and passes her time too. Other main questions raised are what is the reason Sultana has to ask her cloth from Shankar. And when we look at this we find that now the happiness and comfortability level which she received from her companion Khudabaksh is no longer there. With the time it is fading or it might be there that the love and support was never there. She in her loneliness is finding a person who can listen to her, fulfils all her wishes the way he wants but still for her, he should be there always. This story projected the women character doing a filthy job but is still stronger than the male characters. It is Sultana paying the rent of the flats she is staying in, it is Sultana being strong to fulfil her own wish. And this is how Manto comments on the males.

Conclusion

Manto was a master of the Urdu language and he exercises all his right as a writer. He was never being dominated by the people and despite of the different controversies he was facing never ever did put his pen down. He wrote in his own words, in his own ideas and in his own belief. He never distorted the truth and presented it with a sugar-coated level, he always presented it the way it was present in the society. He once said “If you find my stories intolerable then we people live in a intolerable age. His stories had a surprised, shocking ending which can force the chill run down from the nerve. Because he always projected the real picture and people

either get aware of it or they get scared of the reality. People were scared of him sometimes because they were scared about their truth got revealed. He reflected the violent, turbulent and brutal image of India and Pakistan. Nobody can claim him that whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim but he was definitely a human being. He projected the bare nakedness of human nature from his naked eyes.

His stories somewhere were a satire and a comment of the status, morality, culture, ethics of the people which somewhere faced the gradual decline of it. He even commented on the psychology of the people which were facing the destruction of their psychology. Every character in his stories was facing with some or the other mental dilemma. They were emotionless or expressionless and at times they were in blank and a void and were searching for their own identity. The gradual loss of hope and faith and the disillusionment of the character also are depicted in his stories.

Manto would always be regarded as the writer playing with words. His little expressions conveyed a lot to the readers. The readers after their story reach to that place where the author wants to take them. And this was the magic of Manto. His death at a young age was demise to the Urdu works. He will be read in the ages to come.