

Saadat Hasan Manto: Cartographer of Feminine Physic and Psyche

Vikash Choudhary
Department of English
S.S. Jain Subodh P.G.
College
Jaipur

Abstract:

It's reader's eye that reveals Manto as a factual or a fictional cartographer through literature. He is contemptuous of any attempt to find a cultural, religious or historical reason for the carnage; and dismisses as fraudulent all things that evoke a sense of a life.

Manto was one of the first writers who depicted brutal behavior of man in full of madness and as a marauder in its original and naked way with one of the best creation of God – *Female*, physically as well as psychologically. Who can tell what constitute the decisive factor of female – *Events, Individuals or Fate?* Answering this question Manto powerfully dramatized the excruciating dilemma of fair sex in his stories. With an overwhelming emotional and powerful psychological way he had depicted the treatment with women after partition. The research paper focuses on the latent emotions of the victims of this event through the short stories of Manto about unexpected inhumane treatment with fair sex after that auspicious inauspicious morning.

Key Words: Cartographer, Dilemma, Feminine, Partition, Psychological

'Literature is not sickness, but rather a response to sickness.'

- Saadat Hasan Manto

Partition of Indian sub-continent, the most horrifying and cataclysmic incident of Indian History which raised certain questions both from the victims and the aggressor communities specially regarding fair sex whether they primarily perceived as victims of a violent patriarchal order in which they exercise no volition. Recent writings have argued for the subaltern perspective in the writing of history in particular women victims which have become important subjects in feminist and cultural discourses. Women - physically and emotionally brutalized, forced to leave their homes; and dependent on the mercy of male from both communities.

Urvshi Butalia says “Thousands of women on both sides of the newly formed borders ... were abducted, raped, forced to convert, forced into marriage, forced back into what the two states defined as ‘their proper homes,’ torn apart from their families once during the Partition by those who abducted them, and again, after the Partition, by the state which tried to ‘recover’ and ‘rehabilitate’ them.”

Apart from murders, looting and mass migration savage treatment with women have become the focus in the narratives of certain feminist and progressive writers which highlights numerous issues that are extremely diverse in their implications for womanhood. Indian woman at a crucial moment in our recent history springs from a political engagement with the fashioning of a post-independent society and culture.

Among the prominent writers of twentieth century who have touched this crucial issue undaunted Manto comes in one of top names. The reason behind it is that he himself had experienced the so called political policies implemented by some sane and forceful people who perhaps have not thought about the psychological outcome of its execution. It's reader's eye that reveals Manto as a factual or a fictional cartographer through literature. He is contemptuous of any attempt to find a cultural, religious or historical reason for the carnage; and dismisses as fraudulent all things that evoke a sense of a life.

After Partition Manto stood as marginalised — about which there is no doubt — and because women are more marginalised, and they are looked upon with more contempt, he explored this theme vividly. Manto was one of the first writers who depicted brutal behavior of man in full of madness and as a marauder in its original and naked way with one of the best creation of God – *Female*, physically as well as psychologically. Who can tell what constitute the decisive factor of female – *Events, Individuals or Fate?* Answering this question Manto powerfully dramatized the excruciating dilemma of fair sex in his stories. With an overwhelming emotional and powerful psychological way he had depicted the treatment with women after partition yet there is no mention of ‘Hindu,’ ‘Muslim,’ ‘India’ or ‘Pakistan’ in them. This is what makes them so striking, and relevant, even to this day.

His stories, representing lust, squalor, depravity and perversion are of unflinching honesty and iridescent vigour that bear the very nakedness of human nature. The stories delve into facing persecution, self-ridicule, depression, being broke, helplessness, drinking, satire, irony, hypocrisy, sadness, strife and moral decay. These are not the stories of a detached and inscrutable past, they are tales of madness and rage that lurk under a garb that we put on as ego. As a sensitive writer, he was influenced and traumatized by political turmoil during 1947 and beyond.

Thanda Gosht is a strong testimony that blurs the line between nationalism and jingoistic madness of either Hindu or Muslim; India or Pakistan. In the story, Ishwar Singh, a Sikh returns home after a round of killing; when he confesses that he raped a beautiful corpse was stabbed by his suspecting wife during sex. Ishwar Singh represents all those who, in the name of patriotism, engaged in barbarism and fanatic madness. After several days of looting and killing, Ishwar comes home to his young wife Kulwant, only unable to make love to her. He confesses his

attempt to rape a young girl after killing all her family. When he is finally ready to ravage her, realisation dawns upon him that she is nothing but a dead body; like cold meat. This moment of near necrophiliac rape becomes the epiphanic moment that leads to his impotency and later his annihilation whereas in *Kulwant*, there can be seen a volatile mixture of madness and passion. When Ishwar Singh answers affirmatively when asked if he had another woman in his life, *Kulwant* with an unfathomable madness picks up the dagger and stabs to death her own husband. “She picked up the dagger from the floor and stabbed Ishwar Singh in the neck. Blood gushed forth from Ishwar’s neck. In frenzy, *Kulwant Kaur* kept stabbing him and cursing the other woman.” Her passion for Ishwar Singh was so deeply entrenched that she does not think even for a moment before falling into a fit of madness. She behaves like a wounded tigress, inconsolable and revengeful.

In *Khol Do* Sirajuddin and his daughter *Sakina* come to Pakistan with the hope of finding their own nation in the midst of chaos where *Sakina* is brutally gang-raped by her so called ‘own brethren’ until she falls unconscious and becomes psychologically traumatized that during cure when the doctor instructs the window to be opened (*khol do*), *Sakina* very mechanically undoes the thread of her salwar which shows her relationship with language and linguistic meaning becomes so fractured that “*khol do*” brings in just one meaning for her. Sirajuddin on the other hand instead of noticing the dreadful gesture, only exclaims about her survival and an anguished father is overjoyed to find his daughter alive on a hospital bed at a refugee camp, unaware of what she has had to endure. Very dramatically Manto concludes “*Khol do*” with a pointed and appalling end that leaves not only the doctor in cold sweat but also the readers.

In *Hattak* Saugandhi’s character emerges as a self-aware woman who gets determined to put an end to exploitation and live her own life Saugandhi’s character is more powerful than that of many virtuous wives, a character that has the ambition and intelligence to understand her own exploitation. The prostitute when humiliated by her client though feels enraged but her fury frees her of all her apparition now puts an end to her inveterate exploitation that when the next day another client comes to her she kicks him out with a commitment not to be used anymore. For a long time, Saugandhi sat in the cane chair and could think of no way of distracting herself. Suddenly, she picked up her dog and lying down in her spacious bed, went to sleep, with the mangle stricken animal in her arms. Manto had even said that they were his favourite characters: “I accept them with all their vices, their disease, their abusiveness, their peevishness”

Mozel, a memorable story depicting a gutsy and beautiful Jewish woman, *Mozel*, an intelligent, independent and far sighted – unlike several men that surround her. The heroine though rejects to accept the love of a Sikh lover but later saved the life of him and his fiancé during communal riots that when she came to know that *Sardarji*’s life in danger she informed him and put off her Jewish robe which she gave to his fiancé so that the two can escape the religious protestors safely. She overruns her religious leanings to save lives of two individuals of a different faith. The main burden of the story is not what she did rather she made herself a spectacle with which she was able to avert the violence of the situation. Manto has portrayed her as a free-spirited woman who values humanity than the sheer beauty that to save a life she becomes naked

and when one protestor proceeds to cover her body with a sheet, Mozel shrugs it off saying: “Off with it, your blasted religion.”

Women in Manto’s stories come from diverse backgrounds and form a clear conduit for his humanism. According to noted Pak Urdu poet and writer Fahmida Riaz, “Manto saw women the way he saw men.” The historian Ayesha Jalal wrote in her book about him, “Whether he was writing about prostitutes, pimps or criminals, Manto wanted to impress upon his readers that these disreputable people were also human, much more than those who cloaked their failings in a thick veil of hypocrisy.” His women exhibit a conviction that happiness does not lie in winning conflicts on religious or nationalist lines, but in fostering human ties based on feminist threads of love, care, respect and tolerance and appear as defiant and righteous, even when their circumstances are mired in taboo and social marginalization.

Manto’s stories end on a running note as if to suggest that violence and revenge cannot have an end and continue in a vicious cycle which even today applies as still our identities lie inextricably linked to caste, class and religion as opposed to seeing the universality of human experience. These stories are about us, about who we are, and who we cannot hide from. Manto said "If you find these stories intolerable it must mean that we live in an intolerable age." His work reiterates that true morality is not silent, nor hidden under tradition, rules or a white veil of religiosity.

Najma Manzoor entitled an essay ‘Manto, Aurat Aur Waris Alvi’ in which she comments “...Manto’s artistry is such that he never preaches but continues to enlighten your mind and stir your conscience. Women have been subjected to humiliation and Manto through his stories has empathized with their plight and shown solidarity with their cause...this is why we women consider him to be a mature feminist. He raised the character of a prostitute...and familiarizes the reader with the humanity of women. His portrayals of domesticated women and prostitutes are unique for their unconventional attributes-determination, will, not being content in every situation and above all the ability to laugh.”

After that auspicious inauspicious morning the inhuman treatment which the fair sex had to bore bursts with resonant agitation- screams:

*‘Yeh daag daag ujala, yeh shab gazida sahar
Vo intezar the jiska, yeh vo sahar to nahi’*

- Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Works cited:

- Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. India: Penguin, 1998.
- Jalal, Ayesha. *The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Work Across the India-Pakistan Divide*. London: Princeton University Press, 2013, Print.
- Manto, Saadat Hasan. "Khol Do." *Saadat Hasan Manto's Selected Stories*. Tr. Aatish Tasheer. Google Book search, 20 April 2014.
 - "Thanda Gosht." *Saadat Hasan Manto's Selected Stories*. Tr. Aatish Tasheer. Google Book search, 20 April 2014.
 - "Hattak." Menra and Dutt, Vol. 1. 165-181, Print.
 - "Mozel." Menra and Dutt, Vol. 2. 249-267, Print.
- Menra, Balraj, and Sharad Dutt, eds. *Dastawez: Manto*. 1993. 5 vols. New Delhi: Rajkamal Publications, 2004. Print.
- Manzoor, Najma. 'Manto, Aurat Aur Waris Alvi'. In Fahmida Riaz (Ed), *Adab ki Nisai Rad-e-Tashkeel*. Karachi: Wada Kitab Ghar, 2006.