

METAPHORS IN ‘TOBA TEK SINGH’

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ABSTRACT

Any word in a language is not limited to its literal meaning but keeps on expanding itself with the contexts, it has been used into, by different people in different times. The first recorded use of the word Partition was in the 15th century meaning to divide into shares, from Middle English and Latin.

But in 20th century, the word was given a completely different tangent, not in literal but in psychological manner. No other word would have pierced people’s heart more deeply than those who had witnessed the gruesome partition of all times that laid the path of a timeless rivalry and hatred.

The paper deals with the presentation of ‘Madness’ as a metaphor in the short-story “Toba Tek Singh” by Sadat Hasan Manto, where Bishan Singh and the asylum, that he has been put into with other inmates, are not able to accept the ‘sensible decision’ of utterly insensible and heartless governments and leaders, who thought that It would give them freedom from the British rule, barely realising that they were just diving deeper into the swamp of darkness, hatred and division.

Keywords: *Madness, Metaphor ,Partition, Society, Toba Tek Singh, History*

1. Introduction:

A country lives outside of time. It is predicated on a link to the past and a common interest in the future. Evidently the past did try to remain united but the future didn’t hold much promises to ‘them’.

Under the garb of a sophisticated term, PARTITION, as the deathless entity that swallowed millions of lives; death was a kathputali in the ‘privileged’ hands which sealed the fates of the ‘unprivileged’. When even the superlatives fell short of describing the intensity and gravity of aftermaths of ‘the action’ and this was certainly the case with “the great divide”.

This ‘great-divide’ spread live-wires of communal, cultural, psychological and inter-personal conflicts through the entire nation, especially the northern part which witnessed the most gruesome-ever partition in the history of mankind.

In reaction to the quick decolonization, the split was an effort to reach a compromise between a wide range of conflicting interests and governmental powers, where the then Prime Minister Clement Attlee, believed “the transfer of power must be made as Soon as possible – peaceably if possible, with the rights of minorities protected if they could be, but above all quickly, and absolutely”

When the “respective countries” were assumed to “belong to their people,” it not only failed to designate political representatives, but also, in retrospect, failed to account for the intricacies behind the attributes required to be included in “the people.” The only thing that

could be visualised was “a picture of fragmentation and conflict and disorder.” (J.L.Nehru)

Metaphors have always been the mouth-pieces of writers to show the complexities of the so-called simple; abnormalities of an apparently sane and instabilities of a supposedly anchored society. The link of lunacy with literature is an ideal habit, and writers have sought meaning via craziness in their creative works for centuries. Like Shakespeare, Manto brings out ‘madness’ as the only surviving skill amidst the chaos dislocation, and irrationality that marked the partition of India. Through the experiences of the asylum inmates, the story *Toba Tek Singh* invites readers to reflect on the collective madness of that historical moment and the lasting scars it left on the psyche of the subcontinent.

The asylum becomes a prototype of the shredded country. Before the news of partition all the ‘lunatics’, irrespective of their religions, were living together, becoming eachothers’ families; Sikh, Muslim, Hindus and even two anglo-Indians, under the fear of losing their place in the society.

The variations in the professions of the lunatics like radio engineer, politicians, doctor, lawyer, form the society, as some of them were feigning to be insane to escape court trials, after committing crimes. The inmates provide a chance for Manto to indulge in his typical gloomy sarcasm. He criticises the period's governance and dogmatism in religion via the lunatics' oddities.

The story opens up with the writer informing “the decision was made by the wise.” (Manto, 1955, p. 1) . Manto frequently refers to Bishan Singh as Toba Tek Singh, and this becomes his moniker in the institution. Manto underlines the connection between a person's home and his identity by combining the names of the character and the region. When the inmates wish to clear their doubts regarding partition, the policeman are said to be “ignorant and illiterate..... about its actual location and boundaries.” (Manto, 1955, p. 2)

Manto, very cleverly puts in the metaphor of the dismembered politics by showing two inmates proclaiming themselves as Jinnah and Tara Singh, who take the responsibility of the partition, but, “the imminent bloodshed in the enclosure was, however, avoided by declaring both of them dangerous and confining them in separate cells” (Manto, 1955, p. 3); implying, the massive violence and insanity might have been prevented if a rational decision had been made.

Manto reflects the craziness of life beyond the asylum gates through their wild yelling of slogans, uncontrolled behaviours, and stripping off of garments. Their on yis heightened by this inversion of reality, in which the characters within the institution play the roles of those outside, while the people outside behave in illogical and horrible ways.

Bishan Singh also shines out in the metaphorical representation of a mother (India), who goes berserk in the ardent tries to save herself from ‘others’ and her children from sting of hatred which would make them stand in each other’s ways.

“क्योंकि मुझे पागल कहा गया था।”
 चीखती- बिलखती फिरीथी मैं
 हर कूचे हर गली में,
 बदहवास, फटी सी कुर्ती पहने, जो ज़ार-ज़ार हो चुकी
 मेरी आबरू को बेबस सी,
 कोशिश मेंथी बचाये रखनेकी।
 मैंने कहा था के “आ रहा है वो !”
 दरखास्त भीकी थीके बंद कर लें
 अपने हर दरीचे और दरवाज़े को,
 पर उन्होंने कहा था के पागल है तू !
 झकझोराथा एक एक रूह कोमैंने और दिखाए थे
 वो रिसते घाव, जो मेरे ही जिस्म ने दिए थे खुदको
 क्योंकि वो महसूस करने लगेथे
 अल्गाव खुद के हिस्से सेही।
 मैंने मिन्नतें भी की, और ज़ोर-आज़मायीश भी,
 केबचा सकूँ किसी तरह उन सबको जो मेरा ही थे हिस्सा,
 पर उन्होंनेकहा केपागल है तू !
 आजलाल- स्याह हो चुकी है ज़मीं और इसका हर वो दरार,
 कूचा और दरवाज़ा जो ईद के चाँद केसाथ डूबा था दिवाली केदिए की रोशनीमें,
 जिसने शरादका शोक मुहर्रम के साथ मनाया था,
 औरजो पैदा तो एक हुआ
 पर मौत बँटवारेकी मरा !

Madness, with all of its inherent ambiguities, becomes a completely relative phrase, amidst the political and social pandemonium of Partition Walls and boundaries lose their significance. Toba Tek Singh epitomises the contradictions and split loyalties experienced by those people who were uprooted on either side.

2. Conclusion:

As Jalal had put it, “the madness of Partition was far greater than the insanity of all the inmates put together” (Manto) and the souls were far more dead than all the partition-deaths altogether.

Love, the entity that can transcend all concrete and abstract boundaries, is the only thing that the world needs at any given point of time. Traditions, cultures, people, societies, world were made for the people, for their convenience and not people for them.

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