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Sunita Rani
(PGT English)
St. Sophia Sr. Sec. School Sec.15 Hisar, Haryana, India

Correspondence
(PGT English)
St. Sophia Sr. Sec. School Sec.15 Hisar, Haryana, India

Violence: An unavoidable condition of human existence

Sunita Rani

Abstract
Though all these representations of violence, communalism is established as a fact that leads to dehumanization, shrinkages of human sympathies and snapping of meaningful communication between the people. They recognize it as a brute force that created disjunction between passion and reason, between man and society, man and nature, and man and civilisation. However, in most of these writers, these features of communalism get delineated more as descriptive set-pieces than as consciously and analytically thought of manifestations. Despite the dialectical nature of violence and its representation through the binary structures, yielding multiplicity of analyses and arguments about violence, it is believed that creative effort of each writer was underlain by one single motif, that is, to expose and lay bare the subterfuges of human nature and project them on to the world of fiction. This implication of vital human significance has lent a universal appeal to the Indo-English fiction of partition violence and it is this that is proposed as the subject of investigation in the subsequent section.

Keywords: violence, dehumanization, communalism

Introduction
The first way of presenting it makes partition a unique event, but comfortably uncharacteristic and socio-culturally inconsequential. The adherents of 'one-item-set' approach, and they are in majority, usually portray partition as a unique happening "with nothing to compare it within the large and dense inventory of ethnic and religious prejudices and aggressions." [1]. The Hindu/Muslim antagonism is merely seen as an 'aberration' or a madness that was the result of unique processes of colonialism and subsequent decolonization, i.e., the divide and rule policy of the Britishers and its attendant construction of communalism. This madness, however, does not fit into the 'routine' or everyday societal essence of Indian civilization. But as Bauman says, "this may perhaps shed some light on the pathology of the society in which it occurred, but hardly adds anything to our understanding of the society's normal state." This shortcoming, apparently a function of a secular humanistic inclination of the authors glosses over complexities inherent both in the pre and post contours of the partition holocaust.

The second mode of analysis considers partition as an extreme item within a vast category of socially loathsome and repellent but unavoidable condition of human existence. They underline its recurrent and ubiquitous nature by linking it to the primordial but 'natural' predisposition of human nature, immune to any enlightening manipulations of rational thought. Malgonkar in A Bend in the Ganges and Raj Gill in The Rape, to some extent, seem to advocate this line of argument. This consideration of partition violence as an extension of pre-modern and culturally (which in this case is collapsed with religious) embedded differences, once again fails to comprehensively decode or register the "potentialities" inherent in it.

Oscillating between these two modes of representations and comprehension, most of these authors, located as they are within the modernistic paradigms of empirically accessible reality, fail to fathom that the partition violence was something more than a mere aberrant event or a pathological deviance from a logical path of enlightened project of decolonization. The sense of bewilderment and disillusionment that we find in most of these authors, despite locating the causes of partition in sociological or historical contexts, gives the impression of this lack of understanding. So busy are they in situating the fault for violence out there, that instead of letting the holocaust of partition 'speak to them' about itself and about the hidden potentialities of human nature, they try to seize it within the scope of reason.

And this inevitably leads to an aesthetic of binary delineation. Consequently, they fail to bring, what Bauman calls, the "issue of potentiality versus reality (the first being yet undisclosed mode of the second, and second being an already realised–and thus empirically accessible–mode of the first)" in their conception of the partition and, thus, are unable to see it as a "rare, yet significant and reliable test of the hidden potentials of modern [Indian] society." [4] and this lacuna in their understanding resists an attempt on their part to squarely acknowledge partition holocaust as, to modify Bauman's observation, the merely uncovered another face of the same modern (secular and syncretic) society "whose other, more familiar face we so admire. And that the two faces are perfectly comfortably attached to the same body. What we perhaps fear most is that each of the two faces can no more exist without the other than can the two sides of a coin."

In the absence of such an all-inclusive epistemology, these authors, unlike Manto in his stories, fail to look at the breakdown of significance inherent in partition full in the face. Manto was not afraid of presenting partition as the other face of human condition – immoral, perverted, violent and unreasonable. He did not indulge himself in the niceties of apportioning blame justly or constructing the stories to "uphold the principle of 'correct remembrance.'" He recognized the psychopathic and sadistic dimensions of the carnage. In his world, the living did not seem to fare any better than the dead…Manto felt that "violence of partition signified not only the triumph of unreason, but also pathological, perverted reason."

Thus the logic of binary poetics, at least in the novels primarily betraying emotional or affective response to partition, is rooted in the nature of their presentation of the phenomenon. As a corollary, it enables the present study to use structuralist critical tools to unravel the strengths and limitations of this literary output. The rationale for evoking and applying these apparently western critical methods to understand the creative response to partition in the Indian English novels is rooted in the assumption that this genre in Indian English is still cast in the mould of western fictional parameters.

Material

This poetics of binaries, apart from its applicability to the present study, also becomes instrumental in understanding and 'theorizing' the failures of Indian-English fiction to comprehensively problematize the phenomenon of partition violence. The partition authors also bring to bear multiple perspectives ranging from administrative to economic on their attempts to explain the intensity and scale of violence unleashed in the wake of partition. But these attempts in the ultimate analysis are found to be rooted in their overall conviction that these were only the distorted extensions of communalism or colonialism, the ultimate repository of dehumanization.

Many writers try to understand it as organized and orchestrated by law enforcement agencies like the army (Train to Pakistan, Azadi, The Rape etc.), or the police (Train to Pakistan, Azadi) and their functionaries, or by willing hench-men of various political or quasi-political organizations (Ashes and Petals, A Bend in the Ganges, The Dark Dancer) and a communalized bureaucracy.

However, these writers donot see it merely in terms of breakdown of the law or order, but as a suspension of it, that allowed for the brutalities: "Had this not been the case, few would have been motivated enough, to leave their homes and lands and livelihoods, and resettle in a new country… They were forced out of villages and towns by the ferocity of attacks on them, creating enough terror to banish any doubt or possibility of reconciliation."[8] This explanation seems to run throughout the partition fiction, but is established with added passion in

The Rape

Another representation of partition violence seeks to underscore the economic factor as a powerful motivator. It is manifested in the form of greed for material possession in many a work. Abdul Ghani in Azadi, Malli in Train to Pakistan, Agarwal in Sunlight on a Broken Column come readily to the mind as the typical representatives of assorted adventurers and opportunists who saw the partition violence as a short cut to material betterment. The conversion of Gangu Mull, husband of Bibi Amrarvati in Azadi brings out yet another facet of the economics of violence. However in Sunlight on a Broken Column, the exodus of Saleem to Pakistan, though motivated by the prospects of careerism, belongs to a different cognitive category.

Most of the writers, however, represent the cult of violence as rooted in communalism. It is seen as the most virulent form of conflict, as it is "generally a blend of religious political, and economic aims, becomes imbued with religious ultimacy." And the psychological dynamics of communal propaganda during the closing stages of colonialism had turned the issues at stake [the necessity of a separate homeland for Muslims, the fear of Hindu Majorityism, the exigencies for politics of power camouflaged in the garb of cultural exclusiveness etc.], into life and death issue "through an arsenal of ideational and ritual symbols", leading to heightening of "group salience", which ultimately split the social and individual selves of people. This aspect of communalism, the tendency to reduce people into abstractions, to be guided by the 'form' rather than the 'content' or to treat human beings as generic entities rather than as individuals–finds expression in all the writers.

Such configurations of violence represented in the various partition novels logically lead us to attempt a thorough analysis of the forms that the demon of violence manifests itself in, and the writers' treatment of its recondite nature. Let us begin with Khushwant Singh's treatment of the mayhem, violence, death which spread all over India in the early autumn of 1947. Here too he suggests the impossibility of our ever grasping the truth of a massacre on such a scale. So he chooses to present its description in symbolic terms. The unusually excessive heat is symbolic of suffering humanity involuntarily involved in the ordeal of the partition of India into two nations. It seems that the inner spring of human fellowship, affection and love were drying up. In this connection Vasant A Shahane writes: "Singh's presentation of the setting of natural phenomena characterized by the unusually excessive heat is symbolic of man's heated states, of his agonized heart, and of

his fate. The dry, dusty, parched earth becomes the symbol of suffering humanity, involuntarily involved in the ordeal of the partition of India into two nations."

Train to Pakistan begins with the representation of violence apparently of a localized form. On one heavy night of August, Malli, the chief gangester comes to Mano Majra with his four companions. They break open the door of Lala Ram Lal's house, encounter two women and a boy of seven and holding the muzzle of the gun to the child's face elicit information regarding the Lala's whereabouts. He was upstairs. The gunmen caught held of the Old man, demanded the keys of the safe from him and hit him in the face. He spat blood and produced a wad of notes from his pocket but he would not hand over the keys of his safe. Exasperated, one of the robbers stabbed him in the abdomen and Ram Lal collapsed on the floor. The beginning of the novel with the action of violence of the dacoits is very significant, as it is only a prelude to similar actions on other levels.

After committing the gruesome murder, the dacoits dropped some bangles–a mark of impotence and feminity–in the house of another dacoit, Juggat Singh, who at that time was not at home. Juggat Singh, popularly known as Jugga, had served many jail terms on different charges. He was required not to leave his house after sunset. But the call of his beloved Nooran, the Muslim weaver's daughter, was too compelling for him to care for the restriction of police. When Jugga and Nooran returned to the village after making love they found the people gravely disturbed by the dacoity and the murder. Jugga's love in indeed a positive and dynamic force of the novel. The love affair between a Sikh and a pretty Muslim girl cuts across religious barriers. Khushwant Singh depicts not only the emotional ties between the two, but also gives graphical description of the physical love, thus emphasizing the writer's intention to privilege love over violence as a truer human emotion.

Khushwant Singh goes on to narrate how the 'secular' (an overlapping of the Gandhian Sarv dharma Sambhav and Bhakti-Sufi *Syncretism*) moral code is violated, not from within but from without, by communalism. He sees communalism as an outcome of colonial system imperatives. The city bred communal elites (an outcome of modern representational politics), aided and abetted by communally conscious colonial bureaucratic institutions (symbolized in the personalities of Hukaum Chand and the sub-inspector of police) and unscrupulous element like Malli (he is very subtly contrasted to Jugga) are pinpointed as the culprits.

The relationship between Hukum Chand, "magistrate and deputy-commissioner of the city", and the sub-inspector has been built in very suggestive terms. Hukum Chand's bureaucratic personality humorously echoes the colonial hangover. His conversation with the sub-inspector when they are reviewing law and order situation in the wake of Muslim and Sikh/Hindu population shuffling across the border is made to carry a distinct communal slant:

"Do you know", continued the magistrate, "the Sikhs retaliated by attacking a refugee train….

The sub-inspector looked down through fully and answered: "They say that is the only way to stop killing on the other side. Man for man, woman for woman, child for child. But we Hindus are not like that. We cannot play that stabbing game. When it comes to an open fight, we can be match to any people. I believe our R.S.S. boys beat up the Muslim gangs in all the cities. The Sikhs are not doing their share. They just talk big….

You talk rashly like a child…your principle should be to see everything and say nothing….

Sometimes sir, one cannot restrain oneself. What do the Gandhi-caps in Delhi know about the Punjab?... Did your honour hear what the Muslim mobs did to Hindus and Sikh refugees … Pakistan Police and the army took part in the killings… Not a soul was left alive. Women killed their own children and jumped into wells that filled to the brim with corpses.

"Harey Ram, Harey Ram", "rejoined Hukum Chand…" I know it all. Our Hindu women are like that: so pure… we Hindus never raise our hand to strike a women, but these Muslims have no respect for the weaker sex…

We must maintain law and order… if possible, get out, but be careful they do not take too much with them…There must be no killing, just peaceful evacuation.(TTP, 31-32)

The way Hukum Chand connives with the corrupt and communally oriented sub-inspector in turning the routine crime–the murder of the moneylender, obviously committed by Malli with the twin motive of theft and settling personal scores with Jugga–into one that may crate a communal wedge between the two communities is suggestive of the imperial manipulations of divide and rule. In this way Khushwant Singh strengthens his argument that independence was nothing more than a transfer of power. At the same time he is able to establish that communalism, as an ideology, was a colonial construct. It was an artificial and engineered contrivance–an alien imposition that distorted people's (Mano Majrians in this case) outlook but only momentarily. He represents this by showing that it was not the "ghost train" (TTP, 94), but the way its arrival was exploited by the police that engineered the forcible evacuation of the Muslims. Instead of getting provoked by such instigations, and despite the display of volatile tempers (more a marker of the Punjabi trait, then indicative of the communal hostility), the Mano Majrians sit together to chart out the future course of action. And the logic of the decision taken, viz., to let the Muslims leave the village for the refugee camp, springs not from their being perceived as the hostile other who naturally belong to Pakistan but from the pragmatic anxiety as to their welfare:

The lambardar spoke: "yet, you are our brothers. As far as we are concerned, you and your children and your grandchildren can live here as long as you like. It anyone speaks rudely to you, your wives or your children, it will be us first and our wives and children before a single hair of your heads is touched. But chacha, we are so few and the strangers coming from Pakistan are coming in thousands. Who will be responsible for what they do?" (TTP, 147)

Conclusion

Even in the eventual communalization of Mano Majra, the basic historical credo of the author remains intact under the belligerent onslaught of an insolent city-dweller. They yield to his communal persuasion to sabotage the train to Pakistan. But the author makes it amply clear that his yielding was not "comfortable" or spontaneous but was tinged with a sense of

guilt (for betraying Bhai Meet Singh). It was more out of the need to prove their manhood: "What sort of Sikhs you are … potent or impotent?" (TTP, 172], than out of any deeply felt sense of conviction:

The villagers felt very uncomfortable. The harangue had made them angry and they wanted to prove their manliness. At the same time Meet Singh's presence made them uneasy and they felt they were being disloyal to him. (TTP, 173)

Malli, who had earlier (at the time of emotionally charged farewell to the Muslims of the village) acted out of greed, now rests the initiative from the villagers, mainly to redeem his reputations: "My life is at your disposal," said Malli heroically. The story of Jugga beating him had gone round the village. His reputation had to be redeemed. (TTP, 174).

Khushwant Singh is unambiguous in his understanding that the seeds of the communal suspicion were sown by the leaders and the partition of the country was the outcome of this suspicion. The sub-inspector was enraged at the indifference of the leaders in Delhi about the brutal acts in the Punjab done in the wake of the communal violence. Khushwant Singh, through this conversation, spotlights the loss of the values and the naked dance of animality during the days of unchecked violence caused by the partition of the country. Khushwant Singh has recorded the events with dispassionate objectivity. As an honest chronicler he strives to probe deeper into the problem of communal frenzy and holds both, Hindus and Muslims, equally guilty. Both the communities blamed each other of connivance and for initiating killing. But the fact is that both sides killed, both shot and speared, both tortured and raped, and yet the irony is that each blamed the 'other' for the vile acts of inhuman violence.

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