

Partition and trauma; a saga of repercussions

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Abstract

The partition of India, a hallmark of world history is an existing inevitable fact that gave rise to India's Independence; but the horrifying and terror struck experiences that both people on India's eastern front and those on western border has since then undergone is the subject matter of the partition fiction. The partition of India is the greatest human tragedies of the century so far and its traumatic memories cannot be wiped off so soon. Partition of India is the greatest historical event with the highest impact that affect psychologically and physically. Surviving in an independent India and celebrating more than 72 years of the Independence of the region the scars of the holocaust still run deep with its ramifications on every sphere – social, political or economic. Trauma, terror, displacement of masses, migration of a large population, ruthless bloodshed, rape, molestation, a blood bath of horror and violence strikes our brains when the nine lettered word 'partition' reminds us. It is not just a '*Batwara*' or a 'division' of geographical boundaries or assets but most importantly a division of hearts. Our mind still calls us afresh with the pathetic, painful, nostalgia of partition. The division of two religious communities, Hindus and Muslims that lived together

for centuries after centuries in tranquil bliss and struggled hard for the country's Independence together became the worst enemies of each other and in fact got indulged in communal frenzy, genocide, rape, abduction of women, cold blooded violence on a maximised scale with just an announcement of 'freed India' at the stroke of midnight divided millions of people into two on communal basis. People from both the sides, India and Pakistan were worst equally affected and words fall short to describe the depth and limit of their terrific traumatic experiences before and after the partition. Hindu- Muslim riots have shown that women have often been provoked and participated in the violence against religious minorities. The other side of silence, marginalisation, migration, communal transformation etc have heightened the repercussions of trauma of partition.

Women were the worst victims of Partition: apart from physical trauma and pain, the psychological crises that the women characters have gone through and the picturesque of bringing up the emotions and putting light to all sorts of victimisation, molestation, mental and emotional crises is an appropriate justice justified by the lens of literary/cinematic depictions and deliberations. The partition of India is the most painful chapter of Indian history that has changed the course of lives of many people. The blood-bath of partition resulted in mass-migration of people and brought un-imaginable trauma, violence and destruction across the newly created borders. Partition has left a traumatic legacy with indelible scars behind it. The Partition literature has deliberately brought the voice of the voiceless: the marginalised, the other whose voices have remained unnoticed and unheard since time immemorial.

As a result of partition, unimaginable atrocities pondered upon innocent men, women and children. Many people killed their own family (women) to save them from dishonour and some others even committed suicide. During that period a large number of people migrated

from their homes to other places or refugee camps. People of all communities inflicted atrocities on the people of other community. Bipin Chandra states regarding partition:

On 15 August 1947, India celebrated with joy its first day of freedom. The sacrifices of generations of patriots and the blood of countless martyrs had borne fruit.... But the sense of joy....was mixed with pain and sadness... (For) even at the very moment of freedom a communal orgy, accompanied by indescribable brutalities, was consuming thousands of lives in India and Pakistan (Chandra 305-306).

According to social phenomenon woman is a mirror, a cosmic element, a Goddess who reflects the divine power of God and an icon who blesses us with worship and adoration but human from time to time have misused the pamper, care and adoration very harshly. The society even considers woman as a sign of feminine beauty but men since time immemorial have always exploited her and served her for his own egocentric ends. The novel "Pinjar" is a picaresque of the naked picture of the brutal, patriarchal hierarchy of partition in which the women were the battle ground of massacre. In the novel "What the Body Remembers" partition is considered as a subject matter in which Baldwin opens up the other side of silence of women and has successfully drawn out the feminine reality of time with the depiction of Sikh women's domestic experiences and account of political turmoil.

But perhaps the most haunting image of the Partition remains the unmentionable atrocities faced by women from men of the rival community and sometimes from their own men folk who in the name of protecting the honor of their women, either killed them or forced them to take their own lives. Trauma refers to a serious bodily injury or shock from an accident or external act of violence. Traditionally trauma is defined as an injury, disturbances and some kind of blow to the body but now trauma does not centre just on the body but also

on the mind. In a wider sense the title *Pinjar* (The Cage) indicates dual meanings, one is helpless, confined situation of women before and after marriage in pre and post independent India and another is turmoil in captive India, the incident of partition and aftermath. More terrifying situation of East Pakistan and West Pakistan here represents two parts in boiling pot that had been described in this novel. Amrita Pritam became very successful in visual rendering of riot and its panic where the after effect of terror actually exists.

Pinjar is the women's cry in prose against her existential fate and social abuse. It is in this light that Pritam's work displays the status of women as a result of political and social manipulation, a situation that cries out and pleads for dramatic and swift change. It is a classic novel that revolves around Hindu 'Puroo' later on Muslim Hamida who is abducted by a Muslim Rashida for old rivalry. The trauma of woman as highlighted by Pritam in *Pinjar* is literally a shame in the sense that woman has always been the victim of the bloody partition.

The narration of psychological wound of women separated from their families who were uprooted, the helplessness of the one dominated to save their precious gold i.e. daughters, sisters or wives. The question of humanity, dignity, individual freedom of the teenage girl Puroo in *Pinjar* goes through is really a big interrogation. Her distorted fractured and tortured self between Puroo and Hamida raises crucial questions of one's own self-respect and fellow feeling. The tragic tale that portrays identical crisis in the protagonist adolescent Puroo and her identical transformation from Puroo (Hindu) to Hamida (Muslim) that leads to identity crisis in the girl is like a skeleton signifying hollowness of a body without any heart or soul or mind. The troublesome burden that a poverty-ridden girl child suffers in a family just as Puroo is undoubtedly a shame for not only the nation or sub-continent but the entire world on grounds of humanistic views. Marriage being the concern

for parents reigning in lieu of education for a girl child is what Pritam through Pooro wants to feel ashamed of the mentality ruling the partitioned India since then. Her abduction by Rashida , her marriage with him and her forceful conversion into Islam against her will raises a number of questions in her psyche. Her confinement within the four walls is a big shame because she is robbed off all her dreams and it caged her of her joys.

The stories of trauma accounted by the novelist, in *Pinjar* makes us face to face realise the real naked picture of the status of women in the male dominated society. Through the tragic plight of the stories of Kammo, Taro, Lajo, mad woman, hidden girl Pritam poignantly allows our consciousness and sub-consciousness to think if it's really a blunder to take the birth as a female child. The tragic stories, trauma, pathetic plight, sufferings, violence that women have had since time immemorial gone through is a shame to the inhuman society which considers women as their deity.

Towards the end when Hamida stood by a test that made her no Pooro, no Hamida but an illuminated human being with all the normal sensibility, she said to her brother: “My home is now in Pakistan” (Pritam 127). A messenger of humanism, Pooro defines the soul to be the real identity. Pooro thus stands as a symbol who shows the way of love and fellow feeling can only withstand the shame of partition and ensure it never repeats its history in future day ever.

The novel raises the question of love, identity, loss of family, security, prestige and compassion unanswered. Pooro chooses Rashida and rejects her brother's request and henceforth proves a fitting reply to her parents who had left her homeless , identity- less and parentless.

What the Body Remembers tells the story of a Sikh family, with all the complications arising from a polygamous marriage, in the context of the atrocious events of the 1947

Partition of India. Focusing both on intra- and inter-community violence against women, it demonstrates that the female characters in the novel are highly objectified, their bodies becoming instruments for men to use either for their own or for the community's interest.

The novel portrays two women characters- Roop (Beauty) and Satya (Truth). Sardarji's first wife, Satya is childless but very strong character in the novel. She is a combative, bold, straight forward by nature who is not submissive to surrender herself easily in front of any harsh circumstances .She is barren, unable to procreate and her ill fate, unbearable pain really touches our heart. Her uselessness and the adversity of the situation of Sardarji's marriage to a sixteen year girl Roop at forty two with the purpose of a heir holds the naked truth of a woman in the male dominated patriarchal society, The usual notion of what women are for confines in general a woman from welcoming education, revolution, development and enlightenment making her just a puppet so as in the societal norms. Baldwin's two female characters Roop and Satya , one with strong , sharp and bold characteristics whereas the other symbolising the taboo of strict convention of timid, coy focuses the two polar zones of women's nature..

. The terror struck events of bloody partition of India has caused the lives of Roop and Satya to a standstill. It is seen that since ages women's bodies have become the sites of battle ground for men's competition for honour and boundary. Violence enacted through rape, abduction of women and murder along with the patriarchal constraints and women's colonization doubly firstly by her own family and secondly she being the victim of any battle. Baldwin's first novel paints the story of a Sikh family and all the problems arising from the polygamous marriage of the triangular relationship between Roop, Satya and Sardarji in the background of the partition of India 1947. The injustice and awareness of her acceptance of her destiny and her decision to be silent even when her new born baby is given to Satya is a

bitter truth that a woman's body is always in demand that plays an important role in their lives. The hidden yet shocking revelation that a woman is only recognized by her body in our patriarchal society is what stunts us.

After the declaration of independence Hindu people and Muslims eagerly wanted to shift to their respective territories --India and Pakistan. The scene Baldwin describes with Roop being the witness in the train where the carriage of the train comes smeared with blood. Windows smashed. The silence of the slaughters rises, palpable accusing and blood curdling screams fill the air.

Observing the situation of the bloody riot Roop wants as if to discard her clothes and scream: "See me not as a vessel, a plaything, a fantasy, a maidservant, an ornament, but as Vaheguru made me" (Baldwin 560)

The Partition and its resulted horrors are still fresh in many minds and hearts of the people. The division of the country based mainly on religion made several million's life pitiable. Likely the 1971's liberation war of Bangladesh has also affected the socio-cultural life of the people living both East and West part of Pakistan. The agonies, sufferings and other Partition related atrocities can best be represented through literature and hence the litterateurs have portrayed the inexhaustible records of human life in a very explicit way through their respective mediums.

Partition is an 'absurd illusion' and a source of terrifying violence and sufferings. All such demarcations are arbitrary and invented divisions. There is nothing on the earth that can divide memories. Consequently, the border and boundaries have become artificial; not only in the sense of being man-made but also in being inadequate as they are unable to set people from their nostalgia, memories. It is quite clear that the demarcated borders and boundaries cannot resolve the complexities among the people and hence it will be a wise attempt on the

part of people if they emphasize on believing in the horizons or skyline that is symbolic of infinity where peace lies.

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