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Humanitarian crises in Sadat Hassan Manto's works

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Abstract

This article examines at how memories and the humanitarian situation are connected in the context of the 1947 India-Pakistan Partition as it is portrayed in Sadat Hassan Manto's short stories. It will look at the ways in which Manto's fiction captures the anguish of physical and existential displacement brought on by the birth of two states following a campaign of political and epistemological violence and remapping. The study will pay particular attention to the relationship between memory and insanity in addition to the more general concerns of nation-formation, alienation, and loss. The Partition trauma of 1947 will be examined as a psychological and existential crisis that commonly showed up as insanity, aphasia, and forgetfulness. By referencing trauma studies, phenomenology, and cognitive psychological studies in episodic memory, unreliable narration, and cognition, the paper will explore the human condition of shock and loss with an emphasis on the formal aspects of Manto's short fiction.

Keywords: Humanitarian crises, memory, Sadat Hassan Manto's short stories

Introduction

Millions of people's core conceptions of what it means to call a place 'home' were upended when India was partitioned. People who had lived in their isolated villages for generations were all of a sudden forced to choose a country to live in, and this altered their concept of what it meant to live in a nation for them. It is possible that for many people, the concept of nationhood did not become a conscious actuality until after the Partition, which turned friends into foes simply because they practiced a different faith and forced them to go to a region that was very far away. Personal identity took on the quality of being something that might be transferred under such circumstances. People who uprooted their lives and moved to a new country in order to assist in the process of identity building endured a shift in their own identities as a result of the move. In his short fiction *Toba Tek Singh*, Saadat Hasan Manto depicts a character going through an identity problem that is very similar to his own.

The article primarily focuses on the short story *Toba Tek Singh*, which depicts a diplomatically agreed-upon exchange of lunatics across the borders of the two newly formed nations of India and Pakistan. It also discusses the absurdity of the systematised political processes that underlie citizenship, nationality, and identity. It will look at how lunacy develops as an inwardness that defies political influence on an existential and epistemic level. As a result, it will explore how the short story's formal and distinctive design reflects the cognitive and phenomenological processes that underlie memory, narrativity, and consciousness, particularly when they are in their unsettled phases in a politically violent environment. The bloodbath that the partition of India had caused had greatly stimulated the minds of Indian authors, but the novels that were based on this tragedy weren't published until much later. A vast number of Indian regional writers joined the bandwagon and the short story form was selected as an excellent weapon at this difficult time to describe and depict the real society in a clear and vivid manner. Sajjad Zaheer, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Kishan Chander, Saadat Hasan Manto, K.A. Abbas, Upender Nath Ashk, Rajender Singh Bedi, Ismat Chughtai, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, and a host of other individuals are named on the list. Some Indian and English novelists were inspired by the tragedy of the split to use the theme of the division as a vehicle for their creative brilliance. But there's no denying that English authors have picked up on this story's dramatic significance and true promise.

The 1947 Partition has inspired a wealth of writing, including scholarly works, historical monographs, memoirs, bestsellers, and fiction.

Numerous publications on the different facets of the Partition have been produced as a result of the complex political mosaic of a diversified society, the expansion and acceleration of the nationalist struggle, the changes in Hindu-Muslim relations, popular protests, and British colonial actions. Even a cursory glance at the material currently accessible tells one that it is impossible to understand all the numerous concerns involved, including national, communal, and imperial issues with all of their associated social, religious, economic, and political implications.

Manto's *Toba Tek Singh* story has drawn criticism from Leslie Flemming, Gyanendra Pandey, and Alok Bhalla who have discussed the meaning of lunacy and the story's setting. The refusal of Manto's madman Bishen Singh to cross the border when asked to do so, as well as his search for and identification with the unnamed village of *Toba Tek Singh*, have sparked a wealth of discussion about Manto's use of insanity, speechmaking, and crossing boundaries. It is important to remember that Manto himself had a strong bond with Bombay and personifies the city in his nostalgic descriptions of it. The initial dawn of independence was accompanied by the severed limbs and bloodstained corpses of innocent men, women, and children: this is the nightmare from which the subcontinent has never fully recovered. The colossal human tragedy of the Partition and its escalating repercussions have been conveyed more effectively by perceptive, inventive writers and artists like Manto in his short stories than by historians. Primarily about the Partition, the majority of his writing is quite grisly and chilling. The two holocausts, namely the Second World War and the Partition of India, ushered in the deadliest slaughter in human history.

Hindus and Sikhs fled Pakistan for India after the partition of India, whereas Muslims fled India for Pakistan. Refugees who were dug up during the Partition Procedure knew that exodus required a computation using native soil imagery that projected into the past and future. For many, a consciousness of the betrayal of political space meant that personal identity became a portable space in and of itself. The deplorable state of modern man is reflected in the emotional-focused expatriate fiction. A number of Manto's short stories explore the theme of identity deterioration. These themes include being uprooted from one's native cultural traditions and values, losing one's native language, being cast aside as an outsider or unwelcome alien, as well as suffering numerous physical and psychological wounds. Author Bharti Mukherjee is a foreigner.

Acknowledged the discovery of a new identity, the agonizing or exhilarating process of removing oneself from the culture one was born into and then replanting oneself in another culture (12).

Eight years after the partition, Manto's identity struggle was at least largely to blame for his drunkenness and subsequent demise. Manto mournfully describes the anguish and suffering him personally went through during the 1947 South Asian Subcontinent Partition in his most well-known short story, *Toba Tek Singh*. Insanity is used as a metaphor for common sense in the story, which is set in a mental institution. All socioeconomic subgroups are lampooned through the lunatics in the Lahore asylum, and Bishen Singh is one of them. Bishen Singh does not want to live in Pakistan or Hindustan. Both Hindustan and Pakistan are intentionally constructed identities, and Bishen Singh

effectively rejects any attempts to force either identity onto him. *Toba Tek Singh*, the place where he was born and which serves as a symbol of his true identity, is where he longs to go back. Manto is looking into the two-nation theory as well as the idea of nationhood as the primary source of identity. Instead of having to choose between Pakistan and Hindustan, Bishen Singh would much rather remain isolated in no man's land.

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The insane and imprisoned were exchanged after India's Partition. Muslims with mental illness should go to Pakistan, Hindus to India. The swap date was set following several formal meetings. Manto mocks India and Pakistan's leaders for dividing Hindus and Muslims into distinct nations: A few years after Partition, India and Pakistan considered exchanging lunatics for prisoners. Muslim lunatics in India should be deported to Pakistan, whereas Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistan should be allowed shelter in India. These lunatics didn't know where India and Pakistan were. Those in asylums to avoid the death penalty couldn't tell India from Pakistan. There was a vague assumption that Quaid-e-Azam (The Great Leader) founded Pakistan as a Muslim nation. One insane person climbed a tree and said he wanted to live there instead of India or Pakistan. The Anglo-Indian psychopaths feared eating Indian chapatti for breakfast.

Bishen Singh, however, was a prosperous landlord in *Toba Tek Singh* who had become abruptly insane. His legs were distended because he had spent the previous fifteen years standing on them. Usually, nothing troubled him, but the current debate had piqued his interest. He was also perplexed by the events and could not comprehend what had happened to his hometown, *Toba Tek Singh*, given that Sialkot, which was previously in India, is now in Pakistan. However, he was an elderly man with a white beard and hair, which gave him a slightly intimidating appearance. He used to ask everyone only one question: whether *Toba Tek Singh* was in India or Pakistan. No one could respond to him. One time, one of the lunatics proclaimed himself to be God. Bishen Singh pleaded with the so-called deity to solve his problem, but even he was unable to help him. He says, "You don't answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have been more of a sport" (16).

Finally, the day of exchange arrived, and each country's lunatics were transported to the Wagah frontier in Punjab. It was a frigid winter evening, and all the lunatics were out of control because they could not comprehend what was occurring. There was disorder everywhere. There were slogans of 'Pakistan Murdabad' and 'Pakistan Zindabad'. Some of the lunatics were yelling insults, while others were

ripping off their clothing. As Bishen Singh was exiting the vehicle, he asked an official where Toba Tek Singh was located. The official responded that the ship was currently in Pakistan. Hearing that his hometown was in Pakistan, he attempted to flee but was apprehended by officials labeling him Toba Tek Singh. Bishen Singh was unable to move and stood immobile with his calves swollen. Before sunrise, Bishen Singh let out a piercing wail and collapsed to the ground, deceased. His corpse lay on a portion of territory that was neither India nor Pakistan. "There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh" (18).

The narrative progressively centers on an elderly Sikh prisoner named Bishan Singh but known as Toba Tek Singh because he was a wealthy village landowner by that name. Hearing about the planned transfer, he attempts to determine whether Toba Tek Singh is in India or Pakistan, despite his inability to communicate in anything more than nonsense syllables. The other inmates and officers, as well as a former neighbor from Toba Tek Singh who informs him that his people have fled to India, are unable to provide him with a satisfactory explanation as to why he is being uprooted from his home. When he discovers from a liaison officer at the border that Toba Tek Singh is in Pakistan, he refuses to cross, and after all persuasion attempts fail, he is left alone between the two border stations. Finally,

Just before dawn, an ear-splitting shout came out of Bishan Singh's throat. Several officers came running from different directions and saw that the man who had stood upright for fifteen years was now lying on his face. Over there, behind barbed wires, was India. The other way, behind the same wires, was Pakistan. In between, on this nameless piece of ground, lay Toba Tek Singh (34).

This chapter investigates the effects of partition and post-partition crisis through the lens of trauma studies, focusing on the classical and pluralistic approaches to trauma theory. Victims and perpetrators suffered from PTSD symptoms including grief, nightmares, hallucinations, rage, and other diseases. It contains tales such as *Tamasha*, 1919, *Toba Tek Singh*, *A Tale of 1947*, *The Dog of Tetwal*, and *The New Constitution*. Due to the separation of nations, the texts concentrate on the significant protagonists who suffer from debilitating illnesses. The story *Tamasha* is consistent with Judith Herman's psychological trauma theory and symptoms of hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction. Hyperarousal reflects persistent anticipation of peril from Khalid's father, intrusion examines the individual imprint of the traumatic event (Khalid and his parent), and constriction reflects the contrary Khalid's father's submission.

The narrative's opening scene conjures up a scenario that is a true hallmark of Saadat Hasan Manto's storytelling technique. It alludes to a time two or three years after the separation when humanity is in peril from an unnamed catastrophe. The third individual (an omniscient narrator) who performs a great job at telling the story. The author's sarcastic undertone makes its sharp point of view known in the following ways:

A couple of years after the partition of the country, it occurred to the respective governments of India and Pakistan that inmates of lunatic asylums, like prisoners, should also be exchanged, Muslim lunatics in India should be transferred to Pakistan, and Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums should be sent to India (9).

The horrible occurrence of India and Pakistan's division has utterly broken the hearts of the people. It might be confused with the word 'holocaust.' A land divide and a change in the religious beliefs of the populace constitute an event. A number of divisions, including those based on humanity, love, and affection are also pushed by it. The asylum residents are unable to see any pattern or logic in this dialogue. In fact, it is precisely because of this that people are startled when they finally confront reality. In the text, a looming disaster (the trauma of the partition) and Bishan Singh's anxiety offer a new and fresh understanding that expresses through his knowledge (insight), experience (first-hand experiences), and language (vocabulary). Post-traumatic stress disorder is a characteristic of belatedness.

The intriguing tale *A Tale of 1947* examines the difficulties of separation and violence. Riots are an inevitable outcome of international conflict. Riots stifle human reason while unleashing the capacity to destroy civilisation. In a climate of fear and distrust, it leads unimportant events or familial situations to spread and worsen. Ordinary people unknowingly took part in the ongoing slaughter caused by the division of India and Pakistan and suffered immensely as a result. Manto portrays a marginalized person to show how repressive state policies are adopted. A narrative of Hindu-Muslim riots and their effects opens the text.

Mumtaz was speaking with great passion, 'Don't tell me a hundred thousand Hindus and the same number of Muslims have been massacred... And after putting away a hundred thousand Muslims, the Hindus must have celebrated the liquidation of Islam; but the fact is that Islam has not been affected in the least. (216)

Manto accomplishes objectivity by killing the dog and placing the Pakistani and Indian camps at roughly the same height. After describing the suffering of an animal and deprivation, Manto stunned the audience by reminding them of the individuals who had lost their homes as a result of the partition. The human state resembled a lost puppy seeking shelter, food, and protection. In the crossfire between the Indian and Pakistani soldiers, thousands of civilians-including the dog-are caught and must endure a dreadful fate. Due to differences in geography and religion, soldiers fighting alongside civilians had once been lifelong friends who had now turned into competitors. Manto makes fun of the populace's credulity, unease, and mindlessness during a time of conflict.

Humanitarian Crisis is a type of psychological injury that damages people's minds. In the poem, the anger directed at the world creates a dramatic discomfort in which both the army officer and the dog must exist. The pain of men affects ignorance and harmony. The Hindu-Muslim conflict captured the public's attention. His extensive humanitarian concerns lead him to write in his short stories about class prejudices, racism, creed, gender, and ethnicity. In literary studies and as a shared memory that helps them understand the damaged selves of the protagonists, Manto's brief narratives encourage the reader to relive the partition and its aftermath. He was perplexed by the events as well as what had happened to *Toba Tek Singh*, his hometown, given that Sialkot, which was formerly in India, is now in Pakistan. But he was a harmless guy. An elderly man with white hair and a beard who had a slightly menacing appearance. Where was *Toba Tek Singh*, in India or Pakistan? was the main question he used to ask everyone. He received no responses. There was a time when one of the nut cases claimed to be

God. Even the so-called deity let down Bishen Singh when he requested him to resolve his issue.

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