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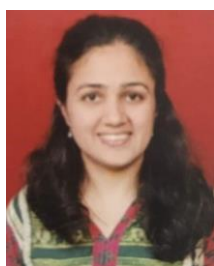
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REFLECTIONS OF REALISM AND ALLEGORY IN MANTO'S *THE DOG OF TITHWAL*

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ABSTRACT

The paper purports to make an analysis of the psychology of fake nationalism in the aftermath of the partition of India in 1947. The paper scrutinizes the realistic and allegorical suggestivity of the story to indicate the working of the psyche of Indian and Pakistani soldiers in treating a helpless stray dog as Indian and Pakistani respectively and ultimately killing him for pseudo nationalistic reasons. Manto thus bestows upon the dog the identity of a faceless ordinary individual who in his innocence and ignorance is oblivious to all this humbug, but who has to suffer at the hands of these insensitive soldiers who represent the brutal state power turning this story into a powerful allegory.

Keywords: Partition, India, Pakistan, Border, Shooting, Realism, Allegory, Faceless individual, Nationalism, State Power.

"It was was best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way— in short the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree only" (Dickens 1). These lines by Dickens stay relevant in an entirely different era and geography too. Dickens, through these lines, painted a picture of uncertain times during the French revolution where balance and logic had gone for a toss. The Partition of India in 1947 is also one such era where all logic turned into stupidity and all balance went haywire. Ayesha Jalal in her prelude to *The Pity of Partition* calls partition "a defining moment that is neither beginning nor

end", which "continues to influence how the peoples and states of postcolonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future". She further says,"there can be no real understanding of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh without a full grasp of the lasting impact of partition on their self imaginings, political contestations and national projections (4).

This crass human tragedy festering like an open wound came back again and again to the sensitive minds of the creative writers on both sides of the border and is also authentically reflected in the life stories of the victims. Anup Beniwal in his *Representing Partition: History, Violence and Narration*(2005) says:

A critical watershed in the history of the subcontinent, the Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 reverberates through the socio-political and cultural discourses of India via a twofold process of implosion and explosion. The dialectics of this embedding has drawn a ghost of creative and critical minds in its vortex and has exercised the

literary imagination of the subcontinent. The very nature of the socio historical arrangements and ideological idioms bequeathed by the experience of partition has been such that it provides a perennially potential platform to creatively play upon the possibilities and probabilities extant within the phenomenon (1).

While social and political analysts have interpreted the Partition with the tools peculiar to their own fields, there has been a long chain of writers in Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali etc where creative writers have interpreted and commented upon it in an imaginative manner. The theme of partition and its consequent repercussions have been taken up by writers like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal, Raj Gill, Attia Hussain, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor and many other creative writers. In this great tradition of distinguished writers, Saadat Hassan Manto, an Urdu short story writer stands out like a beacon. The inhumanity, violence, the beastly behaviour, the arson, the fear, doubt and anger associated with partition painted the sub continent red. Humanity and reason had no say at all. What began in anger ended up in shame. As the event was recent and the wound fresh, the writers found it extremely difficult to stay objective. Their writings were their memoirs and were, in one way or the other, inclined towards their personal ideology. Here, Manto emerges as one of the most objective and dispassionate writers, taking no sides and pronouncing no judgements. He writes almost with surgical precision attaching no frills. Once he himself admitted that he did not hide anything, that is a tailor's job, not his. Manto's stories brutally highlight the insensitivity of the perpetrators of violence in both the communities.

He in a brutally realistic manner makes dispassionate commentary; he does not take sides, is non-partisan. He only presents what is truth but the truth that he presents is gory and lacerating. Through his stories, he was able to anticipate a divided world full of chaos with zero tolerance for any kind of harmony -national, religious, sectarian or communal. In her epilogue to *The Pity of Partition* Ayesha Jalal has high praise for Manto. She comments, "Manto's flair for anticipating social

political and intellectual trends gives his work a timelessness that is awe-inspiring and eerie both at once" (222).

In his story "The Dog of Tithwal" Manto realistically presents a situation in which the soldiers of Pakistan and Hindustan are parked on the opposing hills and are bored to the hilt; they would fire at the enemy in an almost frolicsome manner. This story set in a time frame immediately after the partition pinpoints the struggle between the two newly carved countries to control and govern Kashmir. The opening of the story situates it in this historical perspective:

For some time now, the two sides had been entrenched in their positions on the front. Over the course of a day, the sound of firing could be heard, some ten or twelve times on either side, but no human cry ever accompanied its report. (*Manto: Selected Short Stories* 11)

In a matter-of-fact way, the author tells us that one can hear occasional bursts of firing but never the sounds of human shrieks. The story operates at two levels- the realistic and allegorical. At the realistic level, the writer first described the idyllic beauty of the natural world- the tranquillity of the mountains, the peace and harmony. It is presented in contrast to the violent yet futile burst of the gunfire. While nature bestows its bounties, irrespective of the boundaries and borders artificially created by man, man creates differences in the name of national and religious identities. Manto, thus, in an ironic manner presents the senseless violence of the battle waged by the Hindustani and Pakistani forces. It is equally ironical to note that the two warring sides draw on a deep repository of a shared culture that goes back to hundreds of years. However, the unnatural partition based on fundamentalism and bigotry created a chasm which could never be filled. It is ironical to note that the shared culture is even reflected in the names of the persons belonging to the two opposing communities. For example, the first part of the name Himmat Khan is common to both Hindus and Muslims. 'Himmat' followed by Khan becomes a muslim name and if 'Singh' comes after Himmat it would acquire a Hindu connotation.

"Both fronts were in very secure places. The bullets would come singing at full speed, collide against the rock face and be extinguished. The two hills on which the fronts stood were of similar height; between them lay a valley over whose green-clad breast a runnel ran, writhing over it like a snake" (11-12).

This streak of realism percolates into the psyche and behaviour of the warring armies. Take for example the lonely Corporal Harnam Singh's mental state who even after his patrolling duty is over, feels so lonely that he bursts into a song remembering his darling Harnam Kaur. Similarly, Bashir in the Pakistani army also softly sings a lone heart's song; "where darling did you pass the night...darling, where" (17).

In the same way Manto realistically presents the typical behaviour of the Indian and Pakistani soldiers who would be zealously defending the 'honour' of their respective countries even if their dialogues or actions may be based on the flimsiest grounds. Now, Manto goes on to explore the concept of nation as defined by callous state machineries in a realistic manner. Let us see how he graphically describes the physical location of the opposing armies.

However, Manto does not merely focus on presenting the uncomfortably placid situation of the two armies. For this he chooses a stray dog as the protagonist of the story. The story underlines the fact that the division has not only affected the hearts and souls of the people but seems to be artificially superimposed upon the animal world too. Here, the story assumes allegorical dimensions. If the Indian side nicknames him as Chapad-Jhun-Jhun, the Pakistani forces call him, rather, prefer to give him a Muslim identity, Sapad-Sun-Sun. They badge him as Indian or Pakistani and insist that stray dogs should also decide whether they are Indian or Pakistani. Thus, a young Indian soldier digging the heel of his boot into the ground says, "Yes, dogs, too, had now better make up their minds as to whether they are Indian or Pakistani" (15), The dialogue does not stop here and takes a venomous turn when Corporal Harman Singh, throwing a biscuit in the direction of the dog says, "And like the

Pakistanis, their dogs, too, will be blown away" (15). On this, a soldier shouts, "Long live India" (15).

In the evening, the dog is seen wagging his tail near the Pakistani hillock, and around his neck is tied, with the help of a rope, a piece of cardboard on which is scribbled, "Chuppad-Jhun-Jhun, this is an Indian dog"(15). This piece of information acts as a panic button, and Captain Himmat Khan picks his wireless set to report the matter to the platoon Commander.

Manto creates another layer of irony to the situation when Bashir, the Pakistani soldier started questioning the dog .

He questioned it about where it had been all night, and who had tied the rope and piece of board around its neck but received no satisfactory answer. The dog, in reply to his questions, simply wagged his tail (18).

They gave him a new name, "Sapad-Sunsun", and gave him a Pakistani identity by calling it a Pakistani dog. Captain Himmat Khan threatens the dog, "Look here, friend, do not betray us...keep in mind that the punishment for betrayal is death" (19). He commands the dog, "Go on, deliver our letter to the enemy. But remember: come back. This is your officer's order. Got it?" (20).

Thus, what seems as a mere frolic turns into something really grave and the poor dog becomes the butt of the violence and sometimes, he seems to be scampering towards the Indian side, and at others towards the Pakistani side. Ultimately, Corporal Harnam Singh ends the life of the poor dog by shooting it in a most casual manner.

Even the death of the dog is interpreted on the lines of the political and geographical identities as Corporal Harnam Singh running his hands over the still warm barrel of his gun, said, "he died the death that is a dog's alone." (22). Captain Himmat Khan from the Pakistani camp superimposes his own interpretation on the death of the dog and gloomily remarks, "tch, tch, another martyr" (22).

Thus, the dog of Tithwal is sacrificed at the altar of political prejudices of a few. The dog, here, is symbolic of common man who is sans any identity or, rather, whose identity hardly matters. Partition violence indiscriminately devoured the helpless people-be they Hindus or Muslims- and left them

decimated to live and to die a dog's death. In fact, his identity can be changed as per the whims of the warring nations. Thus the story moves from a realistic mode to an allegorical mode. As the story advances we realise that it is shaping up as an allegory. In Manto's story, the dog becomes symbolic of all those innumerable victims of partition who lost their identity as a citizen overnight. And like Toba Tek Singh, many are confused, whether they belong to one country or the other. This loss of identity on their part reminds us of George Orwell's animals in the iconic *Animal Farm* when one fine morning they find that "all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others" (112).

M.H.Abrams defines allegory as:

... a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions and sometimes the setting as well are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the "literal" or primary level of signification, and at the same time to communicate a second, correlated order of signification. (A Glossary of Literary Terms).

Allegory is a very potent, rather deadly tool, in the hands of creative writers, and what cannot be directly said, can be suggested through an allegory. In its simplest form an allegory is a piece of writing where characters are not merely individuals but personified abstractions acquiring purely symbolic meaning. Thus, an allegory is a story with two meanings — a surface meaning and a symbolic meaning. Further, an allegory is designed to teach a hidden meaning.

To name a few, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590-96), Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) are some classic allegories; George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) are some modern ones. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a powerful allegory with the help of which Swift is able to point to the pettiness of human endeavour in an acerbic tone. Similarly, in the modern times, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, which he terms as a fable is also an allegory pointing at the fraudulent ideology propagated to befuddle the credulous and the innocent. Manto's "The Dog of Tithwal" is also an

allegory in the pedigree of the great classics. What makes this story different in the perspective of the partition is its unrelenting indictment of blatant brutality inflicted in the name of religion and pseudo-nationalism.

Thus, the dog and its death in the story symbolize the tragic fate of a faceless refugee who runs from one camp to another and is finally killed in a violence which is not only senseless but brutal.

Ironically again, the dog is killed at a spot which belongs neither to the Indians nor to the Pakistanis; it is a no man's land and it is killed by those that had made a show that it belonged to their side.

Thus, the dog represents all those innocent victims of violence; a violence which is devoid of any sense. In a way, by making a dog, the protagonist of his story, Manto is able to generalise the idea of all those who are innocent victims of an insane violence. He, thus, through this story profoundly indicts of all forms of power and violence. The dog is a mute victim of the ruthlessness of all those in whom it had reposed its faith, thus becoming a representative of millions of other "voiceless" victims. This loss of identity reminds us of animals in George Orwell's celebrated allegory *Animal Farm* in which animals represented by Boxer, the hard working horse that "all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others" (P 112).

The story also reminds the reader of "Toba Tek Singh", another allegorical story by Manto. In Toba Tek Singh also the helpless mad men are forced into shifting to the countries as per their religion. Bishen Singh, the mad protagonist of this story like the dog in the story under consideration represents the same victim of the violence of partition; he also does not have an identity till based on the fact of his being a Sikh, the authorities try to push him into India. This move he stoutly resists and rushes back to what is known as no man's land. Bishen Singh ultimately lays his life at the altar of partition very much in the fashion in which the dog becomes a victim of the ruthless mechanisms of state power.

To conclude, *The Dog of Tithwal* emerges as a powerful story representing Manto's fictional credo. He, through this story of the stray dog

presents all the insanity, insensitivity and the brutality of the powers that be. In the ultimate analysis it emerges that like the unfortunate stray dog of Tithwal the ordinary people who are in no way related to the matrices of power are confounded and lose their identity, their hearths and homes, even their lives, for no fault of theirs. Therein lies the tragedy of the ordinary people.

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