

## THEME OF COMMUNALISM IN MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH FICTIONS

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*The theme of Partition continues to dominate the field of creativity in different Indian languages. English stands no exception to it. Some famous Indian writers have presented the theme of partition with minutest detail in their fictional works. If we look into Indian history we will find that the term Indian Communalism is rooted psychologically and historically in the Indian Sub- continent population. Like any other movements, the modern Indian communalism has its phases, they are three fold : the first covering the period before partition; the second, the period around partition, and the third, the period after partition. This paper mainly focuses on the literature of the third phase which recorded the aftermath of the partition.*

Although as a term, communalism is as old as the Latin Language its present usage is of the recent origin. As a term it is derived from the Latin word *communalis* and stands for something “shared or done by all the members of community.”<sup>1</sup> In this respect it is closely related to words like “community and commune.” However, this meaning is no longer current in common parlance. It is not at all used to denote “community” or “commune,” but the “antagonisms between people of different races and religions.”<sup>2</sup> It is in this specific sense that we now go on using the term. That is to say, the term no longer defines community or commune but the hostile relationship, existing among different races or religious groups.

If we look into Indian history we will find that the term Indian Communalism is rooted psychologically in the instinct of antagonism and historically in the policies of the British Government, the rise of the Hindu and the Muslim fundamentalism, and in the failure of the congress party which was unable to contain the communal forces. Partition completely failed to solve the communal tangle and was not at all able to ensure the life of peace and prosperity. On the contrary, it ushered in a new era of tension with communalism acquiring for more social and psychological dimensions of ferocious nature. It expanded its field of operation from Punjab and the various cities of Northern India to the entire country. And in the present scenario it has outstretched itself to become a global phenomenon, so much so that the horrible echoes of what happens in India, can be heard in the entire world, especially where the Hindu and the Muslim communities confront each other. Psychologically Communalism has gone deeper into human psyche causing morbidity and has forced people to live in an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety.

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SAIKAT BANERJEE's mullah represent the bond of brotherhood which exists between the two communities in the village. Hukum Chand is the local magistrate. Iqbal, an educated party worker, has come to Mano Majra, he claims to stop the killings. All this is changed drastically by the arrival of a train containing corpses of Sikhs and Hindus slaughtered in Pakistan. This results in mutual suspicions between the Sikhs and Muslims of Mano Majra. The inhabitants of Mano Majra are in panic when a second ghost train arrives from Pakistan. Matters are further complicated by the arrival of the young Sikh extremists who have actually seen the bloodshed and hence, are thirsty for revenge. At the Gurudwara, where a meeting is held, they decide to kill all the passengers on the next train to Pakistan. Hukum Chand learns of the plan, and he wants desperately to stop the train, not only because he wants to prevent a meaningless mass murder, but also because his beloved, Haseena, is on the ill-fated train. In this desperation he has a brainwave; he decides to release Jugga and Iqbal, hoping that either the love of the former or the idealism of the latter will do something to sabotage the evil plan. His idea pays off; for as soon as Jugga learns that Nooran is also in the train, his mind is made up. After seeking the blessings of the priest at Gurudwara, he goes to the railway tracks and fulfils his role as a saviour by cutting the rope which the extremists had tied to decrease the speed of the train and in the process falls and is crushed by the train. Thus the novel, though naturalistic in its setting and tone, goes on to strike an ideal note in the end showing the victory of human values on the dark forces of inhumanity.

Manohar Malgonkar's treatment of communalism is a little more varied and unique in the sense that it treats some obscure points, left untouched by other novelists. For example, in his *Distant Drums* (1960), he focuses his attention on the division of Army during partition. He tells us the story of the two Army Officers Kiran and Abdul Jamal who find themselves on opposite sides. They go on to realise that under the changed circumstances friendship and loyalties have been redefined. However, in the backdrop of the Army life, the novel also embodies the moving accounts of partition riots in Delhi in detail.

In his next novel, *A Bend In The Ganges* (1964), Malgonkar's attitude becomes somewhat more rigid, especially when he analyses the rising communal tension during the division of the country starting with family feud, rivalry, hatred, bloodshed and murder, the novel depicts the tragedy of division. He attacks the Gandhian values of non-violence rather more vehemently than any other novelist. The novel begins as the domestic tale of two characters against the background of the tense years of freedom struggle. Then it switches over to deal with havoc violence and agony that accompanied those fateful days. Malgonkar describes in detail how the Indian Freedom Movement was diverted from the fight against the British Imperialism to a fight against Hindus and Muslims. The novel also deals with the difficult task of tracing the psychological dimensions of religious fanaticism.

The literature of the Second stage of the Third phase, which covers a period from 1965 to 1984, marks the rise of a new type of communalism which emerged after the Indo-Pak war of 1965 and which witnessed not only another partition of the sub-continent or dismemberment of Pakistan but also sounded the death knell of the Two Nation Theory.

Since the novelists who dealt with the communal situation or reconsidered the theme of partition came from different backgrounds, we can find an astounding variety of treatment and technique. We can now visualize partition from different angles and have an insight into the psyches of different communities. The most important works published during this stage include such outstanding novels as *Death Of A Hero* (1968), *Azadi* (1975), *Midnight's Children* (1980), etc.

Mulkh Raj Anand's *Death Of A Hero* is a classic in Indian fiction. It is one of the first creative work to expose the myth of the religious brotherhood and The Two Nation Theory. It is the saga of patriotism and sacrifice of a man (Maqbool) who "stood up to organise resistance and breast the wave of aggression in a memorable, death defying feat." <sup>6</sup>

Chaman Nahal is another post partition novelist who has recreated the theme of the partition in his most celebrated novel *Azadi* (1975). This novel presents a lively and detailed account of the happenings which took place about mid 1947. It opens on June 3, 1947, with the announcement of the division of the country into two parts- India and Pakistan by then viceroy, Lord Mountbatten. It ends with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948. It tells us the story of eight months sandwiched between the declaration of Independence and assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. *Azadi* is a politico-literary novel which uses political insight, objective analysis, and courage of conviction to portray the stark realism of partition in a literary style of rare quality and tremendous power.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is another exposition of the communal situation in the sub-continent during partition by another Muslim writer. Born precisely at the time when India became independent and passed into an era of freedom, Rushdie charts the growth of his country along with the growth of his own personality, nation and child going through the stages of birth, childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

The literature of the Third stage of the Third phase evaluates new forms of communal tension in the sub-continent. The writers consciously or unconsciously open the wounds that were inflicted on Indian psyche in 1947, as they try to relive the traumas of the people who suffered enormously. From the stylistic point of view, we find innovations of form and technique in Bapsi Sidwa's *Ice Candy Man* (1988), Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters* (1998), etc.

Bapsi Sidwa's *Ice Candy Man* provides us with one of the most moving accounts of the communal situation of Lahore and other cities at the time of partition. It is a multifaceted novel, which according to Khuswant Singh, "deserves to be ranked amongst the most authentic and best (books) on the partition of India."<sup>7</sup> *Ice Candy Man* also propagates the message of undying love for the humanity. It decries the cult of violence in any form and on any pretext. It holds in rejection the oft proclaimed policy of neutrality and non-alignment. To Bapsi Sidwa the said policy represents a pseudo concept. In fact man is a victim of different passions. So most of his actions are the outcome of his different passions. Only a man who has succeeded in curbing his passions to the point of extinction can talk of neutrality in his life. In addition, she has eulogised the role of the women members of her community during the partition paper.

Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters* uses partition as its backdrop in her efforts to project the difficulties of the generation born after the partition. The protagonist of the novel is Virmati who is caught in a dilemma caused by the tensions of family duty, desire for education and illicit love. Irrespective of the social taboos, Virmati goes on to marry the already married Professor Harish Chandra whom she loved passionately. But from the communal angle the focal point is Virmati's daughter Ida who is an embodiment of the psychological consequences of partition. The novel narrates the experiences of her Amritsar visit, a visit which enables her to peep in the past of her mother.

In nutshell, the evil shadows of communalism remain one of the main subjects of the twentieth century Anglo Indian fiction. This theme of communalism in Indian literature can be studied in three phases, literature before partition, around partition and after partition. Obviously, it is the literature of the third phase i.e. after partition that saw the emergence of a powerful body of literature on communalism. The great works of this phase includes R.K. Narayan's

*Waiting For Mahatma*, Khuswant Singh's *Train To Pakistan*, Manohar Malgonkar's *Distant Drums* and *A Bend In The Ganges*, Mulkh Raj Anand's *Death Of A Hero*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

The literature of the Third stage of the Third Phase i.e. from 1985 onwards is also remarkable in the senses that it provides fresh dimensions to the communal theme. It not only relives the tragic events of the partition days but also portrays the difficulties of rehabilitation and readjustment. It reevaluates the whole tragedy from the angle of nationalism and freedom. The great works of this period are Bapsi Sidwa's *Ice Candy Man*, Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters*, Amitabh Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, etc.

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