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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Author	Title of the Paper	Download
1	Susan Lobo	Being 'It' in Mahesh Dattani's <i>Steps Around the Fire</i>	2101PDF
2	Vinay Kumar Dubey	Salman Rushdie's <i>the Satanic Verses: the Sense of Futility in Religion</i>	2102PDF
3	Dr. Mitima Sachdeva	<i>Dhamma and the Transformation of the Self</i>	2103PDF
4	Ms. Tusharkana Majumdar & Prof. (Dr.) Archana Shukla	Enhancing Education and Life: Life Skills	2104PDF
5	A. Anbuselvi	The Individuals Isolation and Struggle for Independence and Identity with Reference to the Novels of Anne Tyler and Sashi Deshpande	2105PDF
6	Dr. Ambreen Safder Kharbe	Indian Ethos in the Poetry of Sarojini Naidu	2106PDF
7	Swati Sachdev & Prof. Priyanka Jhavar	Modelling and Performance Analysis of Heat Exchangers for Heavy Vehicles	2107PDF
8	Dr. Pooja Singh, Dr. Archana Durgesh & Neha Sahu	Reflecting Impacts of Epic and Cultural Tales on Young Minds	2108PDF
9	Dr. K. Jaisingh & Prof. D.S. Kesava Rao	Faculty Development Strategies: Practical Problems of EFL Teachers in India	2109PDF

10	Dr. R. Bhuvaneswari	Virtual Learning: An e-Learning Experience	2110PDF
11	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	Principles of Prose Style in Francis Bacon and Bertrand Russell's Essays	2111PDF
12	Tweisha Mishra	The Doctrine of Frustration of Contract: An Analysis and Comparison of Indian Law and English Law, with reference to Landmark Cases	2112PDF
13	K. Gomathi Lakshmi	The Factors in Organisation Climate	2113PDF
14	Dr. Purushottam P. Deshmukh	Idea of Love and Sex in Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry and in Osho Rajneesh's Philosophy	2114PDF
15	Priyal Bhupesh Panchal	Resistance in Partition Literature: Manto's 'Toba Tek Singh' and 'The Dog of Titwal'	2115PDF
16	Goldy M. George	A Sociological Perspective on the Challenges of Rebuilding Adivasi Lives in the Conflicts Region of Chhattisgarh	2116PDF
17	Dr. Amar Kumar	A Discriminant Analysis of Team Cohesiveness among High-Performance and Low-Performance Elite Football Players	2117PDF
18	Vimal Kumar Vishwakarma	Teaching of Speaking Skill: Principles and Approaches	2118PDF
19	Rahila Safdar	Patterns of language use and preferences in Watali community	2119PDF
20	Mr. Vijay Digambar Songire	Taboo Breaking Women in Toni Morrison's <i>Sula</i> , Alice Walker's <i>The Color Purple</i> and Arundhati Roy's <i>The God of Small Things</i>	2120PDF

Resistance in Partition Literature: Manto's 'Toba Tek Singh' and 'The Dog of Titwal'**Priyal Bhupesh Panchal***Research Student, Department of English, University of Mumbai, (M.S.) India***Abstract**

Saadat Hasan Manto's contribution to Partition Literature has made it possible to not only re-visit the trauma of historical happenings which took place during the partition period but also to trace resistance through his works. Manto's short stories are a record of the traumatic history as well as a re-articulation of history through literature. His stories when read in the context of his position and the intricacies involved in issues of representation, reveal an insight into the challenges faced by a writer like him. In 'The Dog of Titwal', aporias of belonging 'in-between' are explored, likewise, in 'Toba Tek Singh', Bishen Singh dies on no-man's land 'in-between' the two nations. In these two short stories, how Manto captures the trauma experienced and the resistance exhibited during the partition period is what this paper attempts to explore.

Key Words: Manto, 'Toba Tek Singh', 'The Dog of Titwal', resistance, partition, trauma.

'Toba Tek Singh' and 'The Dog of Titwal' are the short stories by Saadat Hasan Manto. These stories appear to be an allegory which is satirical at times and questions the futility of war. His writings allow a re-telling of the story of partition. They can be seen as a form of literary resistance against the dominant structures and hegemonies. The amalgam of politics, religion, communalism, and nationalism creates dismal situations, which Manto has tried to depict in his stories. They portray the consequences of communal politics and the perplexed case of forgotten identities. Looking beyond the irony of identities, both these stories are marked by the trope of resistance. Resistance here is the resistance against partition and boundaries. These stories underline the meaninglessness of partition and the futility of borders. The form of resistance used in 'The Dog of Titwal' is strikingly different from the form of resistance used in 'Toba Tek Singh'. The

dog in 'The Dog of Titwal' transgresses boundaries. He crosses the border dividing India and Pakistan so easily as if the border doesn't exist at all. On the contrary, in 'Toba Tek Singh', Bishen Singh refuses to cross the border and questions the logic behind the partition - not only of territory, but also of people. His resistance is seen in his refusal to cross over to the other side of the border, where he is told he belongs post-partition.

In these two short stories, "the theory of individual trauma [and resistance] contains within it the core of the trauma [and resistance] of a larger history", which highlights how the personal narrative is analogous to the larger political narrative (Caruth, 1996: 71). The political history overpowers the personal history which is often silenced. In the process of venerating the national narrative of both the nations, they have neglected the personal narratives of people for whom the partition was a

nightmare. Such silenced narratives have been recorded in literature and their very existence is a form of literary resistance. Tarun K. Saint talks about the role of Manto's partition narratives as 'Fictive Testimony to Historical Trauma' (Saint, 2012: 53). Indeed, his stories are a representation of resistance - though only Foucauldian micro-resistances and not the Marxist idea of resistance - embodied in literature. The same is reflected in the following words:

"For Manto it was difficult to strike peace with the situation around, the torn times are reflected in many of his stories but he does not say much about the usual violence that is usually attached to the partition in common parlance. His response to the partition is articulated in stories such as *Toba Tek Singh*, *Titwal Ka Kutta* and other stories" (Nisar, 2014: 9727).

Manto has written a lot about the partition and his use of the form of short stories is seen as a genre that was most conducive to use for his purpose and in the time and circumstances he wrote. "For him partition is just an insane act which happens to dislocate people not only from the place they live in but also from the people they have been attached to" (Nisar, 2014: 9725). Manto presents the horrors of partition from the level that has been much neglected otherwise. He did not engage in futile political commentary, instead, he wrote about the people, the common people who were placed at the lowest ranks of class, caste, and even gender. "Manto vividly recreates the anger and horrors of this period and the trauma of refugees uprooted and

victimized by the delineation of arbitrary borders" (Alter, 1994: 91).

The narrative strategy used by Manto helps the readers to go beyond the brutal effects of such traumatic experiences and allows them to envision the possibility of resistance even in such bleak situations. The genre of short story being a self-reflexive form helps him to capture the after-effects of historical trauma. His short stories help us trace possibilities of resistance in the traumatic past of partition in various ways. Resistances do not seek to overthrow power but disrupt it. Power is studied to theorize concepts like subjugation and agency. However, Resistance is brimming with wish for social change. The resistance exhibited by the dog and by Bishen Singh is the resistance of the subaltern. They are the 'subaltern' in a lot of ways as they are subjected to the will of the dominant class and hence, they can only be seen as micro-resistances.

Manto doesn't side with any nation and manages to present a critical report on the ill-happenings from humanity's side if any. His concern, as evident from his works, is not to critique any nation - India or the newly formed Pakistan - but to critique the violence and inhumane circumstances brought about in the name of religion and nationalism. The writer's location or where the writer belongs adds prominence to the literary works of writers who have witnessed the epistemological shift in history. Exploring the complexities of the question - which side is Manto trying to represent - leads us towards the realisation of the ambivalence faced by him by the virtue of his position. The exaggerated sense of

nationalism under the influence of religion is also what Manto tries to critique through his stories. The lack of nationalist spirit in Bishen Singh can be seen as incredulity towards the meta-narrative of the nationalism of the newly-formed nation. In fact, Manto goes on to say that, "Perhaps the whole of India might become Pakistan. It was all so confusing! And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely disappear from the face of the earth one day?" (Manto, 1987)

In 'Toba Tek Singh', the character of Bishen Singh represents the Foucauldian idea of resistance. Foucault's perspective about the mechanics of power is exemplified in the micro-resistances in the asylum. Foucault explains, "When I think of the mechanics of power, I think of its capillary form of existence, of the extent to which power seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permeates their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people." (Foucault, interview J.L. Brochier). The various members of the asylum, who behave in a particular manner in reaction to the issue of partition, actually create several micro-resistances against the dominant hegemonic rulers. Arif Nisar tells us that,

Manto has not only parodied the decisions taken by the wise heads of his times, he has portrayed the lunacy of people who have exemplified the nationalistic tropes by creating boundaries and bars. Manto's artistic designation of delineating the grim realities of his times is quite symbolic. He has portrayed a world of lunatics that seem to be saner than the people

living outside the world of lunatic asylum. (Nisar, 2014: 9718)

Manto tries to show how the people in the asylum seem to be better equipped than the big people making big decisions about the nation/s. "These people being the victims of partition have showed very reasonably and intelligently the resistance to the partition, when the news reached to them. The questions asked by the lunatics repeatedly carry an ambiguity, which needs to be justified and answered." (Nisar, 2014: 9728). This ambiguity embodies the anxieties of all the people who cannot find sense in the act of partition. "Bishen Singh exemplifies a world without the bars and boundaries, who wants to live his life neither in Pakistan nor in Hindustan. These national boundaries are identities that have been attached with him without seeking his consent that is why he keeps on resisting; he wants to go back to Toba Tek Singh, form where he belongs and which gives him his identity" (Nisar, 2014: 9731). Similar is the plight of 'The Dog of Titwal'.

"Manto's another story *Tetwal Ka Kutta* (The Dog of Tetwal) deals with the same thematic concern similar to *Toba Tek Singh*, where Bishan Singh is caught in the identity crises. The story is much more satirized on the notion of super-patriotism, the story is about a dog that is caught between the two borders of Pakistan and Hindustan." (Nisar, 2014: 9728-29). As we see in the story,

It soon became a game between the two soldiers, with the dog running round in circles in a state of great terror. Both Himmat Khan and Harnam Singh were laughing

boisterously. The dog began to run towards Harnam Singh, who abused him loudly and fired. The bullet caught him in the leg. He yelped, turned around and began to run towards Himmat Khan, only to meet more fire, which was only meant to scare him. (Manto, 1987)

The soldiers symbolise the politicians and the dog symbolises the common man, moreover, the people who are the worst victims of partition – the people from ‘in-between’. “The story allegorizes the imperative demand the modern-nation state imposes upon its citizens to adhere to the common political identity or nationality and those who fail to align themselves to it, are labelled as traitors and are exterminated, which becomes evident in the story” (Biswas, 2014: 198). Under the pressure and trauma of dislocation, furthermore struck by the insanity of the partition, the forceful

nationalism is like the last bite before a vomit. The madness – that clasps the dog in ‘The Dog of Titwal’ and Bishen Singh in ‘Toba Tek Singh’ – is the final form of resistance possible for the victims of such great trauma as that of the partition.

Hence, we see in Manto’s ‘Toba Tek Singh’ and ‘The Dog of Titwal’, the aporias of belonging to the ‘in-between’ space. The ambivalence faced by the people stuck ‘in-between’ in the traumatic circumstances of the partition is also captured in these stories. The forms of resistance used by the protagonists of both the stories are different as one selects to erase the borders and question its significance, while the other tries to resist the authority of the border. However, both the protagonists suffer as the subaltern under the power of the dominant class. Their resistance is after all, micro-resistance at last.

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