



## POLITICAL MILIEU AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IN THE BACKDROP OF PARTITION OF INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The partition of the Indian subcontinent on the communal basis into the sovereign states of India and Pakistan at the dawn of freedom, after a long period of slavery and tryst with destiny, on August 15, 1947 created a hell of human killings on the earth which was marked as “one of the bloodiest upheavals in the history of human race”. It shocked mankind with its traumatic tales of “anguish and dismay at man’s wolfish cruelty to man in the name of religion”. Undivided India, which freed itself from the colonial yoke, and the event of the partition of the subcontinent are inextricably woven together. Thus, no post-colonial denizen of the subcontinent possessing a sense of history and living in the post-independence era can ignore the pervasive influence and impact of the Partition on contemporary life. The political milieu with its ever changing shades had understandably a deep impact on the Indian mind for it touched not the elite of the society alone but the common people, it was a veritable tempestuous movement which swept the entire nation and shook the very fabric of social, nay the national life. India stood as a nation with one ideology, with one perspective with vehemence and conviction all on its own. It proved too hard to resist the gushing torrent of the surge for liberty for the most powerful of the nations, England in particular. Each shade in the political milieu was strong enough to satisfy the soul of men of letters who chose as they pleased and suited their taste and temperament and gave expression to them in the backdrop of this national consciousness. This communication is an attempted to study the political milieu from the Gandhian impact to the attainment of freedom marked though it was with bloodshed with no equal in the history of mankind, as well as to select group of writers*

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who tried to portray them in their creative works. Special emphasis has been given on the theme of partition followed by the worst ever bloodbath after the Mahabharata on this land particularly in Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* and Chamal Nahal's *Azadi*.

**Key Words:** Political milieu, Indian subcontinent, Partition, Pakistan, Special emphasis

## DISCUSSION:

Political milieu is a fairly new form of literary expression which has come into vogue in the Post-war period of the twentieth-century. The sensibilities of a group of responsive writers, who were disturbed by the atrocities perpetrated by power-hungry fascist regimes, found eloquent expression in new fictional patterns woven around political themes. The works was characterized by an intricately patterned interlocking of political ideology and existential concerns. It is focused on the impact of power politics on the hopes, fears and angers of the post-atomic humanity. The dominant issues of the contemporary world associated with economics, war, race, gender and justice also found ample space in their creative exuberance. Any attempt to define a political novel will be problematic since it does not represent a distinct form of fiction. The line of demarcation between art and politics has become unusually thin in the twentieth-century. The Partition of India was the route of separating the sub-continent along parochial lines in 1947 as India achieved its independence from British Empire. It led into a Muslim dominating northern state of Pakistan and Hindu predominating southern part became the Republic of India. Partition however demolished both India and Pakistan as it averted many lives in riots, rapes, murders and looting but also about 15 million people were displaced from their homes. The two countries commenced their independence with best economies and lands without an entrenched, competent system of government. There is almost identical concern about the organized and random violence that occurred during the freedom struggle and the aftermath of Partition. Thus the writers discussing the issue of Partition have different geographical locations as far as the setting of their novels is concerned. But all the writers unanimously condemned basically violence and holocaust caused by dirty political game. Their description of traumatic experiences of all characters is heart-rending, very touching and realistic that inspired maga TV serials like *Buniad* and *Humlog* and film like *Train to Pakistan, 1947-The Earth*. etc.

## Historical Background:

The two indian are from families directly affected by Partition. They have witnessed inhuman brutality and violence occurred during the period before Partition, during Partition and after Partition. Their fictional works selected for the present study brings out vivid effects of Partition, but their treatment of theme and choice of characters, setting and style differ so



basically that their versions of Partition can easily be categorized. Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* deals with the relevance of basic Gandhian principles of non-violence. Thus his version can be called idealistic Gandhian version of Partition. The theme of the novel is made clear in the epigraph that shows Gandhiji's worry about the prospect of violence which would be unleashed in the wake of freedom that followed the Partition of India. Through the background of Partition, Malgonkar has narrated the story of *Debi Dayal*, *Mumtaz*, *Gyan Talwar* and *Sundari*. The political background of non-violent movement led by Gandhiji and the terrorist movement were in full swing at that time. This contradiction is the base of entire novel and Manohar Malgonkar is keen to point out that it is not the failure of Gandhiji's non-violent movement that caused Partition but there are several other factors like political ambition of all leaders and their deliberate negligence of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence which contributed to the Partition of the country. The Partition is dominant theme of his great novel which is a bold experiment in artistically blending of personal and political perspectives. That makes a quite different type of version of Partition which reminds us of Malgonkar's objectivity in the treatment of complex themes of non-violence and Partition gives a Gandhian touch to the version.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* presents Partition in the light of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. It seems to be different from all the other Partition novels as it makes an effort to encompass all the evils that Partition brought forth. It does not terminate with the minorities fleeing to India. Perhaps the novelist seeks to continue the plot in India in order to catch the ominous effects of the aftermath on the lives of a few individuals in particular. Unlike the other novels, *Azadi* probes into the motives of national leaders succumbing to Partition under pressure. It scrutinizes, in detail, the causes of Partition and the subsequent tragedy. To crown it all, it makes a very fine study of the psychological change effected by Partition in the lives of Lala Kanshi Ram and others. In a detached manner the novelist shows the accountability of the Hindus in India who were as guilty as the Muslims on the other side of the border. The novel seems to be very significant because here Nahal's vision is very expansive which enables his protagonist to cease hating his counterparts in Pakistan. The evil, the futility and the stupidity of hatred are shown by the whirring of *Sunanda's* machine, a symbol of creative action and unflinching hope. She suffered a lot. She was brutally raped and lost her husband in the riots in Pakistan; she was made poor. Despite all these pains, it is she who makes a final gesture of endurance in the novel. She is no longer a passive victim but she can stitch out her own destiny. Love and creative action as shown in the lives of *Lala Kanshi Ram* and *Sunanda* respectively are the supreme values which presents the moving drama of violence and malevolence. Without love collective action is merely compulsion, breeding antagonism and fear, from which arise private and social conflicts. Through self knowledge alone is there



freedom from bondage, and this freedom is devoid of all belief, all ideologies. This is ChamanNahal's comprehensive version of Partition that makes *Azadi* an unrivalled novel.

### Results and Discussion:

The novelists under discussion have been very careful and conscious about selection of appropriate titles for their fictional works. Manohar Malgonkar selection of the title *A Bend in the Ganges* refers to the theme of exile in the title itself. The novel takes its title from a quotation from the Ramayana used as epigraph: "At a bend in the Ganges, they paused to take a look at the land they were leaving behind". The title refers to the scene of Ram, Laxman and Sita taking a last glance at the outskirts of Ayodhya at a bend in the Ganges. Though the novel deals with many other themes like revenge, a dispute over violence and non-violence theory, marriage, relationships and the outcome of Partition at length, the title however is devoted to the agony of being uprooted that is revealed through a character, Tekchand. Similarly Manohar Malgonkar considers Partition a turning point in history of India and imparts epic dimension to the theme and title of the novel. Chaman Nihala's title *Azadi* is self-explanatory as it directly suggests the freedom of India from the British rule followed by the pangs of Partition. We got "Azadi" at the cost of vivisection of the great country with rich past. The writers share some similarities in portrayal of characters. For instance, the major characters of these novels come mainly from Hindu-Muslim-Sikh communities. Malgonkar's characters, though they are drawn from all walks of life, are 'conventional.' They are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Englishmen, Japanese and the Gorkhas. They hardly leave any impression because they are not individuals. They are made to change their point of view and attitudes to suit the exigencies of the melodrama just as the scenes of sex and violence are introduced to compel the readers' attention, rather than to develop his convictions. One such example is Gian, the disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and 'the noblest creed of non-violence', who kills Vishnudutt and is sentenced for life. This character remains sketchy and confused till the end. His actions lack motivation. Others like Mumtaz, Mulligan, Bak, ShafiUsman, Hafeez Khan, GopalChandidar, Malini, Tekchand and Balbahadur merely conform to certain types.

The authors and their novels selected for this work are Indians and their works are written and published after Partition. They are well conversant with milieu of India before and after Partition. Their grassroots are found in families affected by Partition. So their rendering of situation is highly appealing and profoundly moving. They react to historical phenomena of Partition alike while their individuality gives their novels a unique touch. The subject of Partition is commonly shared by them. Such theme has its own demands from the novelists and at the same time each novelist feels free to give expression to his own views on the event





from a different perspective. Therefore we have various versions of Partition. Though Malgonkar deals with multiple themes like revenge, a dispute over violence and non-violence theme, marriage relationship, and the outcomes of Partition, the title however is devoted to the agony of being uprooted that is revealed through the character of Tekchand. The Kherwad family belongs to rich upper middle class taking part in freedom struggle that resulted into freedom as well as the Partition of the country. The novelist depicts two symbolic characters to narrate the story of suffering of people affected by Partition. Manohar Malgoankar is concerned mainly with the basic Gandhian values of non-violence as means of solving all human problems including huge divide between two religions. He attempts to depict fundamental Indian value of 'ahimsa' as the final solution to the problem of hatred. The novel narrates horrors of Partition in its barest nature yet he endeavours to prove that Gandhian value of non-violence is the right weapon to solve our problems. The novel *A Bend in the Ganges* can be appropriately considered as Malgoankar's Indian version of the partition.

Our analysis of the themes, characterization, dialogue and plot of the novel concentrates upon the painful drama of the Partition comprehensively and suggestively. It shows convincingly how the 'terrorist movement'-a symbol of national solidarity-designed to oust the British from the Indian soil, degenerated into communal hatred and violence, and how the emphasis from the struggle between Indian nationalism and British colonialism shifted unfortunately to the furious and malicious communal hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims, throwing into shade the basic Indian fight for freedom from the British rule. The double conflict that led to dual impacts of freedom and the division of the country, but before it happened, a hell was let loose in many provinces of the nation. The novels depict powerfully the horrible developments resulting in the Partition, the triumph and tragedy of the hour of freedom, the screams of the victims renting the morning air, the dawn of freedom greeting the sub-continent in the pools of blood, the barbarous cruelties heaped on men and women, catcalls of the crowd and innumerable women being carried away naked, struggling and screaming at the top of their voice. The Muslims fear of being ruled by the Hindus in the absence of British rule in the country where they had been the rulers, their notion that the Hindus were more dangerous than the foreigners and ought to be their real target and their subsequent striding at them, their struggle for a sage homeland separate from India leading to the Partition, and the terror and pity of it. All versions given by the novelists under study convey that history has a moral. One of the major refrains in the novel is that in spite of the creation of the two nations a bond of oneness can clearly be discerned among the divided. Differences are always there whether religious, regional or others. It is wrong to make barriers out of them. Rather bridges have to be built as all hailed from the same stock. An optimistic note of prevalence of healthy human relations is sounded through episodes of love, compassion and



friendship despite the chaotic conditions of violence, bloodshed and deterioration of human values. The human dimension of the division of the subcontinent is well represented in the six novels analyzed for the dissertation. The study sincerely attempts to bring out the totality of the experience often missed by the historian. All the writers of Partition novels show us that in spite of the creation of two Nation and after 1971 a third nation (Bangladesh), there is a bond of oneness among the divided, and a kind of nostalgia for the undivided past. All the writers reaffirm their faith in humanistic values and deplore the communal and divisive politics. For instance even in *Azadi* when the protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram of Sialkot has to leave his home with his family, his friend Barkat Ali and his son go to bid them good bye in the refugee camp.

## CONCLUSION:

The scars of Partition on the psyche of the people in the sub-continent continue to be felt. The echoes of Partition reverberate all through history - Indo-Pak Wars, the formation of Bangladesh and the simmering Kashmir issue. It is intriguing to note that the Muslims and the Hindus had lived in perfect harmony before the division, though religious, economic, cultural, ideological and linguistic differences had existed. Nahal's *Azadi* begins with the announcement of the Partition and this is where Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1962) ends. So it appears that Nahal has picked up the thread of Partition from where Manohar Malgonkar has left it. *Azadi* won the Sahitya Akademi Award. The two writers under discussion have rightly emphasized the significance of communal harmony, common cultural heritage, peace and prosperity. They also lament the increasing threat to harmony. They rightly believe that communal unity in the Indian subcontinent will herald a new era of peace. They also believe that the loss of communal harmony is something that can never be compensated. By doing so with much success, these writers have given a purposeful direction and vitality to Indian English novels. Through this process, these writers serve as a bridge between Indian literature and world literature with their fictional contribution. The present communication has successfully made a comprehensive delineation of the righteous human sentiments which stay on despite recurrent severe jolts and unrelenting adverse circumstances in sheer desperation and misconception. This work has very successfully presented a critical estimate of the treatment of the theme of partition as works of art particularly of the two writers – Manohar Malgonkar and Chaman Nahal. The outcome of this work is that the success of the politicians is the loss of the most innocent of human beings extremely apolitical in character. Politics, therefore, needs humanization for the welfare of mankind or it will mar future of man as human beings.



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