

Lines of Fire: The Religious Roots of India's Partition

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Abstract: - The division of India and Pakistan in 1947, primarily fueled by religious differences, inflicted lasting wounds on the social and cultural landscape of Punjab. This harrowing event, characterized by extensive violence, looting, displacement, and religious extremism, became a pivotal subject in Punjabi literature in the subsequent decades. From 1947 through 1960 and beyond, Punjabi authors examined the profound repercussions of partition, capturing not only historical occurrences but also the personal experiences of those who endured its brutality. Religion, serving as both a catalyst and a backdrop, permeates nearly every narrative from this era, shaping the structure, emotions, and essence of Punjabi storytelling. Collections such as *Uh Bhi Chote-Chote* by Jaswant Singh Did (edited by Ram Saroop Ankhil), *Kala Santali* (edited by Satinder Singh Noor), and the *Santalinama* special issue of *Samdarshi* magazine illustrate the deep-seated effects of religious violence and communal animosity. These works reveal the atrocities of riots, displacement, and the gradual decline of humanity, while also preserving a glimmer of compassion and resilience amid the turmoil. A notable addition to this discourse is the story collection *1947 Alle Jakhama Di Dastan*, which offers a more sophisticated and evolved approach to storytelling. The narratives within are rooted in personal experiences and provide a fresh viewpoint that contrasts with earlier representations of partition. These stories explore emotional complexities, addressing themes such as separation from one's homeland, violence, fear, sexual assault, forced conversions, widowhood, and the enduring connection between individuals and their native land. The storytellers here redirect attention from grand historical accounts to the individual and collective anguish of ordinary people, thereby enriching the realism and empathy found in partition literature. Punjabi partition literature, through a variety of collections and perspectives, consistently illustrates the profound influence of religion, exploring its significance in one of the most sorrowful episodes of South Asian history.

Introduction:-

The religion was at the core of partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 that raised hundreds of issues. The killings and looting that took place in the name of religion had a direct impact on the stories written in Punjabi. The main theme of Punjabi stories from 1947 to 1960 and beyond has

been the partition of the country and the problems associated with it. Lakhs of Punjabis had to leave their homes, houses, properties, lands here and there (in West Punjab) and become homeless. Lakhs of people were killed in the name of religion. The conditions before the partition of 1947 AD serve as the foundation for the Punjabi stories after independence. The riots that occurred during the partition only opened the way for the Punjabis to face troubles and problems. Punjabi's bore all these troubles and hardships on their own, was the result of religious fanaticism. Contemporary writers have seen and experienced this inhuman phenomenon. Punjabi writers have expressed the monstrous storm of religious hatred in this era which was depicted in their works. Punjabi storytellers have tried to understand the reasons for the partition, riots and have not allowed the ray of humanity to die at the hands of so many barbaric people in the heat of the moment. All the stories related to that period written in Punjabi literature are not untouched from the impact of religion. Jaswant Singh Did's story collection 'Uh Bhi Chote-Chote' edited by Ram Saroop Ankhi, 'Kala Santali' edited by Satinder Singh Noor, in bimonthly magazine, 'Santalinama' special issue of Samdarshi etc, all stories related to the partition of the country depict a deep essence of religion. We would try to highlight the pain of common man from the stories under different titles, which are recorded in the story collection '1947 AlleZakham Di Dastan' edited by 'Jinder'. The story collection highlighted the different aspects of Human suffering of partition in different geographical areas of India in their different stories

'Jinder' is one of the established story writers in contemporary Punjabi stories. Jinder was born on 2 Feb 1954 in village ladran in jalandhur district of Punjab. Jinder passed Higher Secondary from Arya School Nakodar. After that he obtained graduation in year 1972 from DAV college Nakodar and in 1977 obtained MA degree from DAV College Jalandhar. He was appointed as auction recorder in Market Committee Nakodar three times. From 1983 to 1988 he served as proof reader at MBD Jalandhar. From 17 August 1988 he served as an auditor in the Transport Department of the Punjab Government.

'1947 Alle Jakhama Di Dastan' was his fifth edited collection of short stories, besides his five short stories collection "Tusi nahi samajh sakde" (1996),. The collections "Main, Kahani te Uh" (1990), "Nahin main Nahin" (2000), "Bina vajha ton Nahin" (2004) and "Zakham" (2010) have been published. Jinder is known not only for the number of his short stories but also for the special characters and quality of the stories. Apart from short story collections, his sketches

"Kawasi Roti" (1988) and "Je eh Sach Hai Taan" (2004) have been published. Jinder's short story collections "Zakham" and "Dard Aur Paap" have also been published in Hindi. His fame in Punjabi literature is evident in the Traveluge 'che sao ikvanja meel'(2011) edition.

In collection '1947 Alle Jakhama Di Dastan' the stories of the various storytellers included which further enhance the art of storytelling, because the reality of the partition presented in the stories is different from the reality of the partition presented in the earlier stories. These stories are unique in as these stories reveal the subtlety, depth and subtle feelings of the narrative method. In these stories, the storytellers have depicted the division, oppression, passion, fear, rape, women's husbandlessness and forced religious conversion that arose during the partition of the country. The people who had to leave their homeland under forced labor during the partition, their immense love for their homeland became the subject of these stories. The fact emerged in the stories written by the storytellers in this story collection was that these stories have been created by the storytellers out of their own experiences. Our writers have taken this partition as the experience of the common people instead of big events. We can study the realities of partition in the light of religious impact under different titles all show the impact of religion in one way or the other.

Impacts of Partition:-

1. Inhuman torture during the freedom struggle before partition

If we look at the history of India, Punjab has not seen peace for many centuries. Especially when the Mughal invaders started coming. Before the arrival of the Mughals, Hinduism was the dominant religion in Punjab. Later, Islam came to Punjab and became a religion equal to Hinduism. Some Muslims came from across the mountains, i.e. from Afghanistan, but most Muslims converted from Hindus here. The rule of Punjab was in the hands of Muslim kings. Therefore, it was easy for them to spread religion. Then Sikhism was born from Hinduism. Like Islam, Sikhism also spread rapidly in Punjab. After Guru Gobind Singh, Bande Bahadur spread his wings in Punjab. After that, the Sikhs even reached the Red Fort of Delhi. When the Muslim kings became weak, Sikh misls came into existence and then the Sikh state came into existence. After the British came. The policy of the British was 'divide and rule' which has fanned the fire

of religious impact. The British gradually tried to occupy India. Seeing the country becoming a slave of the British, many revolutionary movements came into existence in the country. The British tried not only tried to suppress these revolutionary movements to maintain their rule but also given huge support to spread of christianity which has taken strong roots even toay . The British caught the youth participating in these revolutionary movements and kept them in jails and inhumane violence was unleashed on them.

From the early times till 1947, Punjabi story has been directly accepting the influence of the evolving literary trends and political movements (movements fought for independence). The story 'jalavattan' was written on the basis of these political movements 'Death is the book of those who participated in the struggle for freedom. A young man who participated in the freedom struggle has to leave his country after enduring inhuman torture. This story is about a young man named Vijay Bandhu and his companion Pratikhya who participated in the freedom struggle. Vijay Bandhu and Pratikhya were very active leaders of political movements about 20 years before independence. Vijay Bandhu was jailed many times but Pratikhya stood by him.

Every time she kept getting him released from the coal mine. When a bomb was thrown in the assembly, many young men were arrested. Vijay Bandhu was also arrested and locked up in a dungeon. He was tortured a lot.

"The bitter winter kept him in the canary of the fort, the snow was thrown on him. He was tied up. Gradually, the blood in his veins became stagnant and his brain became numb like a bee. On the third day, when his senses returned, the flesh was pulled and his feet were broken. After putting it on, he kept it for several days. The ropes became stiff, the wood was dry.¹

The common man's heart would have been broken by seeing such torture, but at that time the freedom fighters had to face them on their own. With the help of Pratikhya, Vijay Bandhu managed to escape from the prison cell and went into exile, that is, he left the country and settled in Japan. Even there, he regretted being thrown out of his country like cowards.

¹ 'Naourang singh,Jalavattan, 1947 AlleZakham Di Dastan' 'jalavattan' page-564

"I am a coward - who came armed from the war of independence of the country - many talented people must have strayed from the ropes of the gallows, was my victory so dear. Why did I run away? Why didn't I sacrifice my life for my homeland there? Alas, I won a crushing defeat."²

In August 1947, when he was in Penang, he read the news of the country's independence and he remembered the old times 20 years ago and a wave of happiness came in his mind to return to his country. He reached India by taking a ticket from Penang to India and joined the celebration of independence with lakhs of people. 2. Partition in stories related to the events of Partition

2. Pain in stories related to the events of Partition

The partition of the country was on communal grounds. Religious fanatics gave speeches in different places. The dividing line drawn between India and Pakistan separated brothers and sisters. Destitute No one had ever imagined that the series of events would be so terrible. When religious superstition is combined with passion and greed for plunder, the boundaries of oppression are broken. Images emerge. Swords were sharpened; the season of spears has come.

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²'Naourang singh, Jalavattan, 1947 AlleZakham Di Dastan' 'jalavattan' page-565

of the youth and the elderly has been done in the name of religious identity. Overall, the stories related to the events of Partition present before us the direction of cruelty and barbarity. Many aspects of human cruelty have come to light in the Punjabi stories related to the events of Partition, such as shown in sections below.

3. Degradation of human values and exploitation by government officials.

The partition of 1947 was such an accident in the history of India. The pain of which would be felt for centuries. This partition on the basis of religion was the result of some mischief of the British, the consequences of which we are still suffering. During the process of population transfer during partition, the man who became a slave shed the blood of his own brothers and sisters. There was no limit to his barbarity. Moral values and ethical value systems were helpless in front of these actions of his. Culture was also badly degraded. The values that our Gurus and the fathers of had instilled in us for centuries were not long in being shattered. What Gurmat, Sufi and Bhakti movements gave to Punjab, the ideology of community service and trust was broken by fanaticism, fanaticism and religious fanaticism. In the face of these inhuman acts, all human values were destroyed. The centuries-old harmony and harmony among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs was shattered.

Hira Singh Dard's in his story 'Ki Banega' shows innocent people being killed during the partition of 1947 in the spirit of revenge. This story presents a distorted picture of humanity in the name of fanaticism. While on one side people were dying of hunger and disease, on the other side, the frontier people and the guards of the borders are shown exploiting the people. The people had come to such a situation that they, like their sons, had become refugees, leaving behind their cattle, houses, land and property, and were giving priority to saving their lives.

"Go yourself, leave your house and belongings, somehow or send a message that they should leave everything and come out with their lives."³

The issue was not only the looting of the displaced by the opposing community, but those who had come or gone were also being looted by the fanatics and administrators.

The people were looted by their own brothers. In the story, Seth Raja Ram leaves his home and Guru Ghar Chad in Pakistan and comes to India, but if he brings jewelry and money with him, they are also looted on the way. In total, in 1947, bandits and robbers looted on both sides. In Pakistan, innocents were killed wearing the burqa of Islam, and here Hindus kept looting in the guise of Sikhism. In the name of freedom, the poor on both sides and ordinary people were made scapegoats. The innocent people were exploited mentally, economically and physically.

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During the religious riots, humanity is clearly seen dying in front of the brutality of man. The degradation of relationships in the name of humanity is depicted in Davinder Satyarthi's story 'JannamBhoomi'.⁴ A schoolmaster, his wife and young child Lalit, who had fled from Pakistan, die of thirst while drinking water in a train full of suffering people. The price of a glass was fifty rupees and they did not have enough money to buy water. Taking pity, a sardar took half a glass of water and gave it to them. Most of it was also consumed before he could drink it. Before the

³ Hira Singh Dard's '1947 AlleZakham Di Dastan' 'Ki Banega' Page-623

⁴ Davinder Satyarthi's '1947 AlleZakham Di Dastan' 'JannamBhoomi' Page-113

train started, the master's wife and her son die on the platform. The master and his daughters are left to watch the bodies lying on the platform from the moving train.

The atrocity of humanity enters a worse situation when the benefactors do not even treat their cursed elders and throw them away. Wariyam Sandhu's story 'Parachawan' also describes a similar situation. In the story, Balbir Singh kills Hussain Baksh. Hussain Baksh's father is a close friend of Balbir's father and he has played with Balbir in his childhood, but Balbir does not spare him either. He also insults his daughters. And when Hussain Baksh's little boy was dragged out from under the bed, he folded his hands.

"Oh Sardar-don't kill me. I will feed your cattle, keep me alive."⁵

The little man kept begging to be spared. But Balbir Singh, who reached the peak of brutality, beheads him.

Where Prem Parkash's story 'Bewatan' subtly presents the decline of human values and moral structures, that country's political system and It also highlights the failure of communal organizations. The character of the story, the elderly professor, presents alienation and distrust towards his country. The professor is stuck in England. There, his parents are killed in an accident and he comes to Lahore. He thinks that he will be able to live with dignity in his homeland. But in the long run, his wife and children are taken away from him in Lahore and he is thrown out of his house and pushed towards Indian Punjab. Now the cry for Khalistan is being raised and he fears that he will be thrown out from here too. He does not know which country is his and to whom he should show his loyalty. This story is a very good satire on the human condition and destiny. The old professor expresses his anger towards his homeland in this way-

"Is it not my fault, I was born in Lahore and studied in England. While spending so many years there, my homeland was India. In 1944, I returned to Varanasi. In 1947, I came to know that my homeland is somewhere beyond the borders of India. Now the tide of Khalistan is

⁵ Wariyam Sandhu '1947 AlleZakham Di Dastan' 'Parachawan' page-272

turning. Tomorrow, I will not know where my homeland would be. Such stories make the failure of the country's political, communal organizations and moral values visible.⁶

Gurdev Rupana's story 'Hawa', which exposes the failure of human systems, communalism and cowardice within religious systems, and opportunism and selfishness in the name of moral systems, exposes the poor performance of our military administration. In the story, along with the dead bodies of the military, the half-dead and the injured are also buried. In the story, when Madan As he is passing by, he sees a moving log. He takes water for it. The man says to Madan- Now you make me sit with that kicker's face, don't let the military bury me alive somewhere."⁷

In the story, Madan passes over so many dead bodies on the way that in the end he himself becomes a corpse. At first he tries to save the dead bodies that come under his carriage but in the end he finds himself helpless. While passing over the dead bodies, his mental state becomes such that when he reaches home and finds out that his only son has fallen from the roof and died, he cannot bear it. He sits silently and feels that his son's body is lying a mile away from the rest of the bodies.

Memories are just shadows and the shadows of partition are the byproduct of religious thought. Shadows keep on diminishing and growing. But some memories leave such eternal shadows, which become an eternal image and are etched deep inside. Some memories are just such that they remain overshadowed for the entire life ahead, and no matter how much you scratch, the scratches do not come out. Some such memories were engraved in the minds of the riot-affected people, if you look at them, they seemed like shadows of the past, but the more you scratch, the more bloodshed there was and people would return to the place where those events had occurred.

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