

PORTRAYAL OF HORRORS AND POLITICAL TRAUMA IN CHAMAN NAHAL'S AZADI

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Abstract: The partition of India on the eve of independence is one of the most tragic incidents in the history of Indian civilization. The division of the nation into two separate nations India and Pakistan became a grim reality because of the collective decision of the main stream political parties. The Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, the Akalis and the British Crown agreed to divide the nation. It was the collective decision of the political establishments of India and England. The British Raj survived in India because they followed the policy of 'Divide and Rule.' Once again before their departure the British Raj divided the nation two parts to suit their diplomatic needs. The word 'Partition' brings frightening pictures of a nation to our mind and it tells the story of deteriorating relationships, communal discord, and disorder, feelings of loss as well as being personal, professional and emotional. A tragedy like partition cannot be changed in the field of data alone. Even today the Hindus blame the Muslims and the Muslims blame the Hindus. But the reality is that both the Hindus and the Muslims are to be blamed, they both suffered, were raped, lost life's and became landless. Nahal has also taken this issue quite seriously. Instead of making a post-mortem of the holocaust of the partition, he adopted humanistic outlook. As an artist, Nahal believed in the might of pen and that's why his outlook in his novel Azadi.

Keywords: Partition, Refugee, Horrible, Independence etc.

Chaman Nahal (1927-2013) is one of the prominent writers of Indian English Literature. He has penned eight numbers of novels. *Azadi* (Independence) is one of the four novels which constitute the Gandhi Quartet. It is a modern classic presents a comprehensive vision of life demonstrating the mayhem that partition played on the people of the country at the socio-cultural, economic and individual levels.

Nahal has depicted the horrors of partition by focusing on the life of Lala Kanshi Ram of Sialkot. The novel highlights the positive as well as the negative side of the complex problems. Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist of *Azadi* becomes a spokesman of the Hindus who are intensely troubled by the unprecedented political event.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the inexplicable sufferings of those refugees during the time of partition. Nahal's '*Azadi*' is a moving and heart breaking story of the seven west Punjabi families, who were deeply affected by the partition. The novel is divided into three parts they are (1) Lull, (2) The storm, (3) The aftermath. In the second part there is heart-rending graphic description of riots and annihilation of Hindu families in Sialkot. Lala Kanshi Ram is a central character, an epitome of humanity, had respect for the British, as they had brought peace to the war torn land and made a nation. But his faith in the British Raj diminished when he heard the announcement of the British to quit the country after partitioning it. We understand his displeasure with the British when Lala made angry remarks about the irresponsibility of the British that the British never thought of them while partitioning the country and they betrayed the minorities sanctioning division. The word 'refugee' was new to Lala, he didn't understand it and said to himself "I was born here, this is my home, how can I be a refugee in my home." (*Azadi*, 109)

Nahal aptly titled the novel, *Azadi* is an ironic title (freedom) the freedom which threw them on the road, made homeless, forced to leave the motherland and there was not a family that had not suffered in riots. Some lost loved one's some women were abducted and raped. Did they want freedom at the cost of the millions of deaths? Author questions the so-called leaders of the nation, through the central character Lala, and accuses them for not taking into consideration of the lives of the minorities in Pakistan. Lala was deeply anguished when he was asked by an enquiring officer in Amritsar that what the purpose of going to Delhi was. Lala saw the accuracy of the British Raj in as small an act as the killing of a stray dog and realized that "Indeed was no Raj like the Angrez Raj." (*Azadi*, 112)

The greatness of author lies in his fair and impartial picture of the Hindu-Muslim hatred and love, their emotional and political relationships and the ambivalent relationship between Indian and British people in a very practical and highly structured manner. It portrays the realistic historical records of the horrible incidents caused by the partition through literary perspective. The novel is about the theme of partition of Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. As a refugee Nahal writes with remarkable penetration and realism. The novel is political, historical and above all a great work of art.

Sialkot was the part of undivided India lying in the west of Punjab province. The fate of Sialkot was not known to minority Hindu. But the college going student like Arun felt that partition would be granted to the Muslim League. He was sure that Sialkot would become the part of Pakistan. The Hindu housewives like Prabha Rani and Isher Kaur were also worried about their unknown future. The Muslim like Addul Ghani was the ardent supporter of Pakistan. He chided the Hindus for opposing partition. The Muslim League had worked tirelessly among the Muslims for the cause of separate homeland. The supporter of the Muslim League like Addul Ghani always saw the Hindu people with suspicion: "But the Muslim League had slowly made him aware of the threat to him in a free Hindu India. It was not a question of his personal views; the League or Jinnah Sahib knew better. They said, view you Hindu neighbour with suspicion, and he did that. They said there should be a Pakistan, and he shouted for Pakistan." (*Azadi*, 48)

On the twenty third of June 1947, the Legislative Assembly of Punjab dominated by the majority of the Muslim Legislators declared in Lahore to pass the resolution of partition of the province. The news spread like a wild fire. The riots spread in every important city of Punjab. There were large scale killings and loot in Lahore, Gujarawala, Rawalpindi, Multan and Sargodha of Pakistan owned Punjab. The situation in Indian owned Punjab was also not different. The riots had spread in Amritsar, Ambala, Jullunder and Ludhiana. Sialkot was comparatively better than other cities of Punjab. But everyday there was astray events of communal killings. There were four or five cases of fire by unknown miscreants every night. There was no case of mass killings or organized killings. But the murder of the D.C. Pran Nath Chaddha brought anarchy to Sialkot. To induce the fear psychosis among the Hindus, the Hindu mohallas and Hindu houses were burnt every night on regular basis. There was red smoke of fire every night in the sky. The streets of Sialkot were filled with the sounds of fire brigade ding, ding, ding, ding.

The prominent Hindu mohallas like Dharowal, Kanak Mandi and Trunk Bazaar were badly burnt. The rioters had burnt the Hindu mohallas with meticulous planning. These events had created a fear for death among Hindus. Lala Kanshi Ram and the tenants of Bibi Amar Vati had not left the place. They had thought that the situations might improve. But the situation of Sialkot further deteriorated. At last, that day also came when Lala Kanshi Ram had to leave his home. His shop was looted.

His friend Chaudhary Barkat Ali informed that his mohalla would be burnt tonight. In the meantime, the government had opened the refugee camp to provide shelter to homeless Hindus. These two words- ‘refugee camp’ – became the household name in Punjab. The exodus of Hindu people from Hindu mohalla to refugee camp continued for several days. Arun had told earlier to Lala Kanshi Ram to move to refugee camp. Arun persuaded Lala Kanshi Ram to move to refugee camp. His friend Chaudhary Barkat gave sound reasons to Lala Kanshi Ram to leave his home. Lala Kanshi Ram was too much agitated and enraged with the idea of moving to refugee camp. He was psychologically perturbed by the idea of moving to camp:

“It hurt him, the thought of it, and he paced his room restively.

‘Refugee, refugee, indeed!’

‘I was born around here, this is my *home* – how can I be a refugee in my, own home?’

‘Father, we’ll have to leave’ – Arun said.

Before he could finish his sentence, Lala Kanshi Ram cut him off.

‘Why will we have to? Why?’

‘Well, the government seems unable to protect us, and we’ll have to save our lives.’ (*Azadi*, 109)

The Muslims considered these Hindus women as *Kafirs*. The Kafirs had to be treated like that way according to them. Arun was too much distressed to see such a lewd scene. Every Muslim in the crowd wanted to gaze the public region of *Kafir* women except one hakim. These Muslim showed ugly gesture to these women. The hakim prayed for these helpless women. Suraj Prakash and Arun left for the camp. Arun did not talk on this matter in the camp. Every people in the camp came to know about the naked parade of Hindu women. Some Campmates had noticed the daughter of Dr. Chander Bhan in the naked parade. The Hindus were horrified to think about the incident. The same night the refugee camp was attacked in connivance with Pakistan army. The attack was sudden. It seemed that the attackers were inside the camp. The electric supply was stopped. The electric wires were cut down. Sunanda Bala was abducted by the Pakistani army Captain Rahamat-Ullah-Khan. She was taken to the barn. Arun was at that time in lavatory. He started running without knowing his destination. He wanted to save his life. He reached the field. He saw a army jeep. It was parked in the field. He reached near the born. He heard the voice of Sunanda Bala. She was struggling to save her honour. A man was lying on his top. Arun entered the hut and took a spike and hammered the rapist.

Later he recognized that the rapist was none the else but army captain Rahamat-Ullah-Khan. Both Arun and Sunanda Bala reached to refugee camp. Here Arun came to know that his lady love Chandni was abducted by the Muslim rioters. Sunanda lost her husband Suraj Prakash. He was killed by the Muslim rioters. The life of other people remained safe. Arun was broken man. The partition had given him maximum casualty. Lakhmir Singh rightly observes that, “Nahal’s purpose is not to depict history but to describe the impact of the historical tragedy of the partition on ordinary people.” (Singh, 226) Christopher Ricks, comments that the novel, “...encompasses a vast world of geographical and historical and cultural consideration yet it is strictly economical in a way that embodies a sense of disciplined order in heartfelt opposition to the violent disorder which it has to contemplate. This simple difficult economy protects it from the prurience when it tells of appalling atrocities.” (Ricks, Newspaper)

S.C. Bhatia observes, “He is on the one hand moved by the patriotic exhortations to free the country. Yet he likes the pageants and processions and the safety of the British Raj.” (Bhatia, 228)

Mohan Jha observed *Azadi* is a novel of “...a psychological wedge, an emotional and spiritual rift among the civil, police and military personal of undivided India. Everything looks so confused, so uncontrollable so tense and grim.” (Jha, 37)

When I come to the findings of my research paper, I found that the humanity which lives with love and peace forages, became enemy of each other during the partition. The partition is the outcome of the greedy nature of politician, religious leaders and Britishers who took advantage of these incidents and created a huge gulf between the two communities. Nahal’s *Azadi* depicts the tragedies of the victims of communal violence.

Nahal has attempted to present an authentic account of the horrific events that took place due to the partition. It is nothing less than a tragic novel. It should also be added that he did not try to criticize one religion against another (Muslim v/s Hindu) in his novel, thus Nahal draws upon not only personal experiences but also historical and didactic and circumstantial ones. He intentionally made the facts of the controversy clear almost at the end of the novel.

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