

Partition and Displacement: Exploring Trauma, Migration, Identity and Riots in Post-Partition Urdu Novels on Uttar Pradesh India

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Abstract

The Paper brings to light the theme of the 1947 riots and migration as depicted in Urdu novels. It identifies Urdu novels that specifically focus on the riots and displacement that occurred in Uttar Pradesh and its neighboring regions. The tumultuous events transformed the lives of millions into a tragic saga. Artists with sensitive souls deeply felt the profound sorrow. Predominantly, the study is underpinned by the theories of trauma and migration that focus on the psychological and cultural implications of displacement, violence and erasure of identity in post-partition literature. This study used the quantitative method of analysis to investigate the role of key Urdu novels that address partition and its impact on those experiencing displacement in society. Some writers concentrated on the horrific scenes of bloodshed, looting, desecration of human values, and dishonor during the riots. Primary data is sourced from Urdu literature, novelists like Intizar Hussain, Khadija Mastur, Qurratulain Hyder, and Altaf Fatima, among others, have narrated the stories of the regions beyond Punjab where the agony of riots and migration was particularly immense. 'Chaand Gahan,' 'Basti,' 'Aage Samandar Hai,' 'Aag Ka Darya,' 'Aangan,' and 'Dastak Na Do' are some of those novels in Urdu. These novelists have given voice to the emotions and challenges faced by migrants in their new homes after migration. This research explores the works of these novelists and the analytical investigation reveals that the division of India is still one of the great post-war traumas that have timelessly changed the fate of millions of people. Subtle emotions of the epoch have been portrayed by tormented artists. Some writers focused on the aspects of massacre, plunder, shamelessness of human values, and rape.

keywords: Urdu Novels, Partition of India, Historical Fiction in Urdu, Post-War Trauma, Partition Literature, Uttar Pradesh Migration, Human Tragedy in Urdu Fiction, Literary Depictions of Riots

Introduction

With the partition of India, riots engulfed the entire region. Murder, pillage, and looting were rampant. Hindus and Sikhs from Muslim-majority areas, and Muslims from Hindu-majority areas were forced to migrate. Families were torn apart, and millions perished in the battle of fire and blood, while the survivors were left destitute.

Urdu novelists, in their works, not only depicted the atrocities committed during the riots and migration but also highlighted the shattering of the dreams of the migrants upon reaching their destinations. The social, psychological, and economic problems created by migration for the refugees were also the part of their narratives. Aqeel Ahmad writes, “Urdu fiction has not yet been able to extricate itself from the theme of Partition at both the intellectual and artistic levels, and in one way or another, this theme dominates our stories and novels” (p. 1).

After Partition, Urdu novelists, on the one hand, emphasized the chronicles of the riots and, on the other hand, focused on the problems faced by the new class, the migrants, who had become part of the national mainstream.

Problem Statement

The issue that arose after 1947 was the resettlement of the refugees. Broken-up families from various parts of India began to arrive in Pakistan, and providing them with adequate shelter and food was a difficult task for the new nation. On the one hand, there was a mountain of problems, and on the other hand, a shortage of resources. Moreover, the selfishness, opportunism, and dishonesty of the relevant officials further aggravated the situation. This was a cause for concern for the new nation. Under these circumstances, the writers felt the sense of deprivation of the refugees and drew the attention of the ruling class to the social and economic issues that they were ignoring.

Scope of the Study

Uttar Pradesh, a more civilized region of India, holds a significant place in the promotion of the Urdu language and literature. The two major schools of thought, the Delhi and the Lucknow, are unforgettable in the history of Urdu. Ironically, not much has been written about the 1947 riots in this region in the context of partition. Since the fire of riots in eastern and western Punjab had burnt everything to ashes, the human eye wept much over the scenes of ashes and blood in Punjab. The scenario of the migrants from UP and other parts of India has been depicted in Urdu novels, but the flames from the riots in Punjab were so high that the smoke rising from other regions was less visible.

Methodology

The current research relies on a qualitative approach to examine Urdu novels that are based on the events of partition in 1947 in terms of migration, social and psychological losses. The main source of a primary nature for this research is a set of selected works of authors such as Intizar Hussain, Khadija Mastur, Qurratulain Hyder, and Altaf Fatima, among others, have narrated the stories of the regions beyond Punjab where the agony of riots and migration was particularly immense. 'Chaand Gahan,' 'Basti,' 'Aage Samandar Hai,' 'Aag Ka Darya,' 'Aangan,' and 'Dastak Na Do' novels are textbook mostly providing the understanding of the forced migration, violence

and the dismantling of the identity. These works are analysed through a thematic approach, focusing on indicators of loss, inter-(inter)group conflict and reconfiguration of memory, to see how these writers negotiate the emotions of partition. This approach enables little and large-scale manifestations of post-trauma and post-resilience to be studied in detail, thus giving a clear picture of the trauma reflected in the society portrayed in Urdu literatures.

Analysis and Discussion

In Intizar Hussain's novel '*Chand Gahan*,' the characters Sabtain, Kale Khan, Fayyaz, Haq Sahib, Numbardar, and Booji are from the town of Hasanpur in UP. Intizar Hussain had told Balraj Sahni the painful truth that 'you have not suffered the pain of migration'. The pain of abandoned land is the most important theme in Intizar Hussain's short stories and novels. His novel presents a scene of riots related to Uttar Pradesh. When the looted caravans reached Hasanpur in Pakistan, they were carrying with them, along with stories of oppression, a sense of hatred and revenge. The refugee caravans were enough to poison the peaceful atmosphere of Hasanpur with hatred. Ignoring the centuries-old traditions that were unique to UP, the sympathizers of the refugees started a game of fire and blood. In the circumstances, Muslims had to leave Hasanpur. Two important characters of Intizar Hussain's novel, Sabtain and his companions, had to go to Delhi from their ancestral region so that they could travel to Pakistan from there. These people managed to reach Lahore safely. Fayyaz and Sabtain, being educated, wanted to reform the nation. For this purpose, both of them applied for a press allotment, but the allotment system was as strange as the maze of love. A press was allotted to a dhobi (washerman), and these reformers were allotted a laundry. Fayyaz roamed the streets of Lahore like a madman, trying to understand the chaos that was prevailing in the newly established country: 'Sometimes he was seen lying like a yardstick on the silent roads outside the city. He was often seen going around the refugee camps. He wanted to see a particular kind of defiance in the refugees... then he started to get irritated with the refugees.'

The feeling of insecurity, disappointment, despair, and nostalgia among the refugees is the central theme of Intizar Hussain's '*Chand Gahan*'. Most of his characters look at the newly-formed system with eyes wide-open, and their every word is directed towards the past, thus making loneliness their fate.

Intizar Hussain's novel '*Basti*' is considered one of the important Urdu novels. It is the story of a settlement that had to be abandoned by its centuries-old inhabitants due to the riots. The novel also presents the lament of abandoned lands, how the characters, even after going to cities, start missing their settlement.

"Unpaved paths that seemed to lead somewhere unknown, disappearing into the trees. Swaying, jolting carts, drowsily crawling bullock carts, an occasional chariot... The black temple, surrounded by monkeys, standing in its enclosure... The desolate and sorrowful wall of Karbala, the fort on the hill, the Ravan Forest, and the mysterious banyan tree standing in the middle of Ravan Forest – it was an entire mythical era that remained with Roop Nagar" (p. 3).

Intizar Hussain was born in the district of *Buland* in *Uttar Pradesh*, and he remained captivated by the charm of his birthplace throughout his life. This is why his ancestral town became a cultural

metaphor, scattered across all his writings. He spent his entire life searching for what was lost. About himself, he says:

“If a distinct attitude developed in my writings, separate from those of others, it was not because of a book, but due to an experience... I had to migrate... I witnessed the entire populace migrating, which took me away from the attitudes of the fiction writers of that time and placed me on a different level” (p. 4).

In Intizar Hussain's novel *Basti*, the central character Zakir migrates with his parents from the town of Roop Nagar in Uttar Pradesh to Lahore, while his beloved Sabirah refuses to come to Pakistan. Thus, the tragedy of the partition of the family overwhelms Zakir with a sense of nostalgia. Intizar Hussain has used the symbols, which were part of the collective life of its villages, of the ancient culture of Uttar Pradesh, to unravel the psychology of his characters.

In his final days, Bojaan is troubled by the fact that the shroud brought from Karbala has not been exposed to sunlight. There is mourning over the loss of the family genealogy. The search for the neem tree and the call of the koel continues. Migration divided countless families, leaving millions of people separated from their loved ones. This tragedy is depicted in *Basti* through Zakir and his family's experiences. The novel also vividly portrays the painful scenes related to the plight of the migrants.

"When Pakistan was still new... like the sky of Roop Nagar, and the land had not yet become tainted, caravans were arriving here after long, dark journeys. Every day, a caravan would enter the city and scatter through the streets and neighborhoods. Whoever found a corner to hide their head would settle there. Those who had spacious homes would first, out of joy, and then out of kindness, keep offering refuge to those arriving, until even that spacious house began to feel cramped... How are we to survive here?" (p. 5).

In Saleem Ahmed's poem *Mashriq*, the process of migration emerges as a profound creative experience. Intizar Hussain is also a character in this poem. Both Intizar Hussain and Saleem Ahmed migrated together, and the poem reflects the shared experience. Seen in this light, Intizar Hussain personally endured the pain of migration and was a firsthand witness to the associated struggles, a creative expression of which can be found in his novels.

In his novel, “*Aage Samandar Hai*”, Intizar Hussain has meticulously depicted the tragedy of migration and its profound emotional consequences. The anguish of displacement is a recurring theme in Hussain's oeuvre, dominating his literary creations. The emotional turmoil experienced by a migrant as s/he navigates the aftermath of their journey forms the crux of Hussain's central characters.

As Pakistan grappled with political upheaval and its citizens yearned for stability in their new homeland, the protagonist of “*Aage Samandar Hai*”, Jawad, found himself consumed by similar feelings of unease and despair. Jawad's emotional upheaval was first triggered when he reread letters from his aunt and other relatives after a long hiatus. The longing for his loved ones, previously buried in his subconscious, surged to the forefront of his consciousness.

Although Jawad returns to India, he is met with a perplexing blend of astonishment and melancholy. His hometown had lost its former razzle and dazzle. Families had been torn apart;

parents resided in India while their sons had settled in Pakistan. A poignant dialogue in the novel encapsulates the sentiment: “Brother, I wonder what is in the waters of Pakistan that turns the blood of those who go there white” (p. 4).

Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad Khan further elaborates on this theme, stating:

“Intizar Hussain has poignantly portrayed the hurtful taunts and comments of relatives who were left behind when people migrated to Karachi, Pakistan. These relatives would often remark that those who had migrated had made great progress but had forgotten about those they had left behind, leading to accusations that their blood had turned white” (p. 7).

Jawad was not alone in his decision to migrate to Pakistan. Many others sold their property and ventured to the new nation in search of opportunities. Pyare Mian is one such characters who sold his share of the property and moved to Pakistan. Bashu Bhabhi, another character, remained in India but was deeply saddened by the disintegration of her family. She lamented, “In their eagerness to settle in Pakistan, they should not have ruined us and shattered our family” (p. 8).

Similarly, Nanhi Tai’s grandson had promised to return from Pakistan with the army but never did: “When he was leaving, I said, ‘Son, just as you’re turning your back, make sure to show your face too. Come back soon.’ ‘Grandmother, I will come back very soon, and I will come with the army.’ Well, he is still on his way to this day” (p. 9).

As a result of partition, the Muslims of India faced difficulties according to their circumstances and locations. In some places, like Punjab and Delhi, people became victims of riots and massacres, while in others, Muslims were controlled by military force. Those left behind after partition kept waiting for those who had left, and those who had left had no idea about those left behind:

“I had written to my daughter-in-law, ‘May you be blessed with abundance of wealth and children in Pakistan. We only long to see your face. We will not pluck the jewels adorned on you” (p. 10).

Thus, the division of families after migration gave rise to many emotional and psychological problems.

‘*Aag ka Darya*’ is not only a successful novel by Qurratulain Hyder but is also counted among the finest novels of Urdu literature. Qurratulain Hyder created the novel against the backdrop of India’s two-and-a-half-thousand-year-old history and civilization.

When the announcement of the partition of India was made after a long struggle for independence, Gautam was deeply saddened by the division of the country. According to Gautam, it was not just the division of one country but also the division of Hindu-Muslim culture:

‘Gautam was saying, “Pakistan has been created to solve the economic problem of Muslims”’(p. 11).

When Gautam returned to India, he had a high position, knowledge, and experience of everything, but he did not see the same splendor and gatherings that existed before the partition of India. Due to which, despite all material comforts, he could not find peace of mind. Kamal, who had come to India from Pakistan for the last time, did not come to meet him even at Gautam’s request due to a lack of courage and confidence, but Hari Shankar and Gautam were very upset due to being unaware of the real situation:

“... the bloody, went back after coming all the way to Delhi. If he had sent me a telegram, I would have come and met him there” (p. 12).

However, Gautam’s idea was merely the result of a misunderstanding.

Despite being a Muslim Leaguer, Champa did not have the courage to leave India. At the end of the novel, she says to Kamal at one point:

“Muslims should not have left from here... This is your own homeland... Why did you leave? If I were to come to your place, wouldn’t I get one fine position after another? Look at all the degrees I have brought from Paris and London” (p. 13).

The partition of India, while giving rise to many other issues, also presented the tragedy of dividing the privileged and middle classes into two parts. That was because it created problems related to marriages between boys and girls in divided families. In India, there is a large population that considers marriage outside one’s caste, community, or family to be a disgrace. When such people leave one settlement and settle in new ones, trying to become part of a new community and the collective system, they feel themselves strangers like Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden of Eden. These are the people who have severed their ties with their earthly and cultural center, and forced migration has thrown them into an area where a multitude of different people have gathered. Clutching their memories of the past to their chests, they are seen breathing with difficulty in the present, as in “*Aag Ka Darya*”:

“This is Pakistan’s strangest creature, and it has come from India and is found in every city, town, and village of the country. Karachi is its headquarters... This tribe came to Pakistan as migrants” (p. 14).

The effects that the partition of India had on the upper class are vividly captured in Qurratulain Hyder’s novels that seem eyewitness accounts. Qurratulain Hyder’s characters, despite being filled with a sense of diaspora and displacement, appear to possess immense abilities to live and think. Migration from the Indian subcontinent is proof that these people no longer have any claim to the mangoes of Banaras or to Premchand and Tagore. Karachi has now become the center of this multitude that has arrived from various Indian cities such as UP, Hyderabad, and Gujarat. The large-scale migration of India’s population during the partition and the subsequent problems it faced are of great significance to Qurratulain Hyder.

Khadija Mastur’s novel “*Aangan*” (1962) reflects the impact of partition on the family system and depicts the disintegration of households against this backdrop.

The members of the same family living in the same courtyard have different political affiliations. Some are ardent supporters of the Congress, while others consider the Muslim League to be the savior of the Muslims in the region. Simultaneously, both anti-British and pro-British elements have their distinct identities in the novel. Thus, “*Aangan*” becomes a center for various political trends and movements.

“Those days are gone when you trembled at the mere mention of the English” (p. 15)

The novel’s main character, Alia’s uncle, supports the Congress and hence hates the British, while his son Jameel supports the Muslim League. He goes to Lahore for the Muslim League’s March 23, 1940, session, which further intensifies the mental and emotional conflict, as the uncle, being

the supporter of the Congress, dislikes his son and consider his earnings to be unlawful. His hatred reaches such a point that he starts eating separately:

“I didn’t know this Jameel, my own child, would become my enemy,” the old uncle had said to Alia many times. Seeing his uncle’s restlessness, she was bewildered. She would spend hours thinking about where one, in one’s objectives, becomes such a sharp-edged razor that cuts and throws away all relationships and ties” (p. 16).

The ideological rift creates various psychological problems for the people in *‘Aangan’*. This anxiety spreads from the courtyard to engulf the entire country. In this context, Aqeel Ahmed writes:

“The story of *‘Aangan’* starts from the courtyard of a house and reaches the realm of Indian society and politics. Issues like religion, politics, literature, and educational problems are discussed in the courtyard of the house” (p. 17).

A similar kind of conflict arises between the characters of this novel, especially between the old uncle and Jameel bhai as if the independence of the country was not the political issue of Hindustan instead it was their personal contention:

“...with the decision of independence, father and son had become disgusted with each other’s sight. Pakistan will be formed, Pakistan will not be formed, and in the midst of this conflict, he missed Chammi badly. If she was also sitting in this house today, what would have happened. Even before independence, everyone would have smashed each other’s head and kicked the bucket” (p. 18)

Everyone felt a great sorrow at the departure of Amma and Alia. Jameel bhai and the elder uncle didn’t even have the courage to say goodbye to them. Uncle left the house early that morning and Jameel bhai kept crying in his bed, but Amma was not one to value emotions. She called the intensity of the elder uncle and Jameel bhai’s feelings rudeness and, without caring about anyone’s love, set out for her journey by plane: ‘Would that seats hadn’t been reserved for today, she could have stayed, how could she go without meeting the elder uncle? It’s as if she sat down tiredly.’

The beautiful house, comfortable life, and the constant presence of servants had erased all of Amma’s sorrows. Therefore, Alia’s relatives in India and her mother were engrossed in their own lives. In this context, Dr. Shama Afroz Zaidi writes:

“In this novel, she has interpreted or recovered the significance of the middle class of Indian Muslims on the canvas of a declining civilization, a decaying society, and the economic system of twentieth-century united India... Khadija Mastur’s *‘Aangan’* has become a symbol of every household in India and Pakistan” (p. 20).

In this novel, Khadija Mastur has described the negative changes that occur in the domestic lives of those involved in the country’s politics, the distance from wives, children, or parents and siblings, and how they become insecure due to being deprived of the love and affection of their father, brother, or husband.

The way partition brought the ancient feudal system to ruin, the new political environment played a role in severing blood relations, and the atmosphere of hatred that was created, where father and

son became enemies of each other and, caught up in politics, went their separate ways as they had determined, is explained through different characters in '*Aangan*'."

"*Dastak Na Do*" by Altaf Fatima is a romantic novel set against the backdrop of the partition of India and its impact on domestic life. The novel's plot revolves around the landed gentry from Uttar Pradesh, who enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle in united India. The members of the family were counted among the aristocracy of India. Except for the head of the household, the rest of the family, especially the women, had no interest in politics. As tensions escalated in the region following the announcement of partition, Geety Ara Begum and her mother faced increasing difficulties. The head of the household had already passed away, and the loyal housekeeper, Sharif, was martyred during Friday prayers. When the looting reached its peak, with the assistance of a Hindu gardener, both women were somehow able to reach a camp.

Muslims and refugees living in East and West Punjab were forced to migrate, but the intensity of the riots was somewhat less in Uttar Pradesh and other Indian regions. Moreover, Muslims from these cities disappeared from the scene for a while and began to wait for the situation to improve. For all these reasons, the families were divided. One half became the citizens of Pakistan while the other, of India:

"Asif bhai doesn't intend to come here. He says that my health doesn't permit me to uproot myself again and go there, and if I go, my mother, who is very weak, will never go. Besides, this riot will not last forever" (p. 21).

Class division has always held the world in its grip. Whether it is a revolution or an accident, the difference between the rich and the poor always determines who dies and who survives:

"They are high-class people. Be it a riot or something, the high class remains the high class" (p. 22).

While "*Dastak Na Do*" alludes to other emotional issues related to migration; a large part of it also focuses on the division of the family. Four siblings became citizens of two different countries due to a mere line on a map. Meetings became difficult, family values broke down, and people on both sides became uncertain about the future:

"Arjmand keeps complaining that I am alone here. Although Aapa explains a lot that why are you alone, I am here" (p. 23).

Another reason for the division of families was the search for better opportunities. A new country, new land, and new opportunities for progress led many people to leave the rest of the family behind in India and settle in Pakistan:

"Migrants are those who come during the time of migration. They have only come here recently. They had just received new postings and had just got married" (p. 24)

The newly formed nation brought forth a host of unforeseen challenges. Families, once united, found themselves irrevocably divided into two separate countries. A geopolitical boundary shattered the bonds of civilization, family, love, and affection. As one character laments, 'And yes, now even our aunts and uncles might be able to visit. But given the paperwork, it'll take at least four months for their passports. No, No, Mother! Who travels to another country now?'

Essentially, “*Dastak Na Do*” reflects the migration of the feudal class and the subsequent hardships they endured. The novel also poignantly portrays the familial divisions arising from partition.

Findings of the Study

The paper shows that Urdu novelists, employing the effective descriptions and appeals to the emotional response of the reader, convey the pain of the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the forced population displacement. These authors describe violence, pillage, and social degeneration, thus recreating the experiences of the displaced person and societies. Ethical concerns which are raised are that people’s dignity has been violated, that the lives of those who have been displaced have been adversely affected, and social cohesiveness which matches the psychological impact of partition is similar to that of a trauma and migration. These theories which suggest profound psychological and cultural consequences of displacement assist in the contextualising of the findings and thus showcase how the novelists engage issues to do with identity loss, culture and memory and strength in the face of disruption. Given that the existing literature largely deals with the experiences of partition in the Punjab region, this research brings in a novel perspective to the regional diversities in the catastrophe and analyses how Urdu literature is employed as a record of collective reminiscence of sorrow; in addition to augmenting the knowledge of how war generates new forms of displacement and influences identity formation on the basis of memory.

Conclusion

Beyond the Punjab riots, and then, the deteriorating conditions in Delhi, Bengal, and Deccan, U. P. Where the Muslims were in majority and mostly belong to the affluent class, many of these families were divided. Some were in favour of leaving for Pakistan while others preferred to stay in Hindustan. Many such families faced the agonizing choice between India and Pakistan. Despite facing adversity, the privileged often managed to migrate, their wealth provided them a certain degree of privilege and they reached Pakistan without experiencing riots.

The partition of India remains an enduring tragedy that has irrevocably altered the lives of millions. Sensitive artists have profoundly captured the anguish of the period. Some writers paid attention to the spectacles of massacre, plunder, disgrace of human values, and rape. Urdu novelists like Intizar Hussain, Khadija Mastur, Qurratulain Hyder, and Altaf Fatima, have chronicled the horrors of riots and displacement beyond the confines of Punjab. Their works, including ‘*Chand Gahan*’, ‘*Basti*’, ‘*Aage Samandar Hai*’, ‘*Aag ka Darya*’, ‘*Aangan*’, and ‘*Dastak Na Do*’, vividly depict the struggles and emotions of migrants adjusting to life in their new homelands.

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