

Relooking the Traumatic Condition in K.A.Abbas

Short story

'The Refugee'

Dr. Asha Arora

Associate Professor in English

Ch. Ballu Ram Godara Govt Girls College, Sri Ganga Nagar (Raj.)

Abstract

'Partition literature' as a literary piece depicts of the events that took place during the partition of India. The multiple literary texts on partition have been written by the writers of India and Pakistan. They carried out the varying reactions from nostalgic lament for a long age for the terrible misfortunes that befell those who had been affected by the events of 1947. These works depict that the murder and martyrdom at partition time was a human tragedy. The writers made a conscious effort to give expression to that crucial time when countless innocent lives were lost due to political decisions of a mere handful. They show a clear understanding of the tensions within the communities which occasionally burst into outrage. Through the partition literature, the writers try to give some sensitive insights into the impact of violence on ordinary life. Their aim is not to exorcise the past, but to initiate an ethical understanding of emotions among people. The present paper presents how the innocence of people is crushed by a handful of cruel and selfish people who wanted to divide the nation.

Key words:- Partition, nostalgic, martyrdom, violence

Before partition, the daily life of Hindus and Muslims remained richly interwoven. They used to take parts in each other's customs and practices. But migration, a major fall out of partition resulted in displacement, dislocation, uprootedness and alienation causing pain or anger or bewilderment. The writers wrote about the horrors, witnessed by the people on the way, and the difficulties, in finding safe refuges on the other side of newly demarcated borders. They also focused on the violence and communal tensions in society. The riots had devastating effects such as the rape and abduction of women, desecration of holy places, loss of life and property and displacement. Khwaja Ahmad Abbas (7 June 1914-1 June 1987), popularly known as K.A.Abbas, was an Indian film director, novelist, screenwriter, and a journalist in the Urdu, Hindi and English languages. 'The Refugee' is a popular short story by K.A.Abbas, based on the trauma of India-Pakistan partition in 1947. Abbas depicts the poignant tale of Maanji, the old Sardarni who is uprooted from her ancestral house in Rawalpindi and is forced to move to Bombay due to violence caused by the partition. The historical event of the Partition of 1947 serves as the background to the text. This event is referred to as a "tragic storm" by K.A.Abbas in the opening lines of the text. Partition of the British

Indian Empire into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of India in 1947 is a historical event which forcibly moved thousands of people to both the nations has used as the setting of this story.

The story begins on a general note which talks about the physical movement of the people between nations during partitions and its effect on the economical, psychological and political thoughts of the people. The author K.A.Abbas gives a personal touch to the story when he introduces as his own mother as a victim of partition along with several other mothers. One among this is Maanji, the protagonist (main character) of this story. The rest of the story talks about the comfortable life of Maanji in Rawalpindi where she owned a double storey building, churned butter and ghee, leased out land to farmers and was blessed abundantly by her neighbours.

All these comforts are broken when there is an announcement in June 1947 about the impending partition. For simpletons like Maanji and her husband who never knew what would happen to their life after the actual partition, this news did not make an impact. She would always innocently question “Who will harass as here?” and treated all Muslims who lived around her as her own children. This generosity and ignorance earned her the love and protection from her neighbours who came forward to even keep watch over her house.

She was generous in whatever she did. She sent donations of food and clothing to refugees and freely distributed butter milk to entire neighbourhood. For all that she did the people blessed her and her son a long life. Being a very simple woman, she is moved by the murder of tongawallah and his horse because of religious prejudice. She says “They killed him because he was a Hindu- but they did not even spare the horse”. Even though she is ignorant here as she echoes her secular view of life.

The story shifts to the present life of Maanji as a refugee in Bombay. The author shows how she has moved into her smaller house but still takes effort to maintain it spotlessly. Without servants, she is forced to do all household chores “but she has a maternal smile and pleasant smile”. As a refugee “She never proclaims her tragedy” but she sheds silent tears when she thinks of Rawalpindi and “those pears and apricots and apples, those grapes and melons and baggoogoshas that you never get in Bombay”.

This story shows the changed life of a simple mother in Rawalpindi to a pained “refugee” in Bombay. But K.A.Abbas says that this pain is associated with “neither anger nor hatred, neither rancour nor self-pity, but only memories”. This shows how Maanji has accepted reality but at the same time dwells on her memories which show the intensity of the human heart that accepts change. India- Pakistan division left the unforgettable imprints that can be removed from the memories of the sufferers. That partition can be a political event for a nation but for human beings, it was such an event when they were murdered for no fault of theirs and they had to leave their houses unwillingly just to spare their life. They left their homes with a hope that they would soon return to their homes but that was a deception for them. Such type of events not only disturbs their physical self but also their inner self.

References-

BUTALIA, Urvashi. 2017. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. New Delhi: Penguin.

MENON, Ritu, and Kamla BHASIN. 1998. *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

PANDEY, Gyanendra. 2004. *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

