



## Humanistic value in the traumatic period in the partition novel *azadi* by chaman nahal.

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### Abstract

As India acquired independence from the British Empire in 1947, the Partition of India was the means of dividing the subcontinent along ethnic lines. It resulted in the formation of the Muslim-dominated northern state of Pakistan and the Hindu-dominated southern portion of the Republic of India. However, Partition destroyed both India and Pakistan. It displaced around 15 million individuals from their homes. The two nations began their independence with bankrupt economies and areas lacking an established, effective administration. *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal is a modern masterpiece that conceals an all-encompassing revelation of life, symbolizing the societal and individual havoc partition wreaked on the people of the country. From a literary standpoint, it depicts the realistic historical documentation of the horrific clashes precipitated by the split. As a former refugee, Chaman Nahal writes with remarkable insight and reality. Therefore, he has portrayed his personal experiences through the characters of Lala Kashiram and his son Arun. The narrative focuses on the tranquillity setting preceding the proclamation of division, the terrible episodes that resulted from Partition, and the dreadful conditions of the desensitized refugees following Partition. This article will study the depiction of the historical tragedy of Partition in *Azadi* and the humanistic attitudes of love, tolerance, and compassion. *Azadi* focuses on the dehumanization of life and the destruction of the ideal. In the famous book, Partition is described in the most comprehensive manner. Nahal emphasizes the importance of human forgiveness through the protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram, focusing on “the bright of life” to which he is “committed” despite the fact that his sharp realism is heavily tempered by huge doses of romantic love and sensuality in this Partition book. The author presents the intimate relationship between Arun and Chandni, the daughter of the Charwoman, during the tumultuous period in India and Pakistan. The author appears to be attempting to kill two birds with one stone: erotic interest and societal reform. In this article, an attempt is made to comprehend, evaluate, and defend the contribution of humanism throughout the turbulent time of the Partition of India.

**Key terms:** Partition, love, humanism, relationship, Tragedy and displacement.

## Background

Azadi, one of Gandhi's Chorus's novels, is considered Chaman Nahal's finest work. This tale was inspired by Nahal's actual experience of living in Sialkot during the Partition of India. Nahal himself observes: "I wrote Azadi as a hymn to one's land of birth rather than a realistic novel of the Partition. (Nahal, 10) The novel is historical, political, and a superb piece of art above all else. Nahal has offered a realistic depiction of the Partition's interim as well as a humanitarian approach. When we learn of the killings, massacres, rapes, arson, looting, and the plight of uprooted refugees caused by the division, we are appalled. According to K R. Srinivasa Iyengar: "Azadi is a film about India's Partition, which engulfed the subcontinent in a nightmare of terror for months and left a trail of incredible bitterness and agony in its wake. Even after all these years, the scars bleed again as recollection prods them".<sup>1</sup> Chaman Nahal was himself a victim of the Partition, a refugee who endured painful hardships on his trek over the border. Therefore, he has portrayed his personal experiences through Lala Kashi Ram and his son Arun.

After attaining independence in 1947, Indian works in English that described the liberation fight, socio-political unrest, and Gandhian precepts of non-violence transitioned to the issue of Partition's Holocaust. This terrible tragedy of Partition spawned a new body of literature. A lot of books were created as a result of the blood-curdling catastrophe that shook the Indian literary community. The tragedy of Partition, which resulted in total anarchy and devastation, supplied writers with plenty of material for their writing. This historical event transformed a friend into an enemy overnight, shattering every barrier to a solid connection. People's recollections of horror, arson, murders, rapes, and lootings gave them a sense of shock, panic, and insecurity. Millions of individuals were uprooted and travelled across the new frontiers to confront hardships and adversity. According to several authors, however, harmony and love can transcend such trauma and holocaust of a nation.

## The Protagonist's Dual Ideology

The novel Azadi begins in the Pakistani city of Sialkot. According to the author, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs coexisted amicably in majority-Muslim Sialkot before the Partition. Fear, animosity, and hostility developed among the inhabitants of Sialkot, and a riot broke out there for the first time. The protagonist of Azadi expresses his perspective on Partition and British control. Lala Kanshi Ram feels conflicted about the British. They are admired for their merits yet criticized for their flaws. He appreciated the security of the British Raj and affectionately embraced it. His nation, which had been torn apart, had found peace thanks to the rulers. As per the protagonist of the novels, "They are a nation which cannot be easily beaten, he thought. A handful of them has kept us under their feet for over two hundred years."<sup>2</sup> Lala Kanshi Ram also lauded the authority of British rule and the police officials. For instance, he had considerable confidence in General Riss. Before leaving his home, however, Lala Kanshi Ram accuses the British of failing to safeguard the refugee. Additionally, he attributes problems to the British. If the British were to

lose India, it was not because of Gandhi or the awakening of the masses but rather because of the tactical blunder they committed by sending out an unattractive Viceroy during the key days of their Raj.

### Brutality and atrocities

The novel *Azadi* powerfully illustrates Nahal's dissatisfaction with the Partition of India and the intensity of his pain and rage. In this work, he intends to provide the most exhaustive description of the Partition. Lala Kanshi Ram is aware that the Viceroy would make an important radio statement on the evening of the third of June, 1947, putting an end to all speculation. He appears uncomfortable and dreads the terrible repercussions "if the English agree to give Pakistan to Jinnah." (Nahal, 27) Lala Kanshi Ram is concerned about the division of the nation. He recognizes in it the cunning British scheme. He is familiar with the British policy of promoting the Partition. His conviction in Gandhi's commitment not to accept the Partition appears to be waning. The book analyses this disruption with tremendous sympathy and criticizes the horrific atrocities committed against innocent people as a result of Partition. Kanshi Ram's world is broken by the birth of Pakistan, and he stands as a shattered man, unsupported by his most valued ideas and morals. This demonstrates that the author was not pleased with the Partition of India, and he vividly articulated his grief and indignation over it in *Azadi*, which is primarily a political book and whose protagonist, Lala Kanshi Ram, opposes the split. He blames the English, stating, "Yes, they were the real villains; they had let the country down- they had let him down, he who put such faith in them" Different communities react differently to the news of the Partition. Muslims are enthralled by the news. They mark the occasion by blowing firecrackers. The loudness and glare of these fireworks afflict Hindus and Sikhs, causing them to lose their appetite. The Muslim dwellings and rooftops are illuminated with clay lamps, and as more and more lights come on, it appears as though the ground exploded in a volcanic eruption. They express their excitement with dancing, fake combat, and singing, as well as by forcibly leading the parade past the Hindu Mohalla, where Lala Kanshi Ram and his companions reside. The Police Superintendent and Deputy Commissioner make every effort to maintain order. Hindus and Muslims began to despise and tear one other apart.

### Muslims-Hindus mutuality

Everyone is aware that India is renowned for its democracy, where diverse ethnicities and religions coexist together. It is embedded in the cornerstone of Indian society that no religion is to be used against another. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs are all allowed to live according to their norms and regulations. Before the Partition, Chaman Nahal's novel '*Azadi*' depicts a Hindu-Muslim harmony and peaceful existence. Sialkot was a mostly Muslim city. Nevertheless, there was solidarity among all castes. Hindus and Muslims seldom engaged in antagonism with one another. This is seen in the relationship between Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudhari Barkat Ali and the affection between Arun and Nur. In 1929, Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudhri Barkat Ali attended Gandhi's address in Ramatalai. He says, "Gandhi's views on Hindu-Muslim unity, home industry, nationalism, Purna Swaraj, non-violence, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice" have so inspired them that they have vowed to be lifelong friends and have never considered the communal barrier between them. The Chaudhry Barkat Ali-led Munir-Nur family is an exemplary one. They are devout

Muslims who believe in the harmony of all faiths. Chaudhri Barkat Ali exudes a strong sense of nationalism. He is a committed Muslim who yet appreciates Hinduism. He lives a life of love and camaraderie and makes no distinction between men. "And the Hindu next door was just as much his brother, if not more so, than an unknown Muslim living elsewhere," Thus, Chaudhri Barkat Ali is a staunch opponent of religious fundamentalism. He is the proper individual with the proper views. His neighbourhood, Mohalla Mianapura, is synonymous with tranquillity. Munir shares his father's kindness. Chaudhri Barkat Ali represents intelligent and humane Muslims, whereas Abdul Ghani, the hookah manufacturer, represents irrational and fanatical Muslims. As soon as the government declares Partition, Abdul Ghani becomes elated and begins to despise and oppose all Hindus, especially Lala Kanshi Ram. He inquires as to when Lala Kanshi Ram will leave Pakistan. Thus, even the closest of friends begin to drift away as a result of the communal hate exacerbated by the county's separation. The ancient peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Hindus is abruptly shattered by the Partition. Mountbatten's pronouncement of Partition disrupted the peaceful existence of Sialkot's Hindu and Muslim population and their togetherness. The first riot occurred in Sialkot on the twenty-fourth of June, a day after the Punjab Legislative Assembly voted formally in Lahore to partition the province. The sectarian conflagration that swept the nation is described by Nahal as follows: "Many cities of Punjab had been aflame for months; In Lahore, Gujarat, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Ambala, Jullundur Rawalpindi, Multan, Ludhiana and Sargodha, there were large scale killings and lootings"<sup>3</sup>

On the twenty-fourth of June, Muslims in Sialkot kill some Hindus out of enthusiasm, and this becomes a daily occurrence. Nahal describes the ferocity of the land as follows: "the victim was stabbed to death; he was never permitted to survive the attack and describes what transpired. The murder was always committed with a knife, and the victim's body was frequently found with the huge blade still intact. After surviving the initial blow, the victim was repeatedly stabbed in the chest and abdomen. The killers had a sadistic fixation on tearing open bellies, but they did not disfigure the victims' faces. In each instance, the man's intestines would have flowed out of his body and be lying next to him in a pool of blood. Night-time fires are ignited in various locations across the city. It appears that considerable strategy went into the way these fires were spread out since the fires were harried to the limit in their runs from north to south and east to west. But, at this point, the arson was also intermittent. The city of Sialkot erupts in violence, and Hindu Muhallas are methodically torched. Effects of Partition and Healing the Wounds Punjab and Bengal are rife with murder, arson, and rape events. Hindus in Sialkot are filled with dread and bewilderment because they are not receiving assistance from the police, and their stores are being plundered." The Muslim bodyguard kills the Hindu Deputy Commissioner, who handles the situation in Sialkot. Both sides of the border are violent. The environment of trust, love, and unity is replaced by anger, disgust, murder, rape, fire, and arson as violence spirals out of control.

The targets of the aggressive crowd are trains. As their stores and homes are plundered, men are stabbed, and women are raped, the lives of Hindus in Sialkot deteriorate into misery. They are quite insecure. Lala is much troubled by the night-time looting of his business by Muslims. The government has established many refugee camps for Hindus and Sikhs. Lala is hesitant to leave Sialkot to go to the refugee camp since the phrases “Refugee” and “Refugee Camp” are foreign and distasteful to him. He conveys his uneasiness at having become a man without land, without a home, and without roots. He is completely aware that Muslims will not allow the existence of Hindus and Sikhs and that the Pakistani government would be incapable of protecting them. The existence of Hindus in Sialkot deteriorates. Hindus are compelled to endure the agonizing process of relocation and migration. Due to their strong emotional attachment to their land and homes, they are obliged to abandon them and hunt for other locations for permanent settlement.

Independence produces more violence and deaths. Lala’s daughter Madhu and her husband Rajiv were slain in one of the railway killings while travelling to Sialkot to see her parents. Nahal recounts the loss of his sister, Kartar Devi, during the Partition through the character Madhu. Nahal’s actual experience inspired the depiction of Madhu and her husband’s deaths. The author implies that the rioters were sufficiently impoverished to insult Hindu women and subject them to savage crimes. In such cases, the administration does not intervene. Hindus and Sikhs in the camp were shocked by the afternoon news of the Muslims’ display of nude Hindu women in the market of Narowal. K.K. Sharma and B.K. Johri states Nahal’s depiction of horrific scenes of incomprehensible violence by stating: “Azadi portrays beautifully horror of partition, the colossal violence that still haunts the Indian psyche”.<sup>4</sup>

After many years, the two nations are still attempting to repair the scars caused by the division of the once-complete India. Beyond an impassable barrier, several individuals continue to seek their identities and past. The two nations began with devastated economies and territory, as well as a lack of an established, experienced administration. It lost a large number of its most influential leaders, including Gandhi, Jinnah, Ali and Iqbal. India and Pakistan have been involved in two wars with each other since Partition, and they are at present at an impasse over who should occupy Kashmir. In Kashmir, the same challenges about boundaries and divides, Hindu and Muslim majorities and disparities exist. Overall, Chaman Nahal concluded his tale with a badly diminished family attempting to start over in Delhi. Azadi lacks the sensationalism of other novels on India’s Partition, such as Train to Pakistan and A Bend in the Ganges by Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgoankar, respectively. Nahal demonstrates both the violence and tenderness of both sides.

Few individuals, including the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain dealer, are most affected by this major historical event. Young lovers, such as Arun and Nur, and subsequently, Arun’s relationship with Chandni are thwarted by the country’s division. The novel “Azadi” describes the sorrow and crimes that occurred during the Partition of India, the darkest event in India’s history. India was mercilessly separated into two pieces, India and Pakistan, leaving a severe wound on the minds of countless millions of individuals. According to critic Sisir Kumar Das: “the people were tormented by recollections of terror, looting, fire, murder, and rape, which heightened their sense of terror and instability. Millions of people were uprooted

and relocated to the new frontiers to endure difficult lives. Before the people could comprehend the political ramifications of the split, they were blinded by extraordinary horrors and cruelty.”<sup>5</sup>

Ambuj Sharma, another critic, asserts that “the Partition of the country was heart-rending, unpleasant, regrettable, unpardonable, undreamt of the event in the annals of Indian history – the division of India. Besides the division of the land, the Partition also built the wall of religion, caste, colour and so on. The army, the bureaucracy, and the neighbours who were friends till yesterday became stern enemies at that time of Partition. The division of the country resulted, as it were, in terrible bloodshed and holocaust.”<sup>6</sup> According to Ambuj Sharma, “Azadi is about the freedom struggle of India ending into a tale of miseries – a holocaust, genocide, mass destruction, arson, rape, carnage and turbulence, gerrymandered by the British and the Muslim League”<sup>7</sup>

Even though “Azadi” focuses on the political upheaval at the time of India’s Partition into India and Pakistan, it focuses on the aftermath of the greatest catastrophe in the history of contemporary India. “Azadi” highlights the influence of Indian politics in the lives of Hindus and Muslims in general, as well as its impact on the lives of lovers such as Arun and Nur, and subsequently Arun and Chandni. The love between Arun and Nur is ephemeral and fleeting. The Partition of India serves as a backdrop to both Arun and Nur’s life, causing their love to be ripped apart. Similar to the divide of the country into two halves, there is a division in their lives, namely the separation of their hearts. Their love has been entirely shattered and destroyed. As a result of the prevailing political unrest, the lovers are compelled to part ways, as their future looks too grim to them. Arun, who resides in Sialkot with his parents, must leave the area since it gets incorporated into Pakistan. Arun falls in love with the daughter of Chaudhari Barkat Ali, Nurul Nisar. It has just been two years since Arun and Nurul Nisar, also known as Nur, expressed their love for one another. Yet, each time he approached her, regardless of where he approached her, he yearned for her as if it were their first meeting. There was always a slight flutter in his heart. Will she arrive or not? Will a foe be hiding someplace to inform on their whereabouts? Will she or will she not be able to make it?<sup>8</sup>

After the declaration of India’s division, Arun, a Hindu teenager having a romance with a Muslim girl, comes under the ominous surveillance of other Muslim lads. The political crisis founded on religious boundaries acts as an impediment between these two young lovers of different religions, and they both become extremely powerless. Arun previously pledges Nur that he would convert to Islam for her sake, but the entire situation gradually changes as division occurs. He inquires as to why Nur cannot adopt Hinduism. Nur is astonished to hear the news, which exceeds her anticipation, expectations, and greatest dreams. She tells Arun, through sobs, that she is defenceless and cannot impose her will on her family. She expects Arun to make sacrifices for her since he is a male and so more self-reliant. Arun loves her passionately. As reported by Mohan Jha,

“Arun and Nur may have been married despite their different religions in the normal order of events, but the eruption of communal violence turns everything upside down. Arun might have chosen Nur over his parents when he was young, but the community holocaust transforms him into a man, and he opts to share life’s pleasures and tragedies with them.”<sup>9</sup>

The Arun family chooses to leave the refugee camp and travel to Delhi. Munir, the brother of Nur, gives Arun a letter written by Nur. The letter is smeared with tears, which demonstrates Nur's despondency. The contents of the letter express Nur's thinking with tears.

"I'm weeping when I write this to you," wrote Nur. "Will I ever see you again? God alone knows why people are so full of hate. I wish they were not to part souls

that love each other. But I'll think of you till the day of my death. May Allah protect you. Khuda hafiz."<sup>10</sup>

The tone of Nur's letter is dismal on their terrible future, with little possibility of reuniting. The separation of the country and the political upheaval cast a bleak future for these two loves. Arun's love is unsatisfied due to political unrest and, much more so, religious discrepancy, both of which wreak chaos in his life. Arun and Nur, a Hindu child and a Muslim girl, respectively, are rendered helpless victims by the unanticipated Partition of India. They had no inkling that one day their relationship would end so abruptly. Both parties' vows and promises of love remain unfulfilled. However, Arun's destiny takes an unexpected turn. Arun encounters Chandni, the daughter of Padmini, the Charwoman, while at the refugee camp one day. Chandni is blissfully oblivious that she is being observed as she sleeps. Arun experiences a sharp pain in his heart. He quickly falls in love with her and believes that God sent her to him at precisely the right time. "Nur now seemed only a milestone — which he remembered but had left far back on his path."<sup>11</sup>

Arun's abandonment of Nur for Chandni raises the question of whether Arun's affection for Nur was only fleeting. Or was he attempting to fill the void left by Nur? His attentiveness to Chandni's "heaving breasts" makes one question whether his love for Chandni was only physical attraction and not pure love. Overall, it looks like Arun is attempting to flee his unhappy history - a dismal catastrophe. By granting Chandni a home in his heart, he is attempting to forget Nur.

The affair between Arun and Chandni does not develop gradually; rather, they are caught completely off guard by it. Arun is least concerned with Chandni's education, status, lineage, or poverty. He discovers a new identity through his love for Chandni. But Chandni fears and has questions as to whether their love would bear fruit. She fears that her low socioeconomic status and caste would prohibit her from marrying Arun. She trembles in terror at the notion of being married to him. Even if their entire life patterns are unlike, she clings to him with hope. One day, an emotionally distraught Arun announces to his mother that he wishes to marry Chandni. Even though he is anxious, his voice sounds steely and resolute. This twenty-year-old timid and pudgy young man appears to be quite determined. However, his mother only finds it amusing.

However, even the second lady to enter Arun's life, Chandni, is taken from him owing to the turbulence of the Partition. His commitment to marry her upon their arrival in India is only a promise for the far future. When Pakistan strikes the refugee camp in Narowal, she is seized from the camp. Chandni's kidnapping is a second huge setback for Arun. Arun now despises both his father and Padmini. He feels that they caused the estrangement between Chandni and himself. Arun and his parents make their way to Delhi from the refugee camp. Arun is uncertain of his destination. He just knew that he was leaving Nur and Chandni

behind. Nur was only the beginning; he had merely strolled with her on the slopes. However, “Chandni had led him up the hills to the peak. What would he be without, his beloved hamrahi?”<sup>12</sup>

Arun only realizes the magnitude of Chandni’s grief upon his arrival in Delhi. Each day, life seems to go too methodically for him. He wants to terminate his life, but doing so would result in the termination of his relationship with Chandni. Arun attempts to survive solely by experiencing the sorrow of losing his second love, and by cherishing these ideas, he hopes to maintain this relationship till his death while severing all other ties.

Overall, ‘Azadi’ portrays how the country’s split wreaks havoc on the lives of lovers such as Arun, Nur, and Chandni. Both Nur and Chandni leave an emptiness in Arun’s life, a life of unfulfilled love and melancholy. Arun stays a heartbroken lover till the conclusion of the tale. He wishes to remain alive just to remember Chandni. Arun, despite his frustration, attempts to withstand the situation by holding to the notion that Chandni will return to him one day. Mohan Jha states, “Chaman Nahal’s Azadi is an epoch-making book which depicts not only the trauma and holocaust that accompanied, in fact, darkened, the attainment of freedom in 1947 but did also faces man’s Azadi or freedom from beastliness, from moral, psychological and Spiritual malady.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, through the novel Azadi, Chaman Nahal depicts a realistic event of a tragedy that occurred in 1947, with the independence of the country to be remembered as a historical and the division that followed it as a period of disgrace, cruelty, and destruction that will go down in the pages of history as a black period. The novel “Azadi” by Chaman Nahal recounts the optimistic dawn of Indian independence as well as the selfish politicians whose inhumane decisions destroyed families and killed half a million innocent people. The unfulfilled love tales of Arun-Nur and Arun-Chandni illustrate how the divide has harmed peaceful coexistence as well as personal relationships. Overall, “Azadi” shows cosmic suffering and carnage as a prologue to the creation of a new humanity and new connections.

## Conclusion

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the central topic of this story is Partition. It is an accurate account of the atrocities wrought by the split. It is comparable to any sad novel. It should also be noted that Chaman Nahal did not attack one faith against another in his story (Muslim against Hindu). In this manner, Nahal not only makes the personal experience objective but also presents a deliberate mixture of the historical with didactic and situational discursive elements. Almost towards the conclusion of the novel, he clarified this information. Lala Kanshi Ram and others in Delhi had to witness the march of Muslim ladies who had been kidnapped; they felt dreadful. They soon realized that a train carrying Muslim refugees had been assaulted and that many Muslims had been slain. Nahal expressed through his protagonist that he did not despise Muslims since what the Pakistanis did to Hindus in Pakistan, the Indians did to Muslims in India.



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