

Displacement, Violence and Politics in Partition Literature

Dr. Shaik Reshma
Assistant Professor of English
Presidency University, Bangalore
Karnataka, India

Abstract

Partition of India in 1947 was like a promise and a compromise. It was the end to slavery and a liberation from the British. It also saw the creation of the Muslim state, the geographical divide brought displacement and number of deaths. Benefit was for few at the expense of others. Women were raped, disfigured and 10 million people were killed including children. This was the bloody act carried ever in the history. Some 15 million were asked to leave the country and they ended as refugees in both the sides. The repercussions of Partition resound even now that resulted in mass massacres, about 12 million people became refugees and half a million killed in the religious violence. This was the biggest movement of people in History, outside war and famine. The paper analysis the suffering and politics that changed the fate of many.

Key words:

Divide, Displacement, Violence, Politics

"A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a Nation, long suppressed, finds utterance."

I. Introduction

British after colonizing India for 300 years, finally left in August, 1947. India was broken into pieces like Hindu- majority India and Muslim majority Pakistan. History marked its time forever when these migrations happened, Muslims trekked to east and West Pakistan. Millions of Hindus and Sikhs moved in the opposite direction, while some thousands never made it. Across India people started to attack each other in the outbreak of sectarian violence, Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other. These communities that had coexisted for a millennium, now became flesh mongers of each. India's Partition saw a carnage intense with

massacres, mass abductions and sexual violence. Women were raped and later disfigured or tried to dismember.

Nisid Hapri writes, “Midnight’s Furies” Gangs of killers set whole villages aflame, hacking to death men and children and the aged while carrying off young women to be raped. Some British soldiers and Journalists who had witnessed the Nazi death camps claimed that India’s Partition saw worst of the brutalities ever,” like pregnant women were killed and the infants were burned. It is written that fifteen million people were displaced by the year 1948 and two million were dead.

Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal says “the central historical event in twentieth century, South Asia, it’s a defining moment that is neither beginning nor end, Partition continues to influence how the people and states of post-colonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future.”

What made the British to leave India? The reason was Britain left without resources to control its imperial assets after the Second World War. Sometimes its exit seems to be a hasty and a messy decision. British rule was always confined to revolts and to extreme suppressions. India is known for its famous amalgamated culture that has spawned a vast literature. Polarization of communities happened during 20th century, an attempt was made to pen down old memories of Partition for the present generation. Islamic conquests happened in the eleventh century, with the capture of Lahore, in 1021. The medieval Sanskrit inscriptions identify the Central Asian invaders by this term, instead they are better known by linguistic and ethnic affiliations like Turushka-Turks probably these people were not seen in terms of their religious identity. Conquests happened by the destruction of sites, India embraced and tried to transform these new arrivals. Hybrid Indo- Islamic civilization emerged with hybrid languages like Deccani and Urdu which has a mix of Sanskrit- with Turkish, Persian and Arabic words. Around a fifth of South Asia’s population came to identity as Muslims. The Sufi’s were inspired by Hindu Scriptures. The village folk experienced two faiths blending into one. Hindus visited the Sufi shrines and Muslims left offerings at Hindu shrines. Sufis were numerous in Punjab and Bengal and centuries later saw the worst of violence.

Cultural mixing took place in the entire subcontinent, the Sultan of Delhi was keen to know about the incarnation of god Vishnu and crowned Prince Dara Shikoh, translated Bhagavad Gita into Persian, “The mingling of two Oceans, The last Mughal emperor wrote that Hinduism and Islam, share the same essence.”

In the 19th century India was the most happiest ever where traditions, cultures cut across religious groups, people never tried to defined themselves as Hindus or Muslims, but the British tried to manipulate and erode these traditions by placing their stamp.

Alex Von Tunzelmann says “The British started to define ‘Communities’ based on religious identity and attach political representation to them, many Indians stopped accepting the diversity of their own thoughts and began to ask themselves in which of the boxes they belonged.”

The word Partition would have been eliminated from the context, Patrick French in "Liberty or Death," tells, how much came down to a clash of personalities particularly between, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other leaders, and all of them are highly qualified, partly educated in England, born and brought up in Gujarati tradition.

Who is Muhammad Ali Jinnah? He is the man most responsible for creation of Pakistan. He is seen as villain in Indian history and for Pakistan, the father of the nation. Jinnah as a personality written in history seems to be strong, determined and a haughty personality. He in ways is the architect of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He rarely visited mosque, married glamorous daughter of a Parsi businessman. Indeed a stylish guy, famous for his Saville Row Suits and ties. Jinnah was affected by spiritual sensibilities in politics, he believed this would give way to religious chauvinists on all sides. He spent his early political career during the First World War and tried to bring the Muslim League and Congress party together. He is the eldest son of seven children, belonged to Khoja caste, Hindus who converted to Islam. He made up his mind to become a barrister, interested in British Political system and influenced by the Liberalism of William.E. Gladstone, who was the then Prime Minister. He actively participated in the 1906 sessions of the Indian National Congress, this was his first entry into politics. Four years later, elected to the Imperial Legislative Council- his beginnings of a long and distinguished parliamentary career.

The All India Muslim League was founded and Jinnah's endeavors to bring about political unity among Muslims and Hindus earned him the title "the best ambassador of Hindus – Muslims unity," coined by Gokhale. He left the non-cooperation movement and Congress party in 1920 as he believed it had a different approach and seems partial to one particular sect. He continued to be a firm believer in unity of the Nation, irrespective of caste and creed. Relations between Hindus and Muslims started to deteriorate when the Congress party decided not to include the league in the formation of provincial government and soon Muslim discontent became furious and boundless. Jinnah feared that Muslims would be refrained from all prospects of advancement within the country. So he started to convert the Muslim League into a powerful instrument for unifying the Muslims into a Nation. The league adopted a resolution to form a separate Muslim State, Pakistan; on March 22-23, 1940 in Lahore.

Jinnah as a leader:

Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Nehru's sister writes, "If the Muslim league had two Gandhis and 200 Azads and Congress had only one Jinnah, then India would not have been divided."

This statement says about the fact that it is Jinnah who fought the case of Muslim hood in India and won through his skills. He dominated as a leader and joined the All India Muslim League (AIML) in 1913. In fact Gandhi and Jinnah hailed from Gujarati families. This similarity seemed to be an ending, as Jinnah appeared professional and Gandhi attired as a perfect holy man. Jinnah was not a religious person and had very little to do with the sects. He firmly opposed the Non Cooperation movement in 1920. The election of 1937 proved to be a turning point in the relations between the two organizations as the Congress party decided not to include the Muslim league in the formation of Provincial governments. It was not the religious persecution that Jinnah feared, but the future exclusion of Muslims from all prospects of advancement. The

power was controlled in close-knit structure of social organization. He carried out a nationwide campaign and the Muslim league turned into a powerful instrument with the effect as many started to unify. On March in 1940 in Lahore, it adopted a resolution to form a separate state.

During 19th century India saw several nationalist movements, this happened because of the British policies on education and in various other fields like transportation and communication. The Indian National congress went ahead calling Britain, to quit India. In 1943, the Muslim League also passed a resolution demanding the British divide and quit. Reasons are many for the separate Muslim homeland. All the three parties were responsible for a separate state, like the Congress, the British and the Muslim League. British followed a divide – and rule policy in India, this seems to be their ideology. The differentiation was made based on which sect one belongs to, they gathered more information on religious texts. British were scared of the potential threat from Muslims, who were the former rulers of this sub-continent, just to win over them, they established Mohammed Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh and gave support to the All-India Muslim Conference and the ideology of separate state 'Pakistan,' literally emerged. When the league started to have its own shape, Muslims were placed on a separate electorate. This fire liberated gave a breeze of separateness of Muslims in India into the Indian electoral process. Another incident was again different from the perspective of the British when Congress did not support British during the Second World War, now the entire plot changed when the Muslim league gave full-fledged support to the British, the civil Dis-obedience movement and the Congress withdrawal from politics helped the league gain power. The league was able to gain immense power from the strong ministries in the province which had large Muslim population and it attracted others. Some hope expected but the Congress rejected the Interim government set up under the Cabinet Mission plan in 1942, which convinced the Muslim league and Partition was the only course to take a shape of new state. Great reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidhya sagar ideals were not followed, the Congress's spectacular electoral success in 1937 did nothing to raise the confidence of Muslims, very few knew about the Lucknow pact- what it is all about? It arrived at a joint session of the Congress and the Muslim league in 1916. Jinnah played a major role and hailed as an apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity by Sarojini Naidu.

Electoral victory of the liberals in 1906 marked a new era in the reforms for British India. The Jallianwala Bagh incident turned millions of Indians to rebel, the Sikhs had no trust in "fair play." Gandhi was seen as a sage, chose Sathya and Ahimsa, Gandhi tried and assured people that one day the British can fall to its knees.

Gandhi's mystic faith was followed by millions, his strategy was to put into effect to boycott British-made goods. Here a quarter of Indians did not respond to Gandhi's Satyagraha. The last quarter of the century was bursting with violence. Gandhi's policy promise launched the non-cooperation movement on August 1, 1920, his struggle was to boycott land taxes. Serious outcomes poured in in February 1922, when Indian police men were massacred by a mob of Sathyagrahis as result of "Promoting disaffection" towards British. Gandhi was put behind the bars for 6 years.

Muslim separatism: History is evident a quarter of India's population became circumspect of the Congress party. Hindu-Muslim riots claimed hundreds of lives in Malabar Coast. Jinnah was

the sole representative and a permanent President of Muslim league, here a new thinking of separatism from Indian Muslims was put on marking a separate statehood for the minority community.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal while delivering a speech in Allahabad in 1930 proposed "the final destiny," his proposal included what became the major provinces of Pakistan-Punjab, Sindh, the Khyber and Baluchistan. 1937-1939 were the productive years of "third" party and immense growth for the Muslim league. Jinnah's voice was dominant and became strong that he alone can defend the rights of India's Muslims, elections proved effective that Jinnah's single-plank strategy helped him. Later league won all the 30 seats. Britain's Parliament passed the Independence act in July 1947 and gave order that the dominions of India and Pakistan be demarcated by midnight of August 14-15, 1947. New borders were made, people moved and believed it's their "shelter" and a million were slaughtered and seemed to be erroneous of what they believed.

Tara Singh says "The Muslims got their Pakistan, and Hindus got their Hindustan, but what did the Sikhs get?" The transfer of power got completed on August 14 in Pakistan and August 15 in India, the British Raj came to an end with the division of India.

II. Conclusion

To conclude Partition was not a good decision.

Markandey Katju tells that " the British as a sole responsible for partition of India; he subjects Jinnah as a British agent who advocated for the creation of Pakistan in order to satisfy his ambition to become the 'Qaid-e Azam,' regardless of the suffering his actions caused to both Hindus and Muslims."

It is clear that Partition of India and Pakistan is one of the disastrous event in the 20th century. It affected people especially in Punjab. The states were divided on the basis of religious dominance. Apart from these riots, Cholera killed number of people due to lack of medical facility. Riots started in Punjab and eventually reflected on the whole nation. Fears of minorities became more and people saw displaced and inter-communal violence. People thrown out of their homes where they lived for generations. Lakhs of people irrespective of their religion lost their homes and lives as the Raj was not much helpful. Starvation, spread of disease and brutal killings happened and totally ignored. Thousands of people were killed for the crimes they never did. To conclude an undivided India would have been undoubtedly been more tolerant of diverse cultures, allowing each other to grow; without accompanying political instability, no divisions and politicization of religion by British or the art of 'divide and rule' setting the stage for conflicts. Ties with other nations would have been strong on the grounds of rising tolerance and acceptance of differences. Kashmir would be shining with its beauty as always and would have been belonged to India alone. Hampering China, India could have surpass and could have strengthen its presence in its neighborhood and beyond. Another advantage of an un-divided India would have been an extended maritime borders.

The cries and plight continue to echo even after Partition in the present time.

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