

Review

India at war: A critical study of Amit Majmudar's novel "Partitions"

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The present paper intends to represent the events that occurred shortly after the partition of India through the characters of the novel "Partitions". The research portrays the condition of small children who separated from their parents during partition. Moreover, it focuses on the tragedies of people that include the abduction of women and traumatization of children. The paper discusses in detail that why teenager girls were highly targeted. Furthermore, the research highlights the very crucial moment of men's killing their own women and children during partition. Besides it, the study discusses the passivity of untouchables with partition. In addition to it, the train incident has been depicted in which not even a single person traveling survived. Finally, the study critically describes another outlook of the partition in which the people of either side have been shown happy while going their newly born countries.

Keywords: Partition, abduction, triviality, violation, hope

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INTRODUCTION

I think I want something of Partitions to stick, too, particularly considering the ramifications of the events it narrates. I read "Partitions" wanting to be stirred, to have my feeling muddled, to feel the chaos, the pain, and the fear endured by the four people with whom we share multiple journeys.

Division of India is a terrible event in world history. India won freedom in 1947 along with its vivisections on the communal basis which leaves us puzzled whether the event of partition should be remembered for having a great history and the hope of the people for a better future or whether it should be remembered for the

massacres and the killings of thousands of innocent people. The people who were killed, were not rebels but the only thing they wished was a better future for them and for their coming generation. It should be remembered for its sacrifices made by the men, women and even the little children just like the writer Urvashi Butalia says in her book "The other side of Silence" "the political partition of India is caused one of the great human convulsions of history twelve million people moved between the new, truncated Indian and the two wings, East and West of the newly created Pakistan..... Estimate of the dead vary from 200,000 to two million but somewhere around a million people died is now widely accepted..... 75,000 women were thought

to be abducted and raped by men other than their religion and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion". (Butalia, 4) The partition of India and the sanguinary communal war inspired many Indo-Pak writers to portray this event. There are two folds of the partition; firstly, the causes of partition and secondly, the events broke out shortly after it. Many writers wrote on the theme of causes of partition and many other have highlighted the communal conflict after the partition. Since seven decades creative minds are producing works on the theme of partition depicting the massacres while refugees were migrating, contracting hardships on either side of the border. Even now, more than 70 years after the partition, works of fiction are made that relate to the events of partition.

In the novel "*Partitions*" the writer Amit Majmudar has tried to express his views on the topic of partition and the events that happened during the partition of the subcontinent. He has described the sacrifices of men, women and small children who encountered great calamity because they were weaklings at the time of the division of India. Majmudar portrayed the passivity of untouchables who had no concern with partition. He also discusses the character of Roshan Jaitlee, his untouchable wife, Sonia and their twins, Keshav and Shankar. Through these characters he depicted the inflicted pain of a mother and her twins when they separated, "the twins were separated on the station of Amristar". (Majmudar, 23-24) He also discusses the character of Sikh teenager, Simran Kaur who faces difficulties at the time of partition. There is also a character of Ibrahim Masud who is the symbol of love and humanity even at the turbulent time of partition. Finally, he shows untouchables who took advantage of this event.

The partition of India and its aftermath ignited the stream of the ideas and thought of the writers of the subcontinent of anytime. The novel "*Partitions*" by Amit Majmudar has its own unique status for being a very interesting novel that reflects the hardships of a mother, children, women and the men who sacrificed their lives to attain a separate independent state, Pakistan. The novel shows that the writer has a very unique way of expression of his views in a way that the mother as mother India and her two sons as the two separate nations; Hindus and Muslims. Through his novel "*Partitions*" Majmudar raised his voice instead of those women who were silenced. He spoke for the untouchables through his fictitious character Simran Kaur, Mayarani and all above the two innocent children who had to face the separation of mother. Through the characters of Sonia, Keshav and Shankar Mujmudar

portrayed the perilous journey of a mother and her sons when they separated. He also talks about the Sikh teenager Simran who suffers a lot during partition. There is also a portrayal of character of Ibrahim Masud who is the symbol of love and humanity even during the turbulent time of partition. He also portrays the time when the people were killed without any reason.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nisid Hajari writes in "*Midnight's Furies*" (2015) that aggressive people aggravated by the division of India enflamed the villages, dishonored women and looted homes. Moreover, gang of killers cut off the breasts of pregnant women, hacked out of their bellies and roasted infants on spirits.

Urvashi Butalia writes in "*The Other side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*" (2000) that almost one million of people were swallowed by death and almost eighty thousand women were humiliated after kidnapping. Casualty counts rose steadily, with the daily toll of killed or wounded running between fifty and one hundred. On 9 August, one hundred Hindus were reported killed by Muslims in a single village outside Amritsar, their bodies were thrown into a nearby canal. (Hajari, 124)

Yasmeen Khan writes in her book *The Great Partition of the India and Pakistan* (2009) that the India's partition promised its political and religious freedom of the creation of the Muslim state of Pakistan through the liberation of the India from British rule. In reality, the geographical divide effected and even greater schism of the population to the desperate and devastating consequences thousands of women were raped: at least one million people were killed and ten to fifteen times than the number were forced to leave their homes as refugees. It was one of the first: the most bloody, and remain one of the most significant, events of the decolonization in the twentieth century.

A.K Azad writes in his book "*India Wins Freedom*" (1959) that the very next day news of communal troubles began to cast deep gloom in the capital. It was the news of murder, death and cruelty. It was learnt that in the East Punjab, Hindu and Sikh mobs had attacked Muslim villages. They were burning houses and killing innocent men, women and children of Hindu and Sikh communities. The whole of the Punjab, East and West, was becoming a graveyard of destruction and death. (A.K Azad, 228)

Larry Collins (1975) says "There in the meanness and misery of the world most violent city attacks" in these lines the writer tells about the incident of Calcutta or the Calcutta massacre in which over 3000 people were killed

overnight people were burnt and women were violently abducted and it was a tragedy from which people are still trying to recover and has now turned into a byword of horror for the new generations. (Collins, 291)

Khuswant Singh describes in his novel *“Train to Pakistan”*, the train incident. He has discussed that the train leaves at 10:30 from the station and when they reached Rawalpindi the train was attacked and people were killed brutally. All of them were thrown mercilessly one over the other as if they were not living beings. Other writers such as Nisid Hajari and Yasmin Khan also discussed the train incident in their books such as *“Midnight furies”* and *“The Great Partition”* respectively.

Amit Majmudar, author of the highly regarded novel *“Partitions”*, displays an understated flair for imagery and language, communicating the significance of the ties that bind without ever resorting to mawkish sentimentality. His magnificent fiction debut, *Partitions*, investigated the wrenching moral dilemmas posed by the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Novelist’s magnificent fiction debut, *Partitions* (2011), investigated the wrenching moral dilemmas posed by the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. He (*Partitions*) returns with a moving story of motherhood across cultural divides. The author of the highly regarded *“Partitions”* (2011) displays an understated flair for imagery and language, communicating the significance of the ties that bind.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How has Amit Majmudar portrayed the events of the India’s partition in his novel *“Partitions”*?

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative Research

The present research in its nature is qualitative and employs textual-narrative analysis of the novel *“Partitions”* from the vantage point of Literary Discourse. The collected data for the present paper is descriptive and narrative. Therefore, the qualitative tools like definition, explanation, interpretation are employed to analyze the data and draw generalization and conclusion. According to Kothari the writer of *“Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques”* discusses the major purposes of the descriptive research and description of the state of affairs as present. The research can report what has happened or what is happening. (Kothari, 3) Moreover, in the eyes of Calmorin et al (2007)

Descriptive Research is to find new truth. According to his deep study in the field of research methodology truth may have different forms such as increased quality of knowledge, a new generalization or a new „law“, an increased insight into factors which are operating the discovery of new causal relationship, a more accurate formulation of the problem to be solved and many others” (p. 70)

DATA ANALYSIS / DISCUSSION

Dispersion of children after Partition

Violence must sit at the core of the history of partition. Majmudar has represented the miseries and hardship that the innocent children and women had to face, and the majority of women were not completely women but instead they were underage girls. He has shown the separation of two sons of Sonia the untouchable widow of the Brahmin Roshan Jaitlee. Through this fictitious character he has described the traumatized lives of thousands of children who were pulled through the partition saga. Keshav and Shankar separated on the station of Lahore and then their difficulties started. The children separated on the station of Lahore they were badly injured because they fell down from a moving train, “Keshav just make it; forearms, stomach, fall just a second later... He hits the tracks, tumbles and skids a few feet and come to a stop in the train’s monstrous shadow”. (Mujmudar, 11)

The thrones of trauma appear in the novel when the two meet Saif, “he called them by whistling twice”. (Mujmudar, 74) He was a Muslim who was involved in the kidnapping of Hindu boys. Saif becomes a way for the two to meet Shanaz bibi who was interested in adopting Hindu boy and making them her foster children. The time period of separation from their mother was increasing and this was making the children depressed and even more traumatized. The two decided to escape from the home of Shanaz bibi but Shankar cannot keep going with Keshav due to his illness called “blue disease”. Partition was a time when children were victimized to a chain of attack of respiral and it was a time when children were measured with the yard sticks of identity, caste, creed and sexuality. The partition was a time when thousands of children separated from their parents and then they were orphaned. Many of them died and they could not survive as the writer Yasmin Khan states in her book *“The great Partition”* “women and children were carried away like looted chattels and in a way that one could hardly believe that they were alive”. (Yasmin, 128) This shows that the

children who separated from their parents fell in the hands of kidnappers. They became the victims of both physical as well as mental stress. The partition of the subcontinent was a tragedy in which many of the innocent young children were victimized. Many of the children were not even given the right of being born. They were killed when they were still in their mothers' bellies and many infants were burnt on the roads, "Infants were found literally roasted on spits". (Hajari, 14) This shows that not only teenager or young children had to face hardships but even infants and the ones who were not even born had to; and this was probably the cause of so many deaths during the partition. The majority of deaths during the partition were the death of young children who did not know the differences between right and wrong and were weaklings who could not protect themselves.

Abduction of underage girls

Majmudar depicted the abduction of underage girls. He also describes the affliction of women through a fictitious character Simran Kaur a Sikh teenager who was mentally traumatized. She had to experience and bear the shade of the marginalized sector of any society which is non-other than the female sector itself. Being a female she was doubly traumatized. Her trauma starts at the gunpoint of his father and cousins the dreadful sight of the mass homicides of her mother and siblings make her emotionally desiccated. She was mentally stressed and she started exhibiting the symptoms of stress disorder such as insomnia and an abnormal numbness swallows her. She was lying down like a dead body right next to the dead body of her mother and the corpses of her siblings and her father. The trauma of this teenager reaches its peak when she fell in the hands of the traid--- Ayub and Saif and then she was made the victim of abduction as the writer states in the novel "Qasim and saif got down, their bared teeth and eyes gleefully white while Ayub strips Simran of her clothes" (Mujmudar, 132). Partition was a time when women were victimized and dishonored as the weakling at the time of the partition. They were raped, kidnapped and were even sold in the markets as if they were not living things but objects which were created for the purpose of enjoyment for the men, "women were brutally raped and had their breasts and genitals mutilated and the entire population of the villages was summarily executed". (Yasmin, 129) Another writer Nisid Hajari has discussed the scourge of oppression that the women underwent during the partition of the subcontinent. He states in his book "*Midnight furies*" "Pregnant women had their breast cut off and babies jacked out of their bellies". (Hajari, 14) This shows that the female gender had to undergo the most catastrophes

at the time of partition. As they had to stay alert and protect themselves not from other communities or alien clans but they had to protect themselves from their own clan and community. This also shows that millions of underage girls had to face violent attacks and they were victimized. These situations became the cause of death of many innocent girls who could have a better and a bright future but they became the victims of such hideous beasts who completely destroyed their hopes and their bright future. The exact figures of abducted women are unknown and estimates vary. Leonard Mosley wrote that in total 100,000 girls were abducted on all sides. The scholar Andrew Major notes that the large-scale abduction and girls seemed to have been a part of systematic 'ethnic cleansing' in Gurgaon region on the outskirts of Delhi.

Triviality of partition in the eyes of untouchables

The untouchables were the low caste to whom Mahatma Gandhi referred as *cahoots*. They were the one who was down trodden in the subcontinent. Nobody could say anything to them. They were the ones who were expected to be nothing. They had no rights and no future. Majmudar has discussed the triviality of partition in the eyes of Shudars. The untouchables had nothing to do with the partition because it would not be going to bring any change in their lives. They were neither interested in partition nor in freedom. Centuries' hatred of Hindus had engraved in their hearts that they were permanent untouchables. Partition or freedom in their eyes could never give them the status of touchable. Freedom could not give them their deprived rights because they were untouchables and nothing could change this fact. There was no door that would welcome a new life for them. This was the reason that they had no concern with the partition of India. They did not care if it was the Muslim side of Pakistan or the Hindu side of India. They thought the partition of the subcontinent only a way as a relief from the attacks of both communities the Hindus and the Muslims and somehow making their life better by the things that they looted from the abandoned territories. They had no emotional or physical affiliation for the partition of the subcontinent.

In the novel "Partitions" the writer shows the untouchables with many fictitious characters such as Maya Rani who helped and gave shelter to Shankar and Keshav for a single night at the time of the partition. She was staying at the abandoned house and was trying to collect as many articles as she could. The Muslim rioters threatened her and her friends, but they were not afraid in the least, as it is clearly mentioned in the novel that "why

be I afraid? They come sometimes and shout at me. But no one dares touch me". (Majmudar, 125) This shows that at the time of the partition of the Indian subcontinent the untouchables were fearless and did what they could because it was a fact that nobody could touch the untouchables.

At the time of partition many Muslims and Hindus migrated; they had left everything behind. Untouchables took advantage of open field of left property and considered partition as a blessing that provided them a golden chance of collecting goods. They looted anything they would find in the abandoned territory left by the people who migrated from their birth place. If we look at, it was not their fault because the indifferent approach to serve the crisis such as the partition of the subcontinent was the identity crisis inflicted by the caste system that had once existed in India and in many areas it still does.

Priority of killing to abduction

The partition was a time when the weaklings that include the women and children were kidnapped, sold, violated and even killed. The other side of silence by Urvashi Butalia can be addressed as an anthology of the memories of the events of partition. She states that ten lakh people were killed and seventy-five thousand women were kidnapped and raped at the time of the partition. So what was the reason for which they were raped and what happened to those women who were dishonored? The answer is that the kidnapped women had to face the taboo of being abducted or dishonored or being humiliated only because the people of the one religion wanted to dishonor the pride and dignity of the other religion. For this one community dishonored the females of the other community. The women touched by the other men were not accepted by their families and were looked down by the society. They had to take a burden of being abducted and then their stress reached its peak and they had no other choice than committing suicide. Committing suicide was not looked upon as a sin instead the people looked at suicide as a heroic deed and the people thought that it was the best thing to do which requires courage and bravery. In some communities, people killed their entire families especially the females because according to them it was better to die on their own rather than being violated or being dishonored by the people of the other communities. The novel "*Partitions*" represents this situation by the fictitious character Simran Kaur. She was a Sikh teenager whose father killed his entire family for only this reason that it was better to die on their own rather than being violated by the people of

the other religion. The partition was a time when the violence was at its peak in the subcontinent. The deaths of female by committing suicide or being killed by their own families became common. Many writers have shown these things in their books, such as the writer Yasmin Khan states in her book "*The Great Partitions*" that "The voluntary or enforced suicides of the women and the murder of relatives by shooting, poisoning or drowning was not uncommon as it was in some cases regarded as preferable to life worse than death which it was certain to follow after rape". (Yasmin, 90) Another writer, Nisid Hajari has shown his view in this regards; he writes that it was neither the fault of the women who committed suicide nor was it the fault of their families who rejected them after being dishonored or being abducted. It was the way in which the people of the society would look upon the women or the families who had to face the stigma of being dishonored. He further says in favor of women who voluntary or enforced; committed suicide performed a heroic deed and this deed increased the pride of the family instead of being dishonored.

The Portrayal of the incident of the Train

The novel "Partitions" depicts a tragedy known in the history of India's partition as "the train incident"; it represents how people were brutally killed, and not even a single person was alive in the whole train. Everybody reached dead at the station; the writer shows it as if he was the eye witness of the incident. In the novel he says:

"The platform will stay quiet as the train inches into place. The absence of anyone on the roof, may be or the emptiness of the windows. The station master will part the crowd and throw wide a compartment door. The first gush will reach his feet. He will skip back and leave his sandals in place, soaked, the bottom step still dripping". (Majmudar41-42)

He feels something dripping on him. He was shocked to see that not even a single person in the train was alive. Everybody in the train was dead. Majmudar says that "the train suddenly stopped and inside the train it was a scene of dumbness and a situation and he further shows tragedy of the event". (Mujmudar, 41) "Corpse trains" rolled into Lahore station dripping blood, their carriages filled with hacked-off- limbs, women without breast or noses, disemboweled children. (Hajari, 141)

Hope in a time of Despair

The partition of united India in 1947 into two domains secular India and religiously governed Pakistan is a big event in world history. The partition was a time of trouble and despair of the people of subcontinent. Why was it so troublesome and why partition became the only solution of people's trouble? Let me take you back before partition, it was a time when people were killed without reason, the only possible reason that they belong to other creed, community or clan. It was the time when people did only knew how to kill. It was the time when the people of the subcontinent had forgotten about brotherhood. It was a time when brother killed brother, son killed father, and the wife killed husband just to attain superiority. It was the time when people were killed mercilessly, women were abducted violently and children were sold as they were toys. It was the time when civil rights were trodden and shredded apart. It was the time when people were stopped from worshipping according to their own beliefs. It was the time when there was no hope for the people and the only light seen by the people of the subcontinent was the light of partition. The partition was the only hope for a better future for them and for their coming generation. During partition, people forgot about their caste, creed and community. All were united and helped each other. Majmudar writes in the novel that the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs were united. This situation was represented by the characters of Masud, Simran, Keshav and Shankar who were united and lived like a family. They helped each other, they comforted each other, and they look after each other. Partition was a dark time, but the darkest hour of the night comes just before the dawn. For the people of subcontinent, the division of India was their dawn and the hope in the time of despair. Nasid Hajari writer in "*Midnight Furies*" The Karachi-bound émigrés were in a celebratory mood. As they pulled out of Delhi, cheers of "Pakistan Zindabad!" (Long live Pakistan!) had drowned out the train's whistle. Rather than laboring under a political order dominated by the Hindus who made up three-quarters of the India's population, they would soon be masters of their own domain. (Hajari, xiv)

CONCLUSION

The study has prudently portrayed the untouched events of the partition. It has mentioned the turbulent time when people were killed without any reason. The majority of deaths during partition were the deaths of young children

who did not even know the difference between right and wrong. The tragedies of people include the abduction of women and traumatization of children. Teenagers, especially underage teenager girls, had to face the cruelty of partition because they were the weaklings at the time of partition. In the train incident in which not even a single person traveling survived; all were brutally killed, women were barbarously abducted and then thrown away like a piece of paper and the one who rose voice against them were silenced forever. The untouchables had nothing to do with the partition because it would not be going to bring any change in their lives. They were neither interested in partition nor in freedom. Centuries' hatred of Hindus had engraved in their hearts that they were permanent untouchables. Partition or freedom, in their eyes, could never give them the status of touchable. There was no door that would welcome a new life for them. The People, who had been living opposite sides of their newly borne countries, were happy because they were going to that country for which they had been fighting and devoting their lives for centuries.

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