

**Treatment of Women in Partition Novels - Androcentric vis a vis Gynocentric
Projection of Women: A Comparative Study**

A Summary

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SUMMARY

The division of sub-continent gave the birth to two nation theory India and Pakistan. The Partition of India not only created two new independent nations but also resulted in one of the greatest forced migration in human history. Millions of frightened people dislocated from their ancestral homes and fled across borders. Though more than half a century has gone by, from which the nation is yet to recover fully, the horrendous picture will be still alive who would have gone through and to face in the Partition process. The horrendous tragic events of Partition hold the mirror up to what the Partition was in the annals of Indian history in which a hundred thousand women were raped, abducted, mutilated about three hundred thousand were slaughtered and twelve million people rendered homeless. The loss of the human values during the Partition depicts the Partition as an irony of Indian history. It is difficult to imagine the impact of traumatic experience of the tragedy of human life especially on women.

It was one of the most horrifying human turbulence in history in which millions of people were brutally murdered and rendered from one place to another. Partition brought the bloodiest upheaval in the history of India which was accompanied by mass migrations of Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India. This was the greatest migration took place in the human history. During the massive exchange of population many trains were attacked and its inhabitants massacred. On the border of Punjab there was a naked dance of horrors of Partition and other inhuman cruelties in which women abducted, raped, mutilated and forcibly converted.

Partition has affected society in many ways if we see socially; communal relationships were disturbed, politically the country was divided into two nations, psychologically women went on under traumas and lost their identities and domestically families were broken. Undoubtedly, it was the greatest loss of the society of both nations.

Though the division of subcontinent affected everyone in different ways but it had a particular impact on women as they took a lot of time to come out of the horrifying traumas. No-doubt particularly the women, who suffered atrocities in the form of mass rape public-ally and great humiliations through naked parades. Some of the women who suffered in the great agitations of brutality and revenge could never come out of their traumas and became insane. The mental and physical sufferings what women experienced took number of years to set up their lives back together again. The Partition history especially of women is still far from mended.

Taking the advantage of the movement men of one community abducted, raped, humiliated and finally killed women of another community on a massive scale. The hypocrisy of men took the undue advantage of humiliating women of other community on the name of gender and communal violence. Women were the easy target to take revenge by dishonoring them. For decades these brutal realities remained buried in silence somewhere, even though the picture of cruelties is still in the mind and perhaps can never be faded. The Partition history especially of women is still far from recoveries and perhaps couldn't be eradicated. It was beyond all human imagination and sentiments.

However, literature plays an important role to react upon the contemporary situation of society. And that is why Partition novelists reacted too writing many novels on the theme of Partition. Literature is the mirror and novelists are the medium to get aware public domain of society under existing social conditions.

Partition compelled several Indian English writers to write on the theme of Partition. The irresistible creative urges of many Indian English writers have been the potential literary material for the novelistic presentation. They drew the attention of their readers by taking the Partition theme which provided a great reservoir of literary milieu and valuable material. They have narrated their stories masterfully keeping the Partition as a background to their personal narratives. In-fact Partition has stirred fictional imagination to creatively examine its horrors and consequences and along with that to explore the numbers of issues connected with them. Inevitably, the greatest loss of human tragedy caused by the Partition has been taken up as a theme in many novels in the contemporary literature.

Partition novels written on the theme of Partition constitute an important sub-genre of the Indian English Fiction. The theme of Partition was explored in Indian English Fiction. The Partition of India and associated bloody riots inspired many creative minds in India and Pakistan. In fact, the horrendous events of Partition gave the idea and inspired many creative writers to create literary or cinematic depictions of this event. These nightmarish incidents which occurred after the Partition constitute the major theme to Indo-English writers by focusing on the massacres during the refugee migration. They have certainly realized the potential in the theme of Partition to light violence which depicts the effect of Partition on

Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. The psychology of the suffering humanity and the psychology of the horrid reality of the Partition have been presented intensely and vividly by these novelists.

Since centuries there has always been the difference between male and female sexuality. We know literature always reacts on the contemporary existing social conditions through its narratives and writings. Literature has always been witnessed the roles of women in the society. That is all true that men dominated women for centuries and so the role of women was nowhere in the society in general and it took many years to make their own identities. However, men dominated the world in every aspect and ruled over women. Education and so as literary world was limited to men and that is why the majority of those who could write were men. As the pen was in the hands of male writers, so they sketched the picture of women the way they wanted.

The aim of the present study is to analyze the fictional representation of female characters in male writers' narratives. The work deals with how women were portrayed through the eyes of male writers especially in Partition fictions. No doubt the literary era was dominated by male writers, who treated women as an object, a household commodity, passive and submissive. They created the image of women as innocent and physically 'weaker sex'. Men, who not only dominated the real world but also, they ruled over literary world through their narratives. They ruled over women by creating their image merely as a piece of furniture. As a matter of fact, women remained mute and marginalized from the narratives. It can't be wrong to say that male writers portrayed the image of women, the way they wanted to portray in their narratives. This work deals with how women remained mute and marginalized

in the male text presenting their androcentric perspectives. How male authors observed and evaluated female characters only on basis of their body and not brain. This work explores with the limitations of their characterization that how their individualities end, where the description of their bodies ends. As a matter of fact, lack of women perspectives can be seen in the Partition narratives by male writers. Androcentric approach deals with how the Partition male novelists have been essentially patriarchal in its presentation and how they depict the lopsided view of the victimized women. This study deals the image of women by these three male Partition novelists presenting their androcentric perspectives in their respective narratives:

1- *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar

2- *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal

3- *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh

As a matter of fact, it always has been observed that in Indo-Anglian fiction writing women characters are never portrayed in the strong image. They always have been portrayed far away from the female sensibility. The objectified image of female characters has always been the dominant form of indo-Anglian fiction. Women's psychology is perceptible, as no woman character is fully developed and they haven't been presented as the victim of the Partition. The traumatic experiences of Partition that went through over the bodies and soul of the women is not projected in depth.

The porno graphical description of sexual rivalry between Hindu and Muslim men over the possession of women's body with "rape" emerges as a text of Partition narratives. This repeated voyeuristic drama of sexual violence in form of mass rape and parading naked women

in the procession becomes the erotic text of these narratives like in Nahal's *Azadi*. The work focuses on how the "actual rape" of women during Partition and then the "textual rape" in the Partition fictions produced by Hindu male authors becomes the "symbolic rape" of the nation. Hindu and Muslim women are graphically sketched by the male authors like Chaman Nahal, Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar through rape, voyeurs, naked processions and some of the unwanted love making scenes in the Partition narratives. The porno graphical description of sexual rivalry between Hindu and Muslim men over the possession of women's body with "rape" emerges as a text of Partition narratives. This repeated voyeuristic drama of sexual violence in form of mass rape and parading naked women in the procession becomes the erotic text of Nahal's narrative *Azadi*. Hindu and Muslim women are graphically sketched by the male authors like Chaman Nahal through rape, voyeurs, naked processions and some of the unwanted love making scenes in the Partition narratives. The image of female characters is like they are needed in the scenes for the body show and its measurement.

In-fact, it has been observed that despite having so many women characters in the narratives there is not even a single female character has been seen doing some heroic deeds, protestation or taking an action even in the Partition violence. They have not been seen anywhere taking protest violence with themselves. In-fact they have been portrayed doing merely household chores, taking care of their husbands and children, involving in gossiping and cracking the vulgar jokes that too on women's body. The narrative's text clarifies how women characters are objectified and meant the personal property used by men and thrown having used it.

In the processions men can be seen living out their fantasies through their linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of women like still tied to their place as the slaves following the order of their masters. The constitution of the male gaze, continuous exists as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking female naked body as an object. At the extreme, procession becomes hysterical and fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs, whose only sexual satisfaction comes first by watching it, in an active controlling sense, an objectified female body as the procession moves through the bazaars and the streets. The great humiliation and hatred scene can be seen through the dominant forms, structured ways of seeing and pleasure in looking the submissive female body. Pleasure is used in the narrative text for men onlookers as a radical weapon to see the naked bruised body in pain.

As a matter of fact, about all female characters are portrayed as victimized of male gaze. However, the narratives reject the female characters in action and protesting the physical violence against them. Female body is used as a metaphor through the voyeuristic presentation in the form of rape merely to arouse the curiosity in male readers, who can feel the ways of controlling women through the erotic scenes depicting sexual violence. The presentation of female characters is limited to their body aspects and where their body's description ends, they are immediately taken out of the narrative's text. The actual rape during Partition becomes the textual metaphorical rape through the voyeuristic presentation of female characters in an erotic way in the narratives.

The theme of sex has always been prominent in his novels so as in *Train to Pakistan*. The objectification of female body has always been a matter of controversies in his writings. His

female characters from one novel to another are objectified and merely reduced to their body centeredness. Male dominance can easily be seen in Singh's novel. His female characters haven't been seen anywhere involving themselves taking decisions, or protesting even if they felt something wrong. His female characters are always presented merely as a sex object and victimized in the hands of male dominating society. His novels are always found patriarchal in its presentation.

This is how awakening consciousness is found missing in the characterization female characters in the narrative and it appears directly their confrontation a male dominated and cultured oriented society. Women characters do not emerge as a human being. The spectrum presentation of female versus male dominance is presented male as a subject and female as an object in the narrative. Their inner strength and integrity are exploited as the female characters remain the mute figures in the sexually discriminatory world. The focus on female characters is accomplished through the voyeuristic presentation of their bodies. They remain in the concerns of the narrative as an inferior expandable commodity.

Literature is a dynamic device in the hands of creative writers to bring forth the social changes in a new framework. Literature has always reacted on catastrophic events of Partition's massacre, abduction, rape and mutilation of sub-continent on female bodies. It won't be wrong to say mutilation of female bodies have become the tabula of Partition Literature. There is no doubt women have been projected in these fictional texts in the governing body of marginalization, subjugation and on the basis of their weak traits submissiveness and passivity.

There have been so many female authors who contribute to process a change in the society with their compulsive works. These writers explore the world, free from the supremacy, command, control and the pecking order. They present their female characters to perform the tasks with gender equality. Their female characters remain attentive to individuality and diversity. Women authors have produced the new conceptions in the challenging patriarchal assumptions.

History and narratives about women Partition sufferers foreground their physical, emotional, and psychological traumas during bloody riots of Partition. But at the same time women authors record the experiences of women's sufferings through their female characters' plight from a gynocentric point of view. Gynocentric approach of female authors deals with the traumatic experiences of women in Partition, not on the basis of their bodies as object but on the basis of their humiliations. Gynocentric theories about women's literary production reconsider women's rights and their status all over the world. As a matter of fact, female authors depict the real victimization of women through their female characters and at the same time not presenting them on the basis of their body as object in the narratives of Partition.

It is essential to observe about feminist text, it is the woman who commands, plays her role and performs the action with her significant presence. It is she who draws her readers' attention whether by her strength or victimization by male discourse. There is no doubt gynocentric view gives a different definition to women by giving a radiate presence in front of the readers. Women authors not only deal with the domain of her womanliness but also her surroundings and her varied relationships she creates for herself. Indian feminists like Kamla

Bhasin, Urwashi Butalia, Ritu Menon have given their noteworthy contributions documenting the Partition traumas presenting women as worst victim.

The present study deals with the gynocentric perspectives how women went through the tragic experiences and their psychic disturbances made their lives catastrophic. Female writers depict the brutal effects of Partition through all the female characters as the speaking subjects. The present study deals with how women novelists centrally focus on their female character's point of view in their narratives. Keeping a gendered perspective women authors record the women's painful experiences of Partition very significantly.

The question is appropriately answered by the female Partition novelists: Shauna Singh Baldwin, Attia Hosain, and Bapsi Sidhwa. Female novelists who presented their voice as the speaking subjects present the actual violation of female vulnerable body. Women's experiences through the eyes of female novelists depict the actual stories of violated female body as a possession during upheaval. In this context the three female novelists' writings are presented with their gynocentric perspectives:

1- *What the Body Remembers* by Shauna Singh Baldwin

2- *Ice- Candy-Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa

3- *Sunlight on a Broken Column* by Attia Hosain

Women novelists narrate each aspect of women's sentiments so beautifully that hardly any sentiment would have skipped and escaped from these novelist's eyes. As women writers they succeed in presenting all the sentiments and women's insecurities from a woman point of view. They succeed in foregrounding the inner strength of women that made them lead to face the

atrocities of Partition trauma on women. They masterfully transform their women characters filling them a new inner strength into new women. Women novelists sketch graphically women's experiences along with the male counterparts at the critical junctures. Their narratives always give a strong message to see women as human beings not merely as a commodity. Their novels celebrate the women's sexuality highlighting women's strength and capabilities.

The proposed work deals with a comparative study of androcentric and gynocentric approach; which differentiate the male and female writers' perspectives in terms of the projection of female characters in their texts. This textual approach throws light on their outlooks, portraying their female characters' aspects on the basis of their victimization in general, their image as a commodity on the textual background or sketching their bold image highlighting their sensible steps. The chapter will explore the portrayal of female characters marking the difference between male and female writers' perspectives through their androcentric and gynocentric approach in their texts. At the same time the study explores the textual comparison of all six novels three by male writers and three by female writers on the basis of their women's characterization in their particular narratives.

However, this is true when a woman writer writes she writes differently as she thinks differently. Women writers write and catch all the perspectives of their female characters; whether it comes to their victimization or it comes to their sensible steps taken at the time. Women writers Shauna Singh Baldwin, Bapsi Sidhwa and Attia Hosain have written their narratives from a woman point of view. Being women writers, they have explored all the

shades of their female characters from low to high. They have shaped their female characters throwing all the colors of essentially feminine concern. There have been so many Indian and Pakistani women novelists who sketched women's traumatic plight in a heart rending manner like Amrita Pritam in *Pinjar*.

These women novelists passionately record the experiences of women characters and their compromises dealing with the situation give a different direction comparatively male writing. The way women writers registered the women's experiences with the cry from their wounded souls is explicitly masterpiece. There are so many Indian and Pakistani women novelists who sketched women's traumatic plight in a heart rending manner. Partition narratives sketch the real picture of actual exploitation of women during communal riots in an imaginative manner. No-doubt, female writers explored in their narratives the exploitation and dislocation was much more devastating than it was for men.

From the gynocentric point of view women novelists have always highlighted women characters' perspectives how they had to constantly prove themselves in the male dominating society. On the contrary male novelists have always projected their female characters based on their physical aspects. In the Partition narratives there are number of instances where naked processions of women took place and the scenes had been narrated in a titillating manner by male writers. But what distinguishes female novelists' account from those of other male writers is the difference of approach. Undoubtedly, female novelists' approach is totally feminine while projecting either female protagonists or other female characters. The aim of women writers in context of Partition narratives besides portraying the Partition's violence in general, they

specifically record the women's psychological traumas, their mental and physical sufferings. From a woman point of view, they present the different dimensions of women's sufferings keeping all the gender perspectives in their mind. There is a difference of approach in the treatment and projection of female characters between male and female author's texts. Female authors recognize and feel their female characters by keeping themselves on the place of their female characters. Female writers remain conscious while writing to understand the most important part of female psyche on which a female character stands and keeps her identity alive. This is how the female characters develop and eventually make their places in the hearts of their readers.

A few literary female writers have dealt with women's pains, sexual abuse during riots and uplifted the curtains through their female characters. Many of the female writers like Amrita Pritam, Krishna Sobti have experienced it through their eyes and this is the reason too they have been better succeeded to deal the Partition agonies with women's humiliations and pains. Women writers have dealt a woman's naked body in the processions with a different angle while male writers have dealt a female naked body with a different angle and make a different picture of a female naked body presenting as an object and at the same time the victim of the male gaze. The titillating scenes presented by male writers whether a scene of brothel or a love making scene of lovers; the female characters have always been presented as a commodity in front of their readers.

Another noteworthy difference is also found in love making scenes. Gynocentric text gives the different approach while narrating the love making scenes, on the contrary androcentric

approach targets merely on female body's counterparts. Male writers project their female characters through the titillating scenes merely on the basis of their physical aspects

On the contrary androcentric approach focuses on women's rape, abduction, and naked parades and through the titillating scenes. However, they do not focus on the psychological impacts and how millions of women went under horrified traumas and number of women couldn't come out of the horrified traumas and remained in dark corners throughout their lives finding out their existence.

It has been observed the narratives by male novelists; all female characters are treated like an object, a commodity. In-fact one can say in male narratives a woman's body is used putting titillating scenes merely to arouse the curiosity in the minds of readers. Male writers mostly restrict themselves limited to a woman's body or moreover a woman's honour is saved by the hero of the story as the heroine of the novel is portrayed "a weaker sex".

Generally, in male writings it has been observed that, it is men who take the charge of action and women characters are highlighted as agency; who live under the shade of heroes' mercy. But Partition discourses by women writers portray the bold image of women characters. Women writers give the shape and voice to their female characters and that strong voice gives the confidence to live their own individuality and identity

In male writings one can easily find the projection of their female characters remains only on the basis of their beauty, the beauty of their body or they live their characters either on the mercy or on the love of the hero of the narrative. They do not play their roles exploring their own individualities rather they depend on the heroes of the narratives. They do not carry

their identities rather their identities are either made by the male author or by the male characters of the narrative. This is how an androcentric approach denies the existence of a female character's identity and snatches its individuality as a human being.

Female writers not only bring forth the gender aspects of Partition, but also open each thread of women's pains and humiliations; they suffered during violence which is undoubtedly irreparable. Their aim to show the realistic picture of the time how women had been subjected to bear the pathetic atrocities in the hands of male dominated world. Female writers provide much wider space to their female characters with pride.

On the contrary women writers do not present their female's counterparts through the titillating scenes. They do not portray a woman's objectified and co-modified image in pain rather they present the actual victimization of women during Partition violence. They present the realistic picture of women's victimization without creating any sensation through the titillating scenes.

On the other hand, andocentric approach restricts the female space in the narratives because of the biological difference. However, this is the reason literary discourses by male writer's circumference the women's world in a very small frame. While, the gynocentric approach deals with the image of empowered women in Partition narratives gives a new direction to women's world. The image of empowered women in women's writings indeed create a new space for women under strong dimensions opposing patriarchy. Women's writings take out their female characters out of that typical, stereotyped and marginalized image. The status of women in India was the same status which exactly had been narrated in the partition

narratives. But it was women writers who broke the typical stereotyped image of women introducing some new and bold image of female characters with their fresh interpretations, framed in a new dimension and above all from a woman point of view.

Women's writings not only opposed the stereotyped image of women but also, they dragged out their female characters from the suffocating four walls of home condemning patriarchy. The texts of these female writers illustrate how women have gone through bearing the horrible experiences of Partition under male dictatorship. This is how the female writers created the space for women in their narratives with a bold image through their strong female characters; illustrating their own stories of victimization from a woman's point of view.

However, a common perspective is found in male and female writings; both writings have sketched the pathetic plight of Partition violence and how women have been targeted foremost in the communal riots. Both male and female writings have dealt the Partition atrocities confronting the fact in front of their readers; how the women of both communities have been dishonoured and disfigured, sometimes at the public places in the form of mass rape or in the form of processions.

Having explored the difference between male and female text one can figure out the difference between both writings. In male writings female characters have been portrayed based on their female aspects. They have been portrayed not as human beings but as bodies or objects. They do not carry their own identities but they are carried themselves as "bodies" in front of the readers. But female writers explored womanly experiences and that is why they could be able to sketch the real plight of women from a woman point of view. Their female

characters are undoubtedly fighters who take their position in the narratives and make their places in the hearts of their readers. Their characters celebrate their sexuality and beauty with their strong identity. They are fore-grounded not on the basis of their weak portrayal merely as sex objects but by handling the center stage taking their position to get into one's hands. On the contrary in male writings female characters have been portrayed on the basis of their body centeredness. They have been portrayed not as human beings but as bodies or objects. They do not carry their own identities but they are carried themselves as "bodies" in front of the readers.

However, the similarities between the two approaches one cannot deny the fact without any contradiction that both male and female writers have produced brilliant works on Partition. No-doubt these fictional narratives of Partition play an important role in the discourse of Partition. Their thematic concern is an affirmative vision in the historical accounts. The prime concern of the writers was to depict the Partition disharmony from all the angles of social, political and economical and how it affected the lives of common people. Both male and female novelists have removed the curtains from the dark realities of Partition's upheaval. Both approaches deal artistically the public and private lives of people in their narratives. Both approaches described how the wounds and the scars of the Partition are still fresh in the hearts and in the mind of the people even after the several decades. Both male and female novelists have depicted, how communal hatred turned into revenge and how women had been raped in the hands of communal beasts, and had to pay and suffer a lot on the enormous scale.

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