


Introduction to World Literature
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“Toba Tek Singh” by Saadat Hasan MANTO

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Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955)

- Born in Punjab (British India), moved to Pakistan after Partition (Jan 1948)
- Wrote mainly in Urdu – translated Russian, French and English short stories into Urdu
- 22 collections of short stories, a novel, 5 collections of radio plays, 3 essay collections, two collections of personal sketches, columns in news dailies
 - Predicted the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan
 - Worked with All India Radio
- Best known for stories about Partition
 - Found it maddeningly senseless
 - “the greatest chronicler of this most savage episode in the region’s history”
- A successful script writer for movies



Good morning and welcome to today’s session, today we discuss the short story by Saadat Hasan Manto the title Toba Tek Singh, Saadat Hasan Manto lived from 1912 till 1955 he was born in Punjab in British India and he and his family move to Pakistan after partition that was in January 1948, there was a particular incident which triggered this movement from India to Pakistan **he have initially decide to stay back in India even when he was facing the aftermath of partition the tragic violent of our partition but when one evening one of his Hindu friends remarked that had Manto not been a close friend of his he would have already killed him and this had prompted Manto to consider migrating to Pakistan though it was entirely against his will** and this choice of migration and shifting identities thereby that he had to occupy it can be found at the center of most of Manto’s works, Manto wrote mostly and over though the works that we access today are mostly the form translation but he was very well versed in many languages during his younger days Manto is said to have translated various stories written in Russian French and English and the translations were made into Urdu to make them available in the language that he was also familiar with.

To his credit Manto has 22 collection of short stories long novel 5 collection of radio plays he was a very famous and well versed script writer there are 3 essay collections he was a journalist too and there are two collection of personal sketches he used to continuously write in a newspaper columns it is said that Manto's work he was got a prophetic nature to it as in his journalistic bright he had already predicted the rise of Islamic fundamentalism Pakistan and he also had worked with all India radio which had ensured a lot of fame and reputation for him, Manto today is best known for his stories about partition.

Manto was one of those people who found the event of partition maddeningly senseless he found it very difficult to exercise choice, the choice that he exercised was out of sheer compulsion than out of any personal conviction Manto is now considered in the field of literature as the greatest chronicler of this most savage episode in the region's history because we do not have too many writer documenting this event of partition and Manto was considered as the best of those story tellers who have recreated that horror and the tragedy of partition Manto was a successful script writer for movies before he moved from Bombay to Lahore and it is said that he would have perhaps had thriving career in Bollywood had he not chosen to move to Pakistan.

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A radical life

- Member of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association
- Leftist and socialist leanings
- Provocative stories
 - Tried for obscenity – 6 times. Never convicted
 - About drunkards, mentally ill, prostitutes
 - "Whether he was writing about prostitutes, pimps or criminals, Manto wanted to impress upon his readers that these disreputable people were also human, much more than those who cloaked their failings in a veil of hypocrisy" (Ayesha Jalal's *The Pity of Partition*- his grand n
 - The hollowness of the middle class
- Alcoholic – died of liver cirrhosis at the age of 42.

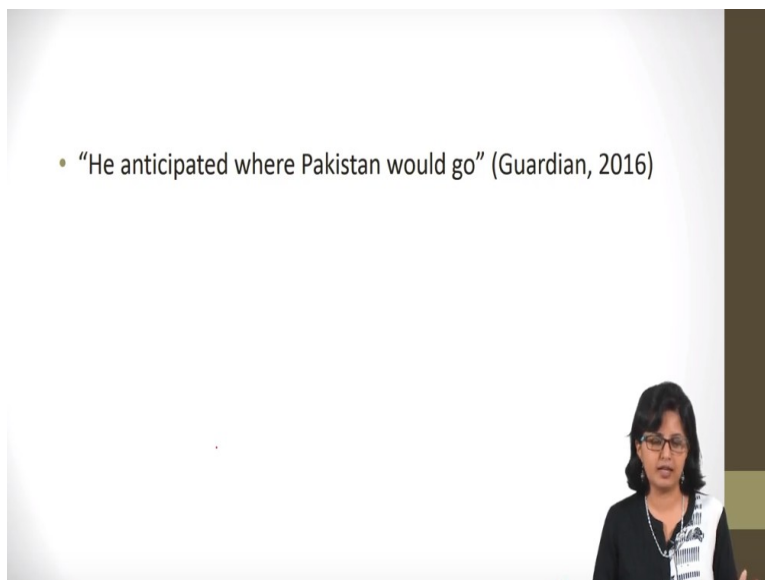
"If you find my stories dirty, the society you are living in is dirty. With my stories, I only expose the truth"

Manto had throughout lived a radical life he was a member of the Indian Progressive Writer's association he had leftist socialist leaning as his political affiliation were very-very clear he had also written provocative stories for which he was also tried to obscenity six times 3 time in India

and 3 times in Pakistan but he was never convicted and his argument was that if you find my stories dirty the society you are living in is dirty. With my my stories I only expose the truth he did not have any obscene word in his dictionary in his understanding he was only writing and representing the kind of things which he was witnessing in around his society.

He wrote about who do not otherwise qualify to be a protagonist or heros or heroine about drunkard about the mentally ill about the prostitutes and Ayesha Jalal's the pity of partition, Ayesha Jalal also happened to be his grandniece she remark whether he was writing about prostitute pimps or criminals Manto wanted to impress upon this readers that these disreputable people were also human much more than those who cloaked their feeling in a thick veil of hypocrisy one of his aimd you may begin to notice that that was to expose a hollowness of the middle class we find that coming through this very punching critique coming through most of his works he was an alcoholic and he also lost his life to liver cirrhosis at a very young age of 42.

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In 2016 an article appeared in the guardian which argued that, Manto anticipated where Pakistan would go so today when we ready his stories we also begin to see that there is certainly a graphic and prophetic quality to most of his writers.

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Major works

- Bu
 - Odour
- Khol Do
 - Open it
- Thanda Gosht
 - Cold meat
- Manto ke Afsaney
 - Stories of Manto
- Dhuan
 - Smoke
- Afsane Aur Dramay
 - Fiction and Drama
- Bagahir Ijazit
 - Without permission
- Burquey
- Phunduney
 - Tassles
- Sarkarkandon Ke Peechey
 - Behind the Reeds
- Shaiytan

Manto wrote prolifically some of his major work include

Bu translated as odour,

Khol do which means open it,

Thanda Gohst meaning Cold Meat,

Manto ke afsaney - Stories of Manto,

Dhuan - Smoke,

Afsane aur Dramey - Fiction and Drama,

Bagahir Ijazat - Without Permission,


Burquey, Phunduney - Tassles, and what translated as behind the reeds,

And finally Shaiytan which is translated as Satan.

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Not so polite or decent!

- Bu (smell) ✓
 - About a sexual encounter between a prostitute and a rich youngman who is intoxicated by the smell of her armpits
- My name is Radha ✓
 - A male character is raped by a woman
- Thanda Gohst (cold meat) ✓
 - A sikh man returns home and is stabbed by his wife during sex when he confesses to raping a corpse



Manto as I mentioned he was tried for obscenity of six times, so his stories were generally not considered super light or descent and most of his plots his references they were found to be very vulgar and obscene and we would take a look at couple of his stories to see why they were seen **obscene during that time**, though those were the kind of things that were happening Manto was really documenting and representing them in an affectional form they did find it **indecent and obscene because those were not the kind of things of people would talk about in public.**

Bu translated as smell it was about a sexual encounter between a prostitute and a rich young-man who is intoxicated by the smell of her armpits this kind of details it really outraged the public my name is Radha is about a male character who is raped by a women, Thanda Gohst translated as cold meat it is about a Sikh man who returns home and he is stabbed by his wife during intercourse because he confesses to raping a corpse.

He is documenting Manto is documenting the hard reality which was happening in the aftermath of partition and also trying to present it without sugarcoating it without trying to cover it up with some kind of decent discourse he is very raw and his plots are very suggestive and it is no wonder that it was extremely unpalatable to the audience of those time and even today there are many critics who argue that **Manto would have perhaps struggled all the more to find a published had he been publishing and writing today.**

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His epitaphs

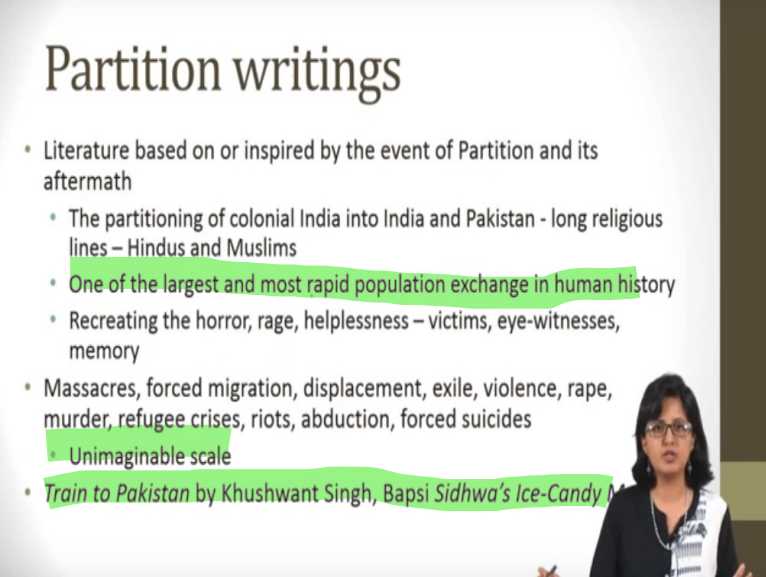
- Wrote his own epitaph
 - Here lies Saadat Hasan Manto and with him lie buried all the secrets and mysteries of the art of story writing. Under mounds of earth he lies, still wondering who among the two is the greater story writer – God or he.
- Later replaced by his sister
 - Here lies buried Manto who still believes that he was not the word on the face of the earth



Manto radical and erratica in multiple ways he wrote his own epitaph it read like this here lies Saadat Hasan Manto and with him lie buried all the secrets and mysteries of the art of storytelling under mounds of earth he lies still wondering who among the two is the greater story writer – God or he here we find Manto equating himself with God he is one script writer Manto himself is one script writer and God being another one but his sister later replaced this epitaph with another one because she thought that in that society the artist equating himself to a God may invite for the trouble the epitaph.

Which is currently there in his burial place reads like this here lies buried Manto who still believes that he was not the final word on the face of the earth, but still we see that Manto somehow manages to have the final word when it come to the narrative about partitions it is difficult to say the things that he is articulating and he is representing through his stories.

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Partition writings

- Literature based on or inspired by the event of Partition and its aftermath
 - The partitioning of colonial India into India and Pakistan - long religious lines – Hindus and Muslims
 - One of the largest and most rapid population exchange in human history
 - Recreating the horror, rage, helplessness – victims, eye-witnesses, memory
- Massacres, forced migration, displacement, exile, violence, rape, murder, refugee crises, riots, abduction, forced suicides
 - Unimaginable scale
- *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, *Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man*

A video inset on the right side of the slide shows a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark top, speaking.


The most of Manto's writings and the short story that we are looking at today Toba Tek Singh it will fall under this category, now known as partition writing so partition literature it is a kind of literature based on or inspired by the event of partition and its aftermath which was definitely tragic and horror-stricken the event of partition refers to the partitioning of colonial India and Pakistan the division was made along religious lines on the basis of whether they were dominantly Muslims or Hindus.

And this is event today considered as one of the largest and most rapid population exchange in human history what the partition literature the writers who write about the partition what they seek to do to recreate the horror the rage and the helplessness which people were facing irrespective of their religious loyalties irrespective of the religious identities and label they that they bore and this recreation this narration happens from the point of view of victims of eye witnesses some are recreated from memory some use historical accounts and give a fictional frame work to it so there are different kind of partition literature that we can find though there are not too many writers who wrote about partition.

Some of the recurrent themes in partition literature massacres, forced migration, displacement, exile, violence, rape, murder, refugee crises, riots, abduction forced suicide and all of these had happened in an unimaginable scale which is what made this event of partition very distinct from all the other kind of riot and all other kinds of violence that this sub-continent had witness some


of the other important works which are classified as partition literature are Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-candy man. The latter was also made into a Hindi movie titled 1947.

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Toba Tek Singh, 1955

- A dark comedy. Satire
- Written in Urdu.
- Context: after Partition
- Setting: a lunatic asylum in Lahore
- Story: the exchange of lunatics (Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians)
- The dilemma of Bishan Singh – Where is Toba Tek Singh, his village
- Chooses to collapse in a 'no man's land' in Wagah border

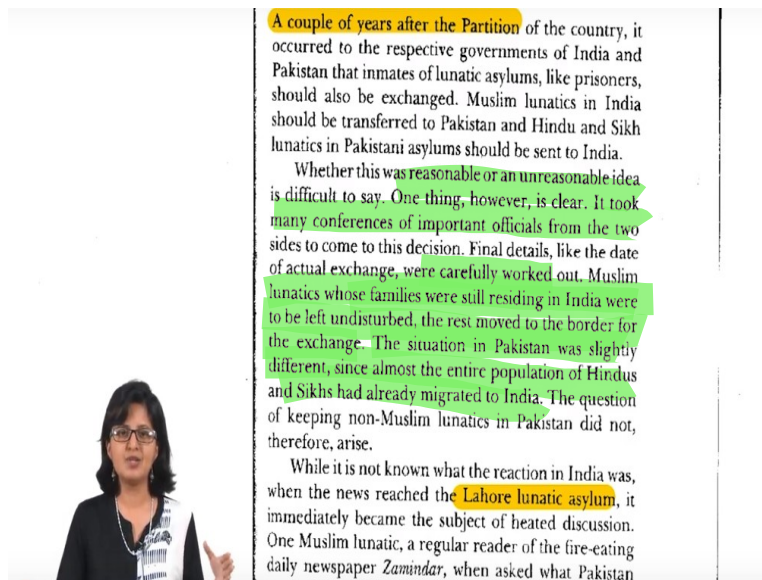


Now we come to look at the short story that we propose to discuss today Toba Tek Singh. It was published in 1955. It's considered as a dark comedy which is black humor. It is a political satire. It was originally written in Urdu and now it is translated into various languages. Incidentally, this is the only work from regional literature which made it into Rushdie's vintage of book of Indian writing of the last 50 years and according to him, according to editors Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West.

Toba Tek Singh was the only work in translation which made the final cut so that is the kind of distinction the Toba Tek Singh enjoys in terms of Indian writing in English. Indian literature in translation and even world literature. The context of Toba Tek Singh is right after partition. The story begins by telling us that this happens three years after partition. It is set in a lunatic asylum in Lahore and the story is about the exchange of lunatics. There are Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Anglo-Indians in this asylum where this story is set and this story and the story is about the government's move to exchange the population based on their religion, sending the Muslim lunatics to Pakistan and sending the Hindu lunatics to India.

So the crux of the story is the dilemma of the protagonist whose name is Bishan Singh and Bishan Singh's dilemma is to find out where Toba Tek Singh is, Toba Tek Singh incidentally is not in a name, but the name of village he comes from but in the story the person and the place gets merged into one, people begin to refer to him as Toba Tek Singh and Ironically to the end of this story we do not get to know where exactly Toba Tek Singh is he ends up collapsing and almost losing his life in this 'no man's land' which is neither in Pakistan nor in India.

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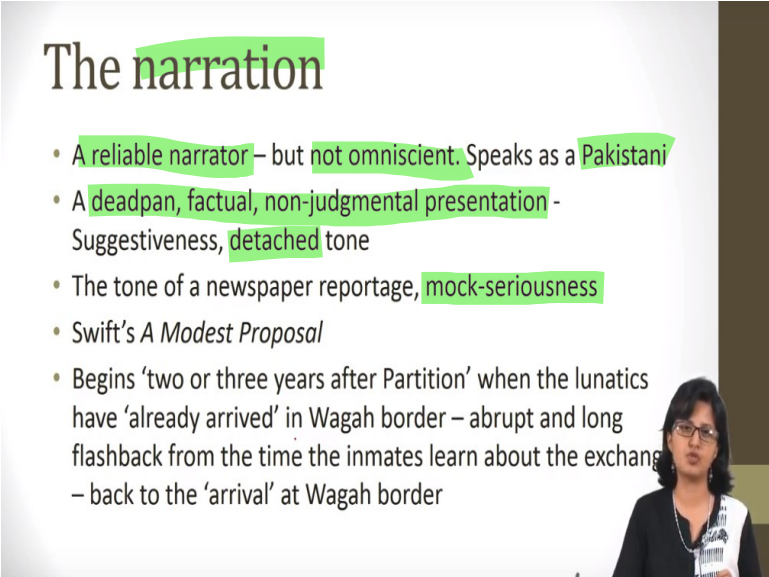
To get a sense of how this narration progresses it would be useful to take a brief look at some of the excerpts from this story, this is a short story Toba Tek Singh this is how the narration begins, a couple of years after the partition of the country it occurred to the respective governments of India and Pakistan that inmates of lunatic asylum, like prisoners should also be exchanged, Muslim lunatics in India should be transferred to Pakistan and Hindu and Sikh Lunatics in Pakistani asylums should be sent to India.

Whether this was reasonable or an unreasonable idea is difficult to say, one thing, however, is clear, it took many conferences of important officials from the two sides to come to this decision, final details like the date of actual exchange, were carefully worked out, Muslim lunatics whose families were still residing in India were to be left undisturbed, the rest moved to border for the exchange, the situation in Pakistan was slightly different, since almost the entire population of

Hindu and Sikhs had already migrated to India, the question of keeping non-Muslim Lunatics in Pakistan did not therefore arise .

While it is not known what the reaction in India was, when the news reached the Lahore lunatic asylum, it immediately became the subject of heated discussions. so the tone is set for the entire story and you also get that is happening not in India presumably in Pakistan because it talks about the narrator does not know what the reaction of in India was.

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The narration

- A reliable narrator – but not omniscient. Speaks as a Pakistani
- A deadpan, factual, non-judgmental presentation - Suggestiveness, detached tone
- The tone of a newspaper reportage, mock-seriousness
- Swift's *A Modest Proposal*
- Begins 'two or three years after Partition' when the lunatics have 'already arrived' in Wagah border – abrupt and long flashback from the time the inmates learn about the exchange – back to the 'arrival' at Wagah border

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP5Nvdz_BWE

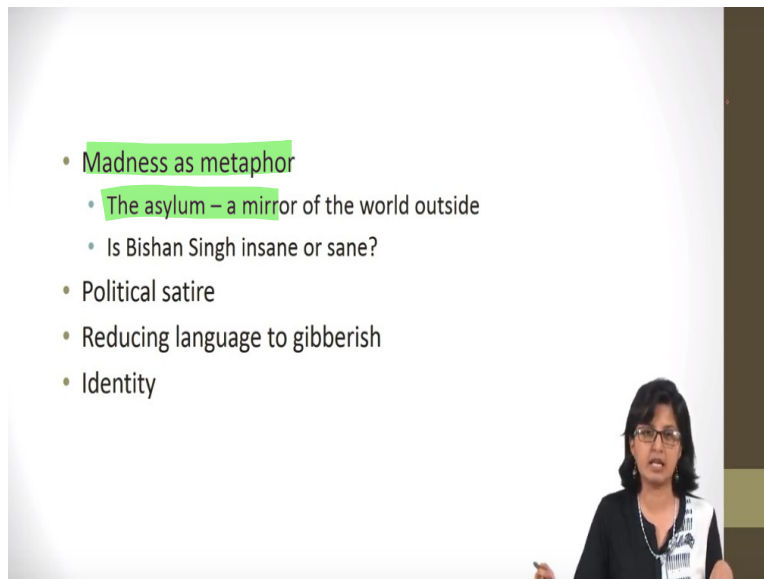
Here we have a reliable narrator telling us a story but he is not an omniscient narrator, he speaks as a Pakistani and his asylum is situated in Lahore and if you have noticed the tone is quite deadpan very factual it is a non-judgmental presentation of entire series of events there is mock seriousness to it and it is very suggestive and it does not necessarily commit to anything it is very difficult to know what the leanings of this particular narrator is and this tone of a newspaper reportage of mock-seriousness it reminds us of Jonathan swift's *A Modest Proposal* and when you read through the entire story you would also know that he is actually.

Manto is actually employing a lot of techniques from swift by presenting a very serious matter in a mock serious way and also providing certain suggestions which are outrageous in a non-judgmental detached non-committal way to make it look to the audience that it is such a grave situation and this presentation of an extremely serious situation extremely violent and horrific

situation in this tone of detached cold narration is a technique that Manto deliberately uses. and as noticed the narration begins by referring to the present moment.

When the decision has already been made to exchange the lunatics and when the narration begins we get to know that the lunatics have already arrive in Wagah Border and then there is an abrupt and long flashback documenting from the time the inmates learn about the exchange and about the various kinds of opinions that they have about this proposal to exchange the lunatics and finally towards the climax of the story we are again back at Wagah border where this exchange actually is about to take place.

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Madness is used as a Metaphor in this story the asylum is being used very suggestively and figurative to mirror the world outside there is sheer madness happening outside Manto himself always believed that this event of partition this exchange of population along the lines of religious faith along the lines of religious identity it was a an insane and arbitrary and a senseless affair and the story also leaves us with this questions whether Bishan Singh really insane or is he the only sane one in this story.


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Toba Tek Singh

A couple of years after the Partition of the country, it occurred to the respective governments of India and Pakistan that inmates of lunatic asylums, like prisoners, should also be exchanged. Muslim lunatics in India should be transferred to Pakistan and Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums should be sent to India.

Whether this was reasonable or an unreasonable idea is difficult to say. One thing, however, is clear. It took many conferences of important officials from the two sides to come to this decision. Final details, like the date of actual exchange, were carefully worked out. Muslim lunatics whose families were still residing in India were to be left undisturbed, the rest moved to the border for the exchange. The situation in Pakistan was slightly different, since almost the entire population of Hindus and Sikhs had already migrated to India. The question of keeping non-Muslim lunatics in Pakistan did not therefore, arise.

While it is not known what the reaction in India was when the news reached the Lahore lunatic asylum, it immediately became the subject of heated discussion. One Muslim lunatic, a regular reader of the famous daily newspaper *Zamindar*, when asked what



To accentuate the madness of this situation of dividing of population along the lines of religion he repeatedly uses terms such as Muslim lunatic a Sikh lunatic again a Muslim lunatic.

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was, replied after deep reflection: The name of a place in India where cut-throat razors are manufactured.

This profound observation was received with visible satisfaction.

A Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh: 'Sardarji, why are we being sent to India? We don't even know the language they speak in that country.'

The man smiled: 'I know the language of the *Hindostanas*. These devils always strut about as if they were the lords of the earth.'

One day a Muslim lunatic, while taking his bath, raised the slogan '*Pakistan Zindabad*' with such enthusiasm that he lost his balance and was later found lying on the floor unconscious.

Not all inmates were mad. Some were perfectly normal, except that they were murderers. To spare them the hangman's noose, their families had managed to get them committed after bribing officials down the line. They probably had a vague idea why India was being divided and what Pakistan was, but, as for the present situation, they were equally clueless.

Newspapers were no help either, and the asylum guards were ignorant, if not illiterate. Nor was there anything to be learnt by eavesdropping on their conversations. Some said there was this man by the name Mohammad Ali Jinnah, or the Quaid-e-Azam, who had set up a separate country for Muslims, called Pakistan.

As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, where on

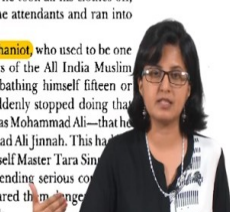
earth was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how come that until only the other day it was India?

One inmate had got so badly caught up in this India-Pakistan-Pakistan-India rignmarole that one day, while sweeping the floor, he dropped everything, climbed the nearest tree and installed himself on a branch, from which vantage point he spoke for two hours on the delicate problem of India and Pakistan. The guards asked him to get down; instead he went a branch higher, and when threatened with punishment, declared: 'I wish to live neither in India nor in Pakistan. I wish to live in this tree.'

When he was finally persuaded to come down, he began embracing his Sikh and Hindu friends, tears running down his cheeks, fully convinced that they were about to leave him and go to India.

A Muslim radio engineer, who had an M.Sc. degree, and never mixed with anyone, given as he was to taking long walks by himself all day, was so affected by the current debate that one day he took all his clothes off, gave the bundle to one of the attendants and ran into the garden stark naked.

A Muslim lunatic from Chaniot, who used to be one of the most devoted workers of the All India Muslim League, and obsessed with bathing himself fifteen or sixteen times a day, had suddenly stopped doing that and announced—his name was Mohammad Ali—that he was Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. This had led a Sikh inmate to declare himself Master Tara Singh, leader of the Sikhs. Apprehending serious commotion and trouble, the authorities declared them dangerous and shut them up in separate cells.



So this how the lunatics their identity is referred along with their religious identity which the absurdity of that begins to strike us and we also realize how utterly absurd it was to divide the

population along these religious lines as well and Manto uses the metaphor of madness to say what he wants to say and this is how Manto makes one of his characters talk about what Pakistan is the name of a place in India.

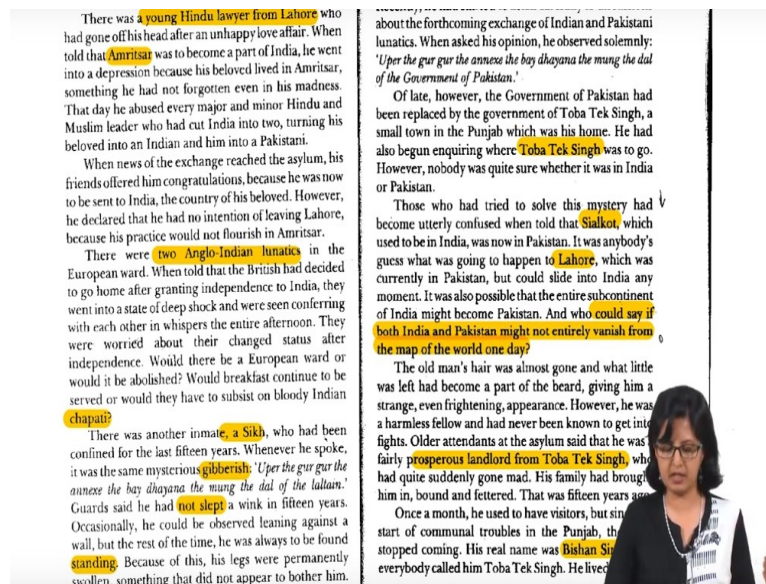
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Where cutthroat razors are manufactured, we have a set of people in this asylum who are clueless about where India or Pakistan are we have a set of characters in this short story within this asylum who are clueless where in India is or where Pakistan is and frankly they do not care until it comes to this life and death situation where there about to be moved and the moment they are about to be moved they begin to realize that their identity can not to be defined in terms of religion in terms of nationality but it is something else altogether.

We find the protagonist Bishan Singh opting for a more local identity of his village of Toba Tek Singh and he holds on to that identity refusing to let any other identity to supersede it neither religious nor national and the story also tells how everyone is clueless about what is happening neither the inmates nor the prison guards nor what the newspapers are writing about nothing else is able to give them a clarity about where what is and there are also this interesting episode where a man by the name Mohammad Ali Jinnah or the Quaid-e-Azam who had setup a separate country for Muslims called Pakistan, and there are these political details which have been given to us we have been made privy to it but the tone with which the story tells us about these things are in a very matter of fact in a way as if to even indicate that it is no big deal and there is one person who declares I wish to live neither in India nor in Pakistan.

I wish to live in this street there is a Muslim radio engineer there is another Muslim lunatic from CHANIOT there is another Sikh inmate who declares himself as master Tara Singh another one who declares himself as Mohammad Ali Jinnah and we find that through this metaphor of madness again Manto is suggesting that not just this inmates but all this political leader who are insinuating the public and who are instigating these various kinds of divisions they are all equally mad and he is able to use madness as a convenient trope to say what is otherwise perhaps impossible to say.

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We continuously find that the lunatics are being referred in terms of their religious identity a young Hindu lawyer from Lahore and there are two Anglo Indian lunatics then this is a very interesting detail there are these two Anglo Indian Lunatics who were more worried about whether there will be a European ward in wherever they are going to be transferred and also about would breakfast continue to be served or would they have to subsist on bloody Indian Chapati.

And these concerns these trivial concerns also accentuate the absurdity the of the political drama which is happening outside and now we come to in page 4 toward the end we come to focus on this protagonist Bishan Singh he is a Sikh who had been confined for the last fifteen years whenever he spoke it was the same mysterious gibberish upur de gur gur de annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain so he keeps uttering this nonsensical language and this is extremely important because the protagonist Bishan Singh he also suggest the breakdown of communication the total lapse language.

And how it stops being an important means of communication totally this language which is otherwise used for communications has not been useful for negotiation or for any kinds of negotiation which could take away the gravity of this violence and here we find of Bishan Singh simplifying that because whenever he talks he just utters nonsense and this exemplifies the total breakdown of total communication during the time of partition and during the month and years

after that the story tells us about how he begins enquiring where Toba Tek Singh is and nobody is quite sure whether it is in Pakistan or in India.

And let us read this short except from page five together those who are try to solve this mystery had become utterly confused when told that Sialkot which used to be in India was now in Pakistan it was anybody's guess what was going to happen to Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India any moment, it was also possible that entire subcontinent of India might become Pakistan and who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely vanish from the map of the world one day.

Through this logical construction of argument Manto is further mocking the entire series of political events and whatever that followed and he is showing us there is no logic there is no rationale however hard you try to justify this act of partition this act of division along these lines and we are also given a background of this man Bishen Singh and some say he used to be a landlord Toba Tek Singh and he lost his mental stability 15 years ago and was brought to the asylum.

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of limbo, having no idea what day of the week it was, or month, or how many years had passed since his confinement. However, he had developed a sixth sense about the day of the visit, when he used to bathe himself, soap his body, oil and comb his hair and put on clean clothes. He never said a word during these meetings, except occasional outbursts of: 'Upur the gur gur the annex the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain.'

When he was first confined, he had left an infant daughter behind, now a pretty young girl of fifteen. She would come occasionally, and sit in front of him with tears rolling down her cheeks. In the strange world that he inhabited, hers was just another face.

Since the start of this India-Pakistan caboodle, he had got into the habit of asking fellow inmates where exactly Toba Tek Singh was, without receiving a satisfactory answer, because nobody knew. The visits had also suddenly stopped. He was increasingly restless, but, more than that, curious. The sixth sense, which used to alert him to the day of the visit, had also atrophied.

He missed his family, the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they used to speak to him. He was sure they would have told him whether Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. He also had a feeling that they came from Toba Tek Singh, where he used to have his home.

One of the inmates had declared himself God. Bishen Singh asked him one day if Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. The man chuckled: 'Neither in India nor in Pakistan, because, so far, we have issued no orders in this respect.'

Bishen Singh begged 'God' to issue the necessary orders, so that his provision could be sent. He was disappointed, as 'God' appeared to be preoccupied with more pressing matters. Finally, he told him angrily: 'Upur the gur gur the annex the mung the dal of Gurji da Khalsa and Gurji ki fateh . . . jo bolay so nahal sat sri akal.'

What he wanted to say was: 'You don't answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have been more of a sport.'

A few days before the exchange was to take place, one of Bishen Singh's Muslim friends from Toba Tek Singh came to see him—the first time in fifteen years. Bishen Singh looked at him once and turned away, until a guard said to him: 'This is your old friend Fazal Din. He has come all the way to meet you.'

Bishen Singh looked at Fazal Din and began to mumble something. Fazal Din placed his hand on his friend's shoulder and said: 'I have been meaning to come for some time to bring you news. All your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. Your daughter Roop Kaur . . . '—he hesitated—'She is safe too . . . in India.'

Bishen Singh kept quiet, Fazal Din continued: 'Your family wanted me to make sure you were well. Soon I will be moving to India. What can I say, except that you should remember me to bhai Balbir Singh, bhai Vard Singh and bhaini Amrit Kaur. Tell bhai Bihir Singh. Fazal Din is well by the grace of God. The two buffaloes he left behind are well too. Both of them gave birth to calves, but, unfortunately, one of them died six days. Say I think of them often and to you there is anything I can do.'

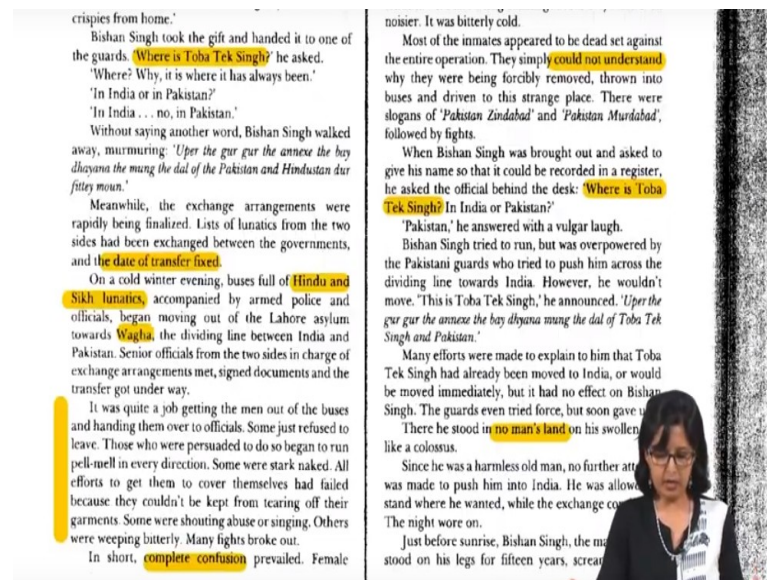
And we are also made to understand that his family visits him quite regularly and he also has a sixth sense which tells him in advance when he would get visitors and during this time of partition we realize that the visits stop because his family had moved they are no longer able to visit him in page 7 there is a way in which Manto brings in a God figure he talks about there is a

mad man who pretends to be God and Bishan Singh is upset that he still has not responded he still has really given an answer to where exactly Toba Tek Singh is and this mad man then says and then the mad man who is posing as God he is preoccupied with the other things and he does not respond adequately Bishan Singh grows really impatient.

And he says you do not answer my prayers because you are a Muslims God had you been a Sikh God you would have been more of sport of course he communicates in that nonsense gibberish language it is translated by this omniscient narrator it is translated by this reliable narrator and this form it again exposes the utter absurdity with which God's religions and everything divided the story half way through tells that Bishan Singh's family had has migrated to India his daughter also has left for India and they are waiting for him in India.

So the inevitable is soon to happen Bishan Singh will be made to move migrate to India because his family has already left for India but still we do not get to know where exactly Toba Tek Singh his village is.

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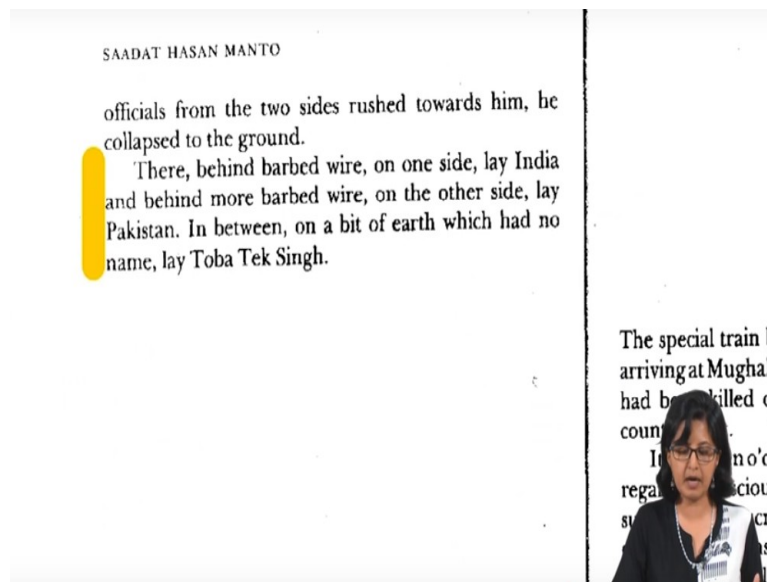
And from now from on the plot moves rather quickly the date of transfer fix Bishan Singh is still clueless of where Toba Tek Singh is and there is a description in page 8 about what happens at border when they are trying to exchange this population of lunatics when they are trying to send some of them to India and we realize that Manto is actually mocking the entire process

through which this exchange of population is planned that it was impossible to plan and execute such a thing of such grave proportions without expecting any kind of chaos.

It was quite a job getting the men out of the buses and handling them over to officials, some just refused to leave, those who were persuaded to do so began to run pell-mell in every direction, some were stark naked, all efforts to get them to cover themselves had failed because they could not be kept from tearing off their garments, some were shouting abuse or singing, other were weeping bitterly, many fight broke out, in short complete confusion prevailed how much more graphic can Manto get he is suggesting the madness the confusion and the total inability to control the situation.

When such a thing is happening here we find that madness is working as a metaphor very well because Manto is able to say many things which would perhaps which he perhaps would not have been able to say otherwise and as we come toward the end of the story we realize that Bishan Singh has still not figured where Toba Tek Singh is neither the guards nor anyone around seems to know the whereabouts of Toba Tek Singh and finally he refuses to move and the guard and the officials also they stop forcing him because it is pointless they begin to see and toward the end we see that we see that there he stood and no man's land on his swollen legs like a colossus.

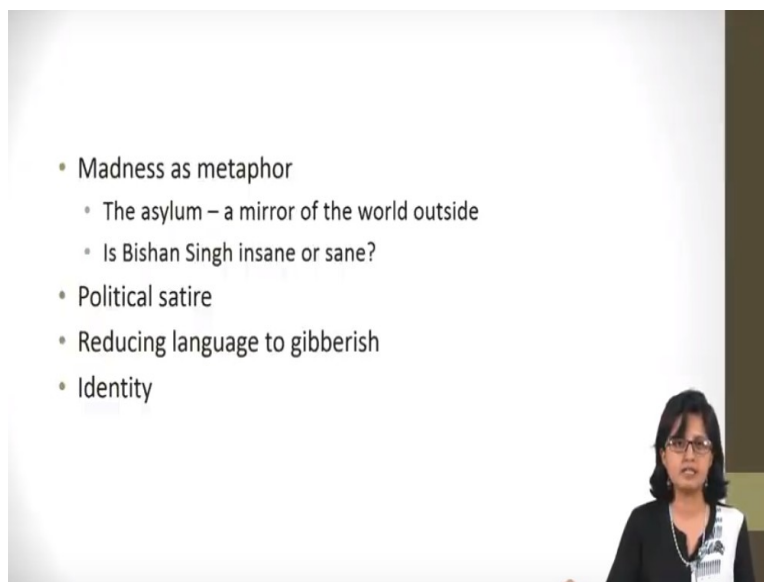
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And towards the end there behind **barbed wire** on one side lay India and behind more barbed wire on the other side lay Pakistan in between on a bit of earth which had no name lay Toba Tek Singh, we do not know whether narration referring to Bishan Singh collapsing and perhaps even dying on that ground which is a no man's land or is the story actually suggesting that is where **Toba Tek Singh is** it is in between no man's land which **nobody can now claim therefore no identity can be attached to that place either the story is ambiguous in that sense.**

We do not get to know how he how Manto wants the readers how he wants us to read and interpret the story but the chaos that he manages to convey the absurdity of this situation that comes across is very-very clear the wonderful about this story is that it resonates with the reader even today the idea of these fluent kind of identities and the impossibility to attribute concrete meanings to them they remain as a true is even today.

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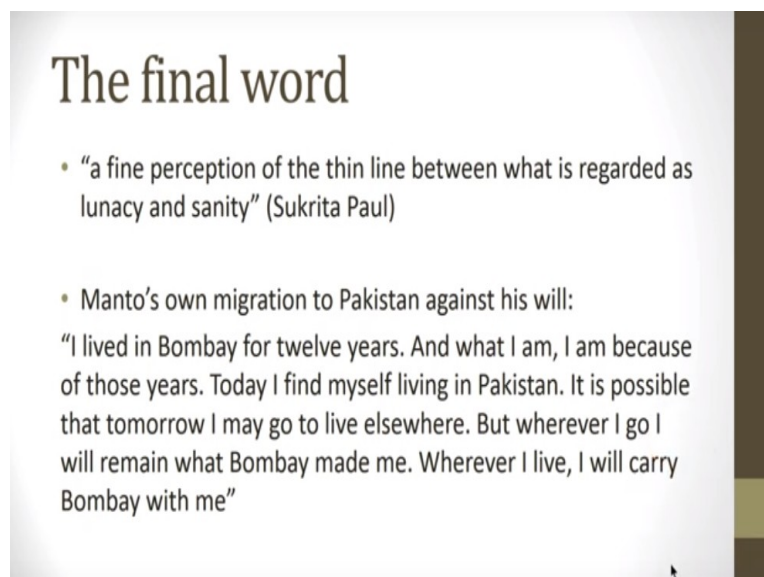


The story has been analyzed different ways and this is definitely **a political satire** and as we have noted a **madness works very well as a metaphor** to critique the agents who have part of this events the governments which were planning and executing this and commoners who were also sympathetically present the civilians the commoners the citizens who were caught in-between the total confusing situation we see that **Manto is reducing deliberately the possibility of language as a means of communication as a means of negotiation.**

He also shows this through this character of **Bishan Singh** who is unable to say anything coherently except for this the name of this village Toba Tek Singh all the other things that he says has been reduced to nonsense it really just not make any sense but in spite of that he comes across as the **only one in this story who is sane** who is clear about what he wants and who refuses to give in to this sort of division and external attributes the question of identity also looms very large throughout this story it is difficult to understand the story in multiple ways is trying to tell as that.

It is on the one hand difficult to tie a person to a **single kind of an identity** it remains as a **fluid category** but never the less there are **also situations where identity itself becomes the reason for forced migrations for forced exiles or even for losing one's own life this has been simplified in Manto's life** itself where he was forced to migrate out of in spite of himself despite the convictions that he held on to and the also find that.

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Manto has the final word as far as this story and it's sympathetic and political spirit is concerned Sukrita Paul notes this about this story fine perception of the thin line between what is regarded as lunacy and sanity that is what Toba Tek Singh successfully achieves we are difficult to judge whether Bishan Singh is the lunatic or whether the ones outside who is prompting this kind of divisions are they the insane ones we will wrap up this discussion by referring to Manto's analysis of his own life and his own identity.

Manto had migrated from Bombay to Lahore against his own will and he wrote and spoke about it for the rest of his life and this is what he wrote in one of his essays, “I lived in Bombay for twelve years, and what I am, I am because of those years, today I find myself living in Pakistan, it is possible that tomorrow I may go to live elsewhere, but wherever I go I will remain what Bombay made me, wherever I live, I will carry Bombay with me.

So this is what Manto made Bishan Singh do as well there is an identity which Bishan Singh manages to carry with himself it is a provincial local personal identity which cannot be superseded by religious identities or national identities it cannot be dictated by any powers that are from without Toba Tek Singh continues to be one of the best known stories of Manto one of the best known stories of partition and one of the best known work from this sub-continent itself and even after these many decades we continue to note that this is a kind of stories which accentuates its relevance as time goes by.

I hope you enjoy reading this short story I encourage you be more attentive to the many critical perspectives within which this story can be further placed I thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next session.

- * Madness as Metaphor
- * Insane or Sane?
- * A Parody of the World Outside
- * Breakdown of Language
- * The Sense of Place in One's Identity
- * The Trauma of Dislocation
- * Arbitrariness of Political Decisions
- * Identity of a Person Linked to Place
- * The Person Becomes the Place
- * The Unresolved Questions

In the utter nonsense that Bishan Singh speaks, Manto seems to be commenting on the breakdown of all communication in these times of sheer devastation. Language which should enable people to connect, often betrayed. Those who migrated and came to their new home felt that they could neither understand the language there nor make themselves understood.

Manto sets the tone of the story and displays the scene of action with a strong suggestion that the madhouse we are about to enter is in fact going to be a mirror of the world outside.

Thus the language was reduced to gibberish as it failed to communicate. In addition to this Manto seems to be implying that division of the country had led to a fracturing of the language too.

‘Opar di rumble tumble di annexe of the thoughtless of the green lentils of the lantern.’ As the story progresses, you will notice that new words are added to this gibberish which seems to be a curious mixture of sense and nonsense. W