

## Home and Exile

Punjab was the site of maximum relocation and rehabilitation. The most comprehensive resettlement scheme in the country, rural as well as urban, had been implemented in Punjab. Certainly, it witnessed the greatest violence and killings in the course of migrations. Numerous ashrams and homes were opened where the destitute people were brought and given shelter and employment. The loss of homes was almost painful and unbearable.

In the human history, the Partition caused one of the greatest migrations wherein Muslims were exiled to newly formulated Pakistan while the Hindus and Sikhs exiled to India. According to records, more than 15 million people were displaced from their homes and in the process nearly 2 million were massacred in the massive communal violence. Thus, Partition was not only a division of political territory but a division of the people as they were separated from their homes, livelihood, family and friends. They were indeed permanently exiled from their homelands.

The partition of India left both India and Pakistan devastated as both the governments did not imagine the migration of the exiled people on large scale. Both states subsequently faced huge problems accommodating and rehabilitating post-Partition refugees. The influx of refugees was so great in Delhi that a new city – Faridabad had to be built to rehabilitate the refugees who were living in an appalling condition in refugee camps. On both sides, the exiled not only had to deal with the effects of the complete break-down of law and order but also the loss of their dear ones' lives in riots, rapes, murders, and looting. Millions of refugees moved across the borders to regions completely foreign to them because their religious identities did not allow them to live in their ancestral homes or with the hope that they would be in a safer territory.

The plight of the helpless is brilliantly captured by the writers like Khushwant Singh in the novel *Train to Pakistan* and the short stories under study. In *Train to Pakistan*, we find exiled Hindus and Sikhs who were fleeing

from their homes in Pakistan and having to find shelter in Mano Majra. They had left everything behind and flee to save their lives. They had to fight at dual level: one is finding a shelter over their heads and saving their lives from the attackers. The Muslims exiled from India had to go through the same ordeal. They had to obey the orders of the army who would announce immediate migration: either on the same day or the next day. Khushwant Singh portrays how there was no time even to say good-bye to the fellow Mano Majarans. The novel describes the moving picture of the people who felt utterly broken as they were compelled to leave the land of their and their forefathers' birth. When Imam Baksh was asked to leave Mano Majra for Pakistan or he would be tortured by Sikh refugees, he was moved and tears trickled down his eyes. He broke down. Meet Singh clasped him in his arms and began to sob. Several of the people started crying quietly. When after much deliberation, all came to the conclusion that in the interest of Muslims themselves, it will be better for them to leave the village. Describing the condition of the village and its people on the eve of the departure of Muslims from there, the author writes:

Not many people slept in Mano Majra that night, they went from house to house-talking, crying, and swearing love and friendship, assuring each other that this would soon be over. Life, they said would be as it always had been.

Khushwant Singh has precisely depicted the real picture of the people who were forced to leave their home during partition and lived as refugees in their own country which was divided into two nations. Similarly, the suffering that the exiled people were made to experience is narrated through Iqbal:

Every time he had dozed off, the train had come to halt at some wayside station and the door was forced open and more peasants poured in with their wives, bedding and tin trunks. Some child sleeping in its mother's lap would start howling till its mouth. The shouting and clamour would continue until long after the train had left the station. The something was

repeated again and again-till the compartment meant for fifty had almost two hundred people in it, sitting on the floor, on seats, on each other or standing in the corners. There were dozens outside perched-precariously on footboards, holding on to the door handles. There were several people on the roof; the heat and smell were oppressive.

Thus, *Train to Pakistan* is both a grim and pathetic tale of individuals and communities who were forced leave their homes and were exiled due to the swirl of partition .

Similarly, the short stories under study too depict the pathetic tales of people from both the countries – Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs who became exiles in their own homelands. For example, in Sadat Hasan Manto's 'Toba Tek Singh', gives us a touching story of the inmates of the lunatic asylum in Lahore. When the news of transfer of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh lunatics reach to the asylum, they revolt against the decision in every possible manner. Bishen Singh is more worried about the location of his village Toba Tek Singh than that of his family. Ultimately, he refuses to move away from the land that belongs neither of the countries. Bishen Singh's death reveals one's love for his/her own land and their least interest in the political division of the nation.

Manik Mukhopadhyay's 'The Final Solution' depicts the heart rendering story of Mallika's family who were exiled from Pakistan only because they were Hindus. The story portrays particularly the exploitation of women as they were looked at by men like Pramatha as an object for sexual gratification. The story also shows plights of the exiled people whose basic needs like food and home could not be fulfilled by both the governments.

Bapsi Sidhwa's 'Defend Yourself Against Me' shows how the exiled had to deal with debased humanity due to hatred among people who were once friends and neighbours. The narrator who had met the boy in the neighbouring deserted house during her childhood once again stands before her as a grown up

Sikandar Khan. Now he is with his Ammijee who is a rape survivor. The story gives an account of the homeless people and their struggle for survival.

The last story under study, 'The Last Leaf' by Lalithambika Antharjanam also depicts a pathetic of rape victims who were exiled from Pakistan and relocated in the rehabilitation camps in India. It depicts the plight of girls like Jyoti who attempted to leave their homeland surreptitiously but got caught in the hands of callous people who made them unwed mothers.

The partition stories thus, give us an account of its impact from various angles. The partition was declared in August 1947 ; a continent was divided into two nations; the British left India offering it a freedom but at the cost of the deaths of millions of people, the birth of millions of children of rape victim mothers, abandoned women and girls, broken families and permanently hurt sentiments of the people.

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