

# Madness as a Critique of State-sponsored Violence: A Study of the Mad Fellows in Select Partition Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto

Mir Ahammad Ali

## Abstract

One of the recent trends in the field of Partition Studies is to focus on the psychological / traumatic aspect of violence. The Partition of Indian Union territory along the communal lines led to large-scale sectarian violence, on the one hand, and massive population transfer and subsequent problems of readjustment in an alien land, on the other. An estimated number of fifteen million people were displaced from their own homeland and a few millions more were brutally killed, raped and looted by the rival communities in the wake of partition. Apart from these sorts of physical violence, the victims had also suffered from mental or psychological violence in the forms of panic attack, pathological neurosis, paranoia, traumatic disorder, aggressive behaviour, and madness both at the individual and the collective level. This new interface between 'Partition Violence' and 'Mental Health' (Psychoanalysis or Trauma Studies) is a space which requires to be explored. There are very few short story writers who had justly captured this psychological aspect of Partition. One remarkable Urdu writer who had successfully been able to depict this in his stories is none other than Saadat Hassan Manto. One of the most remarkable voices of the Progressive Writers' Movement, Manto, had undoubtedly outshined his contemporaries not only in chronicling the Partition-induced "pornography of violence" in realistic terms, shedding aside any "thick veil of hypocrisy" (Jalal 26), but also succeeded in digging deep into the psyche of millions, both the affected ones and the perpetrators of partition violence. A large number of his characters are, in fact, underdogs from the black/dark margins of society like prostitutes, pimps, beggars, lunatics, thieves, sex-alcoholics, criminals and they are labelled as mad/insane, fallen or ignominious in one way or the other by the so-called 'civilized' society. It is largely the narrow territorial politics of the nation-state and the hypocrisy/bigotry of the religion that make them act/ behave in such chaotic ways. A good number of characters in the stories like Bishan Singh in "Toba Tek Singh", Qasim in "Sharifan" (*sugar-apple*), the unnamed old woman in "Khuda Ki Kasam" (*In the name of the God*), Ramkhelawan in the titular story, the rapists of Sakina in "Khol Do" (*Open It*), Ishwar Singh and his beloved Kulwant Kaur in "Thanda Gosht" (*Cold Flesh/Meat*), Santokh Singh in "Gurumukh ki Wasiyat" (*The Will of Gurumukh*), or Mozail in the titular story suffer from either trauma, or pathological aggression or madness. Like Manto, who considers Partition as "maddeningly senseless", these characters too feel that partition itself is a pathology sponsored by the state. Their disorders merely question the fixed paradigm of the sane/insane binary and fundamentally

critique the state-sponsored partition violence. This paper thus seeks to engage in a psychoanalytical exploration of two Mantovian stories “Toba Tek Singh” and “Sharifan” and locate the roots of their madness.

[**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis, Madness, Displacement, Mental Health, Pathological neurosis, Traumatic disorders, Progressive Writers’ Movement, State-sponsored partition violence]

## I

“If you cannot tolerate my stories, this means the times are intolerable. There is nothing wrong in my stories. The wrong which is ascribed to my stories, is in fact the rot of the system.”<sup>1</sup>

-Saadat Hasan Manto

This is how Manto had defended his stance in one of the court trials against him for the charges of obscenity found in his stories. Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the most “famous, provocative and controversial”<sup>2</sup> voices of Modern Urdu fiction had invariably captured the “times” of madness in the wake of Partition of India when brutal bloodbath and mass communal frenzy were at its peak. Indeed, the time that Manto is referring to was gory, outrageously insane and decisively “intolerable”. In fact, one of the recent trends in the field of Partition Studies is to focus on this psychological / traumatic aspect of partition violence. The Partition of Indian Union territory along the communal lines into two separate dominions, namely Hindustan and Pakistan by the Raj in the month of August 1947 led to large-scale sectarian violence, on the one hand, and massive population transfer and subsequent problems of readjustment in an alien land, on the other. An estimated number of fifteen million people were displaced from their own homeland and a few million more were brutally killed, raped and looted by the rival communities.<sup>3</sup> The Punjab province along with Bengal had witnessed the worst forms of man-massacre and mass migration. Apart from these sorts of physical violence, the victims had also suffered from mental or psychological violence in the forms of panic attack, pathological neurosis, paranoia, traumatic disorder, aggressive behaviour, and madness both at the individual and the collective level. This new interface between ‘Partition Violence’ and ‘Mental Health’ (using Psychoanalysis or Trauma Theory) is a space which requires to be explored. As we know that a number of fiction writers like Khuswant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Bhisham Sahni, Bapsi Sidhwa, Intizar Hussain, Qurratulain Hyder, to name a few, had successfully chronicled the horrific aftermath of Partition primarily in their

novels, but there are very few short story writers who had justly captured the psychological aspect of Partition. One remarkable writer of Urdu short story who had successfully been able to depict this psychological aspect of Partition in his stories is none other than Saadat Hasan Manto. One of the most prominent members of the Progressive Writers' Movement, Manto had undoubtedly outshined his contemporaries not only in chronicling the Partition-induced "pornography of violence"<sup>4</sup> in realistic terms, shedding aside any "thick veil of hypocrisy" (Jalal 26) but also succeeded in digging deep into the psyche of millions, both the affected ones and the perpetrators of partition violence. His two master weapons in so doing, as Ayesha Jalal has pointed out, are "Irony and paradox" (Jalal 26). A large numbers of his characters are, in fact, underdogs from the black/dark margins of society like prostitutes, pimps, lunatics, thieves, beggars, sex-alcoholics, criminals and they are labelled as mad/insane, fallen or ignominious in one way or the other by the so-called 'civilized' society. It is largely in the context of narrow territorial politics of the nation-state and the hypocrisy of the religion that the so-called repressive means of big institutions make them act/ behave in such chaotic ways.

A good number of characters in Manto's stories like Bishan Singh in "Toba Tek Singh", Qasim in "Sharifan", the unnamed old woman in "Khuda Ki Kasam" (*In the name of the God*), Ramkhelawan in the titular story, Sirajuddin and her daughter Sakina in "Khol Do" (*Open It*), Ishwar Singh and his beloved Kulwant Kaur in "Thanda Gosht" (*Cold Meat*), Santokh Singh in "Gurumukh ki Wasiyat" (*The Will of Gurumukh*) suffer from a particular kind of trauma, which can be termed as "historical trauma".<sup>5</sup> This particular kind of trauma indeed is very "complex" and "experienced over time" collectively "across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance" (Mohatt et al. 128). Not only the Mantovian characters alone but almost the entire society was suffering from that sort of collective madness, otherwise why they would have engaged in such a lethal game of communal mayhem. Like Manto, who considers Partition as "maddeningly senseless"<sup>6</sup>, his characters too feel that Partition itself is a pathology sponsored by the state in the form of collective neurosis. The behavioural disorders of the Mantovian characters merely question the fixed paradigm of the sane/insane binary and to certain extent critique the state-sponsored Partition violence. In this paper, I shall focus on two particular texts of Saadat Hasan Manto set in the time of Partition, "Toba Tek Singh" and "Sharifan", and try to engage in a psychoanalytical exploration of the major characters to locate the roots of their madness or pathological neurosis.

## II

Manto's characters are neither angelic nor infernal, but certainly bound by the constraints of communal antagonism due to the then socio-political upheavals that essentially make them delirious zealots. Manto would never adopt the role of a social reformer since this was not his choice. Rather, he would, of course, expose the hypocrisy that lies at the core of the so-called civilized society. His characters belong to a "fallen class" wallowing in crimes, guilt, suffering, sins and so on and they have the least desire to prove themselves as immaculate angels. Nonetheless, they are 'real', not fake like the pretentious civilized society who actually sponsored the pathology of Partition. Intajir Hussain rightly summarizes that Manto's characters were "rejected by the society under the assumption that they are somehow morally degraded. They are prostitutes, pimps, thieves, swindlers, liars and gamblers."<sup>7</sup> Manto described them blatantly in realistic terms without romanticizing or sentimentalizing their character traits and he proclaimed that in spite of everything, "I (Manto) accept them with all their vices, their disease, their abusiveness, their peevishness"<sup>8</sup> because Manto could easily comprehend that it was the repressive institutions of politics and religion that had actually pathologized their crimes and madness. The representatives of the institutions, as Manto held, were thousand times more treacherous, hypocritical and insane than these poor fellows. The disorders found in Manto's characters were, in fact, injected in them by the narrow politics of territorial division. There was not only a division of land, properties or the masses, the lunatics of asylums too were divided depending upon one's religion or nationality. Can a sane world afford to do that? Notable Indian psychiatrists like Anirudh Kala from Ludhiana, Punjab and Alok Sarin of SBISR, New Delhi who have worked extensively on the psychological aspect of India Partition posit that the Partition of India which had led to a mass communal frenzy did not spare the asylum seekers even. The lunatics of the asylums also had been partitioned and dispatched to Hindustan and Pakistan accordingly as per their community connections. Kala and Sarin have pointed out that it is ironic that both the nations were engaged actively in partitioning the 'madness' of the subcontinent<sup>9</sup>. What can be more farcical than that?

This is what we have seen in the case of Manto's classic short story "Toba Tek Singh" where a mad fellow named Bhisn Singh had deeply been affected by the politics of division. The decision to partition Toba Tek Singh, a small piece of land had caused irreparable traumatic disorder in Bhisn Singh whose sole wish was to cling to his land till his last breath. The story takes us to world of chaos when the territorial division along the Radcliffe line made people awfully confused. The confusion led to the uncertainty about the fate of thousands of villages across the border. Thousands of civilians became panicked due to the fear/trauma of losing their own land overnight. Sometimes madness and pathological disorders followed. In the present story, Bhisn Singh is very much

identical with his native land Toba Tek Sing as if there is no difference between the place and the person who belongs to that place. The asylum inmates of Bhisn, in fact, called him by the name Toba Tek Singh. Bhisn didn't wish anything as a promised outcome of this Partition. His sole intention was to live in his own land and remain rooted there.

The very setting of the story is a mental asylum and ironically, this asylum can be looked upon as a microcosm of the outside world, which was a larger asylum full of lunatics who were keen on murdering, raping, drawing borders and boundaries between lands and masses. Manto himself admitted that the creation of Partition was none other than a collective form of madness, and this lunatic asylum of "Toba Tek Singh" is just a miniature of the collective madness of the outer world. In fact, a number of studies have proved that the lunatic asylums were perhaps a much safer place to avoid atrocities in comparison with the chaotic outside world full of crazy people. In the story also a number of characters resided within the enclosed space of the asylum deliberately only to avoid the mad world outside. Even though they were within the asylum, the lunatics didn't kill one another like the outsiders. They chose to remain outside the domain of divisive politics. For example, a lunatic climbed on the top of the tree and when the asylum authorities asked him to get down, he retorted that:

I want to live neither in Pakistan nor in Hindustan – I will live on the tree<sup>10</sup> (2).

This can be seen as a critique of the entire game of Partition. An insane is saner than the so-called 'sane' world. Most of the lunatics wanted to live in the grey zone, the so-called no man's land, which fell neither in Hindustan nor in Pakistan. Another lunatic, named Mohammad Ali associated himself with "Quaid-e-Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah" (3) as an alter ego and began to tease a Sikh inmate in a nearby cell, who also suffered from dissociative identity disorder as he fancied himself to be Master Tara Singh. These are pure cases of split personality due to partition-induced pathology. In a carnivalesque manner, the behavioural patterns of the lunatic inmates and their aggression within the periphery not only subvert the dominant socio-political discourse but also undercut the absurd politics of the mad world. Another lawyer-turned-lunatic cursed both the Governments of the two newly created dominions for separating him from his beloved. The text suggests that:

And he [the lawyer turned lunatic] cursed all the leaders, both Muslim and Hindu, who were responsible for splitting Hindustan in two – his beloved had become a Hindustani while he was now a Pakistani (3).

We could clearly grasp the intensity of Partition-induced psychological disorder in the lives of the millions.

As for the protagonist, Bhisian Singh was suffering from a peculiar kind of neurotic disorder as the story opens. Manto very skillfully avoids the past events that led to Bhisian's disorder but leaves no foggy room to make the readers understand that he becomes a victim of this pathology due to his forced dislocation from his native place, Toba Tek Singh. That's why Bhisian suffered even from a speech disorder and sleep disorder. He had not been able to sleep for more than fifteen years. Because of speech disorder, he couldn't utter anything except certain nonsensical and meaningless words. If 'Madness' according to DSM-IV (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) is "mental disorders" that is "conceptualized as a clinically significant behavioural or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress (e.g., a painful symptom) or disability (i.e., impairment in one or more important areas of functioning) or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom" (D J Stein et al), then Bhisian Singh's case is a clear example of such "psychological syndrome". The only occasional gibberish that he could utter was "Oper di gur gur di annexe di bay dhania the mung di dal di of Pakistan and Hindustan of di dur fitay moonh" (6). This seems a kind of claptrap but in reality, it has some inner meaning. The expression "dur fitay moonh" actually means "get away with your bloody mouth". Thinking from this perspective one may consider this nonsensical gibberish as a sort of a critique of the partition-sponsored pathology that had been inflicted on millions like him in both the nations.

In fact, when the final decision of transferring the lunatics according to their religion and nationality came, the text suggests that the "majority of the lunatics were not in favour of the transfer because these people could not comprehend the reasons for being uprooted from one place to be thrown into another" (6). Bhisian did not bother about this at all. It is only when he along with other inmates had been dragged into the lorry and taken towards the border for transfer; he repeatedly began to ask "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" (6). He had nothing to do with Hindustan or Pakistan. Sometimes he was informed that it's on the side of Pakistan; again sometimes he got the report that it's on another side called Hindustan. There was absolutely a conundrum around one's own land. Perhaps he was wondering how someone (either a politician or a bureaucrat) could decide on his forefathers' land in that way. The ending is quite significant because a lunatic like Bhisian would always prefer to remain rooted in his land even at the cost of his life. This is what happened towards the end. The ending is, therefore, suggestive that:

Several officers, and the guards ran towards him. They saw that the man who, for fifteen years had stood on his legs day and night, now lay on the ground, prostrate. Beyond a wired fence on one side of him was Hindustan and beyond a wired fence on the other side was Pakistan. In the middle, on a stretch of land which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh (7).

Bishan Singh's collapse on the no man's land and his rootedness in his own ground subvert the entire idea of Partition. Even if he is dead, he could successfully achieve his libidinal desire even by embracing his death. This makes the reader contemplate as to who is really 'sane' and who is 'insane'? I would like to quote a few lines from Muhammad Umar Menon, who in his Introduction to *Black Margins: Saadat Hasan Manto Stories* very insightfully observes:

Above all "Toba Tek Singh" is about lunacy, madness. It is the madness of the sane which is a million times more destructive than the madness of the insane. A lunatic causes harm only to himself, but when a group of normal people choose to get themselves into a rage or frenzy, they leave behind a bloody trail which takes generations to erase. Who knows this better than the people of the Indian subcontinent? Bishan Singh straddles two worlds – at one extreme we have the madhouse, at the other the no-man's land – both of them are spaces where the restrictions of the "normal" world are suspended and individuals are set free from their stranglehold" (Menon 34-35).

The widespread irrationality of Partition in the society ruled by the so-called "normal" people is "million times more destructive than the madness of the insane".

### III

Violence is a very complex social phenomenon and much like the other forms of human behaviour, violence too is "socially and culturally organized" (Larry Ray 32). Earl Conteh-Morgan rightly defines violence in his book called *Collective Political Violence: An Introduction to the Theories and Cases of Violent Conflicts* in these terms that violence is the "use of physical aggression (force) by an individual, group, or organization resulting in injury or abuse to others" (Morgan 295). If such force or "physical aggression" operates at a wider level by a group of people collectively it is then called "collective violence". Genocide, rape, mass abduction and honour killing are some types of structural collective violence. Charles Tilly describes this collective violence as "a strategic resource that immediately inflicts physical damage and involves coordination between at least two people" (Larry Ray 182). Tilly observes that this infliction of "physical damage" invariably leaves out any "individual action, non-material damage, accidents and long-term or indirect effect" (Larry Ray 182). Collective violence usually triggers from "social interactions and settings rather than driven by ideas or behavioural dispositions" (Larry Ray 182). It is this aspect of collective violence that the Partition victims had to undergo which is, of course, communal in nature. The present story of Manto that I am going to discuss, essentially records this aspect of partition violence. How perpetrators gradually

descend to the world of violence and bloodshed? What is the psychology behind perpetrating a particular type of crime or set of crimes? I shall discuss the story in some detail and try to dig deep into the criminal psychology of the perpetrators of violence.

The present story is entitled “Sharifan” that rightly epitomizes the ethnic belligerence and communal vengeance in the widespread madness of Partition violence. It’s a very disturbing story in that sense it rightly captures the criminal psychology of perpetrators in the wake of Partition. Human history has witnessed atrocities many times. But the uniqueness of this violence lies in that communal frenzy had surmounted to the level of ethnic cleansing, the ideological credence of wiping out entire religion by annihilating members of the rival community. The collective madness giving birth to such mass killing had blurred all traces of communal harmony which had been the essential feature of India from ancient times.

Sectarian politics and jingoism led the masses to identify themselves solely in terms of communal identity. All the other identities got blurred in this madness. An individual or a group of people could identify themselves either as Hindu or Muslim or Sikh and adopt their role as the protector of their own religion, community, ethnicity etc. And in so doing, women became the easiest target of the rival communities. Thousands of women were abducted, raped, paraded naked on the streets by the rival community as has been recorded by Urvashi Bhutalia<sup>11</sup>, Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin<sup>12</sup>. A total number of 75,000 women were profoundly affected in this division by the rival communities.<sup>13</sup> As Debali Mookerjee-Leonard has observed that as a result of the Partition-induced collective violence, “women’s bodies” became “a site for the performance of communal identity” (Mookerjee-Leonard 28). Exactly this is what we can find in the case of Manto’s “Sharifan” where Qasim, the father of Sharifaan, gradually descended to the level of hysterical madness as he determined to avenge the murder of his wife and his daughter just at the beginning of the story. As Qasim returned home after his day-long labour and was frantically searching for his only daughter Sharifan in the room, he was shocked to discover the dead body of his daughter lying “naked absolutely naked” beside his wife’s dead body. He, at once, got stunned and traumatized and Manto describes his condition in these words:

Qasim felt shaken to the very core of his being. A scream, one that could rent the skies, emerged deep from within his innards but he had pursed his lips so tightly that it could not escape. His eyes had shut of their own volition. Still, he covered his face with both his hands. A muffled sound emerged from his lips, ‘Sharifan...’ With his eyes still tightly shut, he groped around and picked up some clothes, flung them over Sharifan’s

body and left the verandah without stopping to see that the clothes had fallen some distance away from her<sup>14</sup> (42-43).

Qasim's disorder after witnessing this event can be termed as absolute neurosis from a psychoanalytical point of view. The communal/bigot self of Qasim made him convince that this act of violence was done by any of the rival communities other than Muslim. Qasim became resolute that the only way to get satisfaction was to avenge this murder with a similar kind of violence on the rival community.

As Larry Ray points out, in this process of seeking revenge on the rival community, the chief stimulus works at the subconscious level, and inflicting "shame"<sup>15</sup> or disgrace on the rival community becomes a chief motivation. Qasim, at once, took his axe which he generally used for chopping firewood and immediately reached a nearby chowk where he encountered a tall Sikh man. Qasim struck the man on his head (giving him a fatal injury), without any apparent reason as the Sikh man never did any harm to him. But Qasim's aggressive, and hence, 'mad self' thought of nothing except committing an act of ethnic violence. He was brimming with rage as if the "blood coursing through Qasim's veins grew hot and began to splutter as boiling oil does when the smallest drop of water falls on it" (43).

After killing the Sikh man he came across another group of three men in his direction who were casually marching on the street chanting "Har Har Mahadev!" at the top of their voice. The mad self of Qasim presumed that they were jeering at him and instead of "responding slogan of his own, he spat out the worse mother-sister oaths he knew and pushed his way into them" (43). All of a sudden the "three fresh corpses lay quivering on the road" (43). The other people loitering nearby had run away immediately. A sort of madness had possessed him and he sat against one of the dead bodies and felt as if "someone had pushed him and began to scream obscenities and shout, 'Kill them! Kill them!'". In this fit of madness the memory of deceased Sharifan constantly haunted him:

For a minute he felt disappointed, for perhaps he wanted to die. But, all of a sudden, the image of Sharifan – naked Sharifan – appeared before his eyes and turned his whole being into a pile of burning gun-powder. He got to his feet, picked up the axe and once again began to sweep through the streets like a stream of molten lava (44).

Taking phrases from psychoanalysis we could term this disarray as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) where his desire to mete out "shame" upon the rival community gave him fresh energy to proceed to more violence. As a brutal bloody machine he began to rush on the streets "like a stream of molten lava". The image of the dead and naked Sharifan still troubled him and he suddenly realised that his babbling with "mother- sister curse" had suddenly transformed to "daughter curse" (44). "Irritable and dissatisfied" Qasim rushed

towards a nearby house whose front parlour was inscribed with a Hindi signpost, indicating that it was a Hindu house. Just like a “madman” (44) he hustled towards its closed door and began to strike axe on it until a girl of the age of Sharifan appeared at the door. On Qasim’s enquiry the girl with her “dry lips” answered that she was ‘A Hindu’ (44). That was all for Qasim. He did not require anything else. Suddenly he pounced upon the girl like a wild beast. As we read in the story:

Qasim stood ramrod erect. He looked at the girl with fire-shot eyes. She was barely fourteen or fifteen years old. He dropped the axe from his hand. Like a falcon he pounced upon the girl and shoved her into the verandah. And, then, began to tear her clothes with both his hands like a man possessed. Scraps and shreds of fabric began to fly in all directions as though someone was carding cotton. Qasim remained busy taking his vengeance for about half an hour. The girl offered no resistance because she had become unconscious as soon as she had fallen on the floor (44-45).

When Qasim opened his eyes he found he had both his hands wrapped tightly around the girl’s throat. With a jerk, he removed them and jumped to his feet. Drenched in sweat, he looked once in her direction so that he could fully satisfy himself (45).

Qasim not only raped the girl but killed her exactly the same way that he imagined Sharifaan had been killed. In this devilish way, Qasim satisfied his ego and avenged the murder of Sharifaan. This scene seems very much like a repetition of the opening episode. Indeed, there are potent similarities between the opening and the ending. The girl naked and dead lay on the floor much like the same way as Sarifan did. Qasim’s condition then was deteriorating gradually. Manto narrates:

He covered his face with both his hands. The hot sweat that drenched his body turned into a sheet of ice and the lava coursing through his veins hardened into a rock (45).

The typical symptoms of PTSD that a perpetrator feels can be seen in him. From rage, aggression and madness Qasim turned to guilt consciousness and that’s why he “covered his face with both his hands”.

All of a sudden a man with a sword in his hand entered the room and saw “a man [Qasim] with eyes tightly shut trying to throw a blanket with trembling hands over something lying on the floor” (45). He was undergoing a sort of schizophrenic aberration, an important pathological case in crime/criminal psychology. The man asked him who he was and got to know that he was Qasim. He immediately asked Qasim what he was actually doing there. The answer lies in the concluding paragraph:

With quivering hands, Qasim pointed at the blanket lying on the floor and in hollow voice uttered only one word, ‘Sharifan...’

The man stepped forward urgently and pushed the blanket aside. The first sight of the naked corpse made him tremble; abruptly he shut his eyes tightly. The sword fell from his hand. With his hand over his eyes, he left the house on wobbly legs, muttering ‘Bimla... Bimla...’ (45).

Manto clearly makes his reader understand that this poor fellow is the father of Bimala, the deceased girl whom Qasim had raped. The ending is quite suggestive and open-ended in that there is a possibility that the father of Bimala too might fall into the trap of this communal frenzy and he might move out of his house to annihilate the ‘other’ from a rival community.

This is a never-ending vicious cycle in the wake of Partition which makes each and everyone mad, frantic and revengeful. There is a possibility that the father of Bimala would set out to avenge his daughter’s rape and murder. Sangeeta Ray, author of the book called *En-Gendering India*, describes a very unique point about the “raped female body” vis-à-vis Partition violence that:

The raped female body encompasses the sexual economy of desire that is denied the mythologization of the purity of one’s own ethnic, religious, and national gendered subject. The inevitability of rape leaves women with the “choice” of committing suicide so that she can be accommodated within the narrative of the nation as legitimate and pure, albeit dead, citizen. Those who survive rape are refused entry into the domestic space of the new nation (S. Ray 135-136).

It was this ideology of patriarchy, religion, and sectarian politics that considers a woman’s body as the primary symbol of a nation. The associated madness actually had paralyzed thousands like Qasim. Even if, Qasim got a chance to escape, he could not because he had killed his inner self of humanity. He was not a hard-boiled rapist or murderer. But it is the madness centred on Partition violence that sponsored millions of Qasims to be trapped under communal frenzy and turned them into aggressive beasts.

#### IV

We can conclude by saying that in the wake of Partition a sort of communal frenzy or mass madness had been so pervasive that it had grasped the entire peaceful society and no one was really free from this vicious cycle. The prime motive of retaliation in such partition-induced inter-ethnic violence centered on a pattern that ‘blood will have blood’<sup>16</sup> or ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’.<sup>17</sup> Panicked and angst-ridden Qasim could

utter no word other than “Sharifaan” with “quivering hands” and in “hollow voice”. It suggests that each and every violent act had been retaliated with a more cataclysmic one from the other side and it was a never-ending process<sup>18</sup> since everyone had been bound up in a sort of Partition-sponsored madness. Things would have turned otherwise if the division didn’t take place in that way. In reality, Partition sponsored this wide-ranging pathology of the masses. Judith Herman, an M.D. in Psychology rightly points out in her book *Trauma and Recovery*:

In many countries that have recently emerged from dictatorship or civil war, it has become apparent that putting an immediate stop to the violence and attending to basic survival needs of the affected populations are necessary but not sufficient conditions for social healing. In the aftermath of systematic political violence, entire communities can display symptoms of PTSD, trapped in alternating cycles of numbing and intrusion, silence and reenactment (Herman 238-39).

Taking a cue from Herman we could easily understand that the aftermath of Partition had shown that the “entire communities” had displayed “symptoms of PTSD, trapped in alternating cycles of numbing and intrusion, silence and reenactment”. Whereas Bhisn Singh suffers from “numbness” and “silence” or speech disorder and mental derision in “Toba Tek Singh”; in the second story “Sharifan”, the communal hatred is making people mad and they get gratification only through inflicting sexual violence and genocide on the ‘other’. In both cases, collective madness as an outcome of Partition plays an important part. The madness of the Mantovian characters, indeed, critiques the state-sponsored pathology or madness that grabs the entire society.<sup>19</sup> I would like to end up my discussion with the words of Stephen Alter:

As both a victim and analyst of his time, Saadat Hasan Manto was able to perceive the traumatic dislocation which took place in South Asian society during 1947. He understood only too well the anger, bitterness, paranoia and secret fears of each individual caught up in the turmoil and violence of this period. In many of his stories madness is conceived as a metaphor, representing not only the upheaval surrounding Partition but also the tortured and split identities which emerged (Alter 98-99).

The stories of Manto in general and these two above mentioned stories in particular, give us a scope to understand the psychological aspect of violence of the partition victims amid an ambience of mass madness.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> This is quoted in the article “Social and Political World-View of Saadat Hasan Manto” by R.K. Shivpuri. *Kashmir Sentinel*, the Largest Circulated English Monthly News Magazine of Jammu and Kashmir. Issue: February 2003.

Weblink: <http://www.panunkashmir.org/kashmirsentinel/feb2003/14.html>

<sup>2</sup> This phrase is quoted from essay of T. Jokinen and S. Assadullah “Saadat Hasan Manto, Partition, and Mental Illness through the Lens of Toba Tek Singh”. *J Med Humanit* (2019). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10912-019-09590-w>

<sup>3</sup> “The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Indian Partition” by William Dalrymple, published on June 29, 2015 in *The New Yorker*. Weblink <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>>

<sup>4</sup> The idea of this phrase is partly derived from Alok Bhalla’s phrase the “pornography of casual murder” from Bhalla’s essay “The Politics of Translation: Manto's Partition Stories and Khalid Hasan's English Version.” *Social Scientist*, vol. 29, no. 7/8, 2001, pp. 19–38. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3518123](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518123). Accessed 24 September. 2015. P. 26

<sup>5</sup> The idea of ‘Historical Trauma’ in relation to the Partition of India has been made popular by Tarun K. Saint. Interested readers may look at Tarun K. Saint’s article “The Long Shadow of Manto's Partition Narratives: 'Fictive' Testimony to Historical Trauma.” *Social Scientist*, vol. 40, no. 11/12, 2012, pp. 53–62. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/23338870](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23338870). Accessed 24 Nov. 2015.

<sup>6</sup> This information is given by Sarfraz Manzoor in his news article "Saadat Hasan Manto: 'He anticipated where Pakistan would go'". *The Guardian*, 11 June 2016

Weblink: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jun/11/saadat-hasan-manto-short-stories-partition-pakistan>

<sup>7</sup> This is quoted from Intizar Hussain’s interview which is later published as “Literary notes: Intizar Husain discusses realism in Manto”. *Inpaper Magazine*. *DAWN* May 06, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> See the essay “The Partitioning of Madness” by Anirudh Kala and Alok Sarin in *The Psychological Impact of the Partition of India* eds. Sanjeev Jain and Alok Sari. New Delhi: Sage India, 2018 pp. 12–19.

<sup>10</sup> All the quotations of “Toba Tek Singh” are taken from Alok Bhalla’s *Sotries about the Partition of India* (Volume III), New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2012. First pub. 1994

<sup>11</sup> See pp. 189-190 of *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* by Urvashi Bhutalia. New Delhi: Penguin Books, India, 2014.

---

<sup>12</sup> Interested readers may look at *Borders Boundaries: Women in Indian Partition* by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2017. First pub. in 1998 by Kali for Women. pp. 31-45.

<sup>13</sup> See p. 78 of *The Partition of India* by Haimanti Roy. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, India, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> All the quotations of “Sarifaan” are taken from Saadat Hasan Manto’s *Naked Voices: Stories and Sketches*. Trans. Rakshanda Jalil. New Delhi: IndiaInk, Roli Books, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> See p. 184 of *Violence and Society* by Larry Ray. New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> This is a Shakespearean phrase taken from *Macbeth* Act 3. Scene IV.

<sup>17</sup> A very well-known Biblical phrase found in the Old Testament (Exodus 21:24) of *The Bible*, known as *lex talionis*.

<sup>18</sup> For more details please see the article “Manto’s women” by Raza Rumi in *The Friday Times*, February 13, 2015 – Vol. XXVI, No. 53 Weblink: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/mantos-women/>

<sup>19</sup> Manto, in fact, got the subject matter of these stories while admitted due to his depression and alcoholism in the Mental Ward of Lahore Hospital for a short period of time after his migration to Pakistan.

## Works Cited

Alter, Stephen, and ن.فیتس رتلاً. “Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto / ميسقتلاو نونجلا : ن.فیتس رتلاً.” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 14, 1994, pp. 91–100. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/521767](http://www.jstor.org/stable/521767). Accessed 7 Apr. 2020.

Bhalla, Alok. *Stories about the Partition of India*. Vol. III. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2012, First pub. 1994.

Jalal, Ayesha. *The Pity of Partition: Manto’s Life, Times and Work across the India-Pakistan Divide*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India, 2013.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. *Naked Voices: Stories and Sketches*. Trans. Rakshanda Jalil. New Delhi: IndiaInk, Roli Books, 2008.

Menon, Muhammad Umar. *Black Margins: Saadat Hasan Manto Stories*. New Delhi: Katha, 2003.

---

Mohatt, Nathaniel Vincent et al. “Historical trauma as public narrative: a conceptual review of how history impacts present-day health.” *Social science & medicine* (1982) vol. 106 (2014): 128-36. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.01.043

Mookerjea-Leonard, Debali. *Literature, Gender, and the Trauma of Partition: The Paradox of Independence*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

Morgan, Earl Conteh. *Collective Political Violence: An Introduction to the Theories and Cases of Violent Conflicts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.

Ray, Larry. *Violence and Society* by. New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2018.

Ray, Sangeeta. *En-Gendering India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. pp. 135–36