



UPROOTED LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Despite the tall claims of the emergence of world culture, the fact remains that a literature of a particular language flourishes in the culture that is rooted in its cultural history. Folk traditions, local flora and fauna, customs, rituals, believe systems of the community provide necessary sustenance and aesthetics to the literature.

Sindhi Language is as old as Mohenjo Daro civilization. Sindhi Literature has the rich tradition of 1000 years. Devastating decision of partition of the country in 1947 besides other catastrophic effects uprooted Sindhi Literature from its natural habitat (The provinces of Sindh). The present article critically understand the challenges that Sindhi Literature faced in the post Independent era as it dragged itself on as uprooted literature. This position has its own challenges and beauty.

INTRODUCTION

Those who conceived and executed partition had a little realization of its far reaching impact. Whether the partition was a consequence of British policy of divide and rule or it was the result of fundamentalist forces , remains immaterial . Except handful of political activists and leaders, common masses had not imagined that their mother land would be divided on religious lines .Partition cannot be taken simply to be the partition of geographical land on the basis of religious majority. Those who have a deeper understanding of this issue would little hesitate to accept that it was an attempt to divide culture, literature, art , history, and the psychic of people.

Partition witnessed unprecedented exodus of people on both the sides. It gave rise to the largest refugee problem in the world till then. More than two to three million people had to leave their homes and hearths. They were uprooted from their soil and had to make efforts to establish themselves in a new land. It is to be noted that literature is nurtured like flora n fauna in soil , like plants literature breathes air from the environment. Every province of India

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which is inhabited by people speaking a distinct language has produced a body of literature which is unique in itself. Notwithstanding the argument that all regional or vernacular literatures can be put in a single basket as they commonly share the single sensibility called Indianness, it is to be borne in mind that the close observation and study of each of these literature (twenty four as Sahitya akademi recognizes twenty _four languages for literary purposes) would convince us that each of these body of literature has its own cultural historical and folk traditional roots. Each regional literature throbs on the regional environment sometimes the local social political movements impart their own identity to regional literature. In other words, Tamil literature can be distinguished from Kashmir literature, Assami from Gujarati ,Bengali from Punjabi, and Sindhi from Telegu. Advocates of one sensibility of regional literature may uphold the view that all these literature. Literature adhere to similar forms and themes. This opinion seems to be the result of strong sense of nationalism which has developed over the period of last two centuries or so. So far as the commonality among various literatures is concerned all the literatures written in different parts of the world share common concern for humanity. They depict human emotions which are experienced by all people. This does not obliterate the distinct features of any particular body of literature.

The above discussion makes it abundantly clear that every literature is produced , understood and interpreted in its cultural context. it is in this context that the impact of partition should be understood .

Usually the term partition literature refers to the body of literature written in regional and English languages including novel, short story, drama and poetry that seek to depict the catastrophe of partition and its aftermath. By and large these authors focus on the tales of suffering that characterize the life of people during and after the period of partition. In this regard Khushwant Singhs *Train to Pakistan* can be cited . here he describes how geographical partition filled the heart of Hindoos and Muslims with hatred for each other. Novel towards the end capitalizes on individual sacrifice when Jugga throws himself before the running train so that train carrying Muslims from India to Pakistan would pass safely . however his motive for the general good is under the shadow of doubt , he sacrificed his life to save the lives of Muslim train passengers because his beloved was in it.

Similarly Manohar Malgoankar in his novel *Bend in Ganges* elaborately describes the violence and blood shed of pre partition years and final compulsion of helpless Jyan Talwar who travels towards India, new land in the faint hope of a better future .many such novels, stories and plays have been written to show the horrors of partition and its devastating social political and economic effect on its victims. No one can forget Bishma Sahani's *Tamas* in this regard.



This article does not attempt the critical interpretation of this body of partition literature. The authors (both belong to migrant communities mainly Sindhi and Bengali) make a humble attempt as how partition affected the production of literature and the sensibility of writers who were born in undivided India and underwent the sufferings of partition and continued to engage themselves in creative pursuit thereafter as well. The article also makes an attempt to incorporate the opinions of some of the intellectuals who suffered the tragedy of partition and have remained closely associated with culture and literature in the capacity of readers and critics. This will make the article authentic with reference to reader response theory. The partition of India had a direct impact on Bangla , Punjabi, Sindhi literature. Bengal was divided into two parts Eastern and Western Bengal. Former was known as east Pakistan and the later became the province in India by the name of West Bengal. Authors and poets had to migrate from East Pakistan to West Bengal. Exactly same situation prevailed in Punjab. The Punjab province was divided into two. a part of Punjab with Muslim majority was included in Pakistan and the part with Hindoo majority became a province of India with the name of Punjab. Authors and poets who were Hindoo's and Sikhs had to migrate to Punjab which was a part of India .

In both these cases of Bengal and Punjab it is true that poets and writer were uprooted from their ancestral soil. But at the same time, the new land where they settled down was not altogether alien to them. They still remained in Bengal and Punjab respectively. Barring the element of religion, all other cultural components remained as they were before. Hence the impact of up rootedness is not fully manifested with all its intensity in Bengali and Punjabi writers. Here it should not be misconstrued that these writers were less affected by the horrors of partition tragedy. Infact, the tale of sorrows and sufferings of partition is narrated with authenticity by such writers as , Khushwant Singh , Bishma Sahani, Chaman Nahal. When it is said that uprootedness is not fully manifested in these writers, it means that their creative sensibilities were not so much shattered and devastated or undergone the process of alienation from their cultue as in case of Sindhi writers and poets.

A Shri Surjeet Singh Jaj who teaches Punjabi literature in Phugwada Punjab and is noted poed of Punjabi , honoured with Punjab Shiromani award sums up the impact of partition in following words “ the authors nd poets of Punjab who witnessed the tragedy of partition were full of rage and protested against this in human acts in their writing. In course of time when they had to get reconciled to this unjust partition they exposed the nerve shattering effect of partition on human life in different genres of literature . fully realizing that religion was the root cause of partition, they did not turn out to be fanatics. They considered it to be their duty to reaffirm faith in human and secular values. Punjabi Literature besides other themes has given much space to humanisms and secularism . Punjabi writers have devoted their creative energies to show that the partition did not do any good to the people on both sides of the border. The partition was as unjust and artificial as it was inhuman in its nature. The post partition Punjabi literary sensibility is one of condemnation of this barbaric political act.

Case of Sindh is different from that of Bengal and Punjab. At the time of partition entire Sindh was lost to Pakistan. The day of freedom marked the beginning of unending exile for Hindoo Sindhis that included writers and poets as well. It is a Historical fact that more than million Sindhis were forced to leave their ancestral land Sindh. They could not settle down in any single part of India so as to call it their own land : New Sindh as the immigrants of England had done when they called one of their colonies as New England. As a result Sindhis got scattered almost all over India . majority of them settled down in big cities like Delhi , Jaipur, Ajmer, Bhopal, Raipur, Nagpur, Mumbai, Ahmadabad, and Gandhidham etc. a very few of them went to settle down in rural India . this meant a great literary loss to Sindhi literature. The writers and poets who lived in urban settings could not be expected to authentically render in their writings rural milieu and natural beauty. The careful survey of post independent Sindhi literature will corroborate this fact.

Sindhi literature had to bear the full burden of uprootedness. The writers and poets felt uprooted from their culture soil environment and roots. For a couple of decades immediately after independence this intensity of uprootedness was manifested almost in pathological nostalgia.

*I'll open my heart
Mother! Only to my love.*

*My body is in ruins
Yet have to walk over hills
I'll open my heart . . .*

*Stones broke into pieces
Hearing my wails
I'll open my heart . . .*

*My youthful body and
Beloved! Your constant repression
I'll open my heart . . .*

*How to show the world
Ruins of my soul?
I'll open my heart . . .*

Moti Prakash , Anthology of Modern Sindhi poetry ,edited by Wasdev Mohi Translated from Sindhi to English , published by central Sahitya Akademi New Delhi p51

In above lyric noted Sahitya Akademi award winner Sindhi poet Moti Prakash has spoken of the anguish of his soul.

A Son of the Soil

*Today Gagomal returned
After his visit to Sindhu Desh
He was happy
He had brought gifts
For all.
His family members asked
Your companion
Khemu had gone with you
Where is he?
Khemu's wife also asked
Where is he?
Gagomal replied in a serious tone
When Khemu and I
Reached the village Bhan
He began to behave in strange manner
There was a glow
Visible in his eyes
He picked earth in his hands
And began to eat.*

*For all the days
He remained hungry
He remained thirsty
Whenever he felt hungry
He ate earth
Whenever he felt thirsty
He ate earth.
With every passing day
His hunger and thirst went on increasing
He was reduced to the skeleton of bones
In his house
He breathed his last restlessly
Before his death
Khemu told me
"When I was two or three year old
It was in this house*

*I used to crawl
I would stumble
Fall down
Mother would beat me up
Stealthily I ate earth
It was at that time
The country was partitioned
Even today
I feel myself to be the same”*

Mahesh Nayanwani , Anthology of Modern Sindhi poetry ,Edited by Wasdev Mohi,
Translated from Sindhi to English , published by central Sahitya Akademi New Delhi.p 125

In above poem , poet expresses nostalgia almost in pathological sense . Living in alien land is like fish out of water. It is like a plant is uprooted from its natural soil and thrown on the concrete floor. In such case expecting plant to grow naturally would be hardly far from foolishness.

Everyone Should Have Home

*With Partition of the country
As if
Both the legs of Jetha had been amputed
When he came to India
He felt
He walked with crutches
He felt lonely
Throughout the day
Lying in the camp
He would think
Some kind hearted person
Had helped him to get a house in claim
Although he didn't feel hungry
He got up
He worked as a labourer
Bought bread and Pakora
He reached home
Opened the lock
He thought
Before eating
He should sweep the house*

*And fetch some water
Having swept the floor
He raised the broom towards corner of the roof
But he stopped
He saw a spider in the corner
His eyes turned moist
He mumbled
“I won't remove the spider web.”*

Mahesh Nayanwani , Anthology of Modern Sindhi poetry ,Edited by Wasdev Mohi,
Translated from Sindhi to English , published by central Sahitya Akademi New Delhi.p 126

The above poem symbolically brings out the sensibility of up rootedness which is peculiar in post partition Sindhi literature. Amputation of Jetha's legs refers to ever haunting sense of uprootedness . it is stated that Jetha working as a labourer earns his bread and butter this is true in case of migrant Sindhis who in a half a century after 1947 have economically settled well in India . A financial security is not all for the complete growth of any community. It merely represents outward body. The real soul consists of cultural elements including literature which finds it difficult to sustain without its root in soil. Jetha sees a web in the corner of his room. He picks up broom with the intention of removing it . All of a sudden his eyes notice spider, his eyes turn moist . a realization dawns upon him that by removing web he would be destroying the home of spider . he has suffered the pains of homelessness and rootlessness he cannot think of committing such crime,. He puts aside the broom. The poem universalizes the plight of all refugees including those of Sindhi's.

This sense of rootlessness is further continued by the poet in his another poem. he sees a sparrow engaged in the activity of building a nest poet does not understand when so much space is available in the room why the sparrow should build a separate nest for itself . In order to dissuade the sparrow from it poet offers him that it can sit on his shoulders. Sparrow does not pay any attention to such offer. Eventually, poet understands the wisdom behind making a separate nest as sparrow can lay its eggs only in the nest. Poem once again emphatically brings out the pangs of rootlessness .

A Nest in the House

*I would think
Why there is so much fuss about Sindhyat?
Every year in the spring
A sparrow comes to my house
She makes a nest in the corner
I ask her*

“Why do you make a house in the house?

Come on, sit on my shoulder

My entire house is at your disposal

Stay where you like.”

But no

She doesn't listen

She continues to build a nest

Separately in a corner

And there

She takes care of her eggs.

(126; Nayanwani)

Mahesh Nayanwani , Anthology of Modern Sindhi poetry ,Edited by Wasdev Mohi,
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There is another truth. Even when Sindhis (who have been referred to as refugees by the local people) have gradually accepted that they have to live here. This acceptance is very often knowingly or unknowingly threatened when their identity is still considered to be that of refugees. The same poet on one hand satirizing this fact and on the other gives a creative twist to it by saying that if people cease to call us refugees' it may happen that we would forget our roots

Refugee

Even those who are born in India

Are also known as

Refugees!

Old refugees, middle aged refugees

Young refugees, children refugees

But yes,

I am grateful to those

Who rub salt on my wounds,

If ever I forget

Remind me

I am a stranger

I am a refugee

And I wish to keep this wound evergreen.

Mahesh Nayanwani , Anthology of Modern Sindhi poetry ,Edited by Wasdev Mohi,
Translated from Sindhi to English , published by central Sahitya Akademi New Delhi.p 127 it



is a sad historical fact that no special provisions were incorporated in the constitution of India for the settlement and upliftment of refugees. Sindhis who were forced to leave behind their entire native land, were neither given any political reservation in parliament and legislative assembly nor were given the benefits of reservation in government jobs and educational institutes.

One may argue that this has nothing to do with the creation of literature. Such a view is nothing but a biopic attitude towards the situation. Imagine a community that is robbed off its land, resources and cultural roots and still expecting the intellectuals and authors of that community to be creative is not a wise proposition. This is precisely a reason for the Sindhi literature to recuperate for a quarter of century after partition on the theme of uprootedness. From 1970's onwards Sindhi literature began to catch up with other contemporary themes. Now the author's and poets had come to the terms of living in alien land. Still from time to time the theme of uprootedness resurges in Sindhi literature. Sahitya Akademi award winner novelist late Kirshan Khathwani in his famous novel *Floating Cloud* written in late 90's brings out the theme of uprootedness with all its vigour and intensity.

The protagonist of this novel in series of interview given to Sujata a journalist intellectually and artistically comments on the theme of uprootedness. "Living in India for Years together has made me accept this land, this culture, these people, the local language as my own. I work here, I interact with the people, I have develop my career here, my children would perhaps never go back to Sindh. Infact, I don't have any discomfort in this land. This land has taken care of me in every possible way. When I am in my senses I know going back would be futile." journalist Sujata interviews the protagonist to publish refugee Sindhis view, she seems to be happy that young Sindhis like the protagonist himself have accepted new conditions. Sujatas professional interest in the protagonist in the course of time turns into personal one. She begins to admire and love him. She is aware that despite accepting this land and people he suffers from the sense of rootlessness she is sure that her profound love will bind him with this land and give him a chance to develop newroots. All her hopes are shattered one dy she learns that the protagonist crossed over the border in his gloomy mood without caring about his security. The novel forefully brings home the psychological fact that the desire to be connected to roots can be stronger than any other desire. This desire overrides all other desire including that of love. Sindhi community may have practically adjusted to new land and and its people but psychologically the sensibility of uprootedness remains if not dominant but in dormant state. Under some intellectual or emotional stirring it comes to surface in the works of greatpoet and writers

Mr Ram Daryani, Nagpur based Engineer by profession opinies that the partition had adverse effect on creative developmentit made the authors preoccued with the feelings of nostalgia and thus delayed the ushering in of the new trends.



Mr Nand Javeri , Bombay based poet , critic, bussiness man says that in immediate decades of partition Sindhi literature was monotonous as it anchored on a few themes inclding loss of land and the problems of adjustment in the new land. It lacked the imaginative and emotional fervor which is necessary for first rate literature.

Mr Isar Kalyani, a Nagpur based story writer and business man remarks, “ the tragedy of partition deprived the Sindhi community of many new creative minds. Young generation of 50’s and 60’s had to concentrate only on earing their bread and butter to sustain themselves under new circumstances was their topmosst priority . atleast , a few of them who had literary leanings would have turned good writers if there would have been no partition .”

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