



PARTITION OF INDIA; SUFFERING AND DIVIDED IDENTITIES IN TRAIN TO PAKISTAN AND VEER-ZAARA

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Abstract

The painful experiences and memories of partition of India gave rise to many cinematic and fictional elements which created a lasting impression on our consciousness. Even now the associated literature depicts traumatized characters with the same social and cultural issues encountered by individuals in the post-independence era. Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956) portrayed cultural understanding and moral development through its poignant and unrefined temperament of central characters. The heart-wrenching description of communal riots, revenge killing, politics, and problems of minorities, refugees and psychological turmoil contributed to its less investigated aftermath. Yash Chopra's romantic drama Veer-Zaara (2004) addresses the issues of separation prevalent during partition, and the courage to renounce one's own identity in order to protect someone else's created a masterpiece in Indian cinema's history. The Indo-Pakistan relationship has always been in a state of turbulence yet the film does not illustrate any controversy pertaining to its existent unrest. The saga of love, sacrifice and courage intertwined with barriers of nationality, resilience and emotional upheaval conveyed strong social issues beyond geographical borders. The picturesque element in both Train to Pakistan and Veer-Zaara renders us immense evidence of stark representations of different circumstances; violence and bloodshed in former and acceptance of displacement by free will in the latter which features the entirety of human conscientiousness.

Keywords

Psychological Traum, Partition, Displacement, Conflict, Emotional, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

India-Pakistan Partition has always been a sensitive and important matter to address especially when people have not forgotten its historical details, war outcomes and psychological warfare. Even to this day, many of us remember the specific aspects of partition which distressed the two nations. The present research aims at a comparative analysis of partition novel and a film i.e. *Train to Pakistan* (1956) by Khushwant Singh and Bollywood film *Veer-Zaara* (2004) by Yash Chopra. The themes of partition are dealt differently in each of the aforementioned works. Even now, impressions of partition are quite evident and the effects it left in the minds of the people who witnessed its horrors and savagery from its first-hand account is still preserved through painful memories. The research throws light on various issues which are less openly discussed in the society. The stories of partition have been passed down from one generation to another in a



hope to reconcile with their memories of the past which haunts them even to this day. Many films and books have tried to describe various events related to partition which invoke the feelings of empathy, bonding, compassion, concern and general awareness in the society.

Impact of Partition on Indo-Pak relations:

The Indian subcontinent's partition into two different countries viz India and Pakistan led its way to scar its relations for all time. The geographical demarcation produced many refugees on each side of the borders. It also led to massive breakout of communal riots, brutalities and injustice. One of the tragic and catastrophic immigration the world had ever witnessed produced innumerable displaced individuals with no proper sign of individual identities and forced nationalities. Perhaps there are possibilities to improve the relationships between the two nations, given the fact that each was affected no less or no more. The two countries share quite a complicated relationship even now after their multiple attempts to reconcile with each other. In the past, there have been attempts to restore their cordial relations; however, both the nations have failed to act jointly. There has been a long period of silence from both nations considering how delicate the issue is, but there are always certain courses of action to judge and contemplate which can guarantee friendly relations in future. India-Pakistan has severed their bonds perhaps beyond repair, and each side has suffered tremendous loss to begin with. Perhaps if the two nations were not divided, circumstances would have been entirely different.

Description of violence and trauma in Train to Pakistan:

Khushwant Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan* published in 1956, narrates the disturbing events of India-Pakistan partition. Singh wrote this novel to make readers comprehend the horrors of partition particularly in the borders of India and Pakistan. The novel throws light on the plight of both the religions and the dreadful deeds encountered by the Hindus and the Muslims. His novels created an impact on the sub-continent and far away. The descriptions of living in communal harmony at the beginning of the novel and gradually shifting the pace of characters, and their beliefs into indifferent and isolated segments is unconventional, however, Singh does justice to the account of scandalous events throughout the partition. The novel gives a brief description of the incidents throughout the partition. By the end of the novel the central character sacrifices his life for the greater good of the communities. The message conveyed by his death is intense and agonizing making readers understand the value of letting go hatred, bitterness and disgust.

Suffering, Patriarchy and Border issues as portrayed in Yash Chopra's Veer Zaara:

The romantic/drama film *Veer-Zaara* released in 2004 directed by Yash Chopra is considered one of the best epic romantic films in the history of Indian Cinema. The Bollywood film created an enigmatic cinematic experience for critics as well as for ardent film enthusiasts. The film was a hit at the box-office and subsequently won several awards. The story of the film entails viewers to be sensitive towards narratives which are long forgotten or rarely addressed in our society. Chopra's *Veer-Zaara* serves as a fresh perspective in Indian cinema to offer new dimensions in a love story which was the cause and effect of enmity shared by the two nations. Remarkably different romantic love story which Bollywood is hardly familiar with, compels the audience to pay close attention to its narrative techniques, unusual portrayal of its characters, classic and ageless music and a bittersweet ending which proved to be one of the timeless romantic drama films, India or its neighboring nation had ever seen.

The film depicts two lovers from India and Pakistan and their epic tale of romance in a time when society still hasn't accepted people from different religions and cultures to come together as one, particularly if the lovers are from two nations which often share great rivalry from time immemorial. The central characters in the film namely Veer Pratap Singh, Zaara Hayat Khan



and Saamiya Siddiqui play a very significant role in shaping the perspective of the viewers. The main characters place the importance on their identities being hidden from the rest of the society in order to protect the honor of the community they belong to, and above all their nationality. Veer Pratap Singh who plays the role of an Indian Air Force Officer and Zaara Hayat Khan who is a politician's daughter in Pakistan. The story unfolds in an appealing way making viewers understand that perhaps the two nations are not so different after all. The film provides an opportunity for people to comprehend similarities and differences on both the ends, more similarities to be specific. The song '*Aisa Desh hai Mera*' in the film gives a state of satisfaction and patriotism towards one's own country however, the same song is dedicated to the neighboring nation (Pakistan) in praise demonstrating that citizens from both the countries share common feelings and emotions. The song is rather significant in the movie to enable viewers to comprehend the similar feelings of nationalism. The central characters Veer and Zaara met accidentally in their unpredictable life but forged an association beyond time and age. Zaara who had crossed the Indian boundary knowingly to fulfill her grandmother's last wishes to have her ashes be scattered in the Indian river. Zaara was later rescued by Veer who helped her carry out the last rites. After their initial encounter, the two exchanged their perspectives on life and their nations frequently and Veer insisted Zaara to stay back for a few days to travel along with him and to take a look at how his country (India) functions differently than hers, and also introduces her to his family. Although Zaara finds it hard to believe that the two countries are any different, anyhow she realized much later that they were indeed different in perceptions. Veer is falsely framed and charged and held in Pakistan prison for being a spy for 22 years. He takes a vow of not revealing his identity and subsequently ruining Zaara's reputation. Veer is imprisoned and is only addressed by his prison number in the second half of the film. He is unaware that Zaara had divorced her fiancé Raza, who framed Veer falsely under the pretext of seeing Veer and Zaara together and blaming both of them for damaging his reputation. By the end of film, Veer and Zaraa have been united, but at what cost? The film subtly mentions the bittersweet ending, since their youthful years were sacrificed for the sake of their identities over border issues. The films unites the duo however their life could have been entirely different if the partition and border issues did still not exist.

Objectives of the Study:

The paper aims to understand the divided identities of the characters taking psychological theories into consideration. The research also examines the trauma shared by characters on both the sides using narrative and power dynamics as portrayed. The book and the film contributes to the discourse of migration, partition and its aftermath, it also makes us understand the political scenario of the bygone era.

Methodology:

This study employs a qualitative research approach focusing on narrative analysis, themes of partition, India-Pakistan relations. The study also dwells deep into themes of trauma and identity as presented in the book as well as in the film. The chosen research contributes in understanding the psychological aspects such as trauma, memory, identity crisis which is suitable for the academic study.

Consequences of India-Pakistan Separation:

Over 15 million people migrated or were rather forced to move out in a hope to find a better place to live and spend the rest of their lives which had become a nightmare following the 1947 India-Pakistan partition. During the partition, many individuals had lost their abode, their well-



established lives, and their sense of identity and undergone a traumatic experience of living in a foreign place for the longest time recorded. In the course of partition, both the nations suffered immensely at the expense of their own driven agendas and political policies, unbothered for the concern of its citizens that led to mass displacement, ultimately giving rise to refugees and immigrants on each end. The newly divided nations faced strong upheaval from politicians, citizens, and international media among others. The burden of losses and desperation on both sides was too heavy to bear. It did not take long for society to become dysfunctional amidst a critical situation during separation. The powerful on the ladder fed on the lives of the minorities which brought forth occasional commotions leaving wounded more so afflicted with agony and endless suffering. The countless death of millions and many refugees endured the trepidations of partition which seemed immeasurable. The partition's history is haunting and unforgettable for people who witnessed it personally and the consequences it followed for generations together.

People who migrated in a short span of time had to survive through unpleasant circumstances of their time which further increased their disturbing experiences in a new and foreign land making it impossible for them to think about it incessantly. The majority of the people during the parting left behind not just the corpses of their dear ones but their sense of belongingness, their land, their estates and their ability to cope with the changing current of time. The partition of India and Pakistan was an irreparable damage which left a painful impression on many survivors and the generational trauma it followed even to this day. Many were never able to make it back to their homes which they had left in a hope to return once again. There were many heinous incidents which took place during migration of countless refugees that shook the entire nation and became an eye-opener for the world to witness the horrors of partition.

Conclusion:

The two countries have been rivals for too long and perhaps it is too late to make amends; however, their formal relationship is still remembered by many who witnessed the communal harmony before the partition. The history and description of partition has been portrayed in many films, books, documentaries in order to make people more aware of their roots and ancestral histories of the traumatic past. The paper focused on the traumatic experiences and psychological distress narrated through the perspective of celebrated director and author from different fields, would not suffice the amount of pain and grief, individuals had to live through.

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