

**Reconciling Trauma: Narrative Endings in *Tamas*, *Adha Gaon* and  
*A River with Three Banks***

**Dr. Radha S. Gautam,**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Dept. of English**  
**S. B. Garda College,**  
**Navsari**  
**India**

**Abstract**

Representation of traumatic events like partition has been an exhausting exercise for authors. The novel form has facilitated the novelists to access counter/ alternative histories through memory, allegory, myths, and other inter-textual devices outside the domain of official historiography. However, ending of such narratives has been more challenging task for writers. The present research paper analyzes narrative endings of *Tamas*, *Adha Gaon* and *A River with Three Banks* to find out the authorial specific efforts endorsed in reconciling the pangs of a tragedy.

**Key Words: Representation, Trauma, reconciliation, authorial intentions,**

## **Introduction:**

Representation of traumatic events like partition or holocaust has been an exhausting exercise for authors. The novels *Tamas*, *Adha Gaon* and *A River with Three Banks* manifest the novelists' distinct modes of narrative structures as representational tools to rewrite the history of an event as traumatic as the partition. The form and structure of narrative genre novel has facilitated these writers in articulating the traumatic event of partition. The texts are self- reflexive, inter-textual and function as an important step in retrieving the silenced voices of the marginalized people. On one side these narratives engage in documenting the personal testimonies, on another side, they provide a framework that facilitate the representation of these suppressed stories thus intervening the confines of official histories. The narrative endings of *Tamas*, *Adha Gaon* and *A River with Three Banks* show specific authorial efforts endorsed in reconciling the pangs of the tragic event of Partition.

## **Narrative Ending of Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*:**

Bhisham Sahni's novel *Tamas* is a recordation of an unbiased portrayal of fanaticism, and devastating effects of the partition on individuals. The novel attempts to expose the ignorance and darkness behind the communal violence on the eve of Partition. The novel points out how fundamentalist forces provoked communal violence and how innocent people were caught into serving the selfish purposes of the communalists, who infused tension and hatred for their own benefits at the cost of communal harmony. The stories represented in the novel contributes to the retrieval of human suffering, the silenced voices, recalling and representing significant moments as they were experienced and witnessed by ordinary, common men and women.

It is the popular belief that these riots were the result of the machinations of the other religious groups or parities. *Tamas* interrogates this public notion of the cause of riots by exposing the real politics behind the eruption of riots, that is, a Muslim, Murad Ali conspires to throw the carcass of a pig on the stairs of the Mosque which causes tension and brings havoc.

In the end of the novel all elites are shown gathered at one place. They seem to be back to business as usual. Politicians are shown arguing with one another; businessmen doing their deals; a real estate broker tries to sell property left by the fleeing refugees. A peace committee is set up and all political leaders of the town go in a bus to spread the message of peace and amity around the town.

The ending of *Tamas* is quite significant because it throws light on the reality that it is the common people who suffer the most in communal riots. It doesn't make much difference for the politicians and elites or affluent people. The irony is that the person, Murad Ali, who was the cause of spreading communal violence is in the fore-front of this peace programme. Thus the ending of the novel is quite symbolic which can be taken as a warning and an attempt to enlighten the public about the dangers of using religion into politics as well as to warn and alarm the public how they are constantly being manipulated and exploited in the ruling class's scheme.

### **Narrative Ending of Rahi Masoom Reza's *Adha Gaon*:**

Rahi Masoom Reza's novel *Adha Gaon* articulates the agony, dilemma of Indian Muslims living in distant rural areas away from the urban politics and by showcasing the views, arguments and the deep love of the rustics towards their homeland Gangauli, the novel epitomizes the agony of all nationalist Muslims who were not ready to accept the two-nation theory based on religion rather it establishes the fact that it was the decision of only handful elites. By rejecting straightforwardly state politics the text foregrounds the politics of common people, which is more simple, secular and inclusive against the complex, sectarian and exclusory politics of the elites. The village Gangauli and its people are sufficiently strong to resist any outside pressures. They resist the storm of partition also for a long time. But somehow in the end fever of partition take some of them in its grip and their world Gangauli is changed and is changed forever. Their suffering is the result of a political decision taken by a few in powers. Their agony turns into mourning when a part of the community depart for Pakistan leaving behind them their fathers, wives, daughters, sons, friends and their beloved Gangauli. Those who are left behind fight for their survival with the new power equations amidst the fade grandeur of Moharram. Partition does have impact upon the lives of Gangaulians. Gangauli becomes a desolate place with half families struggling for their survival, seeking out new strategies for livelihood and losing the grandeur of their celebrations; their lives.

However, Post- partition story is located in the village Gangauli only. The villagers rearrange their lives after partition and mourn the lost world but they don't leave the village. There is a gradual reordering of the life in Gangauli only. The village makes adjustments with the time and shifting power equations. Sayyid girls are married to men of subordinate status and lower caste or even to illegitimate young men. Sayyids have to accept the shifting power equations

Reza, thus, does not end his novel with a pessimistic note. Hakim Sahib's death is immediately followed by the birth of Saida's son indicating both the end of one era and the emergence of a new era.

The Hakim Sahib suddenly fell silent. Abbu Miyan covered his face with a sheet.(...)

Exactly at that moment Fiddu entered and whispered into Fussy Miyan's ear, "Come home quickly! Saida's had a son." (VD 327)

Depiction of birth and beautiful morning outside beautiful reflects Reza's optimism in life itself. The ending of the novel affirms Reza's faith in the regenerating power of culture, territory, language and home.

Outside the morning was most beautiful. In the courtyard a cock was chasing a chicken and a crow was sitting on the the ridge of the roof, (...) A flock of sparrows flew past Fussy Miyan's shoulder (...). A young child, a schoolbag over his shoulder, ran past at great speed." (VD 327)

### **Narrative Ending of Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks*:**

The novel *A River with Three Banks* deals with the tragic consequences of the partition along with a poignant private tale of love and deception. However, its main focus is on the tragic tales of those agonized people who were entangled in the harrowing tragedy of partition. The merciless killings and bloodshed in the wake of communal violence, the abduction of young girls, the loss of faith, and the migration of a large number of people from both sides of the border are some of the tragic consequence of the partition.

However, if we look at end of the novel *A River with Three Banks*, it ends both with the agony of the people migrating to an unknown land and ecstasy of the union of two lovers.

The agony of the ordinary men and women leaving their roots is quite heart rendering:

It was an unending ant line of Muslim migrants, trudging close upon each other's heels. Some of them were carrying only a handbag or a small suitcase, their sole movable property to be carried across border. Famished and wrinkled faces stared blankly into space. Occasionally, a child whimpered for food or drink, only to be shouted down by his or her parents. As the line moved forward, at a snail's pace, some started up conversation with the others, sharing memories of what they were leaving behind their ancestral homes, their

friends and their relatives. They were not certain what awaited them in the new country. It was a journey into the unknown (RWTB 213).

The novel ends with the rehabilitation of the people in the new environment and the consciously adopted secular-humanistic vision of the author. Haseena's family migrates to Pakistan. Gautam assists Haseena's family in the proceedings of migration. Haseena stays back with Gautam in India. Gautam and Haseena are united in the end. One of the prominent strategies in partition narratives is the re-fashioning of female victim's destiny. Generally a common plot pattern is that the victimized women suffers and confronts non-acceptance by the family or society: suicide or death is the inevitable fate of the physically assaulted female victims. And if women are accepted or their lives are restored, it is the pity or sympathy of the male hero and women are at the receiving end. But *A River with Three Banks* is unique in its end. Gautam not only accept Haseena due to his true love for her, he gives her equal respect and status also by assimilating their identities and equalizing their status. By merging the religious identities of the chief protagonists; Gautam and Haseena, the novel suggests that the flow of humanity depends upon trust and mutual understanding and knows no boundaries of caste or culture, religion or nationality. When Haseena asks Gautam: Now call me Haseena Mehta" (214) Gautam says:

No, my love. Not Haseena Mehta... Just Haseena Gautam---our first names only (...)  
Yes we'll start a new race---sans caste, sans religion, sans nationality. (RWTB 214)

Thus the novel ends with an optimistic note symbolizing a future based on love, affinity, free from any marker of religious identity and with a plea for communal harmony and religious tolerance. At the end of the novel there is a description of clouds sailing across the border and a flock of birds warbling in the sky that symbolizes an appeal for hope and of a borderless world, as is the world of birds and other natural entities:

The sky was now covered with mountains, clouds – white, inky blue and grey. They assumed all sorts of fantastic shapes – of giant dinosaurs, their long necks craning forward, of the skeletal remains of some primordial, mammals, of an army of soldiers on the route. Ceaselessly, they sailed across the bridge from India to Pakistan casting fugitive reflections in the tawny waters of the river (RWTB 214).

### **Conclusion:**

Readings of the selected narratives *Tamas*, *Adha Gaon* and *A River with Three Banks* exhibit specific authorial intentions and their renderings in specific settings. The event of partition is tragic in itself, it leaves its traces across time, and spaces, people and culture, and it can't end in any finite sense. Therefore, there is an attempt in these novels to reach to some sort of understanding, not leaving the readers in a perpetual state of mourning thus showing a humanistic approach in its weaving of partition history and offering a reconciliatory mode.

\*\*\*\*\*

## References:

- Bhalla, Alok, (ed.) *Stories About the Partition of India*. 3 vols. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1994. Print.
- Bhalla, Alok. *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a lost Home*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2006. Print.
- Bipan Chandra. *Communalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1984. 245. Print.
- Didur Jill. *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. Print.
- Hasan, Mushirul, ed. *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.
- Hasan, Mushirul. *Legacy of a Divided Nation India's Muslims since Independence* (New Delhi : OUP 1997). Print.
- Jasbir Jain [Ed] *Reading Partition/Living Partition*. Jaipur :Rawat Publications.2007. Print.
- Beyond Postcolonialism, Dreams and Realities of a Nation*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006. Print.
- Jodha Avinash “*The Living Space Between Mindscapes and Landscapes*”. Jasbir Jainv(ed.) *Narrative of the Village*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006. P-225-240. Print.
- Kavita Daiya, *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender and Postcolonial Nationalism in India*. (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2000. Print.
- Kumar, Shiv K. *A River With Three Banks: Partition of India: Agony and Ecstasy* New Delhi: USB Publishers, 1998. Print.
- Mankekar, Purnima. *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India*. Duke University Press, London. 1999. Print.
- Nihlani, Govind. “Introduction”. *Tamas*. Bhisham Sahni .Jai Ratan.(Translator). New Delhi: penguin Books India. 2001. Print.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. “*Can a Muslim Be an Indian?*” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Oct., 1999), pp. 608-629. *JSTOR*. 6th July 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/179423>.
- Paul, Sukrita Kumar. *Narrating Partition: Texts, Interpretations and Ideas*. New Delhi; India log Publications, 2004. Print.

- Ravikant and Saint, Tarun K. (eds.) . *Translating Partition*. Katha, New Delhi.2001. Print.
- Reza, Rahi Masoom. *A Village Divided*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003. Trans. of *Adha Gaon (Hindi)* by Gillian Wright, 1966. Print.
- Robert Stam, Alessandra Raengo. *Literature and Films: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*.Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2005.Web.
- Sahni, Bhisham. *Tamas*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2001. Trans. of *Tamas (Hindi)* by Bhisham Sahni, 1974. Print.
- Saint, Tarun K. *Witnessing Partition, Memory, History, Fiction*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2010.Print.
- Singh A.K. “Villages in Crisis”. Jasbir Jain (ed.) *Narrative of the Village*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006. P-88-89. Print.
- Talwar Urmil “Village as Nation”. Jasbir Jain (ed.) *Narrative of the Village*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006. P-241-253. Print.
- Wright Gillian “The Making of Adha Gaon” *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Monsoon 1993), pp. 111-126 Published by: India International Centre. *JSTOR*. 15<sup>th</sup>Nov. 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23003975>.
- Paruvu, Mohan Hari. *Shiv K. Kumar---A Chance Meeting with a tall Literary figure*. blogpost, 2010/11.[http://harimohan-paruvu.blogspot.in/2010/11/Shiv K. Kumar-Chance-Meeting-with-a-tall.html](http://harimohan-paruvu.blogspot.in/2010/11/Shiv-K.-Kumar-Chance-Meeting-with-a-tall.html). Web.
- Singh, Prabhat K. *A Passage to Shiv K. Kumar (From Agony to Ecstasy)*.New Delhi: Sarup & Sons. 2001.Print.
- <http://www.the-criterion.com/V2/n2/Shewale.pdf>

\*\*\*\*\*