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Description of Partition by Khushwant Singh and BapsiSidhwa

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Introduction:

The subcontinent was turned into a diabolic region in August 1947, when the British government announced the division of Indian subcontinent into two separate states for Hindus and Muslims, India and Pakistan respectively. This historical event proved very fatal for the people of both newly born nations. The large number of people was the victims of wickedness, violence, rapes, abductions...etc. thousands of women during these days abducted, raped and killed. Millions of people were migrated from both sides of borders. The violence and communal riots were uncontrollable and consumed everyone that came in its path. The historical event of partition of India becomes the theme for writing the novels, dramas and short stories...etc. many Indian and Pakistani novelists chose Indo-Pak partition as a theme of their writing. They depicted the traumatic and pitiable conditions of partition affected people in their novels and short stories. The event of partition has changed the entire map of the subcontinent. Even today both nations haven't forgotten the bitter memories of the dark chapters of the history. Both India and Pakistan still living in the shadow of war, they are deadlocked on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. The description of partition in the novels of two partition novelists from India and Pakistan, Khushwant Singh and BapsiSidhwa respectively.

BapsiSidhwa is a Parsi, Pakistani novelists whose novels – The Bride, the Crow Eaters, Ice Candy Man, An American Brat...etc. whereas Khushwant Singh is a Sikh, Indian writer whose novels like Train to Pakistan, I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale and Delhi...etc. the present research paper intends to undertake a comparison between Train to Pakistan and Ice Candy Man for the description of the different aspects of the Partition.

Description of Peaceful Co-existence of Hindus and Muslims:

Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs along with many other minorities were living peacefully before partition. BapsiSidhwa in her novel Ice Candy Man depicted the picture of peaceful co-existence of all religions especially the Hindus and the Muslims. She shows the Hindus and Muslims could fall love with each other by breaking the religious walls. Shanta in a Ice Candy Man is a Hindu woman who is Ayah by profession. Shanta is desired by many admirers like

Ice Candy Man who is Muslim, Sher Singh, who is a Sikh, Hari who is Hindu, Masseur who is Muslim, butcher and a restaurant owner...etc. people who belongs to different religions and castes interact with each other on a normal, human level and live like companions of each other. Muslims and Sikhs also live peacefully, they are not conscious about their religious identities. They shares each other's joy and concerns. They consider the children of their friends from other religions as their own. Before partition Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs participate in each other's religious, social and cultural events.

Khushwant Singh like Bapsi Sidhwa also shows the same kind of picture of peace, love harmony among the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, the inhabitants of Subcontinent but the partition and the politics of some selfish leaders of both the communities shattered it into pieces. In Train to Pakistan, the village Mano Majra which stands for India. The native citizens of Mano Majra begin their schedule of the day with the prayer of Imam Baksh- a Muslim. This is followed by Sikhs prayer. Similarly, the day at Mano Majra ends with Imam calling faithful to prayers with 'God is Great'. Khushwant Singh described the peaceful co-existence and the fine harmony at social, religious and cultural levels among the two major communities before the partition.

Description of Violence:

Bapsi Sidhwa in Ice Candy Man described the scenes of violence that accompanies the partition of India into two separate nations. According to Sidhwa partition is impartial and objective. She blames both the communities for it. On the other hand Khushwant Singh in Train to Pakistan showed the incidents of violence committed by Muslims against the Sikh. Singh on the surface blame both the Sikhs and Muslims for violence equally but suggest that violence and communal riots were initiated by Muslims, in Muslim majority areas and Sikhs killed Muslims only in retaliation. The deputy commissioner makes it clear that Sikhs only retaliated after the train massacre by the Muslims in which thousands of Hindus and Sikhs lost their lives.

Description of British:

Khushwant Singh in Train to Pakistan does not say anything on the conduct and role of the British in Indo-Pak partition and communal riots bursts after the declaration of partition. Bapsi Sidhwa highlights the controversial role played by the British government and officials during the days of partition in Ice Candy Man and the Bride. Sidhwa raises questions on the image of Britishers being competent, capable and neutral. She blames the rulers of the empire for not paying enough attention to issues concerning partition. Post-colonial Sidhwa holds them responsible for the bloodshed and massacres, staining the dawn of freedom with

the blood of millions of people. Bapsi Sidhwa in *The Bride* (1987) shows the British in a rush and hurry to wind up and quit.

Bapsi Sidhwa in *Ice Candy Man* shows that the Radcliffe Commission members were dealing out Indian cities between the two countries like a pack of cards. Sidhwa is extremely conscious about the criminal negligence and lack of seriousness by the British, while undertaking and supervising the partition.

On the other hand Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* does not say much about the controversial role of the British and their failure towards India and its people in maintaining peace and neutrality between the major communities.

Description of Impact of Partition:

Bapsi Sidhwa in her novel *Ice Candy Man* repeatedly projects the price of partition. She wants her readers have a fresh assessment of partition. She shows that the millions of victims of partition pay a terrible price for freedom. She presents the readers with constant sufferings of human beings and their misery. However, she holds both Muslims and Hindus responsible for partition and related violence without becoming partial. Sidhwa does not oppose the partition openly like Chaman Nahal in his famous novel *Azadi*, wants the reader to come up with a final judgment.

Sidhwa shows in *Ice Candy Man* the greatest migration in the history of human civilization as a result and price or impact of partition. Khushwant Singh like Bapsi Sidhwa, in *Train to Pakistan* also depicts the migration that accompanied the partition. He highlights miseries and sufferings of the Hindus moving towards India and Muslims moving towards Pakistan.

Description of Train Massacres:

The partition of India has to pay a large amount of price in the form of thousands of lives, abductions, rapes on innocent women, massacres...etc. by the partition affected people of both nations. Train massacres are very often described by both Khushwant Singh and Bapsi Sidhwa.

Bapsi Sidhwa projects another price of partition in the form of train massacres. She presents the train massacres as the most horrible association of the partition of India for inhabitants of Punjab. The Muslim protagonist of *Ice Candy Man* is waiting for relatives from Gurdaspur, instead he meets with mutilated bodies and sacks full of breasts cut off from Muslim women (p.149).

Khushwant Singh in his *Train to Pakistan* also refers to the repeated train massacres of Sikhs by Muslims, which brought about chaos in society and Kalyug (Dark Age) (p.74). Khushwant

Singh described very horrible scene of thousands of Sikhs murdered by Muslims is disposed of by burning with wood and Kerosene oil collected from the village- Mano Majra. The whole village witnessed the cremation of Muslim cruelties and Sikh victims. Singh does not show the picture of Muslim atrocities against the Sikhs. (p.75). Singh presets train as a Ghost train which is arriving from Pakistan are full of Sikh and Hindu corpses. Singh points out that Bulldozer is used to dispose of the corpses of Sikh and Hindu refugees. (p.126).

Conclusion:

The study of both Bapsi Sidhwa and Khushwant Singh's novels *Ice Candy Man* and *Train to Pakistan* respectively based upon analysis of texts in the light of post colonialism has shown that both writers associate partition with evil and destruction. They stressed the peaceful atmosphere, communal harmony before partition days. However both writers show that there were difficulties and challenges in the synthesis of Hindu-Muslim societies.

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