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THE GIDDY CIRCLES OF PARTITION: DISPLACEMENT AND
DILEMMA IN THE NOVEL BASTI BY INTIZAR HUSSAIN

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about the postcolonial ideas of displacement and dilemma in the novel Basti by Intizar Hussain- a famous Pakistani Urdu fiction writer. Frances W. Pritchett has translated it. His translation is very close to the original Urdu text in essence. It is a novel written with the background of the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. The partition resulted in the displacement of hundreds of families across the border. The people who underwent the formidable experience of partition felt themselves estranged, displaced and in dilemma of identity. Basti is a story of displacement and dilemma and the characters in the novel experience it on physical as well as on the psychological grounds. The theoretical insight is taken from the works of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. This paper aims at discovering the postcolonial idea of displacement and its impact on the central characters and their dilemma related to identity.

INTRODUCTION

Intizar Hussain was born in 1923 and died a few years ago in 2016. He is an emblematic figure of Urdu literature; he follows the generation of Urdu writers like Sa'adat Hassan Manto (1912 – 1955) and Rajinder Singh Bedi (1915 – 1984). Journalist and novelist writing not only in Urdu, but also in English, he grew up in India and went to Pakistan shortly before independence from India in 1947, as was the case for Ashfaq Ahmad. Born into a Muslim family Shiite orthodox, he received a first education at home because his father felt that modern education could pervert his child. Hussain wrote around 125 news stories in Urdu, as well as novels, biographies and plays for radio, television and theater (Memon, 1995). He translated some American and Russian fiction. He is renowned as a news writer. He was also the winner of the prize Sitar-e-Imitaz. Among the other marks of recognition of his literary work and for the translation

into Urdu of the works of Sartre, Gide or Camus, France has awarded the Officer's Badge of the Order of Arts and Letters in 2014.

Basti is a general novel, starts in India under British standard before Second World War. Be that as it may, the novel isn't about verifiable situation. Author Hussain offers discoursed and substantial scenes; his story is a center of coherence like a picture taker collection. He is also known as an essayist of story mode. His rich feeling of short stories draws from the oral customs and legends of the subcontinent, the Kathas and Ramlilas he is observer amid his youth in India, and he reinterprets in his accounts.

Basti, at the start, is the story of a thinking back Zakir, the novel's hero who is an educator of history and a transient to his new country from over the outskirts. The tale fundamentally relates the different phases of his life.

Zakir lives in a dynamic, conflictual and opposing world. There is no Hardy-esque sentiment of an individual set against the bigger powers at work. Rather, all through the novel, there are strings of sentimentality, removal and burst congruities. The Partition of India in 1947 is the focal point of the novel's serious, impressionistic scene (Radha, 2015). That year turns everything upside down, and all the more along these lines, it changes the destiny of the Basti (settlement). In contrast to other Partition writing, Basti maintains a strategic distance from immediate, realistic reportage on the mental and physical brutality innate to Partition. The political disarray at one dimension is likewise interiorised by Zakir. There is, at that point, an extraordinary sentiment of distance and void that Zakir, as a vagrant in another nation, feels. It ought to be recalled that Husain, presently thought about a torchbearer of dynamic idea in Urdu dialect and writing, was never a torch progressive in the manner in which that different illuminating presences in Urdu are known as. Truth be told, Zakir's irresoluteness towards legislative issues and obstruction is somewhat intelligent of Intizar Sahib's ideological moorings in the new talk on *Jadeediyat* or innovation.

Partition was a conclusion to a fresh start yet the end was fiendish. It conveyed to death to a great many individuals, peeled off a large number of ladies of their respect and left a lot more youngsters stranded. Cartography changed the things; fringes tore separated the lives of individuals (Butalia, 1998). Uproars which pursued the freedom have been fictionalized. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Atia Hussain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Intizar Hussain's *Basti* (1975) are some grand books in a similar vein. Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975) is a moving adventure with realistic subtleties of the division of Indian subcontinent into two countries – India and Pakistan, and as a result debacle that hit these two recently pronounced free nations in 1947. Other than a brutality and perversity that we get in this novel, it additionally contains a first rate and holding story, obviously acknowledged with promptly recognizable characters and a sort of terrible, shocking climate that has its own sharp intrigue.

Khan and Gigvijay (2015) hold Intizar Hussain as a great story teller. He is perceived as a living legend in Pakistan, was not forceful in his compositions

when it came to partition. The themes he picked from this catastrophe were of yearning and sentimentality that he utilized over and over in his accounts and stories. There was a feeling of distress in his compositions and a touch of thwarted expectation. Intizar Hussain is the notorious author of fiction in Urdu dialect in Pakistan. He is a pragmatist, symbolist and sentimental dreamer, memorialist, mythographer. He is an outstanding in India and his accounts are regularly distributed here in the Urdu Literary magazines and converted into other Indian dialects. He was affected with the Buddha, whom he considers as undeniably increasingly essential storyteller. The Indian custom of narrating, for example, the Katha, Kahani and Quissa turned into the style of his accounts these accounts have the old effect of local examples in the foundation of present-day figures of speech.

Ananya (2004) asserts that they have a vernacular feeling of dialects in all-inclusive to peruse an unwritten epic by Intizar that is distributed in Urdu in 1952, recognized thus called post present day work. Hussain commitment as a story teller tremendous, particularly in the class of parcel essayist's man to demonstrated the grotesqueness of 1947 or the carnage of the injuries however Rahi (1966) argues that Intizar Hussain tests these injuries and stripping ceaselessly the layers from old recollections to uncover wounds Intizar Sahab likes to be a calm spectator contributing little to the discussion that streams about him. As a storyteller He is a skilled worker of the specialty of narrating. Intizar Hussain gave another exposition story style or the one of a kind thought of folklore with writing.

Dr. Radha (2015) views gender violence in the stories of Intizar Hussain. She states that so far as gendered point of view is considered, Basti marks recognizable predispositions in spite of the fact that the novel denounces and grills the religion based choice of parcel and delivers the anguish and mental thwarted expectation of those individuals who relocated leaving their homes to the "newland, notwithstanding, the hero Jakir speaks to history of segment from the focal point of a male centric expert and along these lines minimizing the jobs of ladies inside their local circles like mother, hireling, sister, and darling." (p. 490)

She further says that nonetheless, certain occurrences, quite of a few characters, and hysteric conduct of a few ladies uncover the injury they may have experienced amid the season of segment. The discoursed between two companions Salamat and Afzal about the character of their dad just as their anger over this issue "unlayer the smothered distress their moms may have experienced in the past in the wake of segment viciousness." (p. 490).

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. The primary text is Basti which has been interpreted with the help of postcolonial theory and its concept- Displacement. The novel is related to partition of the subcontinent 1947 when the grand scale migration took place and displaced the people. This study takes insight from the ideas of displacement and identity given respectively by Edward Said and Homi Bhabh. As Sarris & Frankenberg (1996) argue that in partition literature the dilemma of identity and the nightmares of displacement play a very sensitive and

crucial part. Hence, this study focuses on these two theoretical paradigms and interprets the selected text.

Bhabha et al (1987) argue that Migrant literature is either written by migrants or tells the stories of migrants and their migration. It is a topic of growing interest within literary studies since the 1980s. Migrants are people who have left their homes and cultural settings and who started a new life in another setting that is, in most cases, initially strange to them. “Displacement is a key term in post-colonial theory which applies to all migrant situations. It refers both to physical displacement and a sense of being socially or culturally “out of place.” (p. 209)

Said (2012) asserts that displacement is a dynamic issue in the domain of postcolonial writing for its tremendous scope of outcomes on the post-provincial human mind and their social orders. In spite of the fact that the postcolonial subjects are attempting to manage this displacement as a general rule, it likewise gives favorable circumstances to lift the position. Displacement happens into two phases Gallien, C. (2018). One is physical and another is mental. The postcolonial authors center around the two phases in their compositions to depict the battle of postcolonial subjects. The physical or regional displacement powers the general population to move to the outsider land and it results mental distance or displacement (Teke, 2013).

Chernetsky (2002) argues that a major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. Indeed, critics such as D. E. S. Maxwell have made this the “defining model of post-coloniality...”(p. 116). A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are features common to all post-colonial literatures in English (Bhatia, Ram, 2001).

Redclift (2016) states that displacement is a lively issue in the domain of postcolonial writing for its huge scope of results on the post-pioneer human mind and their social orders. Despite the fact that the postcolonial subjects are attempting to manage this displacement in actuality, it additionally gives points of interest to hoist the position. Displacement happens into two phases. One is physical and another is mental. The postcolonial scholars center around the two phases in their works to depict the battle of postcolonial subjects. The “physical or regional displacement powers the general population to move to the outsider land and it results mental distance or displacement”. (p. 118).

DISCUSSION

Basti by Intizar Hussain is novel about displacement and trauma experienced by the characters during the course of the story of the novel. Originally it was written in Urdu but now the translation is also available. The narration of the novel is quite modern in structure. The text reminds that of Virginia Wolfe and James Joyce. It is in first person narration and occasionally it falls in the hands of omniscient writer. The protagonist of the novel is Zakir. He is the narrator of the story too. It begins from the childhood of Zakir. This story of trouble, turmoil, trauma and displacement from the last years of the Pakistan movement till the creation of Pakistan and later further division of Pakistan covers. In the novel the fire of burning houses, ash of the burnt houses and smoke are in abundance. By the end of the story Intizar Hussain sums it up in the words of Buddha. The narrator imagines that the Basti is on fire, the blood dimmed tide has let itself loose and engulfing the living people. This is followed by the text of the holy Qur'an, "I swear by Time, man is surely in loss." First trauma and displacement on the physical level happens when Pakistan is carved out of the subcontinent in 1947 which is the mega event of Basti and second episode of trauma and displacement takes place during the days of 1971 when the eastern Pakistan declared independence and Bangladesh came into existence. Apart from these their numerous episodes those describe the mental condition of the protagonist who continuously suffers from psychological trauma and displacement.

In an interview with Intizar Hussain in 2005, to a question about Basti, Intizar Hussain answers,

All at once I felt that 1947 had again come alive within me. That whole period before and during 1947 came back to me so sharply and intensely that without thinking what I should do with it, without planning to make it into a novel . . . I just went on writing and writing. After that I put the pen down; after that the news began to come. East Pakistan had fallen. When . . . some months had passed, I again picked up the pen and looked at what I had written . . . [and] the form of the novel began to take shape in my mind and my imagination. (Basti X)

From the answer it can clearly be inferred that the author himself experienced the trauma of partition and displacement which it brought with it. The story of the novel in the beginning is quite lyrical. The world of Basti is quite harmonious and serene. Various religions are composed and calm and the plot moves quite smoothly. The central characters of Zakir and Sabirah are young children in the pre-partition India.

Zakir as a young boy forms attachment with his cousin Sabirah and the play together as children. They dig holes in the grounds and call it grave. When they grow up Zakir becomes a student at Meerut College where he studies literature and Sabirah also develops a particular taste for literature back at home. But time doesn't stay same. They fall apart from each other. They suffer the pangs of separation. Their love for each other is terminated by the partition of 1947. Zakir migrates to newly created Pakistan but Sabirah remains behind in India.

Psychological trauma of Zakir begins right at the very young age. He is a reader and reads stories from the books of his father. He has a thinking mind that meditates on the thin lines of events. "He heard this, and wondered, but now there was a little touch of fear mixed in with his wonder. In his encounters with wonder, the first ripple of fear. He went to the other room" (6). This and many other internal monologues of Zakir indicate his internal conflict- his traumatic turbulent mind that envisions displacement all through the course of the novel. He wonders all the time. His bewildered mind never rests and finds solid ground to remove his inner recesses. "When he put his finger on a memory, dense crowds of other memories drifted along in its train". (8) His mind is crowded with memories. He lives in nostalgia and fragmentations. His perturbed mind in that way oscillates between the possibilities. The impact of displacement falls very heavy upon his mind. It is directly associated with his psychological displacement and nostalgia.

In the smooth and calm plains of Rupnagar spreads the plague-the first catastrophe in the novel. The people of Rupnagar including the family of Zakir live on the edge which leads to death. Within days the plague stops discriminating the religion starts killing the Muslims, the Hindus and the others. It creates havoc and trauma and makes people to migrate. This trauma of plague results in the displacement of many families in Rupnagar. Zakir first time in his life experiences death on grand scale. "The sound of "Ram nam satya" came—and he dashed out to the front door. Behind the funeral procession the grieving women passed by, carrying wood for the pyre and wailing aloud." (11) The procession of the wailing women penetrates the mind of Zakir and to his disillusionment life becomes weak- meant for end and death. The doors before him become desolate and streets are barren. Plague surges everywhere so much so that it takes the life of the wife of the town's doctor but soon after things change. As every cloud has a silver lining and the migratory birds come back to their homes. Similarly, people of Rupnagar who internally displaced people return when the plague leaves the town.

The love story of Zakir and Sabirah is one of the central stimulus and motifs in Basti which is the cause of internal displacement and trauma of Zakir and Sabirah. As they grow up their love also grows stronger for each other but ultimately like fated lovers they fall apart from each other. "He wasn't at all a child anymore! After Bi Amma's passing, and the departure from Rupnagar, it was as though he had all at once grown up, as though his childhood had been left behind in Rupnagar." (32) Displacement is very important in the making of one's character. It gives lessons and makes wise and visionary. His displacement from Rupnagar turns him into a new and wise grown up. He feels as if he had left his childhood deep somewhere in the dense forest of Rupnagar. After passing his matriculation exam he returns to Rupnagar as a changed person. To his surprise Sabirah has also grown up. She is now a young woman. "And Sabirah! How tall Sabirah had grown, and how her bosom had swelled out, so that she always kept it covered with her dupattah. Nevertheless, two round swellings made themselves apparent." (39) Intizar Hussain gives vivid details. His description of the characters is not from outside only but from inside also. He covers outer appearance and also uncovers the minds of the characters. Sabirah as a grown-up girl is attracted to Zakir. Their love for each other grows

taller and stronger but they keep it within the chambers of their heart. When one day destiny brings them close to each other and zakir proposes her in a little confusing way. “Sabirah, if I should get a job in Delhi then—then—” My tongue began to stumble. “Then—we two can live together there.” “What?” She looked at me with surprise, as though she didn’t understand at all.” (58) This is the culmination of his love for her but it is a fated fatal love that wrings his heart and triggers his psychological trauma and displacement. Despite all his efforts he couldn’t manage to bring Sabirah in his life and both are separated and displaced by the partition of 1947.

The novel now jumps forward to the early seventies and the intensifying conflict between West and East Pakistan. Things spin out of control, the news becomes even more intermittent and unreliable, and the sense of isolation at the center of the book grows ever greater. As the gunfire and sloganeering continue, as everything is falling apart, Zakir’s father dies. With his mind moving in anguish between present and past, Zakir tries to view the convulsions of modern Pakistan in light of the Shiite experience of defeat, persecution, and endurance, but it is only to envision the city around him as Kufa, the city which betrayed Imam Husain. wandering through desolate lanes, offers prayers in a mosque devoid of other worshippers. Zakir lives with his parents in Lahore, where he teaches history. His mother is worried about family members in the east and asks worriedly about the news from Dhaka, news that either doesn’t come or is not to be relied on. Much of the book’s action takes place in tea shops where Zakir meets a group of friends who argue and tease each other and try to make sense of the violence outside. The critic Muhammad Umar Memon has described Zakir’s friends as “shorn of physical traits and particularizing details,” and it is true they are a collective presence, a kind of chorus commenting on events, themselves “swathed in an eerie half-light,” that they are hard put to understand and helpless to control. All they can do is talk, a reflection of the powerlessness of intellectuals but also of the people as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Basti by Intizar Hussain is a panoramic as well as vivid screen of trauma and displacement of Zakir on the physical and psychological level. He suffers many setbacks and is burnt into the fire of separation, disillusionment and trauma. The narration of the novel covers wide range of spectrum which highlights the living characters undergoing the turmoil of the partition of 1947 and moreover the impact of the civil war and the creation of Bangladesh on the minds of the characters. Finally, it can be said that Basti is a narration of displacement and trauma that chiefly covers the life of the protagonist Zakir.

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