



Through the Lens of Gendered Violence: Agony, Angst and Abduction in the Partition Stories of Sadat Hasan Manto

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Abstract

Partition is one of the bloodiest upheavals in human history that has continued to dominate the collective memory of both the nations, India and Pakistan – and often overshadows the importance of independence from British rule because of the scale of devastation and communal violence caused by the partition. A suffocating silence continued for decades without any inquiry into the mental and emotional turmoil that at least half million women went through as they committed suicide or were uprooted, raped, killed or dislocated to a different world. The human experience of Partition went unrecorded and un verbalized to large extent; hence literary texts on the subject of Partition have been written and read emphatically within artistic conventions of realism and are treated as surrogate document. Sadat Hasan Manto was a stalwart figure in Urdu literature who is acclaimed for representing the horrors of partition truthfully in his stories. This paper aims to bring out how his stories are an attempt to expose the psyche of the macabre and deal with extreme situations and emotions. The paper also aims to understand how women's bodies become reduced to sexual objects to be owned, disowned, invaded, protected or exploited in patriarchal societies when men turn into communal butchers and women are muted objects stripped of any authority over their own thoughts, bodies or lives. Through a close reading of the stories *Cold Meat*, *Open it* and *The Woman in Red Raincoat*; the paper seeks to investigate how the stories offer a perspective into the sufferings of women in partition through fiction.

Keywords: India Partition, communal riots, gendered violence, sexuality, patriarchy