
Disputing Borders on the Literary Terrain: Translations and the Making of the Genre of 'Partition Literature'

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Abstract

The present paper examines the claim, made on behalf of 'partition literature', that it is a more comprehensive account of partition than social-historical accounts. That it is non-partisan and humane. Through the readings of Alok Bhalla's three volume collection titled Stories about the partition of India (1994), it is shown how in the process of translation and genre-formation, certain texts are 'communalized' and rejected or accepted after constructing an elaborate structure of justification. The paper shows how literature too partakes in the symbolic drawing of nation and community boundaries. Literary genres take shape not only to sift literature but to influence the social, political and other realms as well.

In recent years, History has fallen into disfavor in studies of Partition¹ as the discipline that has suppressed the trauma of Partition in constructing the triumphalist narrative of the nation-state. Instead, these studies take recourse to myth, memory and literature to draw attention to "the other face of freedom".² The assumption here is that myth, memory and literature bring people together while History is said to be divisive. While the universalist and liberal-humanist claims of British Literature have been questioned by Postcolonial Studies, Literature in general continues to be seen as the repository of universal human values. The literary presentation of Partition has come to be seen as a more 'comprehensive' account of Partition than

the historical representation; it is said to be ‘unique’, ‘non-partisan’ and ‘humane’; it is seen variously as ‘social document’, ‘people’s history’, ‘voice of the silenced’.³ It is these qualities associated with the ‘literary’ in the context of ‘Partition Literature’ that I subject to scrutiny in this article. The article argues that the literary is as much a terrain of demarcations and disputed borders as is the political terrain.

The last two decades have seen a spate of translations mainly of short stories and novels set in the context of Partition. So large are the number of individual novels, anthologies of short stories and new editions of earlier translations of literary writings on Partition that today they constitute a significant body of literature that goes by the name of ‘Partition Literature’, taught and studied as such today in many universities in India and abroad. This body of literature includes translations from a wide array of Indian languages – Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, etc.- into English, and writers who belong to present-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. If ‘Partition Literature’ appears as a site of confluence of literatures from different linguistic and national backgrounds, I want to draw attention to the uneasy relationship between the texts/translations that are being so brought together to constitute a body of literature. The journey of the texts from vernacular languages into English, from ‘provincialism’ to ‘cosmopolitanism’, from national into supra-national context is fraught with tension. An uneasy relationship and tension prevails, as the translations are imbued with contentious present-day concerns about nation, society and polity. The attempt of literature of bringing together and into English, a variety of texts to ‘resolve’ these issues and debates is what I call in this paper ‘Genre politics’. I argue that in the process of forming what I call the ‘genre’ of Partition Literature, criteria for selection and omission of texts/translations are being evolved; protocols for reading the texts/translations are being set in place, both in the metacommentaries on the translations (Preface /Introduction

/Foreword /Essays) and in the actual translations - criteria and protocols that are not necessarily of the literary realm. Looking specifically at two translations – Alok Bhalla's (1994) and Muhammad Umar Memon's (1998) - of the same short story by Ahmed Nadeem Qasimi called *Parameshwar Singh*, which is set in the context of Partition, and also at the Preface/Introduction that frames the two translations respectively, and Bhalla's discussion of "the politics of translation", I cull out the debates and disputes over borders and boundaries, this time happening in the terrain of literature.

Not all texts are equivalent, and in the first section of this paper, I look at a particular principle of hierarchization of texts within the genre of Partition Literature. In the second section, I look at the two translations of the short story *Parameshwar Singh* to see how this principle of hierarchization imbues the translation, and in the last section, I look at how a text that may not fit the genre according to the given criteria is reinterpreted and worked into the genre.

I

The Alok Bhalla-edited anthology of Partition stories is among the first of recent well-known anthologies on Partition. Bhalla's anthology is a 3-volume collection titled *Stories about the Partition of India* (1994). It is not as if other anthologies of Partition stories have not been published before. But this has been among the first anthologies coming with the "boom" in Partition studies in the mid-90s. It is a collection of 63 stories. All except one which is originally in English are translations from various languages of the subcontinent such as Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Hindi, Sindhi, Malayalam, Dogri and Marathi.

In his Introduction to the anthology, Bhalla states that he finds most histories written on either side of the border too ideologically driven, written as they are “either by the apologists of Pakistan or by its bitter opponents” and hence these histories read either “like incantations” or “like old demonologies” (1994: xii). He turns to literature, he says, because “[c]ontrary to the communal histories, the stories about the Partition have more to do with the actualities of human experience in barbaric times than with ideologies...” (p. xiv). He sees any attempt to historically study the causes for the formation of Pakistan as a vindication of Pakistan (p. xiii). Though he does question the Hindu Right’s sole claim over India, he is dismissive of any narrative of discrimination of Muslims in India today.⁴ He also sees no differences or inequalities between communities because the balance sheet of Hindu-Muslims shows both sides to be equal.⁵

Bhalla seems to posit some values as inherent in Literature as opposed to History. But it is not as if he approves of *all* literary writings on Partition. He goes on to classify the various categories of stories on Partition and in doing so gives us an idea of the basis of selection of texts that should go into the making of the genre of Partition Literature. He classifies Partition Stories into four categories: 1) Stories which are communally charged 2) Stories of anger and negation 3) Stories of lamentation and consolation and 4) Stories of the retrieval of memories. Regarding this categorization Jill Didur says: “While this may seem to suggest that Bhalla identifies a variety of responses to the events of Partition, in actuality, he speaks about each of them in a progressive, hierarchical relation to each other, as if the modern national citizen-subject author eventually transcends more primitive and illogical states of being in direct relation to his/her correct remembrance of Partition” (<http://www.carleton.ca/caclals/chimodir/Chimo32-web.htm>). While Didur goes on to show Bhalla as a conservative-nationalist, the point I’m trying to make is that Partition Literature is not simply a

descriptive label or an all-inclusive category, but it is a *genre* that is constructed through a process of grading, sifting and selection.

Let us look at the first category – stories which are communally charged - because that seemed to have been the crucial criterion for selecting stories for the anthology (Bhalla 1994: xviii). It is not as if Bhalla's anthology has no stories under this category of which he is severely critical. In fact his analysis of three stories that he sees coming under this category are pointers to why he is dismissive of the category. So these stories are part of his anthology more as an example of what should not constitute the genre of Partition Literature. Before we look at Bhalla's reading of one of the three stories,⁶ Ahmed Nadeem Qasimi's *Parameshwar Singh* which Bhalla discusses elaborately, to see what his criteria for selection are, here are the bare essentials of the plot of *Parameshwar Singh*.

Akhtar, a boy of little over five years in age, separated from his mother, and a part of a foot convoy to Pakistan in the wake of its creation is saved by Parameshwar Singh from fellow Sikhs who want to kill the Muslim boy in their midst. Parameshwar Singh's son, about the same age as Akhtar, it turns out, had been kidnapped on the other side of the border from where Parameshwar Singh and his family had come a month ago. The rest of the story traces Parameshwar Singh's attempt to get Akhtar accepted by his community and family without riding rough shod on the young boy's sentiments. The story ends with Parameshwar Singh realizing the futility of his attempt, given the narrow-mindedness and hostility of his family members and therefore accompanying Akhtar to the border to restore him to his mother. Parameshwar Singh accompanies Akhtar to Pakistan, not because Akhtar "naturally belongs" there but because people around him make him feel that he is an alien and is unwanted. Parameshwar Singh's daughter Amar Kaur is unambiguously hostile and cannot accept Akhtar at all. "...

Amar Kaur always looked at [Akhtar] as though he were an imposter, who at any minute would discard his turban and comb, and disappear reciting *Qul huwa'l-Lah*” (Qasimi, 1998:127). Further, Parameshwar Singh decides to take Akhtar to Pakistan after his wife and daughter unequivocally say that they can never forget their lost son and brother respectively, implying that Akhtar cannot be a substitute for their affections.⁷

Bhalla however finds this story “not only a bit disingenuous, but ... also cynically manipulative” (1994: xvi). He sees a halo around the Muslim child while Parameshwar Singh, he says, is treated as a caricature. Bhalla reads the story as the triumph of a young Muslim boy whose natural piety and inherent religiosity renders futile any attempt to keep him in a Sikh family/community and, he says that “[a]t the end of the story, Akhtar walks towards Pakistan, in the direction from which the morning azan rises into the sky – his mother, his nation and his true spiritual home await him there” (p. xvi). The question that arises here though is who sees Pakistan as Akhtar’s spiritual home – Akhtar, Qasimi or Bhalla?

Bhalla’s discussion of *Parameshwar Singh* in this fashion draws attention to the criteria adopted in literary selection – those stories seen as “communally charged”, i.e. tilting the balance for one community against another are to be excluded from the genre of Partition Literature. The “communal” principle, so to speak, becomes the principle for ordering the texts.

II

If one reads the translation of *Parameshwar Singh* in Bhalla’s anthology (translated by Viswamitter Adil and Alok Bhalla) and also reads Bhalla’s discussion of the short story in his Introduction, it might not take long to be convinced that such stories which are communally charged should not be part of the genre of

Partition Literature. But *Parameshwar Singh* is translated and anthologized in more recent collection of Partition Stories as well titled *An Epic Unwritten: The Penguin book of Partition Stories* (1998) and *The Resthouse: Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi's Stories* (2000) both edited by Muhammad Umar Memon. Interestingly, talking in his Preface to *An Epic Unwritten* about what propelled him to take up this task of putting together yet another collection of Partition Stories after so many had already been published in recent times, Memon says:

I felt that the ideological underpinnings articulated in the learned introductions to the earlier selections worked as a sort of distorting filter against the material presented. In other words, I found them too intrusive for my comfort. Hence my decision to steer clear in my own presentation of any such narrowly nationalistic aspirations on the one hand, and of a kind of mealy-mouthed, neo-Gandhian mumbo-jumbo on the other (preface, 1998: xiii).

Although Memon does not name Bhalla, it is not hard to guess who he is talking about here because Bhalla's Introduction is full of invocations of Gandhi.⁸ But more importantly from the point of view of furthering our analysis of Bhalla's reading of *Parameshwar Singh*, Memon says that he finds many of the translations in these anthologies inaccurate and distorting and one of the stories he mentions as an example of such distortion is *Parameshwar Singh* (xiii). I compared the translations of *Parameshwar Singh* in the two anthologies – Bhalla's and Memon's, not from the point of view of finding out which is aesthetically better, or truer to the original⁹, but to find out what differences there are between the two translations and to see if it is possible to account for them.

While no two translations may be exactly alike and would invariably have differences, I found one instance of variance from each other on comparing the two texts particularly significant. When Parameshwar Singh, after pleading and rescuing Akhtar from his fellow community men, takes Akhtar to his wife, her surprise turns to hysterical anger when she realizes that her husband has brought a Muslim boy home and is pleading for his acceptance in the place of their lost son Kartar. She refuses to allow a Muslim boy in. People from the neighborhood rush and prevent Parameshwar from beating up his adamant wife. It is at this point that the discrepancy between the two translations occurs. I will give the two translations below. First, the translation in Memon's collection:

The people reasoned with her: Parameshwar Singh was doing a good thing. Making a Musalman into a Sikh was not an everyday occurrence. If it were the olden days, Parameshwar Singh would already have become famous as a 'Guru'. That gave her some comfort... (1998: 134).

Now the translation in Bhalla's anthology:

Everyone tried to reason with Parameshwar Singh. His intentions were noble, they agreed. In olden times, he would have been regarded as a saint. But now it wasn't easy to teach a Muslim to become a Sikh. His wife was emboldened by their talk (1994: 164).

As is evident, in the first translation, people approve of Parameshwar Singh's extraordinary action and reason with the wife, but in the second translation, people find his action aberrant in the circumstances and futilely reason with him. Thus in the second translation, Parameshwar Singh's action is seen and evaluated as the action of a mad man rather than seen as an action of an individual who rises above the circumstances of hate and hostility prevalent. In fact "Parameshwar Singh" is not the only story of this kind. There

are innumerable stories of this kind in the genre of Partition Literature that show how individuals rise above narrow community considerations to help and rescue people belonging to the 'other' community. In fact such stories form the strongest basis for claims that Partition Literature is humanist and not narrowly communal. But Bhalla, it seems, denies such humanist renditions of *Parameshwar Singh*. In his analysis of the story in the Introduction, Bhalla sees Parameshwar Singh as "a bit dim-witted" (p. xvi). He accuses Qasimi of creating a caricature of Parameshwar Singh and in fact goes on to say, "... the sarcasm directed towards him, given his name, is always a little heavy-handed" (p. xvi). If one were to read *Parameshwar Singh* in Memon's anthology, one would probably find no irony at all in the title, which would point towards a more literalist reading – Parmeshwar Singh as someone who acted like a God rising above the pettiness of his fellow human beings. Parameshwar Singh's wife and children would then not appear as "hysterical representatives of their tribe", representing "the ancient antagonism between the Sikhs and Muslims" as Bhalla would have it (p. xvi), but as ordinary people shaped by the dominant discourse around them and thereby setting off Parameshwar Singh's extraordinariness, given the circumstances.

In Bhalla's anthology the category of communally charged stories that *Parameshwar Singh* is said to be a part of, is characterized as simplistic and one-sided. But the reading of the text above shows that *Parameshwar Singh* could just as well be read as a humanist text. But why is this reading eschewed? Bhalla, in the Introduction, says:

Qasmi (sic) refuses to acknowledge that in the 1930's and 40's inhumanity wasn't the exclusive right of any one community. He should know this well, since he was the first editor of the progressive Urdu journal *Savera* and had written angry editorials against the Partition.

Immediately after the Partition he changed his stance and wrote a poem entitled “Battle Cry of the Kashmiri Freedom fighter” (p. xvi).

Then does Bhalla’s reading of *Parameshwar Singh* as a “communally-charged story” have to do with its writer Qasimi’s going over to Pakistan, and his changed stance on Partition? Does Qasimi’s going over to Pakistan make him communal? Can a Pakistani writer get included in the genre of ‘Partition Literature’ only by decrying the formation of his nation? – these are questions that arise when we read Bhalla on Qasimi. We can also see here how the translation renders the text ‘communal’, which then becomes the ground for its inferiority and an instance of what should be excluded from the genre of Partition Literature.

III

Are there some stories that automatically merit inclusion in the genre of ‘Partition Literature’? Let us take the case of Sada’at Hasan Manto. In an article titled “The Politics of Translation: Manto’s Partition Stories and Khalid Hasan’s English Version” (2001:19-38), Alok Bhalla critiques Khalid Hasan’s translation of Manto’s short stories brought out as a collection titled *Mottled Dawn: Fifty Sketches and Stories of Partition* (1997). To begin with, Bhalla finds two serious problems with the translations: “One, its translations are highly inaccurate and disfigure the original. Two, it has no recognisable editorial policy” (2001: 20).¹⁰ According to Bhalla, “[t]he greatest damage [Khalid] Hasan does to Manto is to communalize him. He does so systematically, with design and in bad faith.” (2001:27). Thus having established Khalid Hasan as not only an incompetent translator, but also as irresponsibly manipulative, prejudiced, racist and communal, Bhalla turns to the discussion of Manto’s story titled *Yazid* which Khalid Hasan has translated as “The Great Divide” (1997:32-142).

The plot of the story goes like this: Karim Dad is the protagonist of *Yazid* who has lost his father in the riots accompanying the creation of Pakistan. His village has seen killings and destruction as a result of which the villagers are full of sorrow and anger, but Karim Dad realizes that life has to go on and soon marries Jeena whom he had set his sight on before the killings began. Jeena herself has lost her brother, killed when he was saving her from being abducted. But Karim Dad sees no point in endlessly mourning the dead. Soon the village gets the news that India is planning to dam the rivers to prevent them from flowing to Pakistan and thereby make barren their village lands. While this news is received with helpless anger by the villagers, Karim Dad remonstrates with his fellow-villagers for endlessly complaining without thinking of means and strategies to counter the moves made by India. He taunts them saying that one resorts to abuse only in helplessness, when one has run out of options. When he is asked what option there is, he points out that he cannot answer on behalf of thousands of others who will also be affected by the catastrophe. In this mood he receives the news of the birth of a son to Jeena and to Jeena's horror decides to call him "Yazid". Yazid is a Judas-like figure to the Muslims who apparently denied water to Hasan, Hussain and their followers in Karbala by damming the river. But why does Karim Dad decide to call his newborn son "Yazid"? When a shocked Jeena asks Karim Dad, "But do you know whose name that is?", his reply is, "It is not necessary that this little one here should be the same Yazid. That Yazid dammed the waters; this one will make them flow again." (1997:142). These words suggest that if Yazid is a hated figure for the Muslims, because he dammed and denied water to Hasan, Hussain and their followers, this Yazid, by making the water flow again and thereby removing the very cause for hatred will deprive the potency of the image of Yazid. A Yazid who acts favourably can no longer remain Yazid, the hated figure.

Manto seems to have written *Yazid* in the early years after Independence and after Manto's own troubled move to Pakistan from India. The immediate provocation for the story seems to have been a threat to dam the rivers flowing from East Punjab, now in India, into West Punjab, Pakistan and the complicated river-sharing negotiations that were then underway between the governments of the two countries. Manto seems to have been moved at the human tragedy that the damming of rivers would lead to, and in fact, has conveyed his anguish more directly in his *Pandit Manto's first Letter to Pandit Nehru*:¹¹

... I was surprised to learn that you want to stop the rivers from flowing through our land. Panditji, you are only a Nehru [a settler on the riverbank]. I regret that I am just a measuring stone weighing one and a half ser [earlier in the letter, Manto points out that in the Kashmiri language, Manto means "munt", a measuring stone weighing one and a half ser]. If I were a rock of thirty or forty thousand maunds, I would have thrown myself into the river, so that you would have to spend some time consulting with your engineers on how to pull it out (2001: 88-89).

Here is a clear indictment of the intended act of cruelty on the part of the Indian government. This does not however mean that Manto began to support Muslims/Pakistan or turned against Hindus/India. Yet Bhalla belabors this point in his discussion of *Yazid*, as if in anxiety to purge Manto of any "communal" intent:

Manto ... wants to suggest that *Yazid* is not out there in a community whose faith is different from the Muslims, but a part of each of us, Hindus, and Muslims alike – that we are *Yazids* when we refuse to take responsibility for our actions or when we dream of killing as a way of proving our holiness; and, that the history of relations between the Hindus and the Muslims was as complicated a mixture of harmony and antagonism as is the case with any group of

people who have lived together for ages. Thus, he uses Yazid, not to strengthen the historical or religious claims of a few survivors of the riots in Pakistan, but to replace the language of religion by the practice of a mode of analysis which is concrete, moral and psychological, and in the service of community-making (2001: 30).

It is debatable whether Manto's Yazid signifies the Yazid (= the evil, the irresponsible and the bloody-minded) in each of us, as Bhalla suggests. Such a reading, for instance, cannot explain why Karim Dad would choose to give his beloved son such an unflattering name with the connotations still unchanged and negative. Such an interpretation diffuses and draws attention away from the evilness of the action of damming the river on the part of Indian powers, an act Manto neither condoned nor wished away. *Yazid* does not seem to talk about the evil in all of us or the evil actions that we all perform which may make us Yazids. Instead, the story suggests that Karim Dad would like to make Yazid undo this action, so that he no longer remains Yazid or a metaphor of hate.

Bhalla's interpretation of Manto's *Yazid* takes place in the course of his dismissal of Khalid Hasan's translation of Manto as a "communal" one. Bhalla's attempt here is to purge the "communal" taint from Manto and recover him for the genre of 'Partition Literature'. So we see a playing down of Manto's critique of India's ill-intention and a turning of Manto's social and political criticism into moral criticism, as socially and politically motivated threat is reinterpreted as an abstract and diffuse 'evil-in-all-of-us'.

I took up for study Bhalla's critique of Khalid Hasan in order to show how a text is worked on and around to fit into the genre of 'Partition Literature'. In this case, first, the translator is shown as incompetent, unreliable and communal; next, the reading leavens the text to fit into the genre; finally, the iconic figure of the

genre emerges hewed and straightened out to meet the requirements of the genre. My tracing of this process is certainly not to suggest that Sa'adat Hasan Manto is a 'communal' writer.¹² It points to how any association/imagery with regard to religion especially Islam automatically translates itself into the 'communal'. And therefore the anxiety to keep a writer like Manto free from being sullied by this posited 'communalism'.

Thus in the process of translation and genre-formation, certain texts are 'communalized' and then either rejected or accepted after constructing an elaborate structure of justification. The genre of Partition Literature is created in the process of reading 'communalism' into certain texts and paring out the hint of it in others.

The discussion here makes the general point that literature too partakes in the symbolic drawing of nation and community boundaries, and that literary genres take shape not only to sift literature but are themselves shaped by, and also influence, the social and political realms.

NOTES

1. The formation of two nation-states, India and Pakistan, with the end of colonial rule in 1947, the conditions that gave rise to their formation, and the various interests that worked to bring about the two nation-states are all well-documented history. These historical events began to be revisited as the study of "Partition" in the 1990s. The resurgence of interest in Partition came from various quarters – feminists who wanted to see how Partition impacted women, revisionist historians who were unhappy with the existing triumphalist narrative of nation-state formation, who now wanted to study Partition as an instance of people's suffering due to the formation of nation-states, Western

academics doing Postcolonial literary studies who taught and studied "Partition Literature" under the broader rubric of South Asian Literature, etc.

2. This is the sub-title of the 3-volume anthology of short stories edited by Mushirul Hasan (1995).
3. For an elaborate discussion of how literature is privileged in the context of Partition, see Chapter III of my Ph.D. dissertation, *Communalism and Women's Writing in Independent India: A Case Study of Writing on Partition* submitted to Bangalore University (2002).
4. See for instance, his dismissive analysis of Gulam Abbas' short story, "Avtar: A Hindu Myth" in the Introduction to the anthology under discussion. Abbas' story is set in a refugee camp, which years after Partition continues to remain a camp, with its inhabitants kept isolated from the villages around. It highlights the discrimination that Muslims continue to face in Independent India - the lack of opportunities, victimization, targeting in riots, etc. It then uses the image of Kalki, a Hindu Avtar, but in a twist in the story Kalki comes to deliver Muslims from oppressive Hindus. Bhalla of course cannot brook such a perception by the Muslims and therefore dismisses it as a communally charged story in his Introduction (1994: xvii).
5. Bhalla's is critical of Gulam Abbas' short story because while it shows up Hindu discrimination, "there is no hint of the history of massacres by the Muslims" (1994: xvii).
6. The two other "communally charged" stories which are included in the collection are as mentioned before Gulam Abbas' "Avtar: A Hindu Myth" and Krishna Sobti's "Where is my mother?" But only "Parameshwar Singh" is subjected to elaborate analysis in this category.
7. In this article, for my analysis, I have consulted the translation of Qasimi in three anthologies, one *Stories about the Partition of India*, Vol. I (1994), second, *An Epic Unwritten: The Penguin*

book of Partition Stories (1998) and third, *The Resthouse: Ahmed Nadeem Qasimi's stories* (2000).

8. The Introduction is prefaced by two quotations from Gandhi and in his analysis too Bhalla makes out as if Partition happened because the people who were earlier under Gandhi's spiritual-moral leadership suddenly gave in to irrational, unnatural impulses.
9. Post-structuralist theories of translation have problematized the notion of original as source text and translations as versions. So I was not looking for fidelity to the original here.
10. Bhalla is not alone in making this critique of Khalid Hasan's translations. Aijaz Ahmed too makes this criticism of Khalid Hasan based on the 1991 edition of Hasan's translations of Manto titled *Partition: Sketches and Stories* (New Delhi: Viking, 1991). Ahmed says: "Khalid Hasan's editing is at best lamentable, but even his translations are not entirely reliable. He changes words, sentence structure, even titles of stories without any explanation whatever" (1996: 193n).
11. This "letter" is part of an anthology called *Translating Partition*, edited by Ravikant and Tarun K. Saint (New Delhi: Katha, 2001). It was apparently first published as a Foreword to one of Manto's novels in 1954 (ibid. 91 n).
12. In fact Manto is hard to capture under labels. He shared the social concerns of the Progressives dominant in Urdu literature of his time, yet was severely critical of other progressives like Krishan Chander. (See Ismat Chughtai's "My friend, My Enemy" in the book of the same name - *My Friend, My Enemy: Essays, Reminiscences, Portraits* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2001). He migrated to Pakistan in 1948 after agonizing over the decision (Hasan 1997:xvi-xvii). In Pakistan, for a time, he co-edited with Muhammad Hasan Askari, who was then promoting the idea of a distinct Pakistani literature the literary periodical *Urdu Adab* (Memon 1998:365). It is often said that his unhappiness with the new dispensation drove him to drink and

despair. About *Siyah Hashye*, his bleak pen sketches on Partition, he wrote: "For a long time I refused to accept the consequences of the revolution, which was set off by the Partition of the country. I still feel the same way; but I suppose, in the end, I came to accept this nightmarish reality without self-pity or despair. In the process I tried to retrieve from this man-made sea of blood, pearls of rare hue, by writing about the single-minded dedication with which men had killed men, about the remorse felt by some of them, about the tears shed by murderers who could not understand why they still had some human feelings left. All this and more, I put in my book, *Siyah Hashye*" (quoted in M. Hasan, 1995: 89)

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