

'Catastrophic Experience' of Structural Violence in Sadat Hasan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh"

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze, interpret, and examine the impact of structural violence in Sadat Hasan Manto's story "Toba Tek Singh". It particularly stresses the form of violence in which social structure or social institution harms the major character Bishan Singh by preventing him from meeting his basic needs of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. The political decisions forced him to leave the nation where he lived before. He was deprived of his rights to preserve his nationality and pursuit of happiness. This paper also explores how Bishan gets inflicted by the decisions imposed by the rules in the name of democracy and people's aspiration; and traumatizes the people of his strata. Further, it exposes the patriotic feeling of the homeland and brotherhood relationship within the same territory. For this, the concept of trauma theory was employed to explore how the people suffered from the decisions of the nations and felt pain when the intense desire of the common people was suppressed and forced to abide by the unwise decisions. This article argues that Manto uses the setting of the mental asylum to show the structural violence that is inherent in the social, political, and economic systems of the newly formed nations of India and Pakistan. The study, thus, contributes to the readers to understand multidimensional impacts of structural violence and enforces the rulers to rethink their prudent decisions in the law-making process.

Keywords: structural violence, diplomacy, democracy, trauma, partition

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Introduction

Structural violence refers to any scenario in which a social structure prolongs inequity. Such inequality causes suffering to the common people penetrating them in various ways. In many cases, such structural violence outreaches the level of trauma and will have life-long effects on the victims. Structural violence, especially, examines the ways that social structures (economic, political, social, and legal systems) can have a disproportionately negative impact on particular groups and communities.

The concept of structural violence gives a way to consider how and in what forms the negative impacts occur. It also digs out ways to overcome or restrict possible harms. Such inimical forces play significantly in Sadat Hasan Manto's story "Toba Tek Singh". The story is set in the backdrop of Indian partition violence. It presents how the protagonist suffers the violence incurred by the state apparatuses in the asylum. Representative of his class, Singh's sufferings rest in the systemic violence, which is violence inherent in the legal, political, and social systems inflict the individuals.

Structural violence can be divine, legal, hegemonic and other forms as it violates rights of the people and gives way to trauma. Freedom to express opinions and work in respect of natural phenomenon gets violated. A violator's interest affects even the natural law. This form of violence may not cause deaths but acute pain and suffering. Galtung (1969) argues that structural violence explains the negative power of social institutions and systems of social organization among marginalized communities. His argument distinguishes the conventional definition of violence which usually converted the area of physical violence of war or crime with the negative power of social intuitions from extended conceptions of violence such as systems of social organization. He defines structural violence as the root cause of differences between people's potential reality and their actual circumstances. He comes up with the idea that potential life expectancy in the general population might be significantly longer than the actual life expectancy for members of disadvantaged groups, due to factors like racism, economic inequality, or sexism. With such a base, he claims that the discrepancy between the potential and the actual life expectancy results in structural violence.

Structural Violence

Structural violence enables more nuanced analyses of the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical forces that shape inequality and suffering. It creates an opportunity to consider seriously the role of different types of marginalization such as sexism, racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, and/or poverty – in creating lived experiences that are fundamentally less equal. Furthermore, structural violence helps to explain the multiple and often intersecting forces that create and perpetuate inequality on multiple levels, both for individuals and communities.

Besides, structural violence also creates the historical roots of modern inequality. The inequities and suffering of our time often unfold within a broader history of marginalization, and this framework provides a critical context for understanding the present in terms of its relationship to the past. For instance, marginalization in post-colonial countries often connect closely with their colonial histories, just as inequality in the U.S. must be considered with respect to complex histories of slavery, immigration, and policy.

Structural violence could be seen at all levels. The agreement between the two nations, Pakistan and Hindustan, has violated the rights of people in the name of diplomatic relations and agreement. Walter (1978) argues that there is violence in both law making and law preserving and states:

All violence as a means is either lawmaking or law-preserving. If it lays claim to neither of these predicates, it forfeits all validity. It follows, that all violence as a means, even in the most favorable case, is implicated in the problematic nature of law itself.

Walter sees problems with law because it is the carrier of violence. Either in law making or in law preserving, violence operates. The power which has been garnered by the rulers in the name of agreement and so-called law has further violated the people. Walter further adds that lawmaking postulates power making, and it is the immediate

manifestation of violence. He defines justice as the principle of all divine end making power the principle of all mythical law making.

Theory of trauma is the study of human pains and sufferings not only in the physical layers of humans but also in their mind or psyche. Cathy (1995) argues that trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. What lies in Cathy's argument is the mental aspect of trauma. It deviates from the classical conception of violence as a corporeal reality.

Fictions published after the partition violence depict the written, spoken and even implicit traumatization of civilians owing to the nations-imposed violence in the name of diplomacy. Manto reflects the oppressive system in the hierarchical society that dehumanized the individuals is the theme of structural violence.

State incurred violence had the catastrophic experience in Manto's characters. The imprudent decision that the authority had imposed was unbearable. The asylums were forced to leave and made them compelled to lose their identity. The vulnerable situation created due to the authority's decision. The result of the partition made the India and Pakistan the separate nations. The authorities agreed to relocate the civilians based on their religious identity. That was the challenge of religious harmony. As per the decisions, Muslims were to be sent to Pakistan and Sikhs and Hindus were to be sent to India. That forced relocation was a violation of their liberty. They were banned to decide their nationality.

The main goal of this study is to assess the nature of structural violence and its impact on the civilians by the decisions of the two nations in the name of diplomacy. The main objectives are to study how people have been traumatized due to structural violence, to find out the root cause of structural violence and to evaluate the violation of human rights.

Literature Review

Norwegian sociologist, Galtung(1969) explains the negative power of social institutions and systems of social organization among marginalized communities. His argument distinguishes the conventional definition of violence which usually converted the area of physical violence of war or crime with the negative power of social intuitions from extended conceptions of violence such as systems of social organization.

He defines structural violence as the root cause of differences between people's potential reality and their actual circumstances. Galtung (1969) defined violence as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. He elaborates that violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations (Galtung, 1969). He comes up with the idea that potential life expectancy in the general population might be significantly longer than the actual life expectancy for members of disadvantaged groups, due to factors like racism, economic inequality, or sexism. With such a base, he claims that the discrepancy between the potential and the actual life expectancy results structural violence.

Galtung asserts that structural violence as opposed to personal or direct violence is indirect. He argues, "There may not be a person who directly harms another person in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (Galtung, 1969).

Structural violence enables more nuanced analyses of the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical forces that shape inequality and suffering. It creates an opportunity to consider seriously the role of different types of marginalization such as sexism, racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, and/or poverty – in creating lived experiences that are fundamentally less equal. Furthermore, structural violence helps explain the multiple and often intersecting forces that create and perpetuate inequality on multiple levels, both for individuals and communities.

The decision of partition of India and Pakistan marked the worst sexual violence in India's history. The partition magnified the tension over ownership in female sexuality. The sexual violence occurred during the partition traumatized the women of both societies. Narasimhan- Madhavan (2006) asserts:

Through the violence, the female body became representative of not just the honor of her family but also the honor of her community. Her body, in other words, became the very territory that both communities were fighting over. She represented land that was to be claimed, reclaimed, desecrated, or conquered.

She further writes:

The type of violence that ranged in its brutality against women was very telling about the general perception of the female body, ownership, and power. One of the most common types of violence committed was rape. This was the symbolic act of simultaneously extracting male power through “spoiling” and marking her with his progeny, thereby owning her honor and her membership in his community. Through rape the female body becomes polluted and is no longer an asset to the community as an upholder of honor”.

The unbearable situation could be observed. Mass raping and amputation of breasts was common. She further mentions the vulnerable situations stating that another common occurrence was the mass raping of women in front of males’ family members, which simultaneously extracted and confirmed to the enemy that their power was procured.

Theory of trauma is the study of human pains and sufferings not only in the physical layers of humans but also in their mind or psyche. Cathy (1995) argues, “Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena”. What lies in Cathy’s argument is the mental aspect of trauma. The trauma is expressed in Sadat Hasan Manto’s story “Toba Tek Singh” while he was forced to leave the nation where he lived before, and he stood in the middle of the boarder and accepts death. Manto (2007) elaborates:

Before the sun rose, a piercing cry arose from Bishan Singh, who had been quiet and still all this time. Several officers and the guards ran towards him; they saw that the man who had stood on his legs day and night for fifteen years now lay on the ground, prostrate. Beyond a wired fence on one side of him was Hindustan, and beyond a wired fence on the other side was Pakistan. In the middle, on a stretch of land that had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.

The physical collapse of Bishan Singh shows the poignant moment and the representation of emotional and psychological trauma experienced by the civilians that was the effect of the partition of India which explores the theme of displacement, identity, and the tragic consequences of the political decisions.

Thapa (2012) writes how people have been traumatized by the state and the rebels:

Surya Bahadur Shahi was a slim, soft-spoken man on whom fell the unbelievable task of recording wartime atrocities. His work was very risky. “The Maoist did not like coming to their villages, and the state security forces would think I was a Maoist if I stayed outside the bazaar”, he said. He was vulnerable to threats from both sides.

Such a vulnerable situations traumatized the civilians, and they were in trouble condition. They could not judge whether to stay in the village or leave the village.

Similarly, Rakshit and Gaur (2022) deals with how literature as a medium can bring private violence into the public discourse through South Asian women’s texts and intervenes in the dominant narratives of patriarchal nationalism, gender discrimination, and biased social structures that have been materialized through honor killing, rape, murder, and verbal abuse. Literature provides a tool for depicting the symbolic, cultural, and epistemic violence that affect women in Bangladesh in particular and South Asia in general.

South Asian writings has historicized the violence that causes killings, rape, murder and verbal abuse. The literary works of women depicted the sufferings of women. The suffering caused due to state incurred violence.

Research Design

The study adopted qualitative research paradigm that implies the exploratory research design. The characters of Sadat Hasan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh" were purposefully chosen for the study followed by textual analysis. It served as the primary source to explore how structural violence traumatized the civilians. Further, related journals, books, articles, and critique of critics served as the insights for the analysis.

Textual Analysis

Saadat Hasan Manto's story "Toba Tek Singh" is an unflinching portrayal of structural violence. It reveals the impact of structural violence through 'catastrophic' sufferings of the characters from political, social, and economic dimensions. It presents the horrors and human cost of the partition. The loss of identity and sense of belonging is presented as the impact of the absurdity of drawing lines on the maps. The story asserts that such absurdity results in 'catastrophic' consequences via immense suffering and displacement.

Political Restrictions for Liberty

People have the right to rejoice their religion, nationality, and freedom. The political decisions should be made considering the individual's freedom and rights. In the absence of prudent decisions, the individuals suffer. Political authorities should not curtail the rights and freedoms of individuals. During the partition in India, there was heavily curtailing the rights and freedom of individuals. Sadat Hassan Manto talks about the loss of individual's liberty in Toba Tek Singh.

The asylums lost their liberty and freedom when the political decision came to leave their land. It was the loss of their identity. The major character Bishansingh, who was a Sikh, denied accepting his identity as Pakistani. So, he wanted to stay in between the India and Pakistan. Manto writes:

One day, as he was sweeping the floor, he suddenly climbed up a tree. Perched on a branch, he delivered a two-hour long speech on the delicate Hindustan-Pakistan issue. When the guards asked him to come down, he climbed up even higher. When they threatened him, he said, I want to live in neither Hindustan nor Pakistan... I'd rather live on this tree (Manto, 2007).

It was the loss of their physical freedom. The forceful living in the asylum and the forceful leaving from the asylum without their interest and political decision made the individuals lose their freedom.

Further, the structural violence even made the situation worse. In the name of agreement what the nations decided could not control the situations forever. The pain of the decision enforced the lunatics of the asylums to disobey the order and expressed:

For one lunatic, the entire issue of Hindustan-Pakistan and Pakistan- Hindustan resulted in further disorientation. One day, while he was sweeping the floor, he suddenly suspended his task and climbed onto a tree, where he remained for nearly two hours. During that time, he lectured extensively and nonstop on the matter of Pakistan versus Hindustan. When ordered by the guards to come down, he climbed higher still; when threatened with force, he said, "I want to live neither in Pakistan nor in Hindustan—I will live on this tree." (Manto, 2007)

Bishan's reluctance to stay in either Hindustan or in Pakistan but rather to remain in the no-man's land expresses the voice of majority of Indians, who then were going to be either Hindustani or Pakistani. This powerful expression shows that the residents of unified India did not want Pakistan. It was politics that divided them.

The story illustrates the havoc in the name of diplomacy agreed to exchange lunatics. Pakistan and India, which were the newly made nations made the decisions to exchange their lunatics just after some time of their partition in 1947. The story was followed by different characters who were forcibly brought to the border on the trucks, and they were to be exchanged based on their religious faith. The Hindus and the Sikhs were going to be deported to India and the Muslims to Pakistan. The study mainly focuses on the trauma created by the decisions of the two governments.

Bishan Singh resists the decision made by two partition nations and their diplomatic agreement to transfer the Hindu lunatics to India and Muslim ones to Pakistan. Moreover, he challenges the state authority and disobeys the decisions and calls them to define his nationality. He accepts the deaths rather than accepting their decisions. Via Bishan, Manto elaborates his conception:

Before the sun rose, a piercing cry arose from Bishan Singh, who had been quiet and still all this time. Several officers and the guards ran towards him; they saw that the man who had stood on his legs day and night for fifteen years now lay on the ground, prostrate. Beyond a wired fence on one side of him was Hindustan, and beyond a wired fence on the other side was Pakistan. In the middle, on a stretch of land that had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh. (Manto, 2007).

These lines show how his deep feelings towards his homeland. He was profoundly traumatized by the imprudent decisions of the states.

Further, he stresses the value of nationalism and feeling of patriotism. The issue raised by Manto is about the humanitarian value. States are motivated to work for the sake and betterment of themselves not for the aspiration of the people. The main issue raised by Manto in the story is a heartrending tale of the Lahore asylum. He indicates how nationalism vanishes. The so-called nationalism is also a divider that cuts across the humanitarian grounds. Manto, however, shows humanity transcending nationalism. The unity in the characters is above their national feeling. Manto criticizes the barrier between India and Pakistan that separates man from man, body from body and soul from soul. He writes:

Most of the lunatics were not in favor of the transfer because they could not comprehend the reasons for being uprooted from one place and thrown into another. One or two people, not completely mad, shouted, "Pakistan Zindabad!" and "Pakistan Murdabad!" This infuriated both the Muslims and Sikhs, and altercations between them were avoided with great difficulty (Manto, 2007).

Restrictions for Social Life

Manto's story "Toba Tek Singh" brings out the complexities of the partition and impacts on ordinary individuals restricting to live a peaceful social life. The characters in the story find themselves caught in a whirlwind of political decisions beyond their control affecting their everyday life. The partition compelled the lunatics to be transferred from their land and gave them traumatic experiences. Moreover the forced relocation of their residence was a violation of their freedom. The trauma of witnessing the violence even deepened when the decision to relocation came. It was a bitter attack to their dignity. They felt the loss of their identity.

Manto has clung to classical writing by introducing love as one of the troops, even in the narrative of structural violence. The relations between the lovers have been affected because of decisions made:

There was a young Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had been rejected in love and had turned lunatic. When he heard that Amritsar had gone away into India, then he was very sad. He was fallen in love with a Hindu girl from that very city. Although she had rejected the lawyer, even in this madness, he had not forgotten her. Thus, he abused all those Hindu and Muslim elders who had convinced together and made Hindustan into two fragments- his beloved had become Hindustani, and he Pakistani. (15)

This interreligious love becomes a problem in a society because of the hitherto existing structural violence that creates a demarcation between different religions, castes, classes, or genders.

Further, the partition's consequences had long-lasting effects on the social fabric of the region as all the inmates of the asylum who weren't completely insane were thoroughly confused about whether they were in Hindustan or Pakistan. "If they were in Hindustan, then where was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how was it possible since only a short while ago they had been in Hindustan, and they had not moved from the place at all" (Monto, 2007). In this way, the partition affected every aspect of people's lives, including their ability to interact and live their social life freely. The character Kesh loses all his social connections as "once a month, his

people would come to enquire about his well-being, and then go back" (Manto, 2007). This arrangement continued for a long time but as the partition begins these visits stop. So, the characters, including the protagonist Bishan Singh, are unable to live their social life.

Apart from this, the partition created two separate nations with distinct cultural identities. People on both sides of the border started emphasizing their religious and cultural differences. During the time to exchange such religious and cultural differences become very distinct when:

In the same vein, a Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh, "Sardarji, why are we being sent to Hindustan? We don't even know the language they speak there."

The other one smiled, "I know the language of the Hindustooras. These Hindustanis are devils and strut about haughtily..." (Manto, 2007)

Such differences further alienated people from each other and hindered their ability to interact freely and led to a sense of alienation. Moreover, many individuals who lived in a certain place for generations suddenly found themselves in a different country. Such loss of identity had greater psychological impact on people leaving them feeling lost and disconnected. People were uprooted from their homes and families were torn apart.

Economic Restrictions for Pursuit of Happiness

Manto does not strongly stress the economic restrictions for the pursuit of happiness, however he explores the issue of economic impact for the individuals who are forced to leave the place where they lived before. The characters, especially those who were previously engaged in economic activities, faced the brunt of these challenges. A Hindu lawyer whose girlfriend lived in Amritsar had gone to Hindustan but thought that his "(law) practice would not flourish in Amritsar" (Manto, 2007). In fact, the partition created a sense of economic uncertainty as people were unsure about the economic policies of the newly formed nations.

Though Manto does not overtly talk about economic restrictions for the pursuit of happiness, but he hints to the possible economic upheavals going to be caused. Manto (2007) presents example of the two Anglo-Indian lunatics who spent hours in secret confabulation: "Would the European Ward be there or done away with? Would they be served breakfast anymore? And, instead of Western style bread, would they be forced to swallow the 'bloody Indian chapatti?'" This hints to the economic restrictions possible due to displacement and migration, loss of livelihood, trade barriers, resource allocation and infrastructure disruptions.

Trauma and 'Catastrophe'

One day, an old Muslim friend from Toba Tek Singh visits him who informs him that Bishan's family was safe in India and they were waiting for him to arrive in India. He also reassured him that Toba Tek Singh was still in Pakistan. The day of the exchange came, and the patients were taken to the border. There was a lot of clamor and noise.

It could be realized that that was extreme pain in the heart of the asylums as:

Those who were willing to come out became difficult to manage, because they suddenly ran here and there. If clothes were put on the naked ones, they tore them off their bodies and flung them away. Someone was babbling abuse, someone was singing. They were fighting among themselves heard at all- and the female lunatics' noise and clamor was something else. And the cold was so fierce that everybody's teeth were chattering (Manto, 2007).

The sudden expression of unusual behavior shows the feelings of freedom which was uncontrolled. People who were previously suppressed suddenly emerged. There was lack of control, and they were in disorder.

When it came to Bishan Singh's turn, popularly called Toba Tek Singh, he did not move beyond the buffer zone between the two borders.

Bishan Singh was the person who challenged the dictates of the guards. No guard could push him, and they saw it in desperation and set him free for a while. He challenged their dictates and chose to stand in a place

between the border, a place that is neither Hindustan nor Pakistan. He stood in this no man's land for fifteen years before he died.

Structural violence leaves scars to one or two people. It rather includes within its grip people of a class or creed because it is catered for by people of a particular group or authority. There was a massive effect in the professional and could not bear the situation. The people sentimentally expressed their feelings, "One morning, a Muslim engineer who used to spend most of his time walking back and forth in a particular part of the garden suddenly took off his clothes and began running about naked" (Manto, 2007).

Collecting characters from different religious, social, academic, and occupational backgrounds, Manto wants to show that violence allows no one to escape from its tentacles.

Discussion

Sadat Hasan Manto wrote the story "Toba Tek Singh" on the background of India-Pakistan partition of 1947. Following the aftermath of political separation, many people had to transfer and relocate their lives. There was chaos and confusion that how they would be located and what the situation of the new territory was where they were going to live. Moreover, there was pain because they had to leave their land in the name of religion and caste. It was decided that the Muslims would stay or move to Pakistan whereas the Hindu and Sikh counterparts will move to India. The authorities in Lahore immediately started the proceedings of deportation of Hindus and Sikhs to India through Wagah-Attari land border. They were not willing to take part in the proceedings and pretended to create a home in the asylum and did not want to leave. Some climbed up the tree and one claimed that he was a God and decided that both India and Pakistan belonged to him. Among them one person was a Sikh named Bishen Singh. He once had a huge property in Toba Tek Singh (a place in Pakistan). He stayed in the asylum for nearly two decades and owned a lot of property there.

The decisions made by the two nations which forced the people to leave their home places without their wish is known as structural violence that has traumatized the people. The political decisions of the states often have a direct impact on the everyday lives of the general people. When it comes to the case of the two countries having agreement on issues, many people of several countries are affected. Moreover, when it is the decision of the partition of a country or more, millions of people suffer from it. Such decisions are always followed by unimaginable events like loots and riots, rape, theft, fights, killings including terrible bloodshed and mass destruction. Such decisions hampered all the people. Saadat Hassan Manto presents a realistic picture of the then society in his story "Toba Tek Singh".

When the rulers fail to listen to the aspiration of the people, they think that they are the supreme to decide anything. People want to stay in a place where there is harmony, and they could love people and place. The lunatics in the story "Toba Tek Singh" don't like the transfer from Pakistan to India or from India to Pakistan. Manto writes:

The authorities attempted to reason with him. "Look, Toba Tek Singh is in Hindustan now—and if he's not there yet, we'll send him there immedi-ately." But he was adamant and would not budge from the spot where he stood. When the guards threatened to use force, he installed himself in a place between the borders and stood there as if no power in the world could move him. (Manto, 2007)

With a single weapon, Manto succeeds in showing the general public's indignation against dislocation, dissociation from their birthplace and community. This feeling is central to all Indians regardless of their religious backgrounds, on which the politicians were playing.

There was overall impact of the partition in the sub-continent after it. The story "Toba Tek Singh" was written just after the partition of India and Pakistan. This story not only implies the effect of the partition, but it had an impact of overall partition trend and the traumatic situation resulted as an aftermath of the partition.

"Toba Tek Singh" is a realistic representation of partition violence in an ironic way. Manto has used the paradox by showing the power of the lunatics. Generally, lunatics are supposed to be weaker than sane people. However, Manto's lunatic characters in this story are stronger than ordinary people think. The story's characters can

be analyzed from the Marxist perspective too. The deprived characters in the story have given the message of injustice and sensitized to rebel against the discrimination. Those who don't have anything to lose can garner the power intuitively.

Conclusion

Structural violence where there is no war, but the trauma created by the violence is more than war, and it severely hurts people. It leads to many traumatic situations. The people suffer from the decisions of the states and feel pain when the intense desire of the common people is suppressed and forced to abide by the unwise decisions.

The 'catastrophic experiences' of structural violence aware to combat with injustice and the dehumanized behavior that impose in the society and make a society just and equitable. It helps to strengthen the relation among the people of different countries and blurs the separation of culture from man from man, body from body and soul from soul and propagate the message of peace and prosperity to the people of both countries by showing them the way that leads them to a land, where there is no division in the name of religion, color, and nationality. It establishes the feelings of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Further, it stresses critically examine the impact of partition violence caused due to political interest which leads the situation worse, and civilians traumatized. It also enforces to challenge the political system which plays the role to make the civilians traumatized. This ultimately, enforces the rulers to rethink their prudent decisions in the law-making process.

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