

## MORALITY, COMRADERY, COMPASSION, AND SACRIFICE IN MANTO'S SELECT PARTITION STORIES

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### **Abstract**

This article examines select stories of Saadat Hasan Manto who has realistically documented the heart-rending tales of pain, suffering, loss and death and their psychological impact on millions of victims during the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947 ignored by mainstream historians. The paper argues that although stories such as Toba Tek Singh, "The Last Salute," "Ram Khilavan," "A Tale of 1947," "Mozail," "The Great Divide," and "Colder than Ice" basically portray deadly violence in the form of enmity, suspicion, hatred, fear, destruction, death, and trauma, they also judiciously include scenes of trust, friendship, compassion, care, love, and sacrifice. The stories show ordinary people resisting injustice and risking their life to help the members of the "enemy" community by providing them shelter and protection. The characters' heroic involvement in altruistic work attests to Amitav Ghosh's concept of "affirmation of humanity" and proves the ultimate triumph of morality and goodness even in the surrounding atmosphere of bestiality and violence.

**Key Words:** comradery, compassion, morality, partition, violence, affirmation of humanity

The Partition of the united India in 1947 into two nations--India and Pakistan--remains one of the most tragic events in the history of the subcontinent. It led to colossal violence that uprooted, displaced, and killed millions of citizens. Several scholars and artists have made Partition as their subject matter and tried to represent the ensuing pain and trauma in different forms and styles. If some writers have blatantly painted the picture of the genocidal violence in its raw form, others have been more cautious in its portrayal. One of the greatest chroniclers of the massive riots, Saadat Hasan Manto,<sup>1</sup> has artistically documented the heart-rending tales of suffering and loss of the victims. He has “captured the human dimensions of partition far more effectively than have historians,”<sup>2</sup> and tried to reflect reliably on its impact on the psyche of the characters. In the process, Manto includes scenes of charity amid the surrounding conflagration of violence much in the spirit of what Amitav Ghosh calls an “affirmation of humanity”<sup>3</sup> in his essay “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi.” Manto’s stories such as “Toba Tek Singh,” “The Last Salute,” “Ram Khilavan,” “A Tale of 1947,” “Mozail,” “The Great Divide,” and “Colder than Ice” approve Ghosh’s idea that noble acts of comradeship, compassion, and sacrifice prevail even in the worst scenes of ruthless violence.

“The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi” illustrates “affirmation of humanity” through multiple scenes of humanitarian acts where ordinary Hindus make great sacrifices to help the victimized Sikhs. Among others, the essay offers three important instances of altruism in which members of the majority community extend their helping hands to the minority victims: first, passengers in a bus protect a panicking Sikh from a violent Hindu mob; secondly, a Hindu Sen family provides cover to their Sikh neighbor, the Bawas to protect them from the frenzied Hindus; and thirdly, brave, and courageous women in a rally protect their fellow protesters from a dreadful group of attackers.<sup>4</sup> Ghosh explains that in each of the above cases, he “witnessed the risks that perfectly ordinary people were willing to take for one another” because those who helped or served the members of “other” community could not only attract the wrath of the normal members of their own community but also become easy targets of the attack by wild rioters.<sup>5</sup> In Ghosh’s text, the furious mob that hounds the minority Sikhs, also attacks, loots, and burns the houses of the majority Hindus, and Muslims who shelter the victims.<sup>6</sup> However, in the midst of terrible happenings, some sensible people carry on philanthropic work to help protect the victims of communal violence. They disregard the risk involved and make genuine efforts to resist unjust and heartless human actions. Without countering “violence with yet more violence,” the people

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<sup>1</sup>Born in 1912 in Ludhiana, Saadat Hasan Manto (1912 -1955) migrated to Pakistan in 1947. He has written several stories around the disastrous violence of South Asian Partition. His best-known short story collections are *NamroodkeKhuda and GanjeFarishte*. Written in minimalist style his *SyyahHashiya (Black Margins)*, is a remarkable collection of starkly realistic vignettes on the atrocities of Partition violence. Considered to be one of the finest writers of short stories, Manto also wrote film-scripts, radio plays and essays. During his short life span of 43 years, he earned significant fame and notoriety for his bold writings in Urdu.

<sup>2</sup>Ayesha Jalal, *The Pity of Partition*, 23.

<sup>3</sup>Amitav Ghosh, “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi,” 61. First published in *The New Yorker* in 1995, “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi” narrates Ghosh’s personal experience of violent upshot after the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in Delhi in 1984. The pages cited here are from *The Imam and the Indian: Prose Pieces* (2002).

<sup>4</sup>Ghosh, “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi,” 46-62.

<sup>5</sup>Ghosh, “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi,” 61.

<sup>6</sup>Ghosh, “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi,” 51. Gyanendra Pandey, in *Remembering Partition*, also notes an instance in which some Muslim thugs threaten to kill the people in their community who would give shelter to the Sikhs (75).

come together and “defy it [violence] with courage and stoic resistance.”<sup>7</sup> The lofty acts of kindness at different locations prompt Ghosh to aver that humanity is affirmed in the dark and dismal times of death and destruction as in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984.

A similar incident, the split of the Indian subcontinent into two countries in 1947 intensified Hindu-Muslim conflict and poisoned the age-old atmosphere of their harmonious existence. It caused irreversible damage to their friendship, love, and trust giving way to fear, animosity, hatred, and mistrust. Caught up in communal frenzies, friends and neighbors turned into enemies and indulged in terrible acts of arson, betrayal, abduction, rape, plunder, and murder. Vitriolic incidents of attacks, counterattacks, retaliation, and revenge disturbed the flow of everyday life. Besides polluting friendly atmosphere and forcing numerous people out of their native soil, the “arbitrary redrawing” of the subcontinent’s boundaries caused irreparable damage to the minds of millions.<sup>8</sup>

Manto has realistically depicted the gigantic historical calamity of South Asia in his short stories. As he opposed the Partition as an absurd, irrational, brutal and “inhuman act of madness”<sup>9</sup> leading to unprecedented suffering and death on both sides of the border, he criticizes the political leaders while sympathizing with the trauma-afflicted mass on the margins. As a victim of the national tragedy himself, Manto foregrounds the pain and anguish of the unknown and unidentified millions and makes a common cause with their dislocation, displacement, separation, loss, madness, and death. However, he never loses “his belief in man’s ultimate humanity,”<sup>10</sup> and therefore while writing about the holocaust of 1947, he scatters humanitarian actions amidst dreadfully evil events. That is, while Manto gives expression to the tragic experience of the mass by using the victim’s point of view, he also provides space for the kind and compassionate acts good and selfless people engage in. His stories, selected for discussion here, contain moments when his characters, imbued with extraordinary courage, come forward to fight against the wrongs in society. Putting their own life at risk, they cut across the border of community, culture, politics, or religion, and help the needy and suffering people by offering them rest, food, and succor. In some cases, they sacrifice their life willingly for the sake of the members of “enemy” community. Their charitable deeds uphold Ghosh’s idea that humanity exists even in the most horrible scenes of human carnage.

Manto’s “Toba Tek Singh” juxtaposes violent acts with kind ones to drive home Ghosh’s point that human goodness can never be fully suppressed by evil. Dexterously incorporating charitable acts along with the painful ones of forced migration, rape, madness, and death, the text presents characters such as Bishen Singh and Fazal Din who exemplify Ghosh’s ordinary people that display extraordinary courage during difficult times. The text proves that, far from being extinct, “‘Glimmer’ of humanity”<sup>11</sup> remains extant even in the creepiest circumstances. Set in a lunatic asylum in Lahore, Pakistan in the aftermath of Partition, “Toba Tek Singh” depicts the

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<sup>7</sup>Neeta Gupta, “Amitav Ghosh’s ‘The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi,’” 90.

<sup>8</sup>Jalal, in *The Pity of Partition*, observes that Indian Partition “along ostensibly religious lines in 1947 is simply the most dramatic instance of postwar decolonization based on arbitrary redrawing of boundaries. The forced migration of an estimated fourteen and a half million people, and the murder of perhaps two million innocent men, women, and children, devastated subcontinental psyches” (3-4).

<sup>9</sup>Stephen Alter, “Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto,” 94.

<sup>10</sup>Leslie Flemming, “Riots and Refugees: The Post-Partition Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto,” 102.

<sup>11</sup>Alok Bhalla, “Introduction” to *Stories about the Partition of India*, xxxiii.

negative consequences of the decision made by the governments of India and Pakistan to exchange their mentally sick prisoners. The story serves as “a mirror”<sup>12</sup> of the lived world as some lunatics display the anxiety and confusion outside while also imitating and enacting the roles of the political leaders.<sup>13</sup> The inmates such as the protagonist, Bishen Singh who identifies himself with his native place Toba Tek Singh,<sup>14</sup> refuse to move to the other side of the border. Bishen Singh dies on the no-man’s land between India and Pakistan resisting the leaders’ irrational decision to tear the pre-Partition India into two. In voicing his objection to the division of his country, ironically, the lunatic shows more sanity than the leaders of both the countries.

Otherwise, a text filled with violent deeds, “Toba Tek Singh” furnishes remarkable examples of humanity through the rich but mentally retarded Bishen Singh’s loving relation with his family and friends. His family offers an example of care and attention by their frequent trips to the asylum. After his relatives stop visiting him, Bishen Singh misses them and “the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they used to speak to him” (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 14). Despite his insanity, the protagonist appreciates kind human gestures such as love and care which he now misses. Additionally, the attachment to his native place, the pain he feels at the thought of separation from it, and his agonizing cries of resistance reveal Bishen Singh’s innate human qualities.

In “Toba Tek Singh,” Bishen Singh’s Muslim friend, Fazal Din performs excellent humanitarian task by rendering invaluable help to his Sikh friend. He meets the protagonist just before he is scheduled to transfer to India and provides him important information: “All your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. Your daughter, Roop Kaur... ‘She is safe too. . . in India’” (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 15). The passage shows that the Muslim friend’s kindness does not merely confine to his incarcerated friend but extends to his family whom he has sent safely to India. When he meets Bishen, Fazal Din also shows his concerns about other Sikh friends.

“Toba Tek Singh” furnishes one more outstanding example of humanity through a lunatic who resists the Partition in a unique style. Manto writes: “Caught up in this India-Pakistan-Pakistan-India rigmarole,” he climbs a tree and speaks for two hours on the confusion created by the absurd division of India (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 10). The lunatic prefers to live in the tree rather than in India or Pakistan. When threatened with punishment, he comes down and begins “embracing his Sikh and Hindu friends, tears running down his cheeks” at the thought of parting with them for good (11). It is Manto’s suggestion that the lunatic shows much less madness than the so-called sane political leaders who split their country into two;<sup>15</sup> also, his sense of friendship far surpasses theirs.

Similarly, in “The Last Salute,” Manto offers another specimen of a story that transcends “religious and national loyalties” to embrace wider humanitarian ideals of friendship and

<sup>12</sup> Arjun Mahey, “Partition Narratives: Some Observations,” 150.

<sup>13</sup> Alter, in “Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto,” rightly remarks that in “Toba Tek Singh,” Manto “mirrors the irrationality of society outside the walls of the asylum” by making his characters in the asylum mimic in an ironic fashion the action and manners of those outside it (98).

<sup>14</sup> David Gilmartin, in “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative,” argues reasonably that “Manto’s conflation of Bishan [Bishen] Singh with the place is not accidental; it suggests the central importance of “locatedness” in defining Bishan Singh’s identity and humanity (1084).

<sup>15</sup> Jalal, in *The Pity of Partition*, even states that “the madness of partition was greater than the insanity of all the inmates put together” (186).

comradery.<sup>16</sup> Set in the hillocks of Kashmir immediately after Partition, “The Last Salute” deals with a war fought by India and Pakistan for the possession of the beautiful state. It tells a heart wrenching tale of two childhood friends—Sikh Ram Singh and Muslim Rab Nawaz—who grew up together in a village, attended the same school, joined the same army, and fought a common enemy before the Partition. As an Indian and Pakistani soldier respectively, they now face each other in a battlefield because of the “effect of ideology”<sup>17</sup> and the honor associated with war for national identity. The story “underscores the dilemma of yesterday’s comrades”<sup>18</sup> transformed into today’s enemies through a hastily drawn line between the borders.<sup>19</sup> Having become victims to the roles assigned, the two friends follow the decrees of their nation states, however absurd they are. Subsequently, despite his love and concern, Rab Nawaz kills Ram Singh on the frontier in a kind of a mock war obeying the dictates of his religious nation.<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding warfare and death in “The Last Salute,” readers can find abundant cases of humanity—the first one being related with tea. In the harsh and cold hills of Kashmir, Ram Singh and his fellow soldiers of the Indian army desperately need fire for tea to warm themselves up. The Pakistani army officer, Rab Nawaz offers his help to the Indian counterpart, saying: “You have my word. Now go get your things” (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 186). In response, Rab Nawaz promises that he would hold fire for the Indian soldiers to secure tea things. This kindness and cooperation from an enemy soldier in the battle ground furnishes a good example of camaraderie revealing at the same time the softer side of the formidable Pakistani soldier.

The next humanistic act in “The Last Salute” takes place after Rab Nawaz shoots Ram Singh showing once again the sympathetic self of the Muslim officer who genuinely tries to alleviate the pain of his former friend at the last moment of his life. Lying about the casualties, the Muslim friend consoles Ram Singh: “Don’t you worry. The doctor is on his way” knowing that the doctor cannot arrive on time and that the death of Ram Singh is almost imminent (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 188). Though he has shot the Indian as an obligation to his duty, Rab Nawaz almost repents his action because he feels the pain and agony of his friend. In the same scene, readers can see another touching moment of humanity when Ram Singh salutes his former commander, Major Aslam completely ignoring or forgetting the fact that he is now an enemy fighting against him in the battle field. Manto writes: “With one great effort, he [Ram Singh] raised his arm and saluted [Major Aslam]” (189).

Thus, in his war story “The Last Salute,” Manto skillfully weaves moving incidents of love and friendship and shows that higher urge of humanity works even in the hot battle front. Spontaneous performance of generous acts amid intimidating events suggests that even violence can breed empathy and encourage the sense of brotherhood. The portrayal of human relationship in the story transcends community, culture, religion, and region. Giving space to both the

<sup>16</sup>Flemming, “Riots and Refugees,” 104.

<sup>17</sup>Mohammad Asim Siddiqui, “Saadat Hasan Manto’s Poetics of Resistance,” 26.

<sup>18</sup>Khalid Hasan, “Introduction” to *Saadat Hasan Manto: Selected Stories*, xiii.

<sup>19</sup>William Dalrymple, in “The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Indian Partition,” observes: “Cyril Radcliffe, a British judge assigned to draw the borders of the two new states, was given barely forty days to remake the map of South Asia. The borders were finally announced two days after India’s Independence” ([www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com)).

<sup>20</sup>Nasir Abbas, in “A Study of Two Short Stories on Kashmir Written by Manto,” argues: Manto puts forward ironically how problematic the notion of a nation embedded deeply into religion is (<https://www.thenews.com.pk>).

sympathetic actions as well as the heartless ones, Manto's text illuminates Ghosh's idea of "affirmation of humanity."

Likewise, Manto's "Ram Khilavan" makes space for humanitarian ideals along with the frightful events that materialized during the South Asian Partition. It tells the story of the titular character, Ram Khilavan, a poor Hindu dhobi (washerman) of Bombay and his relationship with his benefactor, the Muslim narrator. The "illiterate and warm-hearted" Ram Khilavan had helped the narrator in his days of poverty by not keeping any account, and generously "overlook [ing] his unpaid bills."<sup>21</sup> The honest dhobi has now been working for the narrator's family for about ten years and become a grateful recipient of their attention, kindness, and care.

One of the "ninety-nine percent of the [alcoholic] dhobis," Ram Khilavan comes under the influence of rich hate-mongers during the riots and participates in a drinking spree (Manto, *Manto: Selected Stories*, 95). Although he is supposed to have given up liquor, at the provocation of the troublemakers, Ram Khilavan drinks heavily, insults his benefactor and even raises his cudgel to attack the latter.<sup>22</sup> However, before he strikes, the drunken washerman recognizes the narrator, cries "Saab," and tries faithfully to explain to his wild friends the kindness of the saab's [benefactor's] family. With a desperate desire to save the Muslim narrator, Ram Khilavan lies to them, saying: "This is not a Muslim" (Manto, *Manto: Selected Stories*, 99). The next morning, he goes to the narrator's house to hand over his laundry, apologizes in a choking voice-- "Saab, please forgive me" --and leaves the place without even taking his wages (100). Ram Khilavan repeats "for the nth time"<sup>23</sup> the help rendered by the narrator's brother and wife: "Saeed Saleem, barrister was grateful to me. He gave me one turban, one dhoti, one kurta. Begum saab saved my life. I would have died of dysentery. . . . She took me to the doctor" (Manto, *Manto: Selected Stories*, 100).

"Ram Khilavan" demonstrates the presence of right-thinking people like the characters in Ghosh's "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi" who stand against the evil in society. The protagonist, Ram Khilavan remembers with gratitude the help rendered by the narrator's family: his brother Saeed Saleem had given the dhobi some clothing for his service whereas the narrator's wife had taken him to a doctor for the treatment of fatal diarrhea. These characters furnish rare examples of loving and selfless acts performed for the benefit of one belonging to the combatant community.

Having realized his wrongdoing in the attempt to kill his saab, Ram Khilavan not only apologizes for his behavior but also tries to protect the well-wisher from the "murderous mob of drunken dhobis [washermen]."<sup>24</sup> In doing so, he sets an example of "the heights human beings can reach even during a period of slaughter."<sup>25</sup> The Hindu dhobi's attempt to save the Muslim narrator from his intoxicated friends fits cleanly into Ghosh's concept of ordinary men who perform heroic acts by risking their life to help others, especially the members of the "enemy"

<sup>21</sup> Aatish Taseer, "Introduction" to *Manto: Selected Stories*, xxi.

<sup>22</sup> Jalal, in *The Pity of Partition*, mentions that Manto had visited the washermen's colony to collect his laundry just before he left Bombay, India for Karachi, Pakistan. He has "tellingly" written about it (the last-minute preparations) in his story "Ram Khilavan" (131).

<sup>23</sup> Jalal, *The Pity of Partition*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> Aatish Taseer, "Introduction" to *Manto: Selected Stories*, xxii.

<sup>25</sup> Sudha Tiwari, "Memories of Partition: Revisiting Saadat Hasan Manto," 54.

community. Thus, the story suggests Manto's faith in the goodness of humanity<sup>26</sup> during the wildest of times.

Similar glorification of humanity finds expression in Manto's "A Tale of 1947," a semi-autobiographical story,<sup>27</sup> which also narrates the rupture of friendship, fraternity and harmony. The story shows the defeat of violence caused by sectarian religion and politics. Set during the turbulent times of Partition, it deals basically with the relationship of two close friends--Hindu Jugal and Muslim Mumtaz--who earlier considered their friendship would never be affected by the concerns of community, religion, or nationality. The story also includes a heart touching sub-story<sup>28</sup> of the nobility of Sehai--a Hindu pimp. Benevolent characters such as Sehai and Mumtaz in "A Tale of 1947" offer "role models"<sup>29</sup> to humanity by serving as perfect "examples of moral beings."<sup>30</sup>

After the murder of Jugal's uncle by Muslim rioters in Lahore (Pakistan), when Mumtaz asks Jugal what he will do if Hindu-Muslim killing starts in Bombay (India), Jugal replies: "Maybe I'll kill you" (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm*, 159). Shocked by this cold and scary response from his most reliable friend and convinced that the changed socio-political scenario has stained their friendship, Mumtaz decides to move to Karachi, Pakistan for good. Just before the final leave-taking, he tells his companions about another intimate friend, Sehai, a professional procurer of girls. Sehai takes care of the prostitutes--Ameena, Sakeena, Sultana--as his own daughters, looks after their daily requirements, arranges religious holidays for them, and helps them save money. Discriminating none in terms of religion, Sehai treats the girls and customers with equality, and has even arranged the marriage of a Hindu girl with a customer. However, he is brutally attacked by communal-minded Muslims when he enters their locality of Bhindi Bazar, to help Sultana, a poor Muslim prostitute. In his last moments, Sehai requests Mumtaz to give to Sultana a packet containing her ornaments and twelve hundred rupees kept in the pimp's safe custody so far, adding: "tell her she should leave for a safe place... but... please... look after yourself first!" (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm*, 164). After Mumtaz meets the grateful Sultana with the packet, the anecdote of Sehai ends with the following words of Jugal: "I wish I were Sehai" (164).

Manto makes humanity triumphant in "A Tale of 1947." First, the story of Sehai reveals the wonderful soul's enviable humanity. His last words present Sehai as an embodiment of trust, love, and concern for his Muslim friends--Mumtaz and Sultana. Not only does he trust Mumtaz but is also trusted by Sultana for whom he sacrifices his life--a rare happening during the devastating times of Partition. Next, the wish of Jugal to be like Sehai clarifies that Jugal likes

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<sup>26</sup> Tiwari, in "Memories of Partition: Revisiting Saadat Hasan Manto," rightly remarks that the story "reiterates Manto's belief in the goodness of the human heart as [Ram Khilavan] apologises for his behaviour the next morning" (53).

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Umar Memon, "Introduction" to *Black Margins*, 29. The story is supposed to be based on a real incident Manto's life. The conversation between Mumtaz and Jugal parallels that of Manto and his best friend Shyam, when Manto decided to leave India for Pakistan.

Ayesha Jala in *The Pity of Partition*, also notes that after listening to the horrifying account of a refugee family from Rawalpindi from where he too had come, Manto asked Shyam: "I am a Muslim, don't you want to kill me?" Shyam relied in all seriousness: "Not now, but while I was hearing about the atrocities committed by Muslims. . . I could have killed you" (128).

<sup>28</sup> Told within the larger frame of "A Tale of 1947," Sehai's story foregrounds the value of friendship, love, and sacrifice.

<sup>29</sup> Tiwari, "Memories of Partition: Revisiting Saadat Hasan Manto," 53.

<sup>30</sup> Siddiqui, "Saadat Hasan Manto's Poetics of Resistance," 22.

not only to revive their valued friendship, but also shows willingness to sacrifice his life for others. Thirdly, humanity surfaces through Mumtaz's reflections on the absurd actions of naïve individuals who indulge in bloodshed in the name of religion. He reasons that "guns and knives are powerless to destroy" or "eliminate" religion, and faith or belief or devotion that belong to the realm of the spirit (Manto, *Orphans of the Storm*, 158). Fourthly, human values of love and gratitude become distinctly visible in the teary eyes of Sultana when she learns about Sehai and receives the packet and message sent to her through Mumtaz. The thoughts and actions of Jugal, Sultana, Mumtaz and Sehai conform to Ghosh's belief in the enduring quality of humanity that manifests even at the heart of cataclysmic conflict and ultimately triumph over viciousness.

Readers can perceive the radiance of humanity also in Manto's "Mozail" which puts elements of extreme cruelty such as rape, madness, and death side by side with uplifting ones of friendship, love, and sacrifice. The story deals with a magnanimously noble act in which the titular character Mozail, a young Jewish bohemian girl risks her life to help a Sikh friend, Tarlochan who struggles to save his fiancée, Kirpal Kaur from an attack by a crowd of Muslim rioters. When the girl of "uncertain occupation in Bombay,"<sup>31</sup> learns about Tarlochan's desperate effort to protect his Sikh beloved from the approaching gang, she readily decides to help her former crush. A woman of an independent nature with open-minded liberal views on religion, Mozail sets aside Tarlochan's conservative religious views and their past relationship and goes to the village of Kirpal Kaur to save her. At a time when Tarlochan has almost given up and "even mentally prepared" for the news of the death of Kirpal Kaur and her parents, Mozail brings him hope (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 33). She offers to help the dejected Sikh lover, saying: "Let's go and get your whatever Kaur from wherever she is" (43). With intelligence, courage, and heroism, Mozail not only protects Tarlochan from the onslaught of the furious Muslim mob but also helps him move his beloved to a safe hiding place.<sup>32</sup> In the process, she becomes almost naked and just before her death when Tarlochan hands his turban to cover her body, she refuses to take it. She points toward the Sikh's turban and says: "Take away this rag of your religion" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 49). She does not accept Tarlochan's turban for two reasons--first, to save Tarlochan from Kirpal Kaur by urging him to cover his hair he has cut short to impress Mozail, and secondly, to clarify her priority of humanitarian concerns over the religious ones.<sup>33</sup>

The protagonist, Mozail serves as a most appropriate example of Ghosh's "perfectly ordinary people" who take "risks" willingly and readily "for one another."<sup>34</sup> She gives up her life to save Kirpal Kaur without even knowing who the girl is. Mozail's happiness at the end of the story, when Tarlochan informs her about the escape of Kirpal Kaur, sets the best example of selflessness and as a true beloved, she sacrifices her life to give joy to her former lover and his girlfriend.

Revolving around the heroine's noble acts of bravery, generosity, and selflessness, in "Mozail," Manto puts forth his "incredibly optimistic view" that some people "rose to new heights of human achievement" during "the gloomy, blood-thirsty" days of Partition through

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<sup>31</sup>Flemming, "Riots and Refugees," 103.

<sup>32</sup> Raza Rumi, in "Reclaiming Humanity: Women in Manto's Short Stories," rightly states that Mozail "overruns her religious leanings to save lives of two individuals of a different faith" (79).

<sup>33</sup> Shashi Joshi, in "The World of Saadat Hasan Manto," remarks that Manto makes Mozail die completely naked to defy the symbolism of "meaningless essentialism of religion.... on behalf of humanity" (151).

<sup>34</sup>Ghosh, "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi," 61.



their supreme “sacrifice and courage.”<sup>35</sup> The text makes human love glowingly visible in the murky atmosphere of the brutal times. Readers might even assume that Ghosh has developed his idea of “affirmation of humanity” influenced by a character such as Mozail who “fights against all the odds”<sup>36</sup> and makes enormous sacrifice to keep the ideals of humanity alive.<sup>37</sup>

In the same vein, Manto emphasizes on broader human sympathies in “The Great Divide” which incorporates ideas of decency and respectability along with the vicious scenes of savagery during the times of Partition. Cutting across the cultural norms, the story “breaks from the stereo typical identities and representations,”<sup>38</sup> dismantles the narrow bounds of religious and communal conflict, accepts diversity of communities, adopts a cosmopolitan outlook, and establishes virtuous ideals. Through Karim Dad, his mouthpiece, Manto puts forward his “liberal vision,”<sup>39</sup> honors mankind in general and expresses hope for harmonious relations between the Indians and the Pakistanis.

Set against the backdrop of intercommunal violence that killed the protagonist’s father and his brother-in-law, “The Great Divide” shows Karim Dad countering the villagers’ condemnation of the “other” community, saying: “Whatever happened was because of our own mistakes” (Manto, *Mottled Dawn*, 102). He opposes the discourse of hostility, resists the branding of India as an unjust enemy, and admonishes the villagers including their chief, Chaudhry Nathoo for maligning the Indians as “mean, bastardly and cruel” (107). For Karim Dad, neither India is the “vindictive other,” nor Pakistan the “vulnerable victim.”<sup>40</sup> To the protagonist, it is absurd for his villagers to expect justice from an antagonist (India) whom they too would have sanctioned: “Had it been in our power, we would have seen to it that they received neither water to drink nor food to eat” (Manto, *Mottled Dawn*, 107). A victim of Partition himself, the unnerved protagonist asks his people not to trigger further riots by abusing the enemy--India and Indians.

In “The Great Divide,” the Pakistani Muslims call Indians “Yazid” to endorse a rumor that India would act as the infamous army of licentious tyrant to block the flow of water from its rivers to Pakistan. Karim Dad disagrees with this comparison of India’s perceived action to the “legendary cruelty of the Ummayad caliph Yazid toward the Prophet Mohammad’s grandson, Husain, and his small party of followers prior to their massacre at Karbala.”<sup>41</sup> To demolish the stereotype associated with “Yazid” and to open a space of harmonious existence of the two communities in future, he confers a new meaning to the word. With a “mature vision,”<sup>42</sup> he names his newborn son as Yazid explaining to his wife the logic behind the naming thus: “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” (Manto, *Mottled Dawn*, 108).<sup>43</sup> Karim Dad hopes that the

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<sup>35</sup>Flemming, “Riots and Refugees,” 103.

<sup>36</sup>Tiwari, “Memories of Partition: Revisiting Saadat Hasan Manto,” 53.

<sup>37</sup>M. Asaduddin, in “Introduction” to *Black Margins: Saadat Hasan Manto Stories*, avers that “a hallmark of [Manto’s] fictional art” is “the humanity that shines through in his writings” (11).

<sup>38</sup>Fouzia Abid and Hammad Mushtaq, “New Historicist Aspects in Manto’s Stories,” 63.

<sup>39</sup> Abid and Mushtaq, “New Historicist Aspects in Manto’s Stories,” 62.

<sup>40</sup>Barnali Saha, “Borders and Boundaries: Reading Saadat Hasan Manto’s ‘Toba Tek Singh,’ ‘The Last Salute’ and ‘Yazid,’” 97.

<sup>41</sup> Jalal, *The Pity of Partition*, 205.

<sup>42</sup>Abid and Mushtaq, “New Historicist Aspects in Manto’s Stories,” 63.

<sup>43</sup>Saha, in “Borders and Boundaries” remarks: Here, the very act of naming as confirming communal identity is ironically subverted (95).

young Yazid would be instrumental in bridging the gap between the two nations and open a path for mutual help and co-operation.

Karim Dad's interest lies more in spreading goodwill among individuals and nations rather than indulging in the claims of "religious texts and tribal identities" and the potential communal conflicts.<sup>44</sup> Discarding the idea that the Hindu "kafirs" (infidels) or "yazids" played any responsible role in Muslim "hizrat" (migration), "The Great Divide" tries to deconstruct the binaries of Hindustan-Pakistan, enemy-friend, self-other, and victim-predator. Readers can perceive Manto's exaltation of the good in Karim Dad's unorthodox, open-minded, liberal views on mythology and religion, and his understanding of India and reasonable ideas of relationship between the two adversaries--Pakistan and India--during the genocidal times.

Though less optimistic than the stories discussed above, Manto's "Colder than Ice" also tries to sustain human virtue by providing an instance of righteous awakening in a brutally shocking story of violence and moral degeneration. In the whirlwind of communal riot immediately after the holocaust of Partition, the Sikh protagonist, Ishwar Singh's "abysmal lust for wealth and bloodshed,"<sup>45</sup> makes him wildly involved in loot, murder, and rape of women from the "other" religious community for about a week. His hot-blooded wife, Kulwant Kaur discovers his impotence on bed, suspects of his relationship with another woman and questions his fidelity, adding "you're not the man you were eight days ago" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 20). Although Ishwar tries to explain about his innocence, he fails to convince his wife, Kulwant of his strange state and manner. She becomes furious, picks up his kirpan (dagger), "unsheathe[es] it and plunge[s] it in his neck" (22). The stabbing makes Ishwar confess his attempt to rape a young Muslim girl after looting her house and killing six men in the family. Metamorphosed into an unfeeling brute—a sexual beast—"a mother-fucking creature" by the madness of the time, he carries the girl to fulfill his carnal desire only to realize that she has already died and converted to stiff, cold flesh. The thought that he is about to have sexual intercourse with a dead body, turns the Sikh into "a heap of cold flesh" which is "colder than ice" (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 24). Ishwar's transformation into a lump of cold meat because of this discovery as well as Kulwant's fatal dagger wound transports the readers to the same state.<sup>46</sup>

Although Alok Bhalla is partially right to remark that "Colder than Ice" obliterates "moral realm" and exposes the degradation of human beings who "can only act as beasts,"<sup>47</sup> readers may find traces of human conscience in the protagonist. Ishwar suffers because he is not completely devoid of human values—he has remnants of humanity left in him.<sup>48</sup> If he had been emptied of human feelings, the dead woman would not be instrumental for his "sudden frigidity."<sup>49</sup> Admittedly, Ishwar has partially transmuted into a beast; however, he has not been completely debased, or dehumanized.

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<sup>44</sup> Alok Bhalla, "The Politics of Translation," 33.

<sup>45</sup> Umar Muhammad Memom, "Introduction" to *Black Margins*, 30.

<sup>46</sup> Flemming, in "Riots and Refugees," says that "at the end of the story [the readers] confront with shock the revelation of the depths of evil to which human beings can descend, and [they] become, like Ishar [Ishwar] and the corpse, 'ice-cold meat'" (102).

<sup>47</sup> Alok Bhalla, "Introduction" to *Stories about the Partition of India*, xxi.

<sup>48</sup> Umar Muhammad Memom, "Introduction" to *Black Margins*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Umar Muhammad Memom, "Partition Literature: A Study of Intizār Husain," 391.

In “Colder than Ice,” readers can clearly see the invincible presence of goodness evidenced by the fact that Ishwar has not lost his humanity.<sup>50</sup> The text serves as an illustration of what Ghosh describes as “affirmation of humanity” especially because of the lingering presence of a moral being in Ishwar after his failed sexual exploit of the Muslim girl and his inability to have sexual intercourse with his wife. Readers also find “glimmer of human sensitivity”<sup>51</sup> in Ishwar, when at the end of the story, he begs his wife Kulwant to extend her hand for support and comfort: “jani (meaning, darling), give me your hand” (Manto, *Selected Stories*, 24). The text reiterates and disseminates the optimistic message that humanity survives at all circumstances.

The study above shows that the selected short stories of Manto focus on belligerent religious groups, their communal politics and deadly violence as well as on universal values of humanity and righteous people advocating for friendly and harmonious existence. The characters and events in the tales support Ghosh’s idea of “affirmation of humanity.” Although the texts deal with one of the darkest phases of Indian history when people literally turned into beasts of prey, they provide space for righteous principles. The stories foreground “rational moral vision”<sup>52</sup> over the madness of the times by accommodating ethical response to violence in the form of human values such as friendship, love, trust, care, kindness, and sacrifice. In his stories, Manto has created some characters saturated with milk of human kindness for the enactment of generous activities during the most catastrophic time. Each of these stories demonstrates that even through the extensive malevolence of conflict and madness,<sup>53</sup> kindhearted people come forward to help their fellow beings at the cost of their own life. Characters such as Karim Dad in “The Great Divide,” Mozail in “Mozail,” Sehai and Mumtaz in “A Tale of 1947,” Ram Khilavan in “Ram Khilavan,” Rab Nawaz and Ram Singh in “The Last Salute,” and Bishen Singh and Fazal Din in “Toba Tek Singh” can be considered the creams of humanity--more than the mere examples of “the survival of [the] moral being in the midst of horror.”<sup>54</sup> They represent Manto’s undying “faith in humanity;”<sup>55</sup> they resist different kinds of injustice in the society and try to conquer hatred with love. The compassion and comradery these characters show toward their fellow beings demonstrate the deep-rooted bond of mankind while their acts of morality, sympathy and sacrifice help institute an exalted humanitarian spirit in this chaotic world.

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<sup>50</sup>Flemming, in “Riots and Refugees,” notes that Manto himself has made the following observation about Ishwar’s humanity: “Even at the last limits of cruelty and violence, of barbarity and bestiality, [Ishwar] still does not lose his humanity! If Ishwar Singh had completely lost his humanity, the touch of the dead woman would not have affected him so violently as to strip him of his manhood” (102).

<sup>51</sup>Flemming, “Riots and Refugees,” 103.

<sup>52</sup>Alter, “Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto,” 99.

<sup>53</sup>Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin, in *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition*, observe that the events of 1947 narrativize “successful attainment of independence” as well as unfold a “narrative of displacement and dispossession, of large-scale and widespread communal violence” (9).

<sup>54</sup>Siddiqui, “Saadat Hasan Manto’s Poetics of Resistance,” 22.

<sup>55</sup>Jalal, *The Pity of Partition*, 24.

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