

## EC-2(B)Partition Narratives ( SEM.4)

### Discussion on the Text : *The Train Has Reached Amritsar*

#### **About the Author**

Bhisham Sahni, born on Aug 08, 1915 at Rawalpindi in present day Pakistan, is a distinguished Hindi fiction writer, playwright, translator, teacher and polyglot(multilingual). His works reflect his unflinching commitment to India's pluralist ethos and secular foundations. *Tamas* (Darkness), his magnum opus, translated into English in 1988, gained worldwide acclaim for its sensitive and anguished portrayal of the communal riots and carnage that accompanied India's partition. *Tamas* is considered one of the most powerful and passionate fictional accounts of the human tragedy that marked the period. He uses literature to expose the divide and rule policy of the British and the rank opportunism of the upper classes of both the Hindu and Muslim communities. He made the point that the real victims of all sectarian violence are the hapless common folk, irrespective of religious or denominational differences. All his works are characterized by a sense of compassion, values of universal humanism and lucid narrative.

#### **Major Theme**

*The Train has Reached Amritsar* translated from the original text, *Amritsar Aagaya* is a well-known story by Bhishma Sahni. It presents the scenario of the Indo-Pak partition. After the announcement of Partition, the author has made a successful attempt in realizing the spirit of communalism in his story of "*The Train has Reached Amritsar*". The communalism that was burning in the hearts of the people at the time of Partition came in the form of riots. In the story, the author has made a close observation how a train coming out of a city in present-day Pakistan through different stations to reach Amritsar is faced with tensions and controversies during this train journey by small incidents. As the train moves forward, the tension increases. The ridicule and abuse of Hindu travellers by some Pathan travellers is prominently featured in this story. The tragedy of Partition affected millions of people not only on the emotional and ideological plane but also on psychological and spiritual level.

#### **Critical Analysis**

Partition related short stories magnify the riots, arson, killing, looting abduction and rape during the Partition. These stories reflect comprehensively in all its totality, reality, and variety of human suffering. As Alok Bhalla mentions about the writers of Partition stories: "They (the partition stories) are rather, witnesses to a period in which we fell out of a human world of languages, customs, rituals and prayers into a bestial world of hatred, rage, self-interest and frenzy". The writers of these stories frame the events in a variety of ways and read them according to their own sense of the multireligious and multicultural past of the Indian subcontinent.

Partition of India as developed in the story of *The Train Has Reached Amritsar* was to resolve the confrontation between the Hindus and the Muslims. About six billion people including women, men and children lost their life in this crusade. About 1.5billion people were dislodged and forced to rehabilitate in their safe zone according to their population

ratio. This had been an awful experience for both the communities resulted in the Indo-Pak partition.

This story also explains the process of partition as a hurriedly drawn exercise in which the crux of mental agony and unwanted rumours spread among both the communities. Ultimately both the communities were at daggers drawn. However the reason of this confrontation was not known to the people of both the communities.

The characters mentioned in this story either Pathan, Dubla Babu and other travellers of the train belong to middle class society and seem to be ignorant but exploited. None of them could understand the purpose of the creation of Pakistan. Most of them were found indulged in irrelevant discussion whether Jinnah sahib will leave Bombay and be settled in Pakistan but some of them disagreed to this superfluous discussion. This sort of political sharing is nothing but a voice of the disgruntled society where peace appears to be a distant dream and the high-ups of the society enjoy their mirthful lives.

The whole story depicts the psychological bent of mind developed due to inhumane behaviour of the inhabitants of United India. When the train moves through the passage of Muslim dominated area in the newly created Pakistan, the Hindus are very shaky and the Muslims are behaving like warriors; on the contrary when the train passes through the Hindu dominated area fallen in India, the Hindus behave like warriors and the Muslims look like scapegoats.

Above all this story presents a true picture of communal devastation during the period of partition. The characters are well drawn and they represent lively picture of Indian population in undivided India with the cult of Hindu-Muslim ethos. The religion is not brought to condemn the nation in this story but the social fabric is the culminating point in shaping this story.

#### **Suggested Reading :**

- 1. Original text in Hindi, *Amritsar Aagaya***
- 2. Partition Dialogue by Alok Bhalla (O.U.P,Delhi)**
- 3. The Practice of Criticism by D.H. Rawlinson (Cambridge, 1968).**
- 4. The Making of Literature by R.J.Scott-James (London,1930).**

**Courtesy : Dr. Md. Ejaz Alam**

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