

## SAADAT HASAN MANTO AND HIS NATIONALISM: AS DEPICTED IN HIS WRITINGS ON JALLIANWALA BAGH TRAGEDY

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### ABSTRACT

Saadat Hasan Manto is a well-known name in the literary world. His writings have given some legendary fictional characters like Toba Tek Singh which are still afresh in the minds of the people. But Manto's depiction of the events of partition, life of Bombay city, scenes of bloodshed in Amritsar and the deplorable lives of prostitutes cannot be counted only as a literary piece of work but is revered as an unbiased historical account.

While capturing the trauma of Partition Saadat Hasan Manto has also visited the horrific incident of Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Till date, in his stories the resonance of the wailings of thousands of innocent, dying people is still alive. This event is a stupendous example of courage and valour displayed by all the nationalists who were participating in the meeting. In his short story "Tamasha", which was also his debut story, Manto meticulously touches the strings of sentiments arousing in the tender heart of a five year old child who after seeing an unconscious man drenched in blood places himself in his place and tries to assess the pain that young man must have undergone. The little boy also prays humbly to Allah to exempt him and all other children from such harsh punishment as was meted out to that young man who went to attend the gathering at Jallianwala bagh. In another of his story "1919 ka ek wakya" (an incident in 1919) written around 1935, he portrays the boldness and fearlessness of a young man, less revered by the society for he was the son of a prostitute. Thus, he touched the social stigma attached to the lives of such women and their offsprings. In "Diwana Shayar through the voice of a 25 years old man Manto expresses his admiration for the courage of the martyrs just for the sake of their nation. Ironically, according to British their greatest offence was their allegiance towards their motherland.

A punctilious observation of the literary world built by Manto in his stories helps to analyse that the horrifying incident of 1919 was a prologue to the national consciousness about to come. He painted the picture of 1919 in his stories not with the brush of desperation and hopelessness but he tried to draw the attention of his readers towards the virility of those who died an unexpected death. Manto through his pen tried to channelize the potential of young minds and provoked their inner conscience to rise from slumber, quit the comradeship of fear and walk ahead like the martyrs of 1919 to attain liberation from the clutches of Imperialism.

Thus, through his stories commencing from "Tamasha" to "Toba Tek Singh" the whole journey of Indian National Movement and partition can be experienced by the readers being an eyewitness to it.

This research paper intends to realise through the fictitious characters in Saadat Hasan Manto's stories the prevalent nationalistic fervour in the hearts of the Indian masses who displayed the sheer act of valour and became an embodiment of courage and patriotism for the generations to come.

### Keywords:

Massacre, stigma, allegiance, liberation, valiance

### INTRODUCTION

The brutal event of bloodshed that happened in the year 1919 on the day of Baisakhi in India still shivers our conscience. Hundreds of dead bodies were lying as a carpet on the ground and the groaning voices of injured men, women and children were in the air. These voices not only broadened

the mental horizons of nationalists and freedom fighters and propelled their urge for liberation from foreign rule but also created ripples in minds of the writers. A lot was written then and a lot was said later. Writers outpoured their anti- colonial sentiments through their characters in the novels or stories penned by them.

This paper intends to cover three consecutive stories written by Saadat Hasan Manto after 16 years of this event. Reader finds beautiful depiction of courage, fearlessness and audacity of the attendees of the meeting organised at Jallianwala Bagh in his stories. Simultaneously, he also unveils the stark naked corpse of the society which only calculates the sacrifice of man belonging to upper layer of the society and forgets the sacrifices of those who belong to the underprivileged sections of the societal apparatus. A critical look at the works of Saadat Hasan Manto enables us to decipher the hostile behaviour of the society towards the subaltern classes.

His writings have crossed that threshold which separates a fiction from being called as a historical account. The entire corpus of Manto's works featuring the journey of India from a colonized piece of land to a partitioned country is a historical account backed by facts collected from the real lives of people who were the eye-witnesses of the complete process of National struggle for Independence.

Saadat Hasan Manto has written three stories to voice his approaches on Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. He pictured the pain and trauma that people must have felt at the loss of their loved ones. Manto weaved together the emotions of grief and reverence at the martyrdom of those who died in 1919 in his stories. This paper meticulously analyse the three stories named- Tamasha, Diwana Shayar and 1919 ka ek wakya written by Manto to commemorate the harrowing incident of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.

#### **TAMASHA- 1935**

The story introduces the readers to the dead silence sprawling over a market place in the city of Amritsar, which once was a place of great hustle and bustle. The protagonist of this story is a five year old child Khalid, who is affright because of the killing silence pervading the city. The patrolling of fighter planes in the sky is perturbing him and he shows his concern for the safety of his family. He expresses to his father that if any of these fighter planes drops a bomb on their house then he would surely shoot the plane by his gun.

Manto after narrating the conversation between father and his son ends this scene with an intriguing wish. He wishes that every single individual may possess the same attitude of revenge as this little boy is having who is too small to differentiate between a gun and a toy pistol.

Another scene of **Tamasha** captures the miniscule affairs of the day of massacre. There was unusual tranquillity in the air, vigilant police was roaming around and sadness was there in every pair of eyes, and all were auguring the happening of some misfortune.

The last scene of this story focuses on Khalid's interpretation of the entire affair. A pamphlet dropped on Khalid's terrace by a plane patrolling the area. In order to avoid any interrogation regarding the pamphlet Khalid's father tells him that it's an invitation to a tamasha taking place at Jallianwala Bagh today. Khalid after being satisfied by his father's answer moves to his father's room and stands near a window which opens in to the market. Manto himself was of 9 years when the episode of Jallianwala Bagh was taking place. It is a genuine possibility that after 16 years he sketched the character of Khalid to give voice to his own feelings and anxiety he may be having during that time.

Khalid looking at the empty streets reasons that people are busy preparing to go for tamasha and so they have left their shops closed. Time is running at its pace. Of course whose might it is to hold the spokes of time. Everyone in the family is sitting quietly when the ear wrecking sounds of firing bombard their ears and send tremors to their intestines. Elders are numbed as they are aware that the

punishment of going against the dreadful proclamation of **Rowlatt Act** has been apportioned equally to each one of the participants. But the six years old Khalid is delighted to know that the tamasha has begun. Again he rushes to his father's room and stands near the window which opens into the market. What he is expecting is delighted faces and what he is going to see will only leave him astonished. Khalid hears the wailing of dogs and people groaning in pain. He is surprised at the spectacle before his eyes when he sees a boy running and shouting. The boy faints and he is bleeding profusely. Manto as a narrator sadly describes here the death of this young boy and reveals the cruel face of colonialism where death can be calculated as less frightful than the colonial subjugation. Khalid after seeing the boy drenched in blood asks from his father about his condition. His father again sings a lullaby of false facts to quench his inquisitiveness and says that the boy is punished by his teacher.

The story closes with the solemn and heart wrenching prayers of Khalid who requests to Allah to punish that teacher who has performed such act of brutality. Metamorphically, God did listen to prayers when Michael O Dwyer was assassinated by Udham Singh in 1940.

### **1919 KA EK WAKYA**

Manto once prayed to God that he should be taken away by lord because of his affinity towards what is bad and dislike for what is good. He further elaborated his prayer that he hates fragrance and chases filth and dirt. He dislikes sun shine and feels better in scourging the darkest corners, naked and shameless realities of human heart.

An incident of 1919 is one such story of Manto where he scratches with his pen the layers of sanctity covering the face of the society and unveils the darkness hidden within the souls who forms the society. Manto in this story has sewed together the aftermath of the incident of Jallianwala Bagh massacre and social quagmires present at that time in India. The story opens with the narrator telling a story of Muhammad Tufail to the author. The story discusses the situation prevalent in Amritsar post Jallianwala Bagh incident. The youth are galvanised with the fury to avenge the deaths of their brethren. Among the whole lot of youth there is one man aged 25 called Muhammad Tufail. Talking about his social standing he is a prostitute's son, dejected, unrespected and utterly disliked by the society. He is in the group of young men who are planning to molest some British soldiers and destroy some of their administrative monuments. Tufail suggests them to kill the two soldiers who are standing at the bridge which is a passage to Jallianwala Bagh. They show their reluctance to do so or frankly they aren't brave enough to perform such an act of valor. Tufail commands their masculinity and tries to shake their fear off their shoulders. He motivates them to take revenge of the barbarous act performed by the Britishers.

The most conspicuous scene of the story comes when after motivating others Muhammad Tufail moves towards the bridge to kill the two soldiers standing there. His companions take their ways back but he still walks and even motivates them to not quit the battlefield. He is bombarded with bullets and is bleeding profusely but still he walks upto them with erect head. In a moment one of the soldiers is lying flat on the ground and Tufail is on him. The death of Muhammad Tufail motivates others and then they carried out the incidents of loot and murder.

The narrator is telling this story to the author after five years of this incident to which he was an eye witness. The story doesn't end with a full stop but it stops with a question mark. Muhammad Tufail dies and his sacrifice is termed as a murder instead of sacrifice. He is exempted from the honour of a martyr. It displays the hypocrisy breeding in the society where the son of a prostitute can never be called and remembered as a martyr. The incident of Muhammad Tufail death is similar to an incident that occurred during French Revolution where the first bullet hits a prostitute. **1919 ka ek wakya** was a satire on the diplomatic character of the society where the elite section is praised even with their

dishonesty and inactivity while the downtrodden layer of population is ignored even if they die for the sake of their country. He was a feminist and a democrat in his approach towards the society. In his story by narrating the story of Jallianwala Bagh massacre he dealt with some of the serious questions in the society and advocated for an egalitarian approach to each individual of the country.

#### **DIWANA SHAYAR- 1935**

A trader of sighs I am,  
A poet writing on bloodsheds,  
Beware! Timid winds of the garden,  
Roll over,  
For my fiery songs would,  
Commovve the conscience of your sunken hearts.

These were the opening lines of Diwana Shayar, one of Manto's short stories written to pay reverence to the enthusiasm and nationalistic fervour of those who died at Jallianwala Bagh. Taking into account the theme of Diwana Shayar, we find that it doesn't follow the traditional route as followed by other short stories. It rather transliterates the wiggleness of emotions inside the mind of the author.

Diwana Shayar is the eponymous hero of the novel who is brimming with the sentiments of nationalism. He is a 25 year old man draped in old, tattered clothes and is having long beard which is adding a colour of mysticism in his appearance. He meets the narrator at Jallianwala Bagh memorial. The story is all about the conversation between the two. Here the narrator agapes in wonder after listening to the heart wrenching song of Jallianwala bagh tragedy sung by the protagonist. With the rhythm of Diwana Shayar's song flow the tragic memories of 1919 massacre. The narrator shares his experience of listening to the song to the readers. He says that Jallianwala Bagh incident isn't something which can be forgotten. He justifies himself by asserting that he grieves the loss of thousands of innocent lives. At the same time he is honest to say that he has never taken the incident of 1919 massacre as a gallant act displayed by the nationalist.

Diwana shayar as a protagonist comments on the attitude of the society which is segregated into two sections, the one which is aloof from the national freedom struggle and is under deep slumber of inactivity and the other which is ebullient enough to die happily for the sake of their country. Through his songs the hero tries to focus the attention of the readers to one single viewpoint that is to awaken their snoring conscience and inject in them the same valour and courage that the martyrs of Jallianwala bagh tragedy were having in them.

Saadat Hasan Manto used the character of Diwana shayar in his work to paint the picture of Jallianwala bagh massacre with the colours of optimism. This work of Manto speaks that the incident of Jallianwala bagh massacre is not only a horrifying incident which swallowed the lives of thousands of innocent men and women but it should also be celebrated as an occasion in history which witnessed the greatest degree of Nationalism shown by all those who went there irrespective of the consequences to record their agitation against the Black Act.

#### **On a concluding note**

The massacre of Jallianwala Bagh acted as a propellant for the Indian National War of Independence, it motivated the populace to strongly agitate against the atrocious colonial rule and it deeply affected the conscience of all Indians including Saadat Hasan Manto. What he wrote was not only the description of the entire episode of 13<sup>th</sup> april 1919 but also it pictured the India of those times. He touched the chords of every heart through Khalid in Tamasha and left his readers with welled up eyes. Tamasha was a frightful depiction of humanity at loss. Through the death of Muhammad Tufail

he stripped the sheets of scrupulousness wore by the society and questioned the behaviour of hegemony shown by the people of high social standing towards the lower section often struggling with various taboos created for them. In Diwana Shayar, he inspired his readers through poems of the protagonist to not mourn the sacrifices of those who died but celebrate it as a stupendous paradigm of nationalism and affection towards one's country.

Manto used to say that, Saadat Hasan may die but Manto must live. Surely he did live and he is still alive through his stories as a feminist fighting for the sanctity of a prostitute, as a democrat voicing for an egalitarian society, as a scrupulous writer criticizing the social dogmas corroding the society, as a Marxist fighting for the recognition of even the most downtrodden section of the society and as a human neither a hindu nor a muslim but a human he must live forever.

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