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ISSN (Online) : 2455 - 3662

SJIF Impact Factor :5.148

EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

Monthly Peer Reviewed & Indexed
International Online Journal

Volume: 5 Issue: 6 June 2019



Published By :EPRA Publishing

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AKAR PATEL'S SHORT STORIES: A MIRROR OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Akar Patel in his why I write translates the essays written by Saadat Hasan Manto. The book contains several creative essays of Saadat Hasan Manto. In these essays, Manto especially discussed contemporary political picture, the confusion in the selection of national language, his appeal to save India from its leaders, Bombay's socio-political situation and his liberal views on women. Patel has included the stories of Manto's trials. The essays are actually written in Urdu by Saadat Hasan Manto in the 20th century. Patel has introduced Manto's journey at the beginning of the book, where he has thrown some lights on Manto's identity and his views. Patel said, Manto's identity didn't come from his religion but it came from his belonging to our culture and his writing skill. Manto strongly criticized M.A. Jinnah and the politics of partition. He has expressed his love towards Bombay in his many works, but he assumed that the partition politics made him leave his beloved Bombay. Beyond this Manto has played a vital role in writing many socio-political issues. His essays brought these issues in the gossips of contemporary intellectuals. In this article, a few of them will be discussed.

KEYWORDS: Politics, Partition, Essay, Translation, Language.

India is a country which had endless boundaries of thoughts, discourses, writings and philosophy. From Kabir to Manto or before partition, Indian natives have seen a number of writers which has created socio-political intellectualism through their articles, poetry, plays etc. In this intellectual process social activists began to discourse in several articles and in books. Before partition that is in the 19th century Jyotirao Phule said "Social slavery is worse than political slavery" and this revolutionary line continued by hundreds of activists, not only by working in fields but also in creative writings. In this group of activists there was a writer who followed this line intellectually. This writer was a staunch follower of left ideology. The writer who was born and brought up in British India, criticized the hypocrisy of activists, wrote for the awareness of his countrymen, expressed his ideas on feminism, dragged in some trails he was known as Saadat Hasan Manto.

Manto along with fiction wrote a number of revolutionary essays which influenced tremendous youth of the time. He has different sides of creative writings as he wrote in different genres like

linguistics, patriotism, revolution, films and many other sides he covered in his writings. Especially his fellow readers are very affectionate regarding his thoughts on Hindi and Urdu. This paper is subjected to discuss on his selected essays introduced by Akar Patel in his *Why I Write*. Why I write, Bombay in the Riots and Save India from Its Leaders are considered from writing the present paper.

Why I Write

Manto has been a central point of discussion in intellectual groups. Many has wrote on his ideas, many praised him, some criticized. But the prior question always remained why he wrote? What made him to write? In this essay Manto has answered all these questions. This question is not only now but also asked to him when he was actively writing in that time. He begins the essay with:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've been asked to say how it is that I write. Now I don't really understand the question and what "how" means. My dictionary informs me it means "in what manner?"

In the beginning he himself questioned on the question he had been asked. Later he defined that 'How' with his perspective. In very casual manner he later answers:

"What can I say about this?"

The best way of putting it is to say, well, I sit on sofa in my living room, pile up a sheaf of paper, unscrew the cap of my fountain pen and begin to write."

Continuing this essay, Saadat Hasan Manto also replied to 'Why'. Next he puts the reason as he is addicted to writing just like drinking and he also expressed his desperate behaviour about writing. He notes:

"The most important reason is that I'm addicted to writing, just as I am to drinking. When I don't write, it feels like I'm unclothed, like I haven't had a bath. Like I haven't had my first drink."

He feels that when the fountain pen is not in his hand, he is merely Saadat Hasan Manto. It is the pen that transforms him into Manto. Following this he says that he doesn't write the stories, the stories writes themselves and this should not be surprised, though he has written many books but he haven't had much education. While reading this essay his thoughts seem to be beyond the boundaries of any education.

Bombay in the Riots

Manto was the one who loved Bombay more than his life, in his writings one can find that how Bombay was concerned to him. It was Manto who described the communal violence of the city both ironically and emotionally. Communal violence is now became habit to the Indian society, who brought it, who enhanced it, how it became profitable to political movements everyone knows it but Manto has a different aspect for this problem.

While beginning of the essay he very first clears that he has nothing to do with politics and he puts politicians in the same bracket as he does soothsayers and continued to say that as he is as much interested in politics as much Gandhiji is interested in cinema. He is comparing himself with Gandhi and Gandhi's choices ironically as Gandhi doesn't watch movies and Manto read newspapers and says that both of them are wrong in doing that. According to Manto he comes on the verdict that only Mandir, Masjid, Cow and Pigs are the only reason for the communal violence. These are may be the reason for riots but for Manto cow and pig are just a flesh and Madir and masjid are just a stone. For this he writes:

I've seen. As I said, two riots on this city. The reason were the same-Mandir and Masjid, cow and pig.

Mandir and Masjid –to me only stone.
Cow and pig- to me only flesh.

In this essay Saadat hasan Manto has expressed several stories regarding Bombay's communal violence. During this riot many incidents took place which Manto thought to put in his essay. He assumes Indian National Congress as temple and Muslim League as Mosque. Both Congress and Muslim League are seeking for independence but their paths are different, for few reasons they cannot come together. perhaps this is because a mosque and temple cannot be in the same place as Manto says. Hindu's and Muslim's blood did not mix in mosque and temple, would finally mix in Bombay's drains and gutters. Whatever reason is behind this riot, he seems to be confused but he's very anxious for the divided city.

Manto has described few versions of the riot in one of the versions he described:

"An Englishman was passing in his car. A mob stopped him. He was terrified, unsure of what the young men said to him. He was surprised when one of the young men said to him: 'let your chauffeur sit in the back now and you drive him. You be the servant and him your master'"

In this riot the Englishman had nothing to do with the violence, he was neither Muslim nor Hindu, Manto felt glad that though both religious adamants are wrong but anyhow they have little spark of independence that they expressed their anger in Englishman.

In this riot Hindu and Muslim young men started targeting people from their identity, like if any man passes through the road wearing Muslim cap Hindu young men starts beating him, likewise if Hindu guy passes wearing topi Muslim young men do the same. Even, women started wearing Sari instead of skirts and other dresses which became danger to walk on roads. In this situation Manto found a solution that he used to carry Hindu topi and Muslim topi together. Whenever Hindu mob comes in front of him he used to wear Hindu cap and he does the same when Muslim mob comes in front of him. In this essay Manto concludes that:

"Religion used to be felt in the heart, but now, in the Bombay, it must be worn on the head."

The way Manto concluded this essay is still relevant now, and this must be interpreted seriously. Save India from its Leaders.

We, as an Indian are very habitual to hear save India from this and that. Mainly we need to be saved from the people which plants these 'save India' kind of things in air. In short, all these 'Save India' movements are influenced by political architectures. After every aggressive speech the leader returns to home his brain is empty of all

thoughts of saving us. The leader fools his *Karyakartas* and people as well while depicting one's speech who are interested in personal gaining. For this Manto Says:

“Their concerns are personal, not national, and so occupied are they with this hat there's actually no space for us.”

It has been a complaint from our fellow countrymen that educated and learned people should appear in national politics, but it is also true that our countrymen have elected the people who can't even read our national anthem. Largely, these kinds of politicians are behind this 'Save India' kind of things and it is very sad that they want to strengthen out the country and lecture us on what is right and what is wrong. This is what Manto is trying to elaborate in this essay. He also attacks on those leaders who during the elections roar as “*Dharm/Mazahab khatre mai hai*” and he consider it as a rubbish thing. He said:

“Faith isn't the sort of thing that can come into danger in the first place. If anything is in danger. It's these leaders who want to be save by claiming religion is in peril”

India must be saved from its leaders, who are poisoning our atmosphere. Many of our countrymen are still unaware that only these leaders are snatchers of their money, these are those leaders who wears neat and clean white clothes and fools the people by their dark hearts. Manto questioned that the leader who lives in a house which is sponsored by government, live on governments money are they able to solve our problems? He notes:

“These fellows-who live in houses given to them, who live on the money they raise from others- how can they make us self-sufficient?”

Manto delivered the message as to look coldly at what is in pur best interest, once we take our fate into our hands, these leaders will have nowhere to run.

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