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Praxis

A Peer-Reviewed Journal of
The Department of English
University of Rajshahi

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Editorial Preface

Praxis: Journal of the Department of English, University of Rajshahi is committed to maintaining rigorous academic and ethical standards in the publication of scholarly research in the English language, linguistics, and literature. As a double-blind peer-reviewed journal, *Praxis* ensures that all submitted manuscripts undergo an impartial and thorough evaluation process, safeguarding both academic integrity and intellectual merit.

The journal adheres strictly to a policy of originality. Submissions are unpublished and not be under consideration for publication elsewhere. Any form of plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of academic ethics and results in immediate rejection. Authors are responsible for ensuring the authenticity of their work and for properly acknowledging all sources in accordance with recognized citation standards.

To maintain disciplinary coherence while encouraging intellectual diversity, *Praxis* accepts contributions primarily within the fields of English studies, linguistics and English Language Teaching. Interdisciplinary work is welcomed, provided it demonstrates a clear and substantive engagement with these core areas. All manuscripts are written in English and follow either the MLA (9th edition) or the APA (7th edition) style, depending on the disciplinary orientation of the paper.

The journal enforces a structured submission protocol. Manuscripts fall within the prescribed length and include an abstract and a brief author bio-note. Submissions are accepted in both print and digital formats, prepared according to specified formatting guidelines. To ensure equitable representation, each author is permitted to submit only one manuscript per volume. In cases of joint authorship, full disclosure of all contributors and their institutional affiliations is required.

The editorial board reserves the right to make necessary revisions for clarity, coherence, and consistency without altering the substantive argument of the work. Final decisions regarding publication rest solely with the editorial board, based on reviewers' recommendations and the journal's standards. Individual authors, and not the Editorial Board, are responsible for the views expressed in their writting.

Through these policies, *Praxis* seeks to uphold excellence, transparency, and fairness in academic publishing, fostering a scholarly environment that values critical inquiry, methodological rigor, and intellectual responsibility.

In Memoriam: Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed

Md. Sakhawat Hossain

I had the privilege of being a direct student of Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed, and the memory of his classroom remains one of the most formative experiences of my intellectual life. He was not a teacher of abundance in number, but of precision and distinction; he took relatively few classes, yet each one bore the mark of rare excellence. His lectures were events that were often animated, lucid, and deeply engaging, without ever obscuring the depth of his scholarship.

What set him apart most strikingly was his method. He had the remarkable ability to render even the most extended and complex texts into something graspable without diminishing their intellectual weight. With a lightness of touch and a finely tuned sense of humour, he guided students into the depths of a text as if it were the most natural of movements. His wit was never ornamental; it was pedagogical and it was an instrument through which difficulty dissolved and insight emerged. Many of his students would testify that his classes were filled with mirth, yet never lost their seriousness of purpose.

In demeanour, he was at once formal and disarmingly intimate. His English was impeccable, measured, and refined, reflecting a deep command of language and tradition. Yet he was not bound by rigidity; at moments, he would slip into Bangla, often to delightful effect, using humour to draw students closer into the discussion. He had a characteristic habit of addressing students as “thou,” a gesture that seemed to collapse distance while invoking an older, almost Shakespearean intimacy. Standing before the class, he maintained an alert and penetrating gaze so that no student could afford inattentiveness, yet none felt excluded or disengaged. His presence commanded attention without coercion.

His intellectual range was formidable. He possessed a sharp and integrated knowledge of English literature, history, philosophy, and the broader Christian and Western intellectual traditions. Yet his scholarly vision was not confined within conventional disciplinary boundaries. His doctoral work on the literary techniques of *Surah Yasin* remains a landmark contribution that demonstrates his courageous attempt to bring Islamic textuality into the sphere of literary criticism. In doing so, he opened a space for dialogue between traditions that are too often kept apart.

Born on 31 December 1938, Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed completed his MA in English from the Department of English, University of Rajshahi, in 1960, and qualified in the then Special East Pakistan Civil Service (EPCS) examination. He joined the Department of English at the University of Rajshahi on 10 March 1973 and served there with distinction until his retirement as Professor on 30 December 2004. He passed away on 16 May 2022, leaving behind a legacy of intellectual brilliance, pedagogical excellence, and humane values.

Dedication

Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed
(31 December 1938-16 May 2022)

This Volume is dedicated to the cherished memory of Professor Dr. Idris Ahmed—a teacher of rare brilliance, a scholar of profound humanity.

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Resonance of Resistance:
Reading Selected Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto

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Abstract

Amidst the chaos during the days of partition, stories of Saadat Hasan Manto unveil the hypocrisies of the elitist historiography of the Indian subcontinent. His stories not only show a complete roadmap to the horrors of partition but also give a statement about his skill to find instances of resistance even among the lowest of classes of society. Despite all the critical comments and charges of obscenity, Manto did not relent but rather continued to tell stories with an unbiased tone. He gave voice to those whose very existence got the treatment of exclusion, and by doing so, he de-subalternized the eternal subalterns. His turn to resistance speaks against the criminalization of differences where he points out the politics of identity formation. The focus of this paper is a detailed thematic exploration of the resistance shown by Manto's characters, especially during the days of partition where the author shows how he merges himself with these characters by choosing to tell their stories from an unbiased point of view. It also offers an in-depth discussion that examines the theoretical perspectives of Manto's stories by reevaluating the discourses of Subaltern Studies and Postcolonialism.

Keywords: *resistance, historiography, subaltern, storytelling, identity formation*

The long history of the Indian subcontinent takes a massive turn in 1947. The Great Divide, popularly known as the Partition of India, not only gave birth to two new nations, India and Pakistan, but also became a great domain of discussion where the subcontinent's paradigm shift in the political sphere, the politics of historiography, the situation after independence, etc., can be studied critically. These issues have been meticulously discussed and theorized throughout the years in the writings of great scholars and thinkers, but literature offers an alternative route to interpret these issues in harsher, sharper and grimmer manner. Among many writers of that chaotic time, it was Saadat Hasan Manto who chose to unveil the nakedness of society by writing short stories where he uses, in Gopi Chand Narang's words, "the note of sorrow" (12) as the dominant note. While telling tales about "the sorrow of existence, the loneliness of the soul, and that unfathomable suffering, *dukha*" (Narang 12), he has created such characters who rise above this note of sorrow with their strong acts of resistance. Despite the unimaginable brutality committed upon them, they break the chains and develop a strong form of resistance. This paper aims to analyze Manto's resistance stories, and at the same time, how Manto innovatively merges himself with their resistance by writing for them is also in the domain of discussion. Manto's characters are not just mere characters of stories. Rather, they become larger-than-life characters by putting up a display of resistance during the days of partition and transcending their "sordid existence" (Narang 2).

In *Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto*, a compilation of articles on Manto's works, edited by Alok Bhalla, the characters are analyzed from different angles and perspectives, but in

those articles, there is a subtle knowledge gap that can be traced regarding discussing the domain of subaltern people and their identities. This paper aims to fill the gap by analyzing the process of *Othering* of the subaltern. He tells stories about the fixed identities of the subaltern and the struggles of women who were doubly oppressed in a colonial setup, and at the same time, he goes into the minds of the lunatics who were considered to be mindless to capture their in-betweenness. He stretches the spectrum to such a point where the process of *Othering* has grown to the extreme. That is why this paper focuses on those stories where women and the mindless have something to say or feel.

The significance of Manto's storytelling becomes very important when it comes to the topic of the historiography of the Partition of India. It is very problematic and inaccurate. What history tells about the partition is not actually the real picture; the real picture is hidden in the silent screams of the survivors. To support this claim, Urvashi Butalia's interviews are relevant. When Urvashi Butalia tries to interview the survivors of the partition of India, she, too, is astonished to see that almost all of them do not say anything at all. She writes, "I realized then that in this silence lay the many hidden histories of partition, the histories that have always hovered at the edges of those that have been told, the histories that describe the dark side of freedom" (Butalia 106).

The arguments of Ranajit Guha broaden the scope of constructive criticism regarding historiography even further. He traces that the elitist nature of this subcontinent's historiography has prevailed even after the partition. According to him, because of this elitist nature, the historiography of this subcontinent is controlled by both "colonialist" and "bourgeois-nationalist elitism" where there is no place for the subaltern (Guha 37). Thus, the subaltern cannot be heard or read through the domain of historiography. Likewise, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak talks about the subaltern's inability to speak and criticizes the privileged intellectual's inability to represent them. Her very notable essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" traces the history of silencing the subalterns. She walks through a complete itinerary and argues that no one can represent "those who act and struggle" (Spivak 27). In her essay, Spivak does not conform to the established notion of the term subaltern, but rather, she expands it by pointing to the exclusion of subaltern women from the discourses of national independence. In this essay, she focuses on the subaltern woman's agency to speak. She points out that the subaltern woman cannot speak, even if she does, then she is intercepted. Her act of speaking is a kind of "distanced decipherment by another" (Spivak 64).

The possible way out of this situation is to discard the sources of historiography from "elite institutions" and focus on "local, popular expressions" (Gottschalk 18). This can be done with the help of storytelling. Hannah Arendt is very relevant in this argument as she focuses on storytelling which "brings about consent and reconciliation with things as they really are (Arendt 105). According to her, storytelling can be "a tool for coping with history" as well as "an important tool for resisting the evils of the modern world" (Swift 3). Storytellers like Manto are the narrators who can trace the silence of marginalized people and represent their horrors in front of the world. He, without directly denouncing Spivak's arguments (as he was way before her time), has written such stories which are the testimonies of his becoming the spokesperson of the subaltern. His stories are the testimonies of this claim, and the narrative technique speaks volumes about his resistance against the atrocities of that time.

The Partition of India engraved a permanent mark on Manto's mind. This historical event of 1947 gave birth to two different independent dominions named India and Pakistan, but the comprehension of the concept of partition is not that simple, but rather a complex and deceptive

one. In the naked eye, there were the births of two separate countries, but on a deeper level, there was the perpetuation of unimaginable acts of monstrosity. Manto masterfully captured these illusions of independence in his stories where he spoke for the fallen people of society in a unique style, a style of his own. He was against the elitist conventions of society and always tried to unmask the real face of the same society which gave people false hopes and fake promises to his readers through his stories. He felt the "profane desires" of a writer to expose the flaws of the so-called moral society and to talk about the perpetuation of violence and the process of silencing the downtrodden people because all the monstrosities during and after the partition form a kind of "anthology of incidents in an awful and inexorable tragedy of a degenerate society" (Bhalla 52). Thus, his stories attain, in Shashi Joshi's words, "anti-heroic, anti-salvationist" status where there is "the end of all ideologies" (157).

Manto's storytelling capability reaches another level as his stories are not just the tales of the subaltern people; they can also be analyzed through the lens of identity formation. Identity formation also played a huge role in perpetuating violence during the time of partition. How the perpetuation of violence is closely connected with issues of identity, and the process of *Othering* is traced by Amartya Sen. In his *Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Sen has identified a correlation between identity and violence. He has traced out the root causes which are responsible for the creation and perpetuation of violence in this world. He has placed his discussion of identity and violence into the classic discourse of war and peace and talked about the illusion of destiny, the *pure* identity. In reality, there is no, in Paul du Gay's words, "pure moment of identity" (qtd. in Jones 58). He points out that the "reductionist" (Sen 41) approach to identity formation is one of the reasons that creates a kind of hindrance to achieving the plurality of identity.

Rejecting the Huntington thesis, Sen finds this "solitarist" (Sen, "Prologue" *xii*) nature of identity formation very problematic. According to him, seeing human beings as members of exactly one group can be a good way of creating misunderstanding in this world. This deprives humans of the richness of leading an abundant life. He finds out that prioritizing communitarian or community-based identity is highly dangerous and can lead to numerous wars. He says that human identities are "robustly plural" (Sen 19) in terms of caste, class, complexion, politics, profession, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, and so on, and he advises that they should not neglect these plural affiliations to which they may simultaneously belong.

This reductionist or binarist approach to identity led the Hindus, the Sikhs, and the Muslims to think that everyone outside their respective communities was the *Other* during the time of partition. This *Othering* in terms of communal identity further led them to commit violence against those whom they considered outcasts, away from their very own community. They tried to wipe out the existence of the *Other*. They wanted the appropriation of power over the *Other*. Also, patriarchy, colonialism, and elitism never allowed women to have their own identity from the very beginning of human history. Their existence had barely been felt because of the reductionist nature of identity formation. Thus, women, in actuality, had become the *Other* within the society, the vessel for appropriating the lust and power of the perpetrators. Amidst all of these, Manto's stories talk about those who are considered to be different from normal human beings and thus fall heavily under the *Othering* of society. Anyone who was not of a Hindu-Muslim-Sikh background was considered almost a non-existent creature in the days of partition. If she were a woman, the list of turmoil would grow bigger. Manto's Mozail is such a woman who never has a recognized identity for being a Jew but never chooses to be a part of any of the three

major religions amidst the communal riots, and thus, shows her resistance against the brutality committed in the name of religion.

While portraying his female characters, Manto shows how they display their acts of resistance even though they have suffered the most during the days of partition. He shows that some of his female characters have the agency to speak for themselves long before Spivak who is in denial of the subaltern women's ability to speak. Manto goes one step further by telling tales about the prostitutes. He never digs deep to find the root cause of their condition or tries to find any solution for them but tells stories about those who, at some point, stop being the victim and put up a kind of resistance. He has never seen them as prostitutes; rather, he has seen them with unbiased eyes where they are just as normal as everyone else, who are the most afflicted class of people in society. That is why a woman like Saugandhi feels humiliated, just like any normal human being with feelings. Manto's humane portrayal of the prostitutes raises humanitarian concerns about them.

Manto's humane attitude towards victims of partition violence goes to another level when he considers even the "mindless" people of the society to have the ability to put up a resistance of their own. His masterpiece, "Toba Tek Singh," deals with the resistance the lunatics put up against the authority. The story mainly focuses on the protagonist Bishen Singh's act of resistance and expresses a deep woe to the readers about the creation of a geopolitical boundary. His resistance echoes that of Mozail as they never choose any of the community or country. These two occasions show Manto's very own view of the Partition of India. He never chooses sides; rather, he only mentions the follies of riots, borders, religious extremism, and hatred prevailing in society. Thus, Alok Bhalla writes:

> Manto makes no attempt to offer any historical explanations for the hatred and the carnage. He blames no one, but he also forgives no one. Without sentimentality or illusions, without pious postures or ideological blinkers, he describes a perverse and a corrupt time in which the sustaining norms of a society as it had existed are erased, and no moral or political reason is available. (Bhalla 28)

It was very difficult for anyone to remain neutral during those days of massacre. That is why Manto's strength in staying in a neutral position has been the reason for critics like Bhalla to give such compliments.

Manto does not compromise his realism with the nationalist discourses that glorify the Partition of India. Indian history always tells stories about the elites, omitting the subaltern completely. Even in terms of resistance, the efforts of the marginalized class have been ignored from the beginning of time. Manto's writings are against this conformity and show that stances of resistance can also be found among the fallen. His stories also show that their resistance is more of an ideological resistance where they stand against patriarchy, religious extremism, and the reductionist approach toward identity. Manto does not ignore what Guha defines as "the politics of the people" (Childs and Williams 37). Rather, he chooses to be the voice of the resistance of Kalwant Kaur, Mozail, Saugandhi, Bishen Singh and so many others who are at the bottom of the class hierarchy of the society.

Manto's female characters from his short stories show great strength against the conventions of society when no one is expecting any form of resistance from them. In "Colder than Ice," Manto introduces a strong female character named Kalwant Kaur who does not lower his head in front of his husband, Ishwar Singh, due to his infidelity. As Ishwar Singh returns from

looting the Muslims, both husband and wife try hard to make love but miserably fail because of the necrophilic action of Ishwar. Kalwant pokes her husband till the end to make him confess everything, but she does not remain silent when she comes to know the actual truth about his husband. Here, Manto juxtaposes Kalwant with Sakina, the female character from "The Return." Though he captures the silent screams of Sakina in "The Return," in actuality, she does not utter a single word. The essence of incommunicability is there, but here in "Colder than Ice," Kalwant can speak. She does not remain silent. Manto subverts the idea that the subaltern woman cannot speak. Here, Kalwant has an agency to speak to. She even has the agency to accuse her husband of adultery and to squeeze out the truth from him. She goes even further when she stabs her husband with his own kirpan "[l]ike a wild and demented creature" (Manto, "Colder than" 22). Such a violent act is never expected from a woman because of the social constitution. A lot can be argued for and against this violent deed of Kalwant, but that is a different discussion. Another thing that should be noticed here, though she addresses herself with her father's identity at the beginning of the story, she is able to speak against her husband now. She rises above the meek and soft behavior of an average woman and does not conform to the notion of a silent wife who accepts all the infidelities of her husband. She puts up a strong resistance against the stereotypes of society. Her resistance questions Spivak's claim of the inability of the subaltern, especially women, to speak. Manto gives voice to all strong women out there who speak up for themselves despite the tendency of their existential denial. History may have omitted the tales of their resistance, but this merchant of realism, Manto, never fails to illustrate their valiant efforts.

In "Mozail," Manto shows the contrast between the present and past lovers of Tarlochan. Kirpal Kaur, current lover of Tarlochan, is a meek and soft Sikh girl who strictly abides by all the Sikh rules and regulations. In contrast, Mozail is a strong, eccentric, Jewish woman who lives as an outcast within the society. She directly juxtaposes Kirpal in every manner. Manto has shown in this story that women of both kinds can coexist in the same society. Because of her Jewish identity, Mozail is treated like an outsider inside society. Singular affiliation to identity is the main reason behind the shaping of her *Othering*. She has already been considered as a person of the *Other* as she is a woman, but at the same time, she has to face further ill-treatment and discrimination from every Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. Despite all of these setbacks, Manto portrays her as one of the most humane characters in his literary works as she puts others before herself and makes sacrifices for them. Mozail has accepted her outcast identity from the beginning but that never holds her to being the torchbearer of humanity. Because of her different religious identity, she dresses and socializes with everyone differently. Due to her negligible existence, she has known from the beginning that she cannot marry a Sikh like Tirlochan. She is treated and touched badly by everyone. Despite all of these, the "vulgar girl," Mozail, comes to the rescue of both Tirlochan and Kirpal Kaur (Manto, "Mozail" 40).

In this story, Manto has shown that women like Mozail exist with a very strong presence among the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs. They are forgotten by everyone as they have no place in the national history of this subcontinent, but they have also contributed a lot to society. Manto here goes even further by depicting a Jewish woman's resistance to bowing down to the majority in society. He has portrayed Mozail in such a fashion that her mere existence turns into an act of resistance. It is very difficult for her to survive among the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs. People from these three major religions constantly spread panic and fear among the minorities. The communal riots among them have turned this subcontinent into a pandemonium. Despite all of these, Mozail never converts to those religions and always seeks comfort in her own identity. She embraces her own religious identity, lifestyle and dresses with an accepting nod, and

refuses to be exactly like the perpetrators who quench thirst with blood. Thus, she puts up tremendous resistance where no other identity is as great as the identity of a human being. Mozail is a human first, not a Jew. Religious identities should be considered as secondary recognition in this cruel world where monsters lurk in the shadows of everything.

Mozail reaches the peak of her humane character when she saves the lives of Tarlochan and Kirpal Kaur before her own. Her dress becomes very significant in the last portion of the story. The dress for which she is damned becomes a lifesaver for Kirpal. In contrast, the turban of Tarlochan is not enough to hide the nakedness of Mozail, let alone to save her life. By denouncing the turban, Mozail shows her strength and resistance even on her deathbed. Manto, by portraying Mozail, shows his own stance about the atrocities committed in the name of religion. He does not take any side and remains strong with unflinching poise to write stories about the horrors of Partition.

In "A Woman's Life," Manto depicts an act of resistance by a prostitute. The story begins with a vivid description of Saugandhi's condition after having sex with the city's sanitary inspector. A prostitute's tale begins by describing what has happened just after the sex is quite a style from Manto. There is also a detailed description of Saugandhi's kholi, her dwelling place. Manto feels that it is necessary to describe the room of a prostitute as it is the world for her from where she continuously struggles to survive. The main noticeable thing about the *kholi* is that there are four pictures of Saugandhi's favorite clients hanging on the wall. Madhu's picture is to be found among the four of them. Madhu is her customer, but Saugandhi feels something more about him. She likes him and she thinks that Madhu does the same. That is why she gives away all the money she earns to Madhu. Ram Lal, the owner of the brothel, has warned her many times but there is no use in those warnings. She knows that he is right but does not want to believe it because she finds comfort in Madhu.

Manto describes all the details of Saugandhi's life in this story. Her room, her customers and experience with them, the owner of the brothel, her fellow mates in this business, and even her childhood—all of these have been illustrated with great skill by Manto. Despite describing a prostitute's life cycle, he has created a sense of comfort among the readers where they find Saugandhi as a fallen woman. Her identity as a woman becomes greater than that of a prostitute by showing her feelings and attitudes toward different incidents in her life. Manto captures her feelings about her life which has been like "a game of hide-and-seek" for the last five years (Manto, "A Woman's" 57). She sometimes thinks of spending her entire life in a box just like in her childhood days where she can be "hidden from view yet dying to be found" (Manto, "A Woman's" 57). Her deep sighs, agonies, feelings of all kinds—every human aspect is illustrated masterfully by Manto in this story. He even illustrates why Saugandhi feels comfortable with Madhu. Madhu has given her what she has been craving since joining this profession: a feeling of having a family. Whenever Madhu returns from Poona, he says comforting sentences to her. He acts like he really cares for her and tells her to quit her job. Though he does not give or send her anything for her price, she never complains. She even allows him to take away her hard-earned money despite Ram Lal's warnings. Though she pretends to be a know-it-all to others, she falls for him. She always remains off guard in front of him, but all of these get shattered in an incident of humiliation.

When Saugandhi is presented to the Seth sahib in the car, he leaves immediately with a groan, "[u]gh" (Manto, "A Woman's" 61). This remark of disgust hits her so hard that she keeps thinking about that until she bursts out. That groan has given her great psychological pain that she

cannot bear. She is incapable of recovering from that blow and cannot repress the feeling of insult. Thus, she reacts to Madhu whom she likes very much. All her frustrations come out as a stance of resistance because here she breaks out from her identity as a prostitute. She comes back to reality and confronts Madhu with great courage. It is very unusual for a prostitute to speak like this. She pokes to know the truth about his troubles back in Poona. She starts to throw away all four pictures from her room. She makes fun of Madhu and makes some racist remarks about him. She continues to mock him. He tries to get some authority over her by reminding her of the identity of a prostitute but miserably fails. She does not let him finish and continues to insult him. When he screams at her, she "scream[s] right back" (Manto, "A Woman's" 67). He becomes scared, and the dog living in her room chases him out of the kholi. The ending suggests that a socially accepted person like Madhu can never be a family to a prostitute like Saugandhi. Rather, the dog in her room, an innocent creature who does not make any distinction between men and prostitutes, can become her actual family because it has stayed by her side when everyone else only comes in to fulfill their needs and then leaves without thinking of her as a woman who can also have feelings.

All the rebellious actions mentioned in the previous paragraph can be considered as Saugandhi's acts of resistance. Manto here subverts the whole situation. The mockery, the taken-for-granted attitude, the racist remarks—all of these that a prostitute daily confronts have been transferred right back to a socially accepted person. Madhu represents the whole of society where there is no place for prostitutes. Every time, it is the prostitutes who suffer from immense pain both physically and mentally. They have no place in the nationalistic discourses of India and Pakistan. Thus, Spivak raises the question of their agency to speak, but Manto shows in this story that they indeed can speak. Saugandhi is a subaltern woman who can speak just like Kalwant Kaur in "Colder than Ice." She rises above her identity as a prostitute by putting up great resistance against the reductionist approach to identity. She is not just a mere prostitute; she is also a woman who has feelings just like any other living creature. Society tends to forget this, but Manto, with sheer realism, shows that even the prostitutes can put up resistance against the society where they live like the *Other*. They, too, have feelings of shame and insult. It is the feeling of humiliation that triggered Saugandhi's act of resistance. Manto has shown her as a woman, not as a prostitute in this story and his "concern is not the commodity, but the pain, the suffering, and the loneliness of the human soul that sells it" (Narang 6). Thus, he justifies the translator's translation of the title of this story as "A Woman's Life."

In his stories, the damned get the special attention of Manto. Among them, women living in the lowest labyrinth of society have been portrayed in a different manner that has never been thought of by anyone. People tend to disregard their whole existence, let alone consider them as motherly figures. They never believe that those fallen women can also be someone's mothers, sisters, and wives. Their very existence is considered obscene, and their commodification has veiled their feelings of pain and love. Despite giving erotic descriptions of female bodies, Manto has always shown the brighter sides of them. He finds motherly affection even in characters like Mozail and Saugandhi. He has built her damned women around "the archetypal mother-image of woman" (Narang 8). That is why in "A Woman's Life," he has presented Saugandhi as a woman, not as a prostitute. In "Mozail", Mozail has already been considered as an outcast in society because of her religious identity. She may not take prostitution as her profession but leads an eccentric, promiscuous life. This sinks her even further into the abyss of *Othering*, but despite all of these, it is Mozail who stands against religious extremism and hoists the flag of humanity by saving innocent lives while sacrificing her own. This is where Manto becomes extraordinary in his storytelling.

In the realm of Manto, the insane make more sense than the sane. "Toba Tek Singh" depicts the very essence of this claim. In this story, Manto shows different incidents of resistance from different lunatic inmates, but Bishen Singh rises above everything and dies one of the most meaningful deaths in the whole of Manto's literary works. Through skillful play with the words, Manto masterfully veils the lunatics' resistance and gives it a whole new angle to be looked at. The story begins with the news of a religion-based lunatic exchange between the newly independent states, India and Pakistan. Manto expresses his ambivalent attitude towards the Partition of India when the narrator of this story says, "Whether this was a reasonable or an unreasonable idea is difficult to say" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 9). The news of Partition has shaken the minds of the mindless as their already inflicted minds cannot make any sense of the creation of two newly formed countries. The whole asylum gets divided into many opinions of its dwellers. All of them have different opinions about India and Pakistan. When one lunatic speaks ill of Pakistan, then another speaks ill of India. When one considers himself as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, another emerges as Master Tara Singh. Thus, Manto shows the underlying chaotic situation of the subcontinent where the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs were at one another's throats back then.

The very first instance of resistance in this story can be traced when one inmate climbs up the nearest tree and installs himself on a branch. Then he speaks on the delicate problem of India and Pakistan for two hours. It is not normal for a madman to give a speech on the delicate matter of the newly formed states while sitting high up there. Interestingly, he climbs up even higher when the guards come and ask him to get down. His reluctance to get down portrays his version of resistance. His resistance takes another level when he declares after being threatened with punishment, "I wish to live neither in India nor in Pakistan. I wish to live here in this tree" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 11). Apparently, this weird act of madness seems like a very comical example of the inmate's insanity, but here, it underlies a deeper meaning. By mentioning the spot from where the inmate has been speaking, Manto can possibly refer to the position of God. God is seeing the whole process of dividing the two countries with arbitrary borders from above and now is unwilling to go to either of the two countries because of the atrocities that prevailed at that time. The situation was so hellish back then as if God had left this subcontinent. He does not want to go where the devils dwell and commit violence in the name of religion. This is highly suggestive of a godless society where, in Nietzsche's words, "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!" (Nietzsche 120). Manto's reference to Nietzsche shows the intensity of this great chaos in this subcontinent.

The young Hindu lawyer, one of the inmates of the asylum, also puts up his version of resistance hearing the news of the exchange. He has gone mad after an unhappy love affair. At first, he became very depressed when he came to know that Amritsar, where his beloved lives, was to become a part of India, but his dwelling place, this asylum, falls in Pakistan. He had abused all the major and minor political leaders of India and Pakistan that day, but now, he hears the news of the exchange. Everyone congratulates him as he is going to his beloved's country, but he is now reluctant to go to India as "he [has] no intention of leaving Lahore" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 12). He thinks like this because he believes that "his practice would not flourish in Amritsar" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 12). He has given a terrible excuse, but his reluctance turns out to be a form of resistance with the hint of ambivalence.

Manto takes this hint further by introducing the protagonist of this story, Bishen Singh. Bishen Singh is a Sikh lunatic who has been in the asylum for fifteen years. He is from Toba Tek Singh and that is why everyone calls him Toba Tek Singh. There is a sense of unification with the motherland expressed here by Manto. Occasionally, Bishen Singh is found leaning against the wall,

but the rest of the time, everyone sees him standing. No one has seen him sitting down and that is why he has permanently swollen legs. He is also to be found saying mysterious gibberish. These instances of standing and speaking gibberish become meaningful towards the end of this story. When Bishen Singh hears the news of the exchange, there is only one question on his mind. He wants to know where Toba Tek Singh, his homeland, is, but nobody can answer properly. There is confusion all around the asylum about the exact location of Toba Tek Singh. When an inmate declares himself as God, he asks him if it is in India or Pakistan. The inmate chuckles and says, "Neither in India nor in Pakistan, because so far we have issued no orders in this respect" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 14). Bishen Singh shows his desperation as he begs that inmate to issue the necessary orders for locating Toba Tek Singh accurately, but becomes very disappointed, as that self-proclaimed God "appear[s] to be preoccupied with more pressing matters" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 14). Then he gives a religious identity to that inmate and accuses him of being a Muslim God and thus not listening to his pleadings. The reply of the inmate about the location of Toba Tek Singh is very important because it gives birth to ambivalence in Bishen Singh's unconscious. His ambivalent attitude turns into a form of resistance when he shows his reluctance to cross the border. On the other hand, Bishen Singh's accusation echoes the frenzied situation of this subcontinent due to the communal conflicts. In the name of religion, there are bloodbaths everywhere. When Fazal Din comes to visit Bishen Singh, he, too, cannot locate Toba Tek Singh accurately. This makes Bishen Singh walk away without uttering a single word. His disappointment is clearly visible here as he is never interested in knowing the condition of his daughter and the buffaloes; the only thing he has wanted to know from the beginning is where his motherland is.

Then the day of exchange arrives and there prevails a "complete confusion" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 16). Some simply refuse to cross the border, some run to and fro, some become stark naked, some start to abuse or sing, and female lunatics have created havoc by being "even nosier" (Manto, "Toba Tek" 16). This chaotic situation refers to their own version of resistance. Even in the form of the weirdest insanity, Manto's lunatics put up resistance against the authority. The main resistance is yet to be found in the actions of Bishen Singh who straight away asks the official about the exact location of Toba Tek Singh and gets the correct answer this time. He comes to know that it is in Pakistan. This news acts like a traumatic experience for him, and he tries to run away. He does not want to go to India, away from his homeland, which is now in Pakistan. The officials try their best to persuade him falsely that Toba Tek Singh is in India and that is why he is going to India, but all their efforts go in vain, and they soon give up. Whether Bishen Singh believes the lies told by the officials, the readers cannot know, but what they can see is that he does not feel comfortable knowing that his motherland is now in India either because it is an unknown place to him just like Pakistan. What he pictures as Toba Tek Singh in his mind does not exist anymore. His condition is like the condition of the mythical king Trishanku who was neither accepted in heaven nor could go back to earth. He is mentally nowhere—neither India nor Pakistan can give comfort to his conflicted mind as Toba Tek Singh does not remain what it used to be. He suffers from a kind of statelessness and in-betweenness. He finds himself mentally in a place that does not belong to either of the countries. His mental ambivalence echoes his physical resistance against dwelling either in India or Pakistan. He collapses to the ground that belonged to no one, and finally, his swollen legs get rest after fifteen years. Thus, he embraces "no man's land" as his *mulk*.

Muhammad Asim Siddiqui finds the gibberish of Bishen Singh quite significant. According to his research paper titled "Saadat Hasan Manto's Poetics of Resistance," the use of English in Bishen Singh's gibberish "acquires some significance in his rejection of the colonial arrangement of

dividing the country" (21). He further illustrates Bishen Singh as Manto's mimic man mimicking that of Homi K. Bhabha (Siddiqui 21). When the colonized mimic the colonizers, the latter feel the threat of being replicated. Thus, the speaking of English articulated from the colonized's mouths can present a form of anti-colonial resistance. The use of English in Bishen Singh's gibberish presents "a second order of mimic men mimicking not only the English, but also the English-speaking Indians who are at the forefront of the nationalist movement but are not beyond suspicion, and who, in his view, have accepted the colonial arrangement of dividing the country too meekly" (Siddiqui 21). Manto has given his critics the scope to extract powerful meanings even from the most nonsensical gibberish of a madman. He has created such a strong character like the lunatic Bishen Singh who puts up a great resistance against the authority and finds a place to rest where no one will force him to go to India and Pakistan. Manto's poetic expressions turn the no man's land into Bishen Singh's new Toba Tek Singh.

It is not a surprise that Manto's stories are still relevant in these modern times. The darkness that prevailed in the days of Partition has not left yet. It is still consuming the innocence of humankind. Though not a reformist, Manto has shown the world the follies of war, religious extremism, aggressive nationalism, and the creation of borders in his stories. These themes are still relevant as the perpetuation of violence and war has shaken world peace. The false hopes and myths do not affect the heart of Manto as he has made his craftsmanship a weapon for subverting the stereotypes and made a life out of a graveyard. All of this he achieved by depicting the stories of the subaltern with sheer realism. Representing the subaltern people is always a debatable matter. Great scholars like Spivak have doubts about their representability, but that does not mean that an author must not try. In this sense, the author should stay true to the actual description of the reality of the subaltern people. Thus, even their silent actions prove to be louder than screaming in full voice. That is exactly what Manto depicted in these short stories. By showing the actual scenario of brutality, atrocity, *Othering,* and racial abuse faced by the marginalized people, he becomes one of them. Thus, Manto gets unified with his character. I finish my paper with his own suggestion of engravings on his epitaph. He suggests, "Here lies Saadat Hasan Manto and with him lie buried all the secrets and mysteries of short-story writing. Under tons of earth he lies, still wondering who among the two is the greater short-story writer: God or he" (Hasan ix). His storytelling has given him such grandeur that he himself ends up questioning the whole world whether he is a great storyteller or God. This is not just a boastful self-claim; it is backed up by the renowned critics of Manto, and that is why his stories "become the embodiment of something more pervasive, more universal; that is, of benevolence or compassion incarnate" (Narang 12).

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