

# Identity Crisis in Chaman Nahal's Azadi – A Study

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## Abstract

Chaman Nahal is the one of the well known writers of Indian English Literature. He worked as a professor of Delhi University, Delhi. He depicted this novel by his own experience. It is an autobiographical novel because it resemblance his life story. When Partition took place, then Nahal was a student. He has born in Sialkot, which is in Pakistan now. Being Hindu he found his shelter in India. The novel published in 1975. The story deals with the trauma which is suffered by the grain merchant Lala Kanshi Ram and his family along with some more Hindu and Sikh families of Sialkot. Lala Kanshi Ram is the admirer of the British government. He strongly believes that British cannot agree for the division of India and Pakistan. But on 3rd June 1947 the Viceroy declares the Partition. All the tenants of Bibi Amar Vati are eagerly listening through radio. Arun is the only person to reveal that what this Viceroy declares. By hearing the news of Partition, all become stun and speechless. They worry about their future. All the tenants of Bibi Amar Vati face many problems. They have looted by Muslim gooligans. Some of them have lost their life in this Partition. Bibi Amar Vati's husband becomes Muslim to enjoy the property of her two buildings. Isher Kaur loses her husband. He burns himself and dies only because of his Sikh appearance. Sikhs are easily recognized by their turban and bear. The grain merchant Lala Kanshi Ram's shop is looted by riots of Muslim. Finally they go to refugee camp to save their life from the Muslim gooligans. Again there in the refugee camp they receive sorrowful situations. However they reach India. There they struggle to shelter in Delhi. At last they get accommodation at Kingsway camp on Alipur Road. There Lal Kanshi Ram starts his new life with his Hindu and Sikh friends who remain with him. The novel ends with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

**Keywords:** partition, hindu, muslim, sikh, tenants, riots etc.

## Introduction

Azadi is one of the historical novels of Indian Writing in English, which is published in 1975. This novel has autobiographical elements. Arun represents the author. He studies in BA and Nahal also studied in BA at the age of 19 years old when this Partition takes place. Arun has born in Sialkot and Chaman Nahal has also born in Sialkot. Like such elements are found to show that the novel consists of autobiographical elements. Chaman Nahal got Sahitya Akademi Award for it in 1947 and also he received Federation of Indian Publishers award in the same year.

Partition is the disturbing experience and an emotional shock for the people of border place. Still people of both nations do not come out of this incident. It happens only because of religion. People get psychologically disturbing experience. Partition is an event which marks a line in a place that is called border. Hindus of Pakistan must go to India and Muslims of India must go to Pakistan

without any preparations to protect and convince the people of both sides. In this moving event from here to there and there to here, many critical situations take place such are attacking, looting of properties, abduction and rapping of women are very common factors to find.

## Plot

This novel consists of three parts. The first part is The Lull. It consists of the author's depiction on the Partition of India and Pakistan. This event makes them to get into mental disturbance as well as physical harassment. The story situated in Sialkot, which is in East Punjab. Majority of Muslims live in this part. So many Hindu and Sikh families settle here to get their livelihood. They feel that this place is favorable to them. They have born here and lead their life here. But this Partition is a sudden fall on them as a big stone as if they lose their life.

The second part is *The Storm*. This part consists of the life of Hindu and Sikh families. These people are tenants of Bibi Amar Vati. The families have faced many calamities. The title indicates that will shake the life of the people of Hindus and Sikhs who are living in refugee camp. Lala Kanshi Ram hears the news of his daughter Madhu Bala and her husband's murder in the train. Isher Kaur loses her husband, who kills himself. Sunanda Bala is abducted by Rehmat Ulla Khan, there Arun saves her life. Chandani, who is beloved of Arun is kidnapped by Muslim rioters. Suraj Prakash is also killed in the attack of Muslim gooligans in Nawroli. The third part is *The Aftermath*. In this part the people of refugee camp are reached India. They struggle to get accommodation in Delhi. Atlast they allotted accommodation near Kingsway camp on Alipur road, Delhi. the novel ends with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The whole nation mourns on his death.

### **Loss of Identity and Homeland**

The novel illuminates the loss of their identity and homeland. Lala Kanshi Ram and his family live in rented house of Bibi Amar Vati. They ready to build their own house but this Partition makes them stay in dilemma. The partition of India and Pakistan gives sufferings, sorrow, pain and loss of their identity and homeland. The author Chaman Nahal reveals, how people of Sialkot have felt to leave their homeland through the characters of tenants of Bibi Amarvati. They have to leave their property, their belongings, their livelihood and their attachment to the place and their ancestor's memories. When the Viceroy of British rule declares the partition of India and Pakistan on 3rd June 1947 they feel that lose of their significance. They are familiar with the place. But this partition makes them to feel uncertainty of their life on the day of declaration. The Muslim people start to celebrate it with the slogans. One of the characters of the novel in Abdul Ghani many times he takes help from Lala kanshi Ram. After partition Abdul Ghani's attitude has changed.

'When are you leaving Kanshi Ram?'

'Why do you want me to leave, Abdul Ghani?' said Lala Kanshi Ram. 'We have been good friends – for years we have been good friends!'

'I want you to leave because you're a Hindu, and you don't believe in Allah.' (Page No. 134)

He starts to tease and hurt to Lala Kanshi Ram that when he would leave Pakistan. He says this place is only for Muslims not for Hindus and Sikhs. Lala Kanshi Ram as lost his daughter and his son-in-law. Arun goes to confirm the message. There Abdul Ghani tells that he puts them on the fire. This incident indicates that they lose their identity and homeland. Some people are exceptional for these are Chaudhary Barkat Ali and his family. They support and help Lala Kanshi Ram and his family. But they suggest that to leave their home and stay in refuges camp.

When they come to India they do not get proper shelter and they are teased by the Delhi officials. At that time Lala Kanshi Ram starts to cry like a small child. This situation indicates that the persons pain for losing his identity and homeland. He stops to wear turban. In Sialkot his image is like a reputed person. But this Partition makes him to get humiliated deeply. They tolerate all these changes in their life, only because to lead life to survive, so they come to India. They struggle hard to find their livelihood

### **Fearful Violence**

After declaration of India and Pakistan the East Punjab literally gets dreadful situations in the place. Hindus and Sikhs are become fearful about their future. Hearing the news of partition, Muslims procession takes place in Sialkot. The gate of Hindus Mohollas has closed. The procession wants to enter in the place. So they want it to open. The Muslim procession celebrates for their new nation, Pakistan. They create fearful situation for the Hindu and Sikh people. Women cannot go outside but they do not feel safe even in the four walls. When people live in refugee camp many of them have been kidnapped and abducted by the Muslim rioters. Even today it is a matter of uncertainty when it comes of partition.

### **Refugee Experience**

Being Hindu and Sikh, people have to leave the place of Sialkot and live in refugee camp. Refugee camp is protected by the Indian army. But some riots happen in the camp. Arun once says to his father Lala Kanshi Ram to go to refugee camp.

"Father we'll have to leave - " Arun said.

Before he could finish his sentence, Lala Kanshi Ram cut him off. 'Why will have to? Why?'

'Well the government seems unable to protect us, and we'll have to go to save our lives.' (Page No. 130)

This conversation reveals that how much they are helpless for facing these situations. After the incident of Lala Kanshi Ram's shop is looted by Muslim riots, then the tenants of Bibi Amar Vati get ready to go to refugee camp. In this refugee camp, Arun once again falls in love with Chandini. Who is a daughter of housekeeping servant padmini. His first love is Nurul Nissar. Even he is ready to become Muslim for her sake. But her brother and his friend, Munir prevents him to become Muslim. Choudhri Barkat Ali's family is a progressive Muslim family in Silkot. Arun loses his first love because of religion but he loses his second love also by the Muslim riots. Totally each one has lost one's relative in these riots. Lala Kanshi Ram leaves to wear turban on his head wearing turban is a sophisticated position in the society. This partition makes him to lose many things and people.

### Conclusion

Partition is an unprepared Situation in the history of India. It creates many burning issues. Still today also see the suffering of this partition. Chaman Naha wrote his experience in the novel. Women lose their chastity and purity. Their naked parade has made. Other watching with fear and some watch with curiosity that how many are there? And what their age is. The novel includes loss of identity and homeland, fearful violence, refugee experience. It is a remarkable novel which reveals the meaning and suffering from this Azadi.

### References

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