

The Essentials of Indianness: Tolerance and Sacrifice in Indian Partition Fiction in English and in English Translation

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Abstract

Indian Partition fiction, on the one hand, records man's bestiality and savagery and on the other, attests to the fact that man is essentially sincere, committed to upholding humanity to survive and sustain itself. The paper contends to examine the fundamental goodness of some characters, which the Indian tradition underlines. By analyzing certain characters from Chaman Nahal's Azadi, Khuswant Singh's Train to Pakistan, Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy-Man, Bhisham Sahni's Tamas, Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories and two Indian films, Mr. and Mrs. Iyar, directed by Aparna Sen and Meghe Dhaka Tara by Ritwik Ghatak, the writer tries to bring home the truth that frenzy of insanity is not final and amidst the pall of darkness and threats of insanity, there is a ray of hope.

A careful study of Indian culture and civilization as something homogenous may be debatable. It may provoke one to discard the view that India is indivisible, unitary and single in its culture and civilization. There are many 'Indias' even in one 'India'. Pluralism is the kernel feature of this land of diversity. 'The Essentials of Indianness' is the hypothesis of this article that aims at exploring 'Tolerance and Sacrifice in Indian Partition Fiction in English and in English Translation'.

Tolerance and sacrifice are the essential foundations of Indian culture and civilization. Hindu religion from time immemorial inspires men and women to follow the principle of tolerance and sacrifice. Belief in the divine in all living organism is an important creed of the Vedanta philosophy. Soul that is indestructible is *Brahma*. Swami Vivekananda once said that one who serves creatures serves the divine. Every Hindu knows the divine exists everywhere; the divine is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. This unwavering conviction that is intrinsically connected with the Vedanta Philosophy makes Indians tolerant to all. Everything animate or inanimate in this world is intrinsically sacred. This is an Indian attitude to life. A fundamentalist belonging to any religion underlines a harassing belief that everything is divided into two often very different or opposing parts and those two opposing parts are good or evil, man or nature ,God and Devil and so on. This belief in duality invents friends and foes. And in this belief of duality the principle of non-violence is absolutely redundant. This belief is a blasphemy to Indian religion, culture and civilization. Let me refer to the first law in chapter 11 of G.H Buhler's Translation of "The Laws of Manu" of *Manu Sanhita*:

Learn that sacred law which is followed by men learned (in the Veda) and assented to in their hearts by the virtuous, who are ever exempt from hatred and inordinate affection.¹

The virtuous, according to the Veda, are those who are free from 'hatred' and 'inordinate affection'. Where there is abhorrence, there must be aggression. The absence of the belief in duality in the Vedanta philosophy resulting in the non-existence of violence is one of the facets of the Indianness.

Anticipating the demand of the modern period, Swami Vivekananda made his illustrious remarks at the first World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893:

Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is

come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.²

Swami Vivekananda was a champion of the Vedanta creed and a hater of violence that destroys the mankind ultimately. Mahatma Gandhiji said in a speech on December 20, 1926:

There is nothing on the earth I would not give up for the sake of the country excepting of course two things and two only, namely, Truth and Ahinsa (non violence). I would not sacrifice these two for the entire world. For to me Truth is god and there is no way to find Truth except by the way of non violence. I do not seek to serve India at the sacrifice of Truth or God. For I know that a man who forsakes Truth can forsake his country, and his nearest and dearest ones.³

Gandhiji attended a meeting of the Gandhi Sevak Sangh in 1936 and there he told the audience that he had nothing new to say. According to him, Truth and the principle of non-violence are as aged as the hills and mountains. He further reiterated that in his pursuit of Truth he had discovered the principle of non-violence. Both Swami Vivekanand and Gandhiji were the votaries of non-violence which is one of the traditional values of Indian life.

The pedigree of non-violence is discernible in the Vedas, Upanishads, Dharma Shastras, Yoga Sutras and other Scriptures of Hinduism. The Atharva Veda underlines:

Peace be the earth, peaceful the ether, peaceful heaven, peaceful the waters, peaceful the herbs, peaceful the trees. May all Gods bring me peace. May there be peace through these invocations of peace. With these invocations of peace which appease everything, I render peaceful whatever here is terrible, whatever here is cruel, whatever here is sinful.

Let it become auspicious, let everything be beneficial to us.⁴ (Atharva Veda: X. 191. 4)

Tolerance and sacrifice which stands on the principle of non-violence is thus the essentials of Indianness. A glance at the life of the Emperor Ashoke of the ancient India shows that after his victory at Kalinga battle, he became an enthusiastic activist of the principle of non-violence which is intrinsically embedded in the vision of Indian life. In this connection a reference to the aggression on India by Muslims coming from the Central Asia is pertinent. The Mughal warriors who conquered the Northern India by and large consolidated their administration here and with the passage of time they became totally Indians. They were unlike the western colonisers in India. The Mughal rule in India is not the colonial rule like that of the British or the French in India. Rabindranath Tagore said in one of his poems:

Shak Hoon dal Pathan Mughal ek dehey hollo leen

(Shak, Hoon, Pathan and Mughal—all absorbed in the one body of Indianness)

The Mughals were conquerors in India earlier. Later, they became an integral part of the Indian culture and civilization. To Tagore, India before the British rule was a 'melting pot'. In Indian Partition fiction, not only Hindus and Sikhs but also Muslims show the age-old voices of India by exercising tolerance and sacrifice amidst the frightening madness and barbarity during the communal violence in 1947. In doing so, I intend to examine in my presentation three Indian novels, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice- Candy-Man*, all three written in English and Bhisham Sahani's novel, *Tamas*, Sadaat Hasan Manto's short stories both in English translation.

Partition fiction in English and in English translation on the one hand records man's bestiality and savagery and on the other, the vast volume of it underlines that man is essentially sincere, committed to upholding humanity to survive and sustain itself. In partition fiction, some characters indeed stand for universal goodness which the Indian tradition underlines. The presentation

contends to examine the fundamental goodness of some characters in partition fiction in English and in English translation. Two communities living together in peace and harmony for centuries started killing each other in communal pride, prejudice and hatred. "The holocaust of Partition was in a way more horrifying than the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis". (*Mottled Dawn*. p X11) The vast volume of partition fiction in English and in English translation is a faithful record of how human disaster has taken place during the gruesome period of Indian partition. Simultaneously it also registers the triumph of basic human values of some characters. Frenzy of insanity is not final. Amidst this pall of darkness and threats of insanity, there is a ray of hope. Not all are insane. This is undoubtedly a shift of paradigm in the vast volume of partition fiction.

The unique feature of Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* is that it is wide-ranging in presenting the multifarious views of life through different characters and situations. The novel is epic-like in presenting a character like Lala Kanshi Ram who is an ardent follower of Gandhiji's principle of non-violence. Lala Kanshi Ram, the protagonist of the novel, is a grain merchant in Sialkot, now in Pakistan. The time in the novel is 1947 just on the eve of Indian freedom when migration of people from both sides of this country starts taking place. Hindu families are brought to a newly set up refugee camp for security reasons and are guarded by the military. Kanshi Ram Lala comes to know that Muslims have killed his only daughter, Madhu. After a couple of days in that camp, all Hindus start leaving Sialkot for the Indian side. News of killing of Muslims by Hindus on the other side of the Pakistani border spreads like wild fire and disturbs the communal relationship. When this traumatized foot convoy reaches the Indian side, they all are thunderstruck and dumb found. In spite of all these ghastly experiences in their horrible journey from Sialkot to the other side of the border, Kanshi Ram Lala emerges as one who transcends himself from the level of an individual to a universal man.

The experience of his life enables him to see life with a compassionate and humane understanding and thus helps him attain a cosmic vision of life. An excerpt of the conversation between Prabha Rani and her husband Kanshi Ram Lala reveals the epic-like quality in the character of Kanshi Ram Lala:

'We are all equally guilty', he said, spacing his words apart. 'Each of those girls in that procession at Amritsar was someone's Madhu, and there must have been many amongst the dead you saw at Ambala'.

Without knowing it, Prabha Rani was weeping. Softly, she called, 'Madhu, Madhu, Madhu. ...' And she repeatedly shook her head, for she did not agree with her husband.

'Forgive. That way alone can you make peace with yourself'.

She shook her head in slow motion and continued to weep.

'There's no other way', he said.

'As a last resort –yes. But I don't believe in it'.

'You have to .To forgive fully'. (*Azadi*, p.300)

The nobility and strength of Kanshi Ram Lala's mind makes him an epic character. In one sense, he represents human understanding, tolerance and wisdom which are synonyms of Indianness. He is steady, strong and undaunted even in the worst moments of his life. My purpose in referring to this epic dimension of the character of Kanshi Ram Lala is to emphasize that this is one of the dominant themes of Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*.

I will now refer to Barkat Ali Chowdhury and his son, Munir in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. Barkat Ali Chaudhri and the members of his family believe that they all are true Muslims because they are of the opinion that everyone has the right to worship his/her own God. For that reason he accepts Lala Kanshi Ram as his brother. According to him, no animosity should grow between the two communities of different religions. The unity of all religions is the strength of his mind. He is a person who emphasizes the need of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. And when the communal tension engulfs the tiny town of Sialkot, he is the person who extends all necessary help to Lala Kanshi Ram and his family. He comes to Lala Kanshi Ram's house and informs him that the Muslim rioters will loot and burn the shops and houses owned by Hindus on that street that night. He also advises them to leave the place and to take shelter in the refugee camp. When it is decided that all will have to take shelter at the camp, Munir, the son of Barkat

Ali Chaudhri, who has also much concern about Lala Kanshi Ram's family arrives there. Munir and Lala Kanshi Ram's son Arun are friends. The most important thing is that at this crucial moment of his life Lala Kanshi Ram relies upon the trustworthiness of his Muslim brother Barkat Ali. When vultures hover over the sky of Sialkot, thousands and thousands of Hindus are massacred and their properties are looted and set on fire, a man like Barkat Ali is there to earn the confidence of a riot victim like Lala Kanshi Ram. I refer to this incident in order to show that amidst the atmosphere of gloom and communal tension, there is at least one person who is sane and humane. And he is Barkat Ali Chaudhri with all the members of his family. This event reveals their concern for Lala Kanshi Ram and others. He is a devout Musalman free from religious bigotry and fanaticism.

The distance between Dera Baba Nanak, the border town on the Indian side and Sialkot is about forty-seven miles. It is decided that the Hindu refugees will start for the Indian border town on foot. Lala Kanshi Ram is the leader of one of the units of this foot-convoy. The scene on the day when the foot convoy starts is a pathetic one. Almost everyone of the moving convoy stops for moments and looks at the places of their life long association in the city. It is a moment of their departure from the soil where they were born and brought up. Their association with this city is deep-rooted. Chaudhri Barkat Ali and Munir have come to the refugee camp to see them off. They also walk almost six miles along with the family of Lala Kanshi Ram. The moment of their farewell is proof enough of an Indian's basic goodness and human values. Chaman Nahal narrates the moment thus:

'We must return,' said Chaudhri Barkat Ali, the giant frame shaking.

'Khuda hafiz, bother Kanshi Ram,' he said, folding his hands.

'There have been good years,' said Lala Kanshi Ram, taking Chaudhri Barkat Ali's hands in his own. There were tears in the eyes of both men.

...

'If not in our life-time, Insha-Allah in the life-time of our children this folly will surely be undone,' said Chaudhri Barkat Ali, looking at Lala Kanshi

Ram. 'We are one people and religion cannot separate us from each other.'

'I hope you are right.' (*Azadi*, p.241-42)

Partition fiction in English and in English translation is a faithful record of the plethora of violent and gruesome events, but at the same time, it shows some individuals who rise above the communal animosity and assert certain basic values of Indianness. Barkat Ali Chaudhri and all members of his family are those individuals who stand for the aspirations of mankind.

Let me refer to another shining instance of man's assertion of fundamental goodness in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. The foot convoy reaches Narowal, a town close to the Indian border. Lala Kanshi Ram and others are now in the refugee camp at Narowal. The time is afternoon. Suraj Prakash informs Arun that Muslims of the town, abducting some Hindu and Sikh women, decide to parade them fully naked through some roads. The local administration and the police authority want that the procession of naked Hindu and Sikh women will not go near the refugee camp. Arun and Suraj Prakash leave the camp and go to the specific area where the procession of naked women moves on. It is very difficult to identify them as Hindus because they dress themselves as typical Muslim young men.

It is a dreadful and barbarous example of communal behaviour. Amidst this gruesome atmosphere, there is one individual praying to Allah silently for this heinous crime. Arun and Suraj Prakash stand in front of a 'shop of a hakim, a doctor practising an indigenous system of medicine'. While the whole world dances with the bestial frenzy of this crowd, in that shop of indigenous medicine, sits a man covering his face with his hands and saying, 'Allah, Allah, Allah!' This man stands for light and sanity in this atmosphere of gloom and horror. The hakim sahib assures us all of the unending march of Indian values towards the light and hope. This note of optimism is one of the characteristic features of partition fiction in English and in English translation.

Now I would like to shift my attention to two individuals trying to accent Indian values in Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. Iqbal and Juggut Singh who

are socially marginalized represent the sunny side of life. They undauntedly assert that this world is worthy of living. Iqbal, an English knowing young man has an exposure to the western style of life. He comes to Mano Majra with a purpose of doing social service to the poor rural folk. His sincerity and his love for his country is undeniable. The authorial comment reveals his concern for India thus:

Iqbal stood up and looked all round. ... The whole country was like an overcrowded room. What could you expect when the population went up by six every minute--- five millions every year! It made all planning in industry or agriculture a mockery. Why not spend the same amount of effort in checking the increase in population? But how could you, in the land of the *Kama Sutra*, the home of phallic worship and the son cult? (*Train to Pakistan*,p.45)

A close reading of the novel gives us a faint understanding that Iqbal is associated with the Communist Party of India. He may be a person living in the world of utopia; he may have no connection with the ground reality; he may be an unpragmatic person. But he is one of those sensible ones who loathe the killing of people. He is a champion of class struggle in India although the possibility of intensifying the class struggle may be an absurd proposition in Indian context at that particular point of time. He has sympathy for the underdog and the downtrodden. He is in favour of a Government that will protect the interest of the poor. He tells Meet Singh:

Morality, Meet Singh, is a matter of money. Poor people cannot afford to have morals. So they have religion. Our first problem is to get people more food, clothing, comfort. That can only be done by stopping exploitation by the rich, and abolishing landlords. And that can be done by changing the government. (*Train to Pakistan*,P.37)

Iqbal is against the exploitation of the poor by the rich. The sincerity of his conviction is unquestionable. One may agree or disagree with what Iqbal

professes. He is against the partition of India. He believes that no good to the people of India and Pakistan will come out of this partition, violence and the transfer of population. He is the man who requests repeatedly Meet Singh, the priest in the Guruddwara at Mano Majra, to stop the violence and killings. He comes to know that near the bridge at Mano Majra, the Sikhs and the Hindus are planning to attack the train that will carry Muslims of Chundunnugger and Mano Majra to Pakistan. This plan of mass-destruction will take place under the aegis of the militant boy leader. Iqbal passionately requests Meet Singh:

You cannot let this sort of things happen! Can't you tell them that the people on the train are the very same people they were addressing as uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters? (*Train to Pakistan*, Pp.159-60)

Iqbal underlines Indian values of life. His vision of life registers the ultimate triumph of man's human values over the menacing lunacy overtaking the country during time of the Indian partition in 1947.

Juggut Singh, a social marginal at Mano Majra, who lives at the outskirts of the village, is a diehard daredevil. He is involved in several 'train robberies, car hold-ups, dacoities and murders'. He has an affair with Noore, the daughter of Imam Baksh, who is the priest of the mosque at Mano Majra. At first, Juggut Singh is unaware of the event that a gang of dacoits from another village under the leadership of Malli has attacked the house of Lala Ram Lal, a moneylender at Mano Majra. The robbers kill Lala Ram Lal and loot his cash and jewelry. It is then mid-night and at that time of dacoity, Juggut Singh makes love to Noore at a nearby cultivating land. The police naturally suspect Juggut Singh and put him behind the bars. When the communal tension reaches the point of outburst at Mono Majra, i.e., when the Sikh and Hindu fundamentalist forces plan to attack the train near the bridge carrying the Muslim migrants to Pakistan, the local police Inspector on the instruction of Hukum Chand, the District Commissioner, releases Juggut Singh from the police custody.

Juggut Singh after his release comes to know the blueprint of the train attack by the boy leader. He also comes to know that Muslims along with Imam

Baksh and his daughter Noore will be travelling to Pakistan by that train. The social marginal, Juggut Singh, rises to the occasion and decides that he should save those Muslims travelling by that train. Sisir Das comments:

The revenge plan of the Hindus to blow up the train is aborted by the notorious gangster Jugga, whose beloved Nooran, daughter of a Muslim weaver, also was aboard the train. Love triumphs over hatred: it is the love of an individual for another individual that saves the train. 'The train went over him, and went to Pakistan.'¹

Khuswant Singh introduces the love story between Juggut Singh and Nooran in *Train to Pakistan* to show that the religious difference between Juggut Singh, a Hindu and Nooran, a Muslim does not stop Juggut even from the sacrifice of his own life to save the life of Nooran. The authorial narration of the suffocating situation when the train is to approach the Railway Bridge at Mano Majra and to meet the gruesome and dastardly attack of the boy leader and his associates makes readers breathless for a moment.

The train runs fast to the Railway Bridge, the approach of which is ready with this horrendous death trap to greet the train travelers. Suddenly a man is found 'climbing on the steel span'. The boy leader and his accomplices waiting for the train to come notice the man when he has almost climbed the top where the killer rope is tied with the two ends. Confusion among them is there at the beginning. They first think that the man is on the top to test and tighten the knot. The train with a huge number of human beings sitting on its roof is coming closer and closer. The man then whips out a sword from his waist and starts hacking at the rope. The boy leader then fires at the man. Khushwant Singh concludes the novel thus:

The engine was only a few yards off, throwing embers high up in the sky with each blast of the whistle. Somebody fired another shot. The man's body slid off the rope, but he clung to it with his hands and chin. ... The rope had been cut in shreds.... The engine was almost on him. There was

a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan. (*Train to Pakistan*, P.172)

Readers heave a sigh of relief. The human disaster is thus averted. And the man is Juggut Singh, the so-called social marginal. He sacrifices his own life to save thousands and thousands of those Muslims migrating to Pakistan from Chundunnugger and its surrounding areas during the Indian partition in 1947. Shikoh Mohsin Mirza comments on the role Juggut Singh plays towards the end of the novel thus:

Train to Pakistan, like the best of Partition literature, explores humanity under duress, as well as the moral probity and courage of the individual. The book encourages introspection and is very relevant even today. It does not end on a pessimistic or a bleak note...Juggut Singh succeeds in his mission, and the train crosses over safely into Pakistan, thus negating the passionate arguments of the frenzied youth. The novel explores and lays bare the mysterious wellsprings of courage, endurance and affection, from which human beings draw inspiration at moments of distress to rebuild their lives and to sustain faith in themselves.²

Juggut Singh's sacrifice of his own life is a symbol of the voices of India. His sacrifice for saving those Muslim minorities is a ray of hope amidst the menacing madness of the dark days during the partition.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* registers how some individuals assert some tradition bound values of Indian life. During the time of Indian partition, thousands and thousands of Hindus and Sikhs are massacred; their properties are set on fire. The communal harmony between Hindus and Muslim is wrecked. Trainload dead bodies of Muslims arrive at Lahore railway station from Gurdaspur. Communal tension mounts up to the maximum possible extent. In the midst of this darkness prevailing upon the city, Muslim rioters come to know that some persons who are either Hindus or Sikhs live with the Parsee family and they

are employed as domestic help. By the time Lahore reaches the indescribable height of communal tension, all Hindus and Sikhs living in that Parsee family except Ayah leave for Amritsar. The situation in Lahore deteriorates with each passing day. Lahore is a town where Hindus and Sikhs mostly own business houses. Muslims are majority in number in Lahore. The movements of the members of this Parsee family are restricted. The members of this Parsee family, particularly Lenny's mother and grandmother are very much concerned about the minority people of the town. Parsees during the Indian partition take side neither of the Muslim League nor of the Indian National Congress. They remain always with the establishment. What characterizes them mostly are their compassionate understanding and humanitarian outlook on life. Jagdev Singh comments:

It is at this moment of Prufrockian dilemma that Col. Bharuchc allays the fears of his community by advising them to cast their lot with whoever rules Lahore...The Parsees are going to be neutral in the tug of war among the three major communities of India. The neutral attitude of the narrator character, Lenny, has its roots in this psychology of the Parsees. In a way, attitude of the Parsee community revealed here is the externalized collective sub-consciousness of Lenny.³

Historically Parsees are peace-loving people. The members of this family always try to help victims of the partition violence irrespective of their religion. Lenny's mother even smuggles petrol for helping those Hindus and Sikhs flee from Lahore. During the partition, the rationing of petrol is the reality. Lenny's mother also supplies petrol for the convoys that carry the kidnapped women across the Indo-Pak border.

When Muslim rioters enter Lenny's house and abduct Ayah, the concern about her among the members of this Parsee family is noteworthy. After a couple of weeks, from a reliable source Ayah's Godmother and her mother discover that Ayah is married and she is at Lahore. The Godmother also informs Lenny of the ensuing visit of Ayah's husband to her in the evening. The Ice-Candy-Man, who abducts Ayah and then makes her a dancing girl at Lahore red light area, is in

love with her. He is now her caring husband. He does not want Ayah to desert him and leave for Amritsar. The conversation between Lenny's Godmother and the Ice-Candy-Man shows how much concern this Parsee lady has in her mind about this emotionally wounded Ayah who is driven by circumstances to suffer the crisis of identity. The Godmother wants to know from Ice-Candy-Man what Ayah does from the month of February when she is lifted by Muslim rioters till the month of May when he marries her. She also asks Ice-Candy-Man if he has married Ayah only after receiving the news that Lenny's mother is arranging to send her to Amritsar. Lenny during interrogation of Ice-Candy-Man is in the lap of her Godmother. She feels then that the thighs of her Godmother beneath her tremble like anything. The Godmother is very much disturbed when Ice-Candy-Man gives no answer to her queries and he remains silent.

This event and the subsequent authorial narration vindicate the basic human goodness of the members of this Parsee family. Ayah is apparently happy and socially secure with Ice-Candy-Man who has married her. He is polite and caring to her. Nevertheless, the Godmother and Lenny's mother being women realize the extent of disgrace, humiliation and defilement perpetrated to Ayah by her husband before her marriage. For that reason they come forward to help her leave for India.

I will refer to another event in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*, which catalogues man's fundamental goodness based on Indian ethos, even in the darkness of menacing insanity of both Hindu and Muslim communities during the Indian partition. Rioters at Lahore surround the house where this Parsee family lives with the expectation that some Hindu and Sikh domestic workers still are there. Imam Din informs them that all of them have already left for India. Furthermore, Imam Din clarifies to the Rioters that Sethi can also be a Parsee name. Then someone from the rioting mob shouts and asks where Hari, the gardener is. Imam Din roars genially and tells them that Hari has already converted himself into Islam and he is now Himat Ali. The enquiry does not stop here. They look for Ayah whom they know as a Hindu woman. Ayah in the mean time hides herself in one of the secret places of the house on the instructions of

Lenny's mother. The conversation between Imam Din and the rioters is relevant to the context:

And then someone asks, 'Where's the Hindu woman? The ayah!'

There is a split-second's silence before Imam Din's reassuring voice calmly says: 'She's gone.'

'She's gone nowhere! Where is she?'

'I told you. She left Lahore.'

'When?'

'Yesterday.'

'He's lying', says the familiar voice again. 'Oye, Imam Din, why are you lying?'

'Call upon Allah to witness your oath,' someone says.

'Oye! Badmash! Don't take Allah's name! You defile it with your tongue!

Says Imam Din losing his geniality...

other voices join in the attack and, suddenly, very clearly, I hear him say:

'*Allah-ki-kasam*, she's gone'.

(*Ice-Candy-Man*, p.181)

Then follows the narrator's comment in the first person:

I study the men's faces in the silence that follows. Some of them still don't believe him. Some turn away, or look at the ground. It is an oath a Muslim will not take lightly. (*Ice-Candy-Man*, pp.181-82)

Ayah does not succeed in escaping the notice of the rioting mob. Ice-Candy-Man exploiting the innocence of the eight-year baby Lenny locates Ayah in the house and informs rioters of her hideout. Nevertheless, what is important in this conversation between Imam Din and the rioting mob is that Imam Din being a devout Muslim even makes a false oath in the name of *Allah* for protecting a Hindu woman. To a Muslim Ayah is a *Kafir*. To him, life of a person is more important than even the religious code of conduct. Imam Din's role in this moment of crisis is a stamp of man's benevolence and universal goodness which is

traditionally Indian. In Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*, the universal Indian values of life are revealed through some characters. One such character is Shah Nawaz. The landscape of the locale of the novel is historical. The valley in this small town at its end diverges in two directions: one way goes to Tibet and the second one to Afganistan. The small town is peaceful. However, during the Indian partition, the people of both Hindu and Muslim communities are virtually at war. The mounting communal violence affects all in the town. Hindus living in Muslim dominated areas try desperately to procure some weapons to fight against the Muslim rioters if they attack them. Lalaji somehow manages to procure the woodchopper that can only serve as a weapon in addition to some sticks, which Lalaji's family uses to hold up the mosquito nets. Lalaji's only son, Ranvir during these trying days has not returned home and Master Dev Vrat has managed to inform Lalaji of Ranvir's engagement in the party work. Lalaji is very much disturbed with all looting and burning incidents taking place at the town. One day a blue-coloured Buick car stops in front of his house. Lalaji's Muslim friend Shah Nawaz steps out of the car and meets Lalaji. Shah Nawaz asks Lalaji to pack up essential household things and to go with him to a safer place immediately. Within a couple of minutes, Lalaji, his wife and their daughter, Vidya board the car and leave the house for a safer location keeping the house in the custody of their servant Nanku. Shah Nawaz drops Lalaji and his family at a relative's house in the cantonment. Had there been no Shah Nawaz at this crucial moment when the town was in the grip of communal violence, the Muslim rioters would have definitely killed Lalaji and all members of his family. The truth in this supposition is that Nanku whom Lalaji entrusts with the responsibility to guard the house has been brutally murdered by the rioters later.

After dropping Lalaji and his family in the cantonment, Shah Nawaz travels over different areas of the town in his Buick car. Finally, he arrives at a place where Raghunath and his family take shelter leaving their own house where their security is in danger. At the time when Shah Nawaz knocks at the door of Raghunath's temporary house; Raghunath is in his bathroom; his wife opens the door and welcomes Shah Nawaz. After sometime, Raghunath appears and they embrace each other. They then talk about the deteriorating condition of the town.

Riot spreads even in villages. Janaki, Raghunath's wife after a while returns there with a cup of tea for Shah Nawaz. She then requests Shah Nawaz to take care of the jewelry box which she has left in her house at the time of leaving her house for safe shelter. She informs Shah Nawaz of the place in her house where the box of jewelry lies and gives him the key of the house. This request is significant because it shows how a Hindu woman trusts a Muslim friend. This conversation between Janaki and Shaw Nawaz is followed by the authorial comment:

Shah Nawaz felt elated at the thought that so much trust was reposed in him, that bhabhi was handing over keys for jewellery worth of thousands of rupees, that she regarded him as one of their own. (*Tamas*, p.310)

I refer to these two episodes to specifically point out that not all is lost. Some Muslims and Hindus are still there above the bestiality even during the mass killing in 1947.

Now I will refer to one more event of human goodness of a Muslim who saves the life of a Sikh and his wife who live at a village near the town Khanpur in *Tamas*. In that village live only Harnam Singh and his wife Banto. They run a teashop and maintain themselves thus. All other people living in that village are Muslims. They are quite happy in that village and have a friendly relationship with all Muslims in that village. Even they help Muslim neighbours by lending money when they are in need. When riots and communal disturbances spread all around, they are hesitant as to whether they will leave the village or not. Harnam Singh cannot think of shutting down his running teashop in that village where they have been living in communal peace and harmony for many decades. Harnam Singh's wife Banto all along is of the opinion that they should leave the village for their safety but Harnam Singh is hesitant. He pays no heed to Banto's argument as to why they should go to some other safe place.

One day an unusual event takes place. No bus from Khanpur arrives at the village and no one comes to Harnam Singh's teashop for either tea or gossip. Harnam Singh only sees during the whole day two or three strangers going to the village casting their looks at his shop closely. Harnam Singh has never seen them earlier. The village road also looks deserted. An atmosphere of quietness

prevails. In the evening, Harnam Singh hears the familiar sound of footsteps. This disturbs him very much. Suddenly he finds Karim Khan approaching towards his shop. While he passes Harnam's shop, he goes on muttering, "Things have taken a bad turn, Harnam Singh. Your welfare lies in leaving the place." (*Tamas*, p.345). The thing that surprises Harnam is that Karim Khan never stops in front of his shop. Karim Khan also adds that the local residents of the village will not attack him but the people of other villages will attack him and the local people will remain passive. Karim Khan informs him of all these and moves on. For the first time, Harnam Singh looks shaky and his faith in God wavers. That Karim Khan has not stopped at his teashop also worries him very much. He now realizes that the real danger is ahead. After a couple of minutes, Karim Khan is again seen nearby. This time also he does not stop in front of his shop. He pretends to cough, and mumbles, "Don't delay, Harnam Singh. The situation is not good. There is fear of marauders attacking." (*Tamas*, p.345). Harnam Singh is very confused and does not know what he should do then. He comes to the room behind his shop and tells everything to his wife. Banto is almost on the verge of collapse. The night is approaching. They decide to leave the village. Suddenly they hear the beating of drums coming from the distance. They also hear the slogan shouting of slogans by the members of the Muslim League Party. Without any further delay, these two old persons leave their home and enter into the nocturnal wilderness. The point to note here is that Bhisham Sahni introduces this event in *Tamas* to clearly illustrate that Indian values are not altogether lost. Even in the darkness of savagery and barbarity, a person like Karim Khan stands like a light-fountain—a hope for the sane world.

Saadat Hasan Manto's short stories on partition theme promote compassionate understanding of Indian life though his stories expose nakedly the brutalities and savagery of people irrespective of their religions. Amidst the pall of darkness and petrified gloom during the Indian partition in 1947, the narrator shows how the goodness of an individual saves mankind from the utter confusion of hopelessness and frustration. Khalid Hasan who translates Manto's fifty short stories into English from the original in Urdu comments in the Introduction:

“It is a measure of his greatness that Manto did not allow the savagery of 1947 to diminish his faith in the essential rightness of human nature. He demonstrated through one powerful story after another that the intrinsic nobility of man, his basic decency, his ability to love and care may become temporarily eclipsed but they do not die. Manto’s humanism, his rejection of religious labels and his refusal to accept cruelty and intolerance distinguish him from his contemporaries.” (Mottled Dawn, p.xiii)

Manto’s short stories are marked by his profound faith in the basic human values of Indian life. At least one person in his short stories on partition theme stands as a colossal force that asserts man’s nobility and grandeur amidst the horrendous violence during the time of Indian partition. I will refer to Manto’s two short stories, *Colder than Ice, A Tale of 1947* that draws our attention to the basic goodness of an individual –the goodness based on Indian way of looking at things with a spirit of tolerance and sacrifice. And the goodness of that individual convinces us all that everything is not lost; some hope still exists for our redemption.

‘Colder than Ice’ is a story of Ishwar Singh and his wife Kalwant Kaur. The time in the story is one past midnight when the city is in the grip of communal violence during the Indian partition in 1947. Ishwar Singh entering their bedroom at the midnight looks extremely nervous and shaky. Kalwant Kaur asks him where he has been so long. Ishwar Singh, moistening his parched lips, says that he does not know where he has been. The perplexing answer irritates her very much and she insists on his telling the truth. On the contrary, Ishwar Singh starts involving himself in physical love with his wife. The conversation between the husband and the wife intersected by the narrator’s description of Ishwar Singh’s handling of the awkward situation arising out of his wife’s repeated query is very interesting:

Ishwar Singh took off his turban. He slapped her thigh and said, more to himself than to her: ‘I feel strange’.

His long hair came undone and Kalwant Kaur began to run her fingers through it playfully. ‘Ishwar Sian, where have you been all this time?’

'In the bed of my enemy's mother,' he said jocularly. Then he pulled Kalwant Kaur towards him and began to knead her breasts with both hands. 'I swear by the Guru, there's no other woman like you'.

Flirtatiously, she pushed him aside: 'Swear over my head. Did you go to the city?'

He gathered his hair in a bun and replied: 'No'. Kalwant Kaur was irritated. 'Yes, you did go to the city and you looted a lot more money and you don't want to tell me about it'.

("Colder than Ice", p.25)

Ishwar Singh continues shuffling his wife without paying any heed to her physical demand but ultimately he fails to satisfy her sexual desire. Suddenly springing out of the bed in a fit of passion, she asks him to tell her the name of the woman with whom he has spent the time. Her husband's behaviour confirms her of his awful and intimate associations with someone. She does not even hesitate to stab her husband with the knife in his possible involvement with the worst type of criminal activity. The description at the end of the story is revealing. The narrator ends the story thus:

He began to groan. His pain was becoming unbearable, but she was unconcerned. 'Go on,' she said in a merciless voice. ... 'There was this house I broke into. . . there were seven people, six of them men ...whom I killed with my *kripan* one by one ... and there was one girl ...she was so beautiful ... I didn't kill her ... I took her away'.... I thought she had gone into a faint, so I carried her over my shoulder all the way to the canal which runs outside the city ... then I laid her down on the grass, behind some bushes and ... first I thought I would shuffle her a bit ...but then I decided to trump her right way ...

"What happened?' she asked.

'I threw the trump ... but, but ...'

Kalwant Kaur shook him violently: What happened?

Ishwar Singh opened his eyes. 'She was dead . . . I had carried a dead body . . . a heap of cold flesh ... jani, give me your hand'.

Kalwant placed her hand on his. It was colder than ice. ("Colder than Ice",pp.28-29)

The speech of Ishwar Singh is an evidence of how he desperately wants to live. He is on the verge of a total collapse. He realizes the extent of the gruesome and immoral act he has committed. He satisfies his carnal appetite by uniting himself physically with a dead woman. In a desperate attempt to survive, he wants help from his wife. He finally returns to his sanity. He has not lost all he has as a human being. The basic goodness of man still remains at the core of his heart. And the evidence of this fundamental goodness is his frantic prayer to his wife for her hand. Here the 'hand' stands for his wife's moral and emotional support, so that he can live on. He looks forward to salvaging himself with the moral support of his wife. The support is moral in nature because he is repentant. Furthermore, let me substantiate this view linguistically by referring to what the narrator describes about Ishwar Singh's state of mind. The storyteller comments, 'He began to groan. His pain was becoming unbearable'. This comment foregrounds the extent of Ishwar Singh's immeasurable suffering and repentance. The keywords in this comment are "groan" and "pain".

It will be wrong if anyone thinks that Manto has idealized the character of Ishwar Sing. Indeed Ishwar Singh has committed the worst crime of murder and depravity. What I intend to underscore in this context is that Manto has a deep-rooted conviction in man's ultimate humanity and goodness. Ishwar Singh towards the end of his life reminds us of one fact that not all is lost.

'A Tale of 1947', another short story written by Manto introduces at the beginning of the story the character of Mumtaz who is an emblem of tolerance and basic goodness. Manto in the mouth of the narrator of the story puts the idea that by killing hundreds and hundreds of Hindus or Muslims, neither the Hindu religion nor the religion of Islam can be exterminated. Religion is a matter of faith. The liquidation of any religion by killing its votaries is impossible. Religious faith of any brand cannot be wiped out from the mind of a person with the help of a gun. Mumtaz at the beginning of the story says passionately:

Why can't they understand that faith, belief, devotion, call it what you will, is a thing of the spirit; it is not physical. Guns and knives are powerless to destroy it. ("A Tale of 1947",p.155)

Bombay where Mumtaz and his two Hindu friends have been living in peace is plunged into the orgy of communal violence during the time of the Indian partition in 1947. A character like Mumtaz is a lighthouse amidst the pall of darkness and dismay. The beginning of this story hints at what Saadat Hasan Manto intends to pinpoint in his short stories on the Partition violence in 1947. It is that man's sanity and humanity are not altogether lost. Amidst the gruesome communal violence and barbarity, at least one Mumtaz is there and he stands for secularity, religious tolerance and basic goodness of human life. Let me examine now what Mumtaz narrates to his friend about the story of a diehard Hindu, a pimp by his profession, who even at the last moment of his life thinks of a Muslim prostitute with the utmost concern and sincerity in this story, "A Tale of 1947".

The name of the Hindu pimp is Sehai. This man tells Mumtaz that he has already saved up twenty thousand rupees from the twenty-five percent commission money. Actually, he is a procurer of women for local prostitution. Moreover, he is in need of another ten thousand rupees for starting his retail cloth business at Benaras. Mumtaz then starts telling his friend Jugal about this Hindu pimp:

First, I thought he cannot really be what he appears to be. Maybe he is nothing but a big fraud. After all, it was hard to believe that he considered and treated all the girls that he supplied to his customers as he would his own daughters. I also found it strange that he had opened a postal savings account for each of them and insisted that they should put their earnings there. There were some whose personal expenses he subsidized. All this was unreal to me because in the real world these things do not happen. ...One day he told me that the Hindu girl from Ahmedabad, whose marriage he had arranged with a Muslim client of his, had written from Lahore, "I went to the shrine of the great saint Data Sahib

and made a wish which has come true. I am going again to make another wish, which is that you should quickly make thirty thousand so that you can go to Benaras and start that retail cloth business of yours". I had laughed, thinking that he was telling me this story about the popular Muslim only because I was Muslim. ("A Tale of 1947",p. 162)

The most interesting aspect of this man's Indian attitude to life even in the world of frauds and hypocrites is revealed when he is stabbed by Muslim rioters in one Muslim locality in Bombay. The city is tensed because the Hindu-Muslim riot has already started. One morning Mumtaz walks hurriedly through Bhindi Azad. The area looks deserted because of the night curfew. Suddenly he sees a man lying on the road in a pool of blood. Mumtaz goes near the lying man and recognizes him. The man is Sehai. Mumtaz at first becomes very nervous. He is a Muslim, the man on the verge of death is a Hindu, and he has been stabbed by Muslim rioters. If police arrives there at that time, Mumtaz will be arrested on a murder charge. Suddenly Sehai tries to pull out something from the inner pocket of his shirt. He is so feeble that he fails to pull out the stuff from the inner pocket of his shirt. Then Sehai says in his faint voice:

There's a packet in there . . . it contains Sultana's ornaments and her twelve hundred rupees ... they were with a friend for safe custody ... I picked them up today and was going to return them to her ... these are bad times you know ... I wanted her to have her money and the ornaments ...Would you please give them to her ...tell her she should leave for a safe place ... but ...please look after yourself first! ("A Tale of 1947", p.164)

Sehai represents the fundamental nobility of Indian life, which has nothing to do with any religious bigotry. Saadat Hasan Manto in his stories on partition repeatedly pinpoints that bestiality is not final. Man will sustain his humanity even in the orgy of communal violence and religious hatred because the basic goodness of life survives the hours of darkness.

'The conclusion of the present paper tempts me to refer to two Indian films, *Mr. and Mrs Iyer*, directed by Aparna Sen and *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (The *Cloud Shrouded Star*, translated by the present author) by Ritwik Ghatak. In the context of the present study, the reference to these two films may appear irrelevant. However, the fact is that I am very much inspired to relate these two films with the fiction, examined in the present work, for a close similarity between these two forms of art, as far as their thematic suggestiveness on the emotional relief of the readers and the viewers is concerned. Like Indian fiction in English and in English translation, both these two films has got this message without any ambivalence that man's self-centeredness, religious intolerance, cruelty, communal violence, bestiality and so on are not final. Amidst all these depressing faces of man, some indispensable goodness in man's life helps the mankind to live and sustain from time immemorial. Perhaps this essential goodness of man is the elixir of the mankind to continue.

Mr and Mrs Iyer begins with the showing of newspaper clippings of terrorist attacks on innocent people followed by a scene at a bus terminal where passengers are ready to get into buses for their destinations. Mr Raja Chowdhury, a Bengali Wild Life Photographer is also at the bus terminal for returning to Calcutta. Mr Srinivasan comes to the bus station to see off his daughter-in law, Mrs Meenakshi Iyer who will go to her husband now posted in Calcutta. One of Raja's friends introduces Raja to Mr Srinivasan and his daughter-in-law. Mr Srinivasan then requests Raja to look after his daughter-in-law and her baby named Santhanam during this long journey to Calcutta. A bus full of passengers leaves for a nearby railway station. It is a night journey. Most of the passengers are Hindus. One old Muslim couple and a Jewish young man are also among those bus passengers. While the bus moves on, everything initially is fine. Children sing popular Hindi songs. Everybody is engaged in gossips with co-passengers. Suddenly, the bus stops at one point of the forest road near the river and there is long line of buses and other vehicles ahead. Everyone gets down from the bus and comes to know that the curfew has been declared by the local administration for the riots between Hindus and Muslims. The Police Inspector arrives at the spot and orders everybody to get into the bus for security reason.

Mr Raja Chowdhury looks very nervous. He now confesses to his co-passenger, Mrs. Iyer sitting next to his side that his nickname is Raja but he is a Bengali Muslim and his name is Jahangir Chowdhury. Initially she is confused about how a Bengali can be a Muslim. However, the revelation that Raja is a Muslim horrifies Mrs. Iyer because while on the bus she has borrowed the water bottle from Raja for drinking. The point is that she comes from an orthodox South Indian Brahmin family and she has drunk water from the bottle of a Muslim.

The bus halts at a Hindu locality. Frenzied Hindu communalists encircle the bus suddenly and two of those rioters enter the bus and start asking everyone's name for knowing whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim. In case they have any doubt about the religious identity of some passengers in the bus, they also ask them to drop their trousers and to show whether they are circumcised or not. The situation in the bus is tensed and all have shrunk in fear. While the checking of religious identity of the passengers continues, the Jewish young man jumps from his seat and shouts that there is one Muslim couple in the bus. The most interesting aspect of this particular situation is that the Jewish person has no foreskin and he may be identified a Muslim. However, it also hints at the hostile relationship between Palestine and Israel and the partition of Arab world. Immediately the two rioters approach the old Muslim couple and ask the old man his name. The old man replies that his name is Iqbal; one of the rioters wants clarification for the name. Then the old man says that his name is Iqbal Ahmed Khan. The cruelest and barbarous thing is that amidst the all passengers the two Hindu communalists take him outside the bus. His wife also follows him. It becomes clear to all travelling in the bus that the old Muslim couple will be butchered and they will never return. In the front of the two-sitter row of the bus, sit Mrs. Iyer and Mr Raja Chowdhury. Raja is then sure to be identified as a Muslim and looks pale with fear. The rioters come to them and ask their names. Abruptly, Meenakshi says that they are Mr and Mrs. Subramonium Iyer. Here lies the essential goodness of a man. Mrs Iyer who comes of a conservative South Indian Brahmin family instinctively responds to the situation for saving the life of a man forgetting everything about the religious background of her family.

Another interesting moment that is strikingly humane is the evening, when Mrs. Iyer and the photographer sitting side-by-side gossiping in the balcony of the guesthouse of the forest department, suddenly hear wild shouts of some people. The caretaker of the guesthouse informs them that some Hindus are chasing a Muslim and they should go to their room and shut the door immediately. Mrs Iyer without any hesitation almost forces the photographer to stay and share the room with her during the night. She then feels that the photographer will definitely invite danger if he goes out and sleeps outside the room somewhere in the guesthouse as in the preceding night. Her decision at this moment of crisis is spontaneous. She instantly comes out of the shackles of her conservative values of life. She feels an instinctive urge to save the life of a man ignoring the caste, creed and religion of the photographer. Indeed this is unimaginable on the part of a conservative South Indian housewife to spend the night in the same room with a stranger. Moreover, the stranger is a Muslim. Instantly she decides not to let the photographer go anywhere. Her experience in the night is traumatic. She sees through the window that rioters kill a Muslim. She asks the photographer if it is easy to kill a man. This is to emphasize Mrs Iyer's basic values of Indian life. Bestiality and simmering communalism are not all nor the end of life.

Meghe Dhaka Tara (The *Cloud Shrouded Star*, Translated by the present author), a Bengali film, directed by Ritwik Ghatak, delineates how a Bengali refugee family migrating from East Bengal after the Indian Independence in 1947 becomes the victim of economic hardship in the Government Refugee colony in the suburb of Calcutta metropolis. The film is based on the Bengali novel written by Shaktipada Rajguru. Ritwik Ghatak's film vividly points out how the economic hardship, insecurity and rootlessness during the post-partition period degenerate a Bengali family, living in a refugee colony near Calcutta, into selfishness, self-centredness, meanness and inhuman approach to life and the world. *Meghe Dhaka Tara* does not show any communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. In *Mr and Mrs Iyer*, the essential goodness of human life prompts instinctively Mrs Iyer to save a Muslim from the frenzy of the Hindu communalists.

In *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, Ritwik Ghatak focuses how Neeta sacrifices all her happiness for the sustenance of her parents, brothers and her younger sister.

She stops going to her college, engages herself in private tuitions, and thus maintains the family of her parents. She feels that her elder brother, Sankar, will be a singer of repute in future if he is given an opportunity. Sankar is also reluctant to take the financial responsibility of the family. Neeta helps him also by giving him money from her meagre income from private tuitions. Everyone in the family except Neeta insults him because he does not earn money. After her father fractures his bone in an accident, the entire financial responsibility comes on her shoulder. She is the only earning member in the family. Neeta finances her younger brother to continue his college education with an expectation that one day he will establish himself in life and relieve her of the responsibility.

Neeta and Sanat are in love. Sanat is adequately qualified to secure a job. He wants to marry Neeta and to establish a family. However, it is difficult for her to desert her parents and other members of her family. She asks Sanat to wait till her brothers establish themselves in life and take the responsibility of the family. Meanwhile Sanat starts visiting Neeta's house. Sanat is an eligible bachelor. Geeta, Neeta's younger sister is flippant in nature. She decides to grab the opportunity of being married with a successful man like Sanat even at the cost of her sister's happiness. Geeta knows that Neeta and Sanat are in love. But that does not bother her; she is a selfish person. Therefore, she plays all her tricks upon her sister's fiancé. Sanat infatuated by her tempting beauty marries her, owns an apartment and they live together in the city. Sankar thinks that Sanat has no principle. The cruelest thing is that Neeta's mother tacitly supports this marriage knowing fully well the existing relationship between Sanat and her eldest daughter Neeta. The apprehension of her mother is that in the event of Neeta's marriage with Sanat they will be left uncared and everybody in the family will simply starve. She knows now well that her husband will not be able to earn anymore. If the marriage between Geeta and Sanat materializes, Neeta's income will be intact and they will survive. Her mother unhesitatingly says that the family will not run even for a day if Neeta is married to Sanat. Let Geeta and Sanat marry. Sankar is a silent observer of all the events and remains all along sympathetic to Neeta for her sacrifice. He is hurt by the heartlessness of his mother and his younger sister. He is helpless and emotionally dependent on her.

Neeta is the only person in the family who supports his artistic pursuit. Being upset with the selfishness of his younger brother and sister, he leaves the family for his career in music.

The irony in the life of Neeta is that her brother Montu leads an extravagant life with the money he gets from Neeta. Montu's selfishness is so cruel that he decides to leave the family when he secures a job in a factory. This is one of the shocking events in Neeta's life. She accepts this selfish role of her brother calmly. After some days, Montu meets with an accident in his work place, returns home, and becomes a permanent liability of his sister.

Hard work from dawn till dusk, accompanied by worries gradually kills Neeta's vitality. When Montu is in his hospital bed after the accident she is again in problems. Nobody is by her side to help. Neeta is attacked by tuberculosis and she keeps this a secret. Even she has not told anything about this killer disease to her parents. At home, she segregates herself from everyone, lives in a separate room and even never allows anyone to wash utensils she uses. Days pass on this way. News spreads in the locality that Sankar who has left the house is in Bombay and has made a successful career there. To the people of the locality he is now the pride of Bengal. Sankar returns home. Geeta affectionately demands to Sankar that he should give her a gold necklace if she mothers a male child. The mother demands that Sankar should construct a double storied brick building. Neeta is confined to her room. She peeps through the bamboo made window of her hut and sees everyone happy. It is a grand family union.

Sankar asks his mother of Neeta's whereabouts. His mother points out the room where Neeta stays alone. He goes to her and discovers that her sister who has helped everyone in the family to get established in life suffers from tuberculosis. Sankar arranges the proper treatment of his sister. Neeta is now in a sanatorium in Shillong. Sankar visits to Reid Chest Hospital in Shillong. When Sankar meets Neeta, she cries out and says, 'Brother, I want to live' Sankar embraces her firmly with the non-verbal assurance of life. The film ends here with Neeta's shrill cry.

Man's meanness is another form of man's bestiality. *Meghe Dhaka Tara* underscores that even in this world of man's selfishness, nastiness and self-

centredness, man has not lost essential goodness of life. Neeta and Sankar represent basic goodness of life. They are aware of the exceptionable behaviour of the people around them. They still accept and accommodate them all. No communal riots are shown in this film. In a Bengali refugee colony in the post-partition era when everyone struggles for existence sacrificing his humanity, Neeta and Sankar are the hopes of life.

Charity, mercy, benevolence, generosity, concern for others i.e., altruistic vision of life, the importance of which is both mundane and spiritual, appeared first in the Scriptures of the Hindu religion. The fact is that no religion ever teaches anyone to discard all these values of life. All these values are universally accepted. But what makes all these values of life characteristically Indian is that the essence of the Scriptures of Hindu religion is intermingled with the Indian philosophy. The Indian philosophy is a way of looking at the life and the world. It preaches a man to lead his worldly as well as spiritual life. The Indian philosophy is a part of Indian life.

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