

Bhisham Sahni's *TAMAS* A Saga of Human Suffering

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Abstract

Tamas is the third novel of Bhisham Sahni based on the riots of 1947. It is a novel that describes each scene of the partition with the eye of a camera. Sahni's camera moves on each scene without any criticism or commentary. It represents the life as it was at the time of partition. Sahni has the first hand experience of the suffering of humanity so he delineates each scene very clearly and realistically.

It is notable that only the novelists who have experienced the trauma of partition on their bodies write about partition very clearly, realistically and emotionally. Otherwise it is very difficult to write about the story, which is not familiar to you. Sahni writes about his experience:

Partition has affected my life in a big way many incidents took place before my eyes. The society in which I lived got more and more tense everyday and I saw the growing bitterness among people. When I was a child, I witnessed the first Hindu Muslim riot in my own place. I was just eleven twelve years old. The onion market caught fire and it was so wild that almost the sky turned red. We used to sleep on the terrace of our house. Though my father tried to dismiss it as nothing. There was that red sky which I saw when I was lying on my bed . . . that left a deep scar on my mind (*Narrating Partition* 164)

This experience of life compelled Sahni to write. These incidents of the partition were boiling in the mind of Sahni and one day they appear before us as a beautiful novel titled *Tamas*. This paper is an attempt to experience the suffering of people during the partition through the novel.

Key Words: Tamas, India, Partition, Suffering, Saga

Tamas means darkness. The title of the novel is actually derived from the *Upanishda*, which contains a prayer to the lord to dispel darkness (Tamas) and usher in light jyothi). The novel depicts the darkness of that time very clearly and without any exaggeration. It depicts that world where man has lost his conscience and brother has turned against brother. There is blood in the eyes of every person and logic has no place in this situation. Everyone talks with spears, daggers, lances and swords. The novel depicts the communal tension in the town as well as in the villages during the partition. It focuses on the pre-partition time as well on the post-partition time, when the people have lost everything. There is no direct message by the novelist to us, only the description of the reality as it is and it depends upon us that what we get from this great novel. Sahni, in an interview, tells:

I did not try to analyze the cause of the partition in *Tamas*. I was only interested in describing the incidents I had seen and heard about. I was also trying to record what

people thought and felt at that time. If you however want to know my own opinion about what happened and why, I still may not be able to tell you. All I can say is that, as a humanist and a writer, I cherish some values and modes of behavior. I deplore the killing that took place. It was shameful that a large population should have indulged in so much violence (*Tamas and Landscape of Memories* 132-33).

So the motive of the novelist behind the publication of *Tamas* is to present the real picture of that time. Every writer, every thinker, even every person watches everything from his own point of view, many writers find faults with communalism, politics, immaturity of people, the Britishers etc. But Sahni is silent; he portrays the picture and asks us to analyze the situation because it is not easy for one person to analyze everything properly.

When the story of novel begins we are introduced to the protagonist of the novel, Nathu, who is struggling to kill the pig. It is the time of night, of darkness, which has a symbolic meaning that the time of darkness has started. The struggle between Nathu and the pig is the struggle between humanity and animality. It is the fight between human values and the senseless world of animals. It is the struggle of a poor laborer to make his life livable. Nathu is a *chamar* by caste but he has not willing to kill this pig:

"But I have never killed a pig, Master. If it were flaying an animal, or clenching a hide, I would have been glad to do it for you. But killing a pig, I am sorry, I have never done it. It is only the people in the piggery who know how to do it" (*Tamas* 3).

But he is helpless also; he is compelled by Murad Ali to do so. Murad Ali is a rich person and with his help Nathu earns his living.

Here starts the actual drama of the darkness in the novel on a dark night. The first chapter of the novel deals with the struggle between Nathu and the pig. Nathu is very tired and in dirty situation to kill. It is his struggle for life. He is struggling against this animal to win his life. He is helpless; he has no other choice besides killing the pig. In the end of the struggle the situation is:

The pig lifted its snout, which had turned red. Its eyes appeared to have shrunk. Behind it, at some distance, lay the stone slab, which had been thrown upon it. The flame in the clay lamp flickered again and in its unsteady light Nathu thought the pig had stirred. He stared hard at it. The pig had actually moved. It walked ponderously towards Nathu. It had hardly taken a couple of steps within it staggered and emitted a strange sound. Nathu with his dagger raised high, sat down on the floor. The pig took another couple of steps when its snout drooped to its feet, and before it could move further, it suddenly fell down on its side. There was a violent tremor in its legs and they soon stiffened in midair. The pig was dead (11).

It is not only the death of a pig. It is the symbolic death of harmony, of peace, of love and of humanity. It is the starting of killing, of bloodshed and chaos in a peaceful society before partition. As the story of the novel proceeds we get the meaning of this chapter and also learn about the evil powers behind all this, even behind every violence. Murad Ali is a reputed Muslim in the society but he is not a true Muslim, he wears the mask of humanity but actually he is an evil power. He compels an innocent poor man Nathu to kill a pig by his power. He tells a lie that a veterinary surgeon needs it for an experiment, but in reality it is the conspiracy of the Britishers. Richard, the Deputy Commissioner orders Murad Ali to do so and the next day the same carcass is left on the threshold of the mosque and it is the starting of the riots between Hindus and Muslims in the town.

The next chapter delineates the fickle nature of the Congressmen of the town. They don't understand the situation properly, they only blame to each other for minor things, and everyone tries to show his superiority over the others. On the other side Nathu is very upset on his deed of last night and he wants to get relief and it is only his wife who will soothe his feelings with love. So the love becomes a major force in the novel as we study further that it is only the love of Nathu's wife that saves him from depression. Congressmen are going on their *parbhat pheri*. They raise their "*Quomi Nara*" '*Bande Matram*' but suddenly they hear from the other side:

'Pakistan Zindabad!'

'Qaid-e-Azam Zindabad'

(Referring to Mr. Jinnah). (33)

It is a minor dispute between the small politicians. They are also the victims of the high leveled politics. Muslims want to have their separate political party, separate state and separate identity. So one of them says that Congress is the body of the Hindus. The Musalmans have nothing to do with it. While the Congressmen call it the party of everyone. It is the quarrel just for power, and nothing else.

When *Tamas* delineates the history of a particular period, it becomes a historical novel in that sense. Sudha Shastri writes, "*Tamas* belongs to the order of the classical historical novel as popularized by Walter Scott, who draws a specific historical epoch within the purview of each of his novels . . . *Tamas* restricts itself to a period that actually happened." (117). The history presented by our historians may be false, but the history in the fiction is more close to the reality, because there is depiction of the feelings of the common people, their lives, their experiences and their thinking. This depiction of real history also brings the novel to the realism and the novel can also be included in the category of realist novels. "*Tamas* tells the story of a good Hindu, a good Muslim, a good Sikh, a bad Sikh, a bad Muslim, a bad Hindu and worse than all British." ("Tamas-Bhisham Sahni Review" 1). It depicts the reality without any partiality. Sahni understands the pain of humanity, nothing else. The pain is same for everyone although one is a Hindu, a Sikh or a Muslim. This depiction of pain in the novel "shakes you, depresses you, and literally makes you see the horror of partition . . ." (1). It is realism in the novel that makes it appeal to the readers. The trauma of partition is not so old that it can be changed into a myth. We all know about the massacre of the partition from our old people. They approve every incident of the novel. Sudha shastri again says, "*Tamas* belongs to the literary world of realistic novels. It strives to convince the reader of the reality of its world, of its rootedness in history"(118).

The story of the novel proceeds. The Congressmen are going to the Muslim street for *tameeri*. When they were passing through the lanes. There were some Muslim men on every turn staring at them. They all are confused about such behavior of the people. Some Congressmen blame each other that perhaps it is because of their behavior toward people. But no one is clear about the situation.

It is the beginning of the confusion in the town. It is the carcass of the pig killed by Nathu and nothing else on the threshold of the mosque. Muslim community loses its temper. They think it is an attack on their religion by Hindus. They want to listen nothing. Now we see that a group of Muslims is running after a cow with arms to kill it. It is the starting of communal riots in the town and Congressmen has to come back after analyzing the situation. Bakshiji tries to solve the problem. He removes the carcass from the stairs of the mosque. But the situation is changing bad to worse as Hindus also lose their temper on the killing of the cow. There are rumours all around. It's the situation of doubt, tension, insecurity and inhumanity. This tense environment changes into riots. There is bloodshed all around. It is the starting point of all confusion and riots. About this incident V. P. Sharma writes:

The total structure of *Tamas* is determined by a symbolic incident, which the carcass of a pig, wrapped in a gunnysack, is placed on the steps of a mosque. In retaliation a cow is killed and the simmering communal tension explodes into horrendous communal riots. (221)

On the other side, Sahni depicts the nature of Britishers through the character of Richard, the Deputy Commissioner. They have to do nothing to solve the problem; rather the Britishers are responsible for such incidents. Sahni is very much aware of the 'divide and rule' policy of the Britishers. So "*Tamas* dramatizes the attitude of the British towards the natives in terms of about half a dozen scenes between Richard, the district collector and his wife Liza." (215). Liza doesn't like the policies of her husband about the Indians. She asks her husband to teach the history to the people for their understanding but Richard makes fun of Indians by saying: "These people know only what we tell them." After a little pause he added, "Most people have no knowledge of their history. They only live it." (Sahni *Tamas* 41)

They discuss the difference between a Hindu and a Muslim. While Liza doesn't discriminate among the people on the basis of their caste. Richard has no logic behind this discrimination. He only discusses the differences between their names and style of living. Liza doesn't understand it and calls Richard "so clever" as he has differentiated them. He again makes fun of Indians and their weak points:

"Well all Indians are quick-tempered. They flare up over trivial things. They fly at one another's throat in the name of religion. They are all terribly self-centered. And they all adore white women." (50)

She asks Richard that he had told her in England that Indians are fighting against the Britishers but now he says they are fighting against each other. He again makes the fun of the foolishness of Indians. Now Liza says:

" . . . In the name of freedom they fight against you, but in the name of religion you make them fight one another ... you can stop them from fighting . . . " (50)

Now Richard replies:

"Darling rulers have their eyes only on differences that divide their subjects, not on what unites them. " (51)

Liza wants to help the Indians and tell them the reality. She has love for humanity, while Richard only smiles to the sayings of Liza. She is also worried about the safety of her husband. On this Richard replies:

"No, Liza. If the subjects fight among themselves, the ruler is safe." ²⁴ This statement by Richard tells about his policies as a ruler. He is the most evil power in the novel, which is responsible for the great massacre and bloodshed in the town. Sudhi Rajiv states: "Bhisham Sahni has made conscious use of history and fictional presentation." (229).

On the other side the religious powers of both the religions take advantage from this hot situation in the town. Everyone wants to earn from these riots. The riots are problem only for common people while the rich people, the politicians and the corrupt religious leaders want to cash the situation. Vanaprasthi who shows that he is a true man and well wisher of everyone, in fact, is a corrupt and greedy man. He chants the holy verses: "Sarve Bhavantu sukhia . . . " (May every living being in the world be happy and live a contented life . . .) (*Tamas* 71).

He recites the *Shanti Path* on the riots in the town for peace but he is the same person who oils the fire indirectly. He chants:

"Much blighted has this land been by the sins of the Muslims, even the divine has refused us this grace, and the earth its bounty" (73).

With the help of a religious mask he anses the feelings of hatred in the minds of Hindus against the Muslim community. Vanaprasthi encourages the workers of Hindu organization to collect the arms to fight with Muslims. He provokes them indirectly that their primary concern is not to kill anybody but we should be armed for our safety. He asks them to store a canister of linseed oil and a bag of coke and charcoal in every house so that they can pour the boiling oil from their roofs over the enemy. He is a wolf in religious clothes. The local Gurdwara Committee is also not back to others. They are also preparing themselves for a war. Other members of these religious organizations suggest different methods to fight.

A Deputation of some congressmen and some members of Muslim league go to meet MR. Richard for the solution of the problem. But nobody approves it. The Hindus think that there is no hope of solution if we go with Muslims; nor do Muslims believe on Hindus. The Britshers use religion as a tool to fight with Indians. Richard knows about every problem but he doesn't co-operate with the local leaders. He receives them with a comment: "There must be something important gentlemen that has brought you to my residence, and that too on a Sunday." Richard said smiling (92).

He makes fun of them that they don't believe in British government so he can not do anything. He says that the whole power is in the hands of Pandit Nehru, as he can not do anything to stop the riots. The members ask him at least to set up army pickets but he refuses to do so. He says that he has no power to resolve their personal problems, while the cunning smile plays on his lips. When the members feel that Mr. Richard is not co-operating them, then one of the members asks him about his duty. Richard rebukes them and shows them the door.

On the other side master Dev Vrat, the organizer of the Youth Wing's akhara is teaching the young Hindu generation the use of arms. Ranvir, a young boy comes in his akhara to learn the use of arms. Dev Vrat conducts an examination for him to enter in the akhara. He asks to kill a hen. It is very difficult for a fresher to kill a hen. Master Dev Vrat told him the stories of valour and tries to change him in a warrior against Muslims. In enthusiasm, Ranvir makes the hen wounded and Dev Vrat recruits him in his akhara. This akhara misguides the youth and changes them in heartless killers on the name of religion. Dev Vrat teaches the basics of killing to Ranvir that one should not indulge in talking with the enemy it becomes the cause of sympathy. One should directly attack with the knife in the stomach and then twist the knife in the stomach. Now Ranvir is a very changed person. He loots the shop of a local *halwai*, he also kills a poor peddler on the road who sells the scent and is worried about the safety of Ranvir on the free road. This enthusiasm on the name of religion changes every human being into a devil. Now Ranvir finds killing easy than fighting.

Now the tension has spread in every corner of the town. The Gurkha watchman cleans the bell hung on the wall of shivala. The bell is a symbol of the starting of riots. It has been put after the communal riots of 1926. Now it is again time for communal riots in the town. One side are the slogans of 'Bharat mata Ki Jai', 'Vande Matram', 'Har-Har Mahadev', 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' and on the other side 'Pakistan Zindabad', 'Allaha-Akbar'. Liza asks Richard to implement the law to stop this violence but Richard again refuses by saying it that we don't interfere in their religious matters.

Thus, the main focus of the novelist becomes communal madness and the policies of the Britishers that destroy the life of common man. Poor Nathu is confused and frightened. He doesn't know the ways of the world. He tries to meet Murad Ali but Murad Ali ignores him and does not allow him to come close to him. Nathu reaches to his house in confusion. He hears the voices from outside that there are riots in the town and grain market is set on the fire, all these things increase his tension and he can not tell anything to his wife. It is a very beautiful depiction of history and reality in fiction. Sudhi Rajiv writes: "Bhisham sahani has made conscious use of history and its fictional presentation. The novel is set in an historical framework" (229).

Lala Lakshmi Narayan is upset and in tension because his house is in the street of Muslims. He is very frightened. He is worried because he has not found his woodchopper. He is also worried that his young son, Ranvir has not reached the house. He mutters in fear: "On one side the alarm bell is ringing and on the other, the grain market is being gutted down. It will be the undoing of the Hindus." (*Tamas* 153). He gets more and more frightened by the slogans in the street 'Allah-O-Akbar.' He is also worried because the Hindu slogans are not audible in this street.

Shah Nawaz is a rich Muslim, who drives his car freely without any tension. Nobody dares to touch him, But the conversation between Shah Nawaz and other Muslims show that they are angry with him that he is helping the Kafirs. Shah Nawaz presents himself as a true human being, not as a Muslim. He shows that he loves humanity. Raghunath's wife asks him to bring her jewellery from her old house. He reaches to their old house with a bunch of keys where only the house servant Milkhi is in the house. Shah Nawaz is good at heart; he doesn't want to kill anyone. He doesn't discriminate between a Hindu and a Muslim, but when his eyes fall on the thin tuft of hair on Milkhi's head, this *chutia* gives him a creepy feeling. He has also seen the grieving crowd of people in the mosque and the funeral procession. All these scenes changed his mind for a moment.

Shah Nawaz gives a sharp kick to Milkhi on his back and Milkhi stumbled, fell head downward and died. The interesting thing about this episode is that Shah Nawaz himself is not aware why he killed that innocent person. But the novelist and we understand the mind of Shah Nawaz, which comes under the impact of communalism prevailing all around Shah Nawaz looks out of the window into the courtyard of the mosque and sees a corpse surrounded by a number of people. It generates the communal hatred in Shah Nawaz also. Suddenly his eyes fall on Milkhi's *chutia*, instantly Milkhi gets transformed into a type. When Shah Nawaz kicks Milkhi, he is kicking the Hinduism. So the communal forces and feelings were so powerful at that time that Shah Nawaz also can not escape from all this.

There are the scenes of bloodshed all around. People are thirsty for one another's blood in the town. But some people are still working for the people as comrade Dev Datt. There are the disputes in the families, as the parents of Dev Datt don't allow him going out in such confusion. They don't want to lose their son in the service of people, but Dev Datt has to leave his family for the service of people. He says on the tone of Gandhi that Pakistan shall be made over my dead body'. But suddenly the faceless crowd rejects him:

"You, son of a . . . " shouted someone standing behind him, and with one swing of his lathi, hit the jarnail on his head and broke his skull in two. Jarnail fell down in a head, with his cane, his green 'military' uniform, his torn turban and his torn chappals, before he could finish his sentence. (*Tamas* 191)

Most affected victim of the situation is poor Nathu. He is deeply disturbed by his doing and the mis happenings in the town. His heart sinks every time when he hears about the killings in the town. He tries again and again to console himself that he is an innocent and he is not responsible for all this. Again fear catches him. He feels nobody will spare him; he will be put behind the bars. No one will believe in his story and his life will be destroyed. Murad Ali has power and no one will doubt on him because he is a Muslim himself. This net of thoughts confuses Nathu more and more. His soul is in pain. He wants to get relief. So he decides to tell everything to his beloved wife and he knows that only she will believe in his words. He starts to discuss with his wife:

"Do you know why the grain Market is burning?"

"I know someone killed a pig and threw it outside a mosque. And then the Muslims set fire to the Grain Market"

'I killed that pig'

Nathu's wife turned pale. (210)

Nathu clears the whole situation before his wife one by one. His wife understands his problem and tries to console him by her love. One thing that is notable is that only the poor people suffer in this massacre though they belong to Hindu, Muslim or Sikh castes. No rich person suffers from this fire of violence.

The next part of the novel focuses on the situation of the villages. The Sikh families living in Muslim villages are in danger. Harman Singh runs a small tea stall in his village Dhok Illahi Baksh. He and his wife are living in peace. He has many Muslim friends also. But now they hear the news of riots from here and there so now Ban to fears to live in a Muslim village. She asks Harman Singh to leave the village but he doesn't agree to do so. He believes in God. He thinks if they have never thought ill of any person then how can others

attack on them. But the situation is turning bad to worse all around. Karim Khan, Harman Singh's Muslim friend doesn't stop on his shop but warns Harman Singh to leave the village because the situation is not in favour of Sikhs in the village. Now Harnam Singh gets frightened. Karim Khan again passes before the shop and again warns him in hard words to leave the village. At last, the old couple decides to leave the village. They only take some necessary goods and a gun with them and leave the place. The gun is not to kill any person, but for their own safety. The marauders reach to their shop with the slogans 'Ya Ali', 'Allah-O-Akbar!'. The old couple runs through the fields under the darkness. They see fire from the distance. Harnam Singh states "It is our shop burning, Banto! . . . everything reduced to dust!" (224)

The couple is also worried about their son Iqbal Singh who runs a cloth shop in a nearby village Nurpur and their daughter Jasbir Kaur, who is married in a village named Sayedpur. At last after spending whole night in the fields the couple reaches to a village and decides to ask for help from a house. Harnam Singh says: "Banto, if we find them hostile, then I shall first finish you off with my gun and then kill myself. I won't let you fall into their hands so long as I am living" (227).

Now they reach to a Muslim house. Rajo the mistress of the house has pity on their situation and allows them to come in the house at their request. Ehsan Ali asks Harnam Singh to leave his house because his son will not spare him. Then there is confusion in the family. Ehsan Ali's son wants to kill the couple but the family saves them and they leave this house.

Now there is portrayal of life in Sayedpur:

The gurdwara was packed to capacity. The entire congregation was swaying in ecstasy. It was a rare moment. The singers sang with their eyes closed, in frenzied exaltation: "who is there, besides you my Lord . . ." (228).

It is the preparation for war by the Sikhs of the village. They all are collected on a common place, their gurdwara. They are chanting the songs of bravery and sacrifice for their community. They were collecting the weapons from all around. They were in typical attire, a long, blue robe, blue turban covered with an iron dice and yellow waistband and they have the lances in their hands. Everyone was ready to sacrifice his life for *the Panth*. On the other side Muslims of the village gather in Sheik Gulam Rasul's double-storied house. The Muslims of the village are also storing arms and ammunition. The atmosphere of Sheik's mansion is similar to the Sikh gurdwara.

Sohan Singh refutes Sardar Teja Singh and others. He wants them to know that they are being incited against the Muslims, and the Muslims against them. He calls them for joint effort. On the other side Mir Dad tries to teach the lesson of humanity to the Muslim community. Mir Dad tries to teach them that their real enemy is the British Government; they should fight against it collectively. They both try to save their communities and to nip the rumours. But all in vain, none understands them; rather people blame them to work against their communities. Actually both are the workers of the same party and try to develop a community center in the village. Now the situation is out of control. There are some incidents of bloodshed those incite the both communities for the attack.

The scene is shifted to Narpur village, where Iqbal Singh, the son of Harnam Singh is running to save his life from the furious Muslim community. Ramzan, the son of Ehsan Ali and his fellows are in search of him. When they see him, they run after him. Iqbal Singh runs into a cave to save his life. All the Muslims ask him to come out but he doesn't come out. They call him 'Sikhra' and start to throw the stones in the cave.

Iqbal is wounded, but he doesn't cry because of fear. They continue to throw the stones but the Sikh youngman doesn't come out of the hole. Now they offer him his life if he accepts their faith. Even now the youngman doesn't come out. But at last they are successful to force him. Insured Iqbal Singh comes out of the cave. They ask him to recite the Kalma forcibly and helpless Iqbal nods his head in yes. Now they call him their brother and hug him one by one. The people, who were thirsting for his blood, now receive him with love. But some of them make his fun indirectly. Someone pushes him from back and someone from the other side. They give his beard a Muslim cut. His head is shaved; when the conversion ceremony is over he looks like a Muslim. A piece of raw meat is placed in his mouth forcibly, Iqbal Singh's eyes are popped out, and he is unable to breath. The rest of the ceremony is conducted with peace. Mullah makes Iqbal Singh to recite the Kalma. The Kalma is recited three times and finally Iqbal Singh is changed into Iqbal Ahmed. Everyone hugs him and the slogans are again raised: "Nara -e- Takbir, Allah -o-Akbar!"

The Turks have come in Sayedpur. A bitter fight takes place and it goes for two days and two nights. A great massacre takes place in the village. There is bloodshed all around. Seven dead bodies covered with white sheets of clothes lying near *Granth Sahib*. Five women are sitting with the heads of their husbands in their laps. There are two dead bodies without any claimant - one is of Nihang Singh, who was protecting gurdwara, the second dead body is of Sohan Singh, who tries to control the situation by teaching the people. There are many other dead bodies scattered here and there. The dead body of the peon of Khalsa School is lying in the school courtyard. Mai Bhagan's dead body is also found in her house. The old man Saudagar Singh is also killed. Someone also kills Poor and innocent water Carrier Allha Rakha. Two small children, working as shop boys are found dead. The flames of fire are rising from the building of Khalsa School. This is the worst face of humanity. The study of this scene creates the atmosphere of horror in our minds. It is even difficult to imagine such massacre that has happened in reality. It is too difficult to discuss such reality, but we learn a lesson and feel relieved, after reading it as readers. Now although some people try to reconcile after seeing this great massacre but the Muslims are not interested in any discussion, they ask for high payments for it, so all in vain. Many Sikh women jump into the village to save their honor and lives. Jasbir kaur, the daughter of Harnam Singh is first to jump into the well. Many ladies even jump with their small children also.

Now after this great massacre authority is awoken, the white officer comes in an aeroplane over the village. The situation changes with the arrival of the aeroplane. People receive it as the symbol of peace, they are innocent and do not understand the double policies of the Britishers. People calmly start to resettle their households. The dead bodies are removed and the religious people start to wash their religious places. The hatred between Hindu and Muslim communities was a strange thing. Today, we think that why the people were mad, how easily they broke the centuries old relationship. Urvashi Butalia writes:

For years after wards-indeed well into the present day-people involved in partition violence would ask themselves what it was that turned the interconnectedness of entire lifetime, often generations of shared interdependence, albeit different lives, into feelings of enmity (58).

Now the atmosphere is changed all around. The administration comes into action. The Deputy Commissioner is doing rounds in the city himself. Government hospitals, as well as private organizations are attending to the wounded people and disposing the dead bodies. The National Congress has set up a relief office inside a school building, which is crowded all the time. The Deputy Commissioner visits there again and again and tries to show that government is interested in the welfare of people. He discusses the situation with health officer also and invites his wife to work in the service of people with his own wife. He earns name and fame in the town by his hypocrisy. On the other side his wife has lost interest in this boring life. She is thirsty for his love and she takes the help of liquor to forget all this. This situation of his wife reminds Richard the story of the broken marriage of Mr. Lawrance. It is very ironic situation; on the one side, he is building the houses of other people while his own house life is in danger.

In the last chapters of the novel, Sahni depicts the situation after partition, the pitiable condition of the refugees in refugee camps. The functionary of the relief committee asks the sufferers about the loss of countable things and lives from them, but these living beings are lost themselves. They are not able to understand this 'Statistical Babu'; they only talk about their uncountable sufferings. The administration can do nothing to heal the wounds in their hearts and psyche. It asks only about the figures. While the sufferers are telling the sad tales that how the friends turned into enemies. Kartar Singh tells that his beloved friend attacked with a sickle on his eye and he is worried, can it be cured? The next person is Harnam Singh. He tells his tale that he and his wife are saved, but they have heard that their daughter has committed suicide and they also have no news of their son IQbal Singh. He wants to recover his gun from Jalal Din Subedar. He also wants that enquiries should be made about the whereabouts of his son. But Babu does not care except figures. Another sardar feels that his wife Sukhwant and son Gurmeet have not jumped into the well. He wants the Babu to trace her for he is very particular about the gold chain that she has been wearing, he even offers bribe to the 'Babu' if he recovers his gold chain. He has lost everything and hopes that gold chain may help him to restart his life. Many refugees are sitting here and there and sharing their experiences with each other. Dev Datt is also working in the office. He is in charge of tracing the missing people. As he is attached to the Marxist ideology, he asks the 'Babu' to collect figures regarding the number of the poor killed against the rich. There is hustle and bustle all around, all are moving like puppets without knowing about their future and destination.

There is a Brahmin couple, who are sad because a tonga driver of Nurpur village has kidnapped their daughter Parkasho. They beg to recover their daughter. The Bubu says that they themselves can go to Nurpur in the bus next day. But the couple refuses to go to that village next day because till then she will be polluted and they will not accept her. So they try to forget her. On the other side, the novelist depicts the scene of Nurpur village where Parkasho is slowly conditioning herself to be wife of Allah Rakha. She is happy after learning that her parents are living. Allah Rakha also loves her and makes her overcome her initial fear. While in the Relief Office situation remains same for a long time.

Now the prominent citizens of the city gather to form a Peace Committee in the wake of the riots. They discuss the issue to fight and the aim of the committee. They again fall in the disputes about religious basis of the Peace Committee but they resolve it and decide to work for the peace. Lala Shyam Lal decides to contest the municipal elections with the help of Congress. Some characters show love for each other. The Peace Committee is organized. The novelist here reveals that poor Nathu is no more. Perhaps Murad Ali kills him because only Nathu knows the reality of Murad Ali. Peace Committee members try to spread the message of love on a bus and Murad Ali is on the top of the bus and speaking about peace in microphone. The Deputy Commissioner, the root cause of this turmoil will be transferred soon.

Poor Nathu is killed, while the devil Murad Ali is still living, it is symbolic, means the evil forces are still ruling over our country. Only poor people die in riots, no rich person suffers in this turmoil. The prey is always poor either he is a Hindu, a Muslim or a Sikh. Rich people work in favour of their class as we study that Shah Nawaz, a rich Muslim helps to a rich Hindu family. He doesn't help to any poor. Lack of conversation also plays a major role in the novel. There is lack of communication among the people, so they don't understand each other and the feelings of each other. Because of this lack the rumours take place in the story. These rumours incite people against each other. We know that the two communities are not really enemy to each other but they are made by the rumours, if there was proper conversation among the people, there would not be such a great massacre. Ranvir is also taught in akhara that he should never talk to the person to whom he goes to kill because the conversation generates the sympathy for the other person. So when there is no conversation, it naturally generates the enmity among people and the British takes its advantage.

The major problem in the novel is of communalism. Sahni is hopeful that communalism can be contested/fought, but only then when the wise men of all the communities will come together in the service of humanity. If they remain apart, the innocent people will follow them and there will be again and again massacre on this earth, as we are suffering from the fresh riots in Gujarat and other states of India.

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