

PAPER PARTITION LITERATURE

TEXT 'BASTI' by Intezar Hussain, WEEK-5<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> April, 20

TEACHER DR. PRERANA SINHA

What makes the Plot of 'Basti' complex?  
OR

Comment on the Narrative Structure used in 'Basti' OR Memories through the child, Zakis is a deliberate motif used as a narrative structure.

Notes Based on 'Post-Realist Fiction' Devices by  
Mohammad Umar Menon

Memories of the Past evoked by child Zakis are certainly not about his nostalgia. They are a deliberate account of the past to depict some circumstantial psychological traits of Zakis' personality traits which will later provide the rationale for his conduct and responses to events in the present. These events in the present are juxtaposed with analogous events in the past, some even extending back a millennium or more. Hence one gets a distorted prism, a dizzying collage of discontinuities and refractions.

The main structure thus not only supports but also replicates the structure

and state of Zakir's mind; for instance, the first chapter reflects a beautiful ideal picture of the past, very soon in the second sentence the tragic tone appears signalling loss of a paradise, of a pre-industrial town. What makes the narrative more tragic is the descent and destruction of Rupnagar (though an imaginary place) that ruptured its harmony that was latent, existed within it as Zakir refers to stories of creation according to Hinduism and Islam. The motif of fratricide, according to Islam's legend, the shocking, brutal tale of Cain slaying his brother Abel sets the tone of the novel. As outbreak of Plague in Rupnagar, while black acts appearance as an ominous sign signals final act of dismemberment of Partition.

Tragic incidents of 1947 Partition, civil disorders in the late Lahore of late 1971, point out to the inevitability of Creation into Destruction.

The events and human conduct that fill the intervening space explain causally the inescapability of death and destruction.

Zakir's name implies one who rewalks through time and space with the graphic memory of Shiite suffering. He and his friend do not participate in any action, they simply observe and recount.

Critic says material events instead of inciting to physical action perhaps tend to heighten the sense of suffering, making him rise to sublimity.

Hence, in personal arena too, his love for Sabirah "patient" remains unfulfilled. Perhaps, it cannot blossom in such an imperfect world. Zakir and Sabirah's love each other with an intransitive love.

Husain's characters indulge in paradoxes and contradictions. He believed 'no creative effort can feed for too long on nostalgia or survive in a present haunted by the past.'

It is important to differentiate between having a Nostalgia and being conscious of a Past.

Critics who have failed to understand this, fail to understand him and hence label him a Reactionary. For History and its consciousness help in shaping the individual that he becomes, emerging as a collective personality.

Husain intensely felt it is no use lamenting a lost Paradise, rather efforts should be towards building a new one. Such insightfulness gives him a Humanism and a Pragmatism.

He regrets that creative possibility of a newly born nation should have been exploited. Migration, a dominant experience of the times immediately following Partition gets a different treatment in Husain's writing.

He said, 'Hijrat', a recurrent phenomenon i.e; sense of continuity with recurrent historical

experience, should have enriched Muslims, unfortunately it did not do so.

To Hussain, Migration implied gap from old to New Country which should have been embarked with creativity from physical to spiritual level. In this form it was treated with particular intensity and fondness by writers such as Hassan, A. Hamid and Hussain. Thus scepticism & gloom pervades their writing, a sense of failure at not making migration a positive experience.

You can attempt following Questions on 'Basti' on the basis of Notes sent so far and after reading the Novel.

- ① 'Intezaar Hussain's 'Basti' is a narrative journeying through multiple spaces and times documenting the partitions of Memory.' Discuss
- ② 'Basti' is a novel about Multiple Partitions yet it embodies an unpartitioned consciousness. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.

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