

Twentieth-Century Fiction
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Lecture - 51
Toba Tek Singh - Part 3

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Toba Tek Singh
by Sadat Hasan Manto

Two or three years after the 1947 Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan to exchange their lunatics in the same manner as they had exchanged their criminals. The Muslim lunatics in India were to be sent over to Pakistan and the Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums were to be handed over to India.

It was difficult to say whether the proposal made any sense or not. However, the decision had been taken at the topmost level on both sides. After high-level conferences were held a day was fixed for exchange of the lunatics. It was agreed that those Muslims who had families in India would be permitted to stay back while the rest would be escorted to the border. Since almost all the Hindus and Sikhs had migrated from Pakistan, the question of retaining non-Muslim lunatics in Pakistan did not arise. All of them were to be taken to India.

Nobody knew what transpired in India, but so far as Pakistan was concerned this news created quite a stir in the lunatic asylum at Lahore, leading to all sorts of funny developments. A Muslim lunatic, a regular reader of the fiery Urdu daily *Zamindar*, when asked what Pakistan was, reflected for a while and then replied, "Don't you know? A place in India known for manufacturing cut-throat razors." Apparently satisfied, the friend asked no more questions.

Likewise, a Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh, "Sardarji, why are we being deported to India? We don't even know their language." The Sikh gave a knowing smile. "But I know the language of *Hindustani*," he replied. "These bloody Indians, the way they strut about!"

One day while taking his bath, a Muslim lunatic yelled, "*Pakistan Zindabad!*" with such force that he slipped, fell down on the floor and was knocked unconscious.

Not all the inmates were insane. Quite a few were murderers. To escape the gallows, their relatives had gotten them in by bribing the officials. They had only a vague idea about the division of India or what Pakistan was. They were utterly ignorant of the present situation. Newspapers hardly ever gave the true picture and the asylum warders were illiterates from whose conversation they could not glean anything. All that these inmates knew was that there was a man by the name of Quaid-e-Azam who had set up a separate state for Muslims, called Pakistan. But they had no idea where Pakistan was. That was why they were all at a loss whether



So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Twentieth Century Fiction. We will start with the new text today which is Sadat Hasan Manto's story, Toba Tek Singh.

I believe I have really given you an introduction to this text and a brief background to the cultural setting which produces this text which was one of 1947 partition. This is a story about madmen in Lahore and we talked about how interestingly the madmen's response to partition turns out to be a saner response, a more rational, more humane response compared to the supposedly rational responses which were done at a bureaucratic level.

So, essentially this is a story about exchanging madmen from India and Pakistan. And there is a rationale behind it which is that the Indian, the Hindu madmen from Pakistan would be transported to India, and the Muslim madmen in India who had relatives in Pakistan would be transported across the border to Pakistan.

Now, obviously this mathematical formula of division is what makes entire experience of partition. So, absurd at an existential human level, because suddenly people were told the

house that they grew up living, house of ancestors had built and had sort of grew up living essentially belonged to a different country. And this whole idea of nation formation becomes something like an absurd act in this particular story. And the lunatics' response to absurdity becomes interestingly ironically a very human, it is perhaps the most human response available at that point of time.

Now, this story is of course as I may have mentioned already this story is also about the whole idea of the entanglement between memory and space. So, how does the place become a space in the mind? So, a place which is an address, it becomes more than just a physical location. How does it become something existential, something profound, something emotional and its emotive existential spatial quality about a place, a psychological quality about the place is what makes it so embedded in terms of identity formation, in terms of identity location and identity articulation.

To a certain extent this story is about a madman but it is also about space and how the madman and the space blend into each other because the protagonist in the story is a character called Bishan Singh. But he belongs to a village called Toba Tek Singh, and you know post partition, no one quite knows where Toba Tek Singh is. So, he essentially becomes a space in a in a very metaphorical way. So, we will see how the story goes and we will begin at the beginning again just to give you the flavor of the story and then we see how the bigger issues of madness, partition, absurdity and dislocation, they all come into being in different degrees of you know alienation. So, this is how the story begins.

Two or three years after the 1947 partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan to exchange the lunatics in the same manner as they had exchanged their criminals. So, again the way the criminals have been exchanged the lunatics are also going to be exchanged. So, again look at the way in which lunatics and criminals are sort of almost equated with each other. These are the fallen citizens, these are the dysfunctional citizens, these are not the healthy citizens.

So, at the very outset we have the idea of healthy citizenship, right. So, one who does not fit into the healthy citizenship model becomes a liability, becomes something like a dissident, something like a marginalized presence in the citizenship landscape, right. So, this is how the story began. So, the criminals and lunatics were equated together and now

it occurs to governments of India and Pakistan to exchange the lunatics just the same way that it exchanged the criminals.

So, again we see the madhouse and a prison being a very similar kind of places. Both are places of confinement and coercion, something we have seen already in a different degree in let us say Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The Muslim lunatics in India were to be sent over to Pakistan and the Hindu and the Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums were to be handed over to India. So, that was a deal that was arranged at a bureaucratic level.

It was difficult to say whether the proposal made any sense or not. So, look at the tongue in cheek, dry irony at play over here. Manto's narrator over here is obviously a dry ironist. He is not really spelling out the irony, not spelling out the absurdity of it, but he is very much pointing towards the same, right. So, it is difficult to say whether it made any sense or not, which is obviously suggesting or insinuating that it did not make any sense at all. But which is what quite clearly what the case was about the entire partition, it did not make any sense at all to divide people based on religion, to divide people based on mathematical principle of cartography, mathematical principle of land and religion that obviously completely did away with any understanding of emotion, any understanding of location, any understanding of integration, etcetera.

So, it was difficult to say as the narrator tells us whether the proposal made any sense or not. However, the decision had been taken at a topmost level on both sides. After high-level conferences were held a day was fixed for exchange of the lunatics. So, some very high-level bureaucratic conferences were held in different countries and different cities presumably in Islamabad and Delhi, and then bureaucrats decided on a date in which this partition this swapping of madmen would occur.

It was agreed that those Muslims who had families in India would be permitted to stay back while the rest would be escorted back to the border. Since, almost all the Hindus and Sikhs had migrated from Pakistan, the question of retaining non-Muslim lunatics in Pakistan did not arise. All of them were to be taken to India.

So, again as you go back and reread this, we find out how it is so fascinatingly fabulous and fantastic in a literal sense, in a fantastical and negative sense. It has got nothing

logical about this, and the whole idea of deporting and swapping becomes an absurd act. And this story in many sense, is quite resonant with the current politics of deportation and immigration and exile etcetera, where you know the identity is reduced to a number, reduced to certain metonymic signifiers, religion, name, race, color skin, language etcetera. So, all these become the markers of identity, the different boxes which are to be ticked you know you know based on which one's location is to be determined.

So, you know the whole idea of Hindu and Muslim lunatics over here are mathematically divided. So, the Hindu lunatics and the Sikh lunatics were you know who were in Pakistan were just sent back to India because there are no Hindus and Sikhs left in Pakistan, and the Muslim lunatics who had families in India would be permitted to stay back, otherwise if the families were in Pakistan, they would be sent back to Pakistan, ok.

Nobody knew what transpired in India, but so far as Pakistan was concerned this new this news created quite a stir in the lunatic asylum at Lahore. So, Lahore being the site of this particular story the asylum in Lahore is where the setting, the action takes place. So, it has caused quite a stir, quite a lot of you know lot of rumour and controversy and the commotion that happened in that particular madhouse when this news broke out.

Leading to all kinds of all sorts of funny developments and you know the word funny over here is obviously very ironic because there is a lot of dark humour in this story. I mean it is humorous, it is funny, but at the same time it is quite unsettling if we think about it in a deeper way.

Because in the one hand, it is about madmen who are confused and they obviously have no clue what is going on and sometimes we laugh at them sadistically, but at the same time their crisis becomes very metonymic and very microcosmic representation of the bigger crisis of dislocation or the bigger crisis of identity-less-ness of agency-less-ness. You do not really have any agency, you do not really choose where to go, it is chosen for you and you have to just enter into a particular narrative whether it is an Indian narrative or the Pakistani narrative.

So, in some metafictional sense you might push the argument and say that these are the characters who do not want to fit into any of these two novels, the two novels being India and Pakistan, the two novels with emplotment, character, history, etcetera, two novels are being written. So, if you look at the nation as novels, two narratives are being formed

and these madmen, this liminal presence, these outsiders really do not want to go anywhere apart from where they are and they want to go back to a pre-novel space, a pre-nation space which is unavailable to them anymore.

So, everything is post-nation, now history is about to begin, the national narrative is about to begin, the novel is about to begin, the two novels are India and Pakistan, they are about to begin now. So, it is a question of choosing one of these two, and obviously the choice is not with the people over here, it is chosen for them. So, they just have to follow the orders in terms of their identity markers. If you are Hindu you go to India, if you are Muslim you go to Pakistan that is chosen for you whether you like it or not.

So, again it becomes a very key question about agency-less-ness or will-less-ness in the context of partition over here. So, there was a lot of stir in the lunatic asylum at Lahore, leading to all sorts of funny developments. A Muslim lunatic, a regular reader of the fiery Urdu daily Zamindar, when asked what Pakistan was reflected for a while and then replied, "Do not you know? There's a place in India known for manufacturing cut-throat razors." Apparently satisfied, the friend asked no more questions.

We have a series of quasi non-sensical questions and answers over here. So, someone asks where is Pakistan and there is a person who reads all kinds of very fiery newspapers says, oh do not you know? It is a place in India where they produce razors, cut-throat razors, that is the place called Pakistan and the person who hears it becomes, is satisfied and goes away.

So, all these funny quasi or seemingly non-sensical question and answer sessions obviously is reflective of the bigger nonsense of partition or the bigger absurdity of partition where people just do not know why there is a need for two different nation states, where in the process millions of people get killed and dislocated and outraged and shamed because of the religious markers.

Likewise, a Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh, "Sardarji, why are we being deported to India? We do not even know their language." The Sikh gave a knowing smile. "But I know the language of Hindostoras" he replied. "These bloody Indians the way they strut about."

So, again look at the way in which language, religions all these different things which are seen as identity markers, material markers are actually more emotional in quality. He grew up speaking a particular language and then you transfer him to another country, another place where they speak a different language, simply because your religion happens to be in alliance with their religion. Well, religion becomes the metanarrative of identity over here that obviously subsumes and consumes all the other micro-narratives of identity like language for instance.

This there was a very big issue apparently in North India at that point of time because many people, many Hindus, quote unquote Hindus who came from Pakistan during partition well they grew up speaking Urdu because they belonged to that part of land. And when they came to, when they came to in Delhi or settled in northern parts of India the language there the more common language over there, the more commonly consumed language was Hindi which is different from Urdu, right So, again just because it happened to be religiously same they were dislocated and they were forced to be reintegrated into a different kind of culture altogether.

So, you can look at food you can look at language, you can look at dress, all these different markers all these get subsumed completely and a one metanarrative, the one grand narrative of identity which is imposed on everyone during partition is that of religion. So, that becomes the be all and end all over here. So, if you are a Hindu you would go to x, if you are a Muslim you go to y and there is no other you know liminal territory in between, so that becomes the major issue over here.

So, we find all these nonsensical questions over here. Questions and answers are reflective of the nonsense and the absurdity of dividing people, simply on the basis of religion and that that becomes the most reductionist, the most barbarous the most absurd and perhaps the most irrational act of division ever done in history of this subcontinent, ok.

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don't even know their language." The Sikh gave a knowing smile. "But I know the language of *Hindustani*," he replied. "These bloody Indians, the way they strut about!"

One day while taking his bath, a Muslim lunatic yelled, "*Pakistan Zindabad!*" with such force that he slipped, fell down on the floor and was knocked unconscious.

Not all the inmates were insane. Quite a few were murderers. To escape the gallows, their relatives had gotten them in by bribing the officials. They had only a vague idea about the division of India or what Pakistan was. They were utterly ignorant of the present situation. Newspapers hardly ever gave the true picture and the asylum wardens were illiterates from whose conversation they could not glean anything. All that these inmates knew was that there was a man by the name of Quaid-e-Azam who had set up a separate state for Muslims, called Pakistan. But they had no idea where Pakistan was. That was why they were all at a loss whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan, how come that only a short while ago they were in India? How could they be in India a short while ago and now suddenly in Pakistan?

One of the lunatics got so bewildered with this India-Pakistan-Pakistan-India rignarole that one day while sweeping the floor he climbed up a tree, and sitting on a branch, harangued the people below for two hours on end about the delicate problems of India and Pakistan. When the guards asked him to come down he climbed up still higher and said, "I don't want to live in India and Pakistan. I'm going to make my home right here on this tree."

All this hubbub affected a radio engineer with an MSc degree, a Muslim, a quiet man who took long walks by himself. One day he stripped off all his clothes, gave them to a guard and ran in the garden stark naked.

Another Muslim inmate from Chinot, an erstwhile adherent of the Muslim League who bathed fifteen or sixteen times a day, suddenly gave up bathing. As his name was Mohammed Ali, he one day proclaimed that he was none other than Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Taking a cue from him a Sikh announced that he was Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs. This could have led to open violence. But before any harm could be done the two lunatics were declared dangerous and locked up in separate cells.

www.sbsc.net/partition/tobatawaingh.html



One day while taking his bath, a Muslim lunatic yelled, "Pakistan Zindabad" with such force that he slipped, fell down on the floor and was knocked unconscious. So, again these are quasi funny moments, but then you know if we take a look deeply these are not really funny at all. This is a madman trying to engage or trying to process, the story of partition which is just broken down on them, which is just broken out to them.

And there is this Rip Van Winkle situation about the story as well. These are people who have essentially slept for so many years. They do not really know what is happening, they are not switched on about the current affairs. Suddenly, they are waking up and told that there are two countries now India and Pakistan.

So, if you have religion x you go to country a, if you are religion y you go to country b and no one is asking you no one is giving you the option of a third space of rather the space where you grew up belonging or grew up, you know living you know you do not have to go there, you do not need to go there you are not asked to go there. You are just asked you go somewhere else which is determined and decided for you.

And again, this whole idea of predetermination becomes important over here whereas, whereby you lose your agency, you lose your authority to decide upon your own life and that is taken away from you and everything becomes very bureaucratically governed very bureaucratically informed. So, all these there is a bigger Kafkaesque bureaucracy

somewhere up there which takes the decisions for you and all you have to do is obey the orders that come from the Kafkaesque point, ok.

Now, we come to the demography in the in the asylum which is very interesting kind of a mix because we are told immediately that you know this is a very mixed and hybrid and complex kind of space, where not everybody is a madman. There are people over here pretending to be mad because that is the only way they could escape the gallows. So, they were criminals. So, now, are put in with the mad people someone bribed them to get in there and bribed the authorities to get in there, get them over here, just so they could be safe from hanging or other penal kinds of punishments. So, we are told this is where in this section.

Not all the inmates were insane. Quite a few were murderous. To escape the gallows, their relatives had gotten them in by bribing the officials. So, in that sense the madhouse becomes a safe space because again madness will protect you from legal retribution. If you do something out of madness, if you break the law out of madness the commonly consumed theory is you need medical help, you do not need legal retribution. So, madness becomes something of a license here as well, to escape the law, to escape the retribution of the law and that again becomes very complex.

So, again if you take a look at the ontology of madness in the story, it is a very complex phenomenon, sometimes it is more rational than what the supposedly rational world is and sometimes it is just feigning and performative it is not really mad at all and you know in a properly medical sense, ok.

So, these people who had just been there because they wanted to escape the gallows, they had only a vague idea about the division of India or what Pakistan was. They were utterly ignorant of the present situation. Newspapers hardly ever gave the true picture and the asylum wardens were illiterates from whose conversations they could glean nothing. So, these are the quote unquote “sane” people. So, they wanted to know what was really happening. So, they wanted to find out or glean information, collate information from the asylum wardens. But they got more and more addled talking to them because no one had any idea about you know what was really going on, ok.

All that these inmates knew was that there was a man by the name Quaid-e-Azam and who had set up a separate state for Muslims called Pakistan. So, the reference obviously

over here is Quaid-e-Azam who is a reference to Muhammad-Ali-Jinnah. And Jinnah obviously was a first statesman of Pakistan. He was one was a forerunner for that separate state etcetera and now these people are told there is someone called the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad-Ali-Jinnah, and he had now form Pakistan and now all the Muslims over here must belong there and not to India.

But this is important bit or in the funny bit as well. They had no idea where Pakistan was. So, again Pakistan becomes more of an idea to them rather than a real geopolitical location and suddenly they are told that this is Pakistan. And then they would be asking questions completely you know addled questions such as well if this is Pakistan how come this was India just a few minutes ago and then where is India. So, it is just given a new name, a new classification and that classification, that material machinery through which new names are given, the material machinery through which new classifications in a geopolitical level occurs that creates or that generates an existential dislocation.

So, we can see how there is an equation over here between classification and dislocation, right. So, that is something we should pay some attention to, ok. That was why they were all at a loss whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. So, they completely confused whether they are in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan then how come that only a short while ago they were in India? How could they be in India a short while ago and now suddenly in Pakistan?

So, because it is, the divisions are very abruptly done, they are done in a very ad hoc basis it does not make any sense to them at all, these people who have lived in this asylum for so many years.

And again, you can take a look at the asylum as something of a space outside the mainstream political discourse. So, the outsiders, the news have not had not historically penetrated them. So, in a way they had lived in a Rip Van Winkle situation where they were outside this mainstream action and now suddenly they are woken up and they are told that there is a two different country now and now they have to take a decision in terms of, not decision, decision is already taken for them. But they are just informed that they have to move to certain locations depending on where the religious identities were. And obviously from their perspective it becomes extremely absurd phenomenon, and that absurdity is something just constantly hinted at in the story, ok.

So, now we get all this again this funny quasi dark humorous quality in the story as it comes up. One of the lunatics got so bewildered with this India-Pakistan, Pakistan-India rigmarole that one day while sweeping the floor he climbed up a tree, and sitting on a branch harangued the people below for two hours on end about the delicate problems of India and Pakistan. When the guards asked him to come down he climbed up still higher and said, "I do not live in India and Pakistan. I am going to make my home right here on this tree."

So, again this is funny this is absurd, this is irrational, but this again becomes the most sane human response given the condition at this point. And here is the man who says I do not want to go to India, I do not want to Pakistan, I want to live in this tree. Tree obviously becomes a symbol over here, the chosen space, or the agentic space, the agentic location. This is a space where I want to belong, right. I do not want to go to India or Pakistan which are decided for me, rather I would climb this tree and I will live here you know and this is because this is my choice.

So, the choice of the madman, there are choice of a madman assert over here, it becomes quite political in quality and sometimes subversive in quality as well. So, again this whole idea of living in the tree becomes important. I do not want to go to either of these two lands which are decided for me. I have decided it for myself to live in this tree and that is important decision.

All this hubbub affected a radio engineer with an MSc degree, a Muslim, a quiet man who took long walks by himself. One day he stripped off all his clothes, gave them to guard and ran in the garden stark naked. So, again the fact that he is stripped of all his clothes, gave it to a guard and ran around naked, again becomes irrational madman's act. But then again this is no more absurd, no more mad than the entire idea of partition in the first place, right.

So, all these different micro models of madness that we see over here are reflective of the macro model of madness which is the partition in the first place, the fact that you decided to create two landmasses by separating millions of people and in the process so many people got killed and disintegrated and traumatized and because of some bureaucratic decisions taken at some Kafkaesque high level. So, all these micro madnesses actually

reflective of the macro the bigger the grand narrative of madness which is the partition in the first place.


Another Muslim inmate from Chiniot an erstwhile adherent of the Muslim League who bathed fifteen or sixteen times a day, suddenly gave up bathing; as his name was Muhammad Ali, he one day proclaimed that he was none other than Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad-Ali-Jinnah. Taking a cue from the Sikh, taking a cue from him a Sikh announced that he was Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs. This could have led to open violence. But before any harm could be done the two lunatics were declared dangerous and locked up in separate cells.

So, again what we see here is a politics of affiliation. So, he because his name is Muhammad Ali he declares that he is Muhammad-Ali-Jinnah the Quaid-e-Azam seeing that another Sikh declares himself to be master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs. So, again the affiliation to the bigger macro models outside the asylum that becomes important over here and eventually both of them are declared dangerous and are locked up in separate cells.

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19/22/2019

Toba Tek Singh by Saadat Hasan Manto




Among the inmates of the asylum was a Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had gone mad because of unrequited love. He was deeply pained when he learnt that Amritsar, where the girl lived, would form part of India. He roundly abused all the Hindu and Muslim leaders who had conspired to divide India into two, thus making his beloved an Indian and him a Pakistan. When the talks on the exchange were finalized his mad friends asked him to take heart since now he could go to India. But the young lawyer did not want to leave Lahore, for he feared for his legal practice in Amritsar.

There were two Anglo-Indians in the European ward. When informed the British were leaving, they spent hours together discussing the problems they would be faced with: 'Would the European ward be abolished? Would they get breakfast? Instead of bread, would they have to make do with incensed Indian chapattis?'

There was a Sikh who had been admitted into the asylum fifteen years ago. Whenever he spoke it was the same mysterious gibberish. "Upur the gur gur the annex the bay dhyana the mung the dal of the lalain." The guards said that he had not slept a wink in all this time. He would not even lie down to rest. His feet were swollen with constant standing and his calves had puffed out in the middle, but in spite of this agony he never cared to lie down. He listened with rapt attention to all discussions about the exchange of lunatics between India and Pakistan. If someone asked his views on the subject he would reply in a grave tone: "Upur the gur gur the annex the bay dhyana the mung the dal of the Government of Pakistan." But later on he started substituting "the Government of Pakistan" with "Toba Tek Singh," which was his home town. Now he began asking where Toba Tek Singh was to go. But nobody seemed to know where it was. Those who tried to explain themselves got bogged down in another enigma: Sialkot, which used to be in India, now was in Pakistan. At this rate, it seemed as if Lahore, which was now in Pakistan, would slide over to India. Perhaps the whole of India might become Pakistan. It was all so confusing! And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely disappear from the face of the earth one day?

The hair on the Sikh inmate's head had thinned and his beard had matted, making him look wild and ferocious. But he was a harmless creature. In fifteen years he had not even once had a row with anyone. The older employees of the asylum knew that he had been a well-to-do fellow who had owned considerable land in Toba Tek Singh. That he had could have been used. His family



So, again coercion, confinement these may become very important categories over here as we saw already in Mrs. Dalloway and Virginia Woolf, but this was obviously more graphic, more corporeal etcetera. So, these people are corporeally confined, corporeally

coerced into some kind of existence and they are physically handled by the guards and the doctors and the protectors presumably.

Among the inmates of the asylum was a Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had gone mad because of unrequited love. He was deeply pained when he learnt that Amritsar, where the girl had lived, where his beloved had lived, would now form a part of India. He roundly abused all the Hindu and Muslim leaders who had conspired to divide India into two, thus making his beloved an Indian and him a Pakistani. When the talks on the exchange were finalized his mad friends asked him to take heart since now he could go to India. But the young lawyer did not want to leave Lahore, for he feared that his legal practice for his legal practice in Amritsar.

So, again if you take a look at this little passage over here there are so many different kinds of moods at play. We have a Hindu lawyer from Lahore who was also was obviously quite good, presumably quite good, but he had fallen in love with a girl from Amritsar which now belongs to India. So, he now is told that he will be sent to India and that would presumably be good news for him because now he could go and meet his beloved his ladylove who was now in Amritsar. But then the other tension comes to him and says, well I am a lawyer over here, so what is going to happen to my practice? I will not be able to practice quite as well in Amritsar as I can over here in Lahore. So, again your different undercurrents of thought, different sentiments, different affective tensions at play with each other sometimes at war with each other.

There are two Anglo-Indians in the European ward. When informed the British were leaving, they spent hours together discussing the problems they would be faced with. Would the European ward be abolished? Would they get breakfast? Instead of bread, would they have to make do with a measly Indian chapattis?

So, again a different kind of dynamic is generated out for different kind of identity, identity which does not belong to Hindu or Muslim, but the Anglo-Indians presumably Christians. Now, they are more concerned about the degradation, the possible degradation of the food. So, they are talking to each other saying the word, what is going to happen to our breakfast, will we still get our English breakfast, or will it be reduced to suffering chapattis which is again an Indian thing.

So, again this food markers become important as well. So, when the European ward gets dissolved and people in European ward began to eat chapattis instead of bread that transition of food obviously becomes a political transition as well, because it opens up to readings of political change, ok. So, now, we come to the protagonist in the story Bishan Singh. We get to know his character we get know his background, and obviously we get to know his eccentricities which inform his supposed madness.

There was a Sikh who had been admitted into the asylum fifteen years ago. Whenever he spoke it was the same mysterious gibberish: “Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain.” So, you know what it roughly translates into is, the gods up in the high heaven, do not have really any care for the quality of the dal which is getting deteriorated every single day, which obviously does not make any sense because he is talking about the quality of dal which is deteriorating every single day.

Now, one may if one wishes do a reading of this dal being a metaphor for domesticity, happiness, nourishment, thing that you consume to sustain yourself etcetera and when he says dal is deteriorating and the gods do not care what he is actually saying, what could he possibly saying is the quality of life, the sustenance of life, the thing, which sustains you in life, the nourishment of life, all these are deteriorating dramatically and the gods in high heaven simply do not care. So, this complete detachment from any divine design and instead there is complete you know participation or this forceful participation in something of an anarchic design it is something which is hinted over here.

So, the movement is from divinity to anarchy and that this particular nonsensical you know gibberish may be read to interpret you know in a way I am interpreting this kind of a transition from a divine design into a design-less existence, into an agency-less existence, into something which does not have any purpose or any meaning whatsoever, just a gradual deterioration, a very organic deterioration of that which is supposed to sustain you and comfort you.

The guards said that he had not slept a wink in all this time. He would not even lie down to rest. His feet were swollen with constant standing and his calves had puffed out in the middle, but in spite of this agony he never cared lie down. So, again this whole, it becomes very symbolic and graphic image if you think about it. His feet getting swollen

and swollen, and the fact that standing all the time, he never sits down. It is almost like he is accumulating time and it almost becomes the corporealization of time.

So, he is accumulating time in his body. He has not spoken to people for many years. He has not slept for many years. He just always stands and no one's ever seen him sleeping. So, it becomes the entire the feet in his body, the mass in his body, it just gets thicker and thicker bigger and bigger, more and more swollen and that swollen quality is obviously reflected in the corporealization of his of the temporarily which informs him which gets into him in that sense.

He listened with rapt attention to all discussions about exchange of lunatics between India and Pakistan. If someone asked his views on the subject he would reply in a grave tone; again: "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the Government of Pakistan." But later on he started substituting, "The Government of Pakistan" with "Toba Tek Singh" which was his home town.

So, the first time in the story we are introduced to this place Toba Tek Singh. So, that was his hometown, that is the place where is obviously affectively associated with or affectively attached to, ok. So, again the whole debate over here, the whole conflict over here is between your affective association and your effective association, right. So, affective, affective; the affective association is purely emotional in quality whereas, the effective association is politically driven, it is politically motivated, is based on religious markers, religious divisions, etcetera, ok, right

And we were also told no one quite knows what Toba Tek Singh is. This is hometown. Now, he began asking where Toba Tek Singh was to go. But nobody seems to, seemed to know where it was. Those who tried to explain themselves got bogged down in another enigma. Sialkot, which used to be in India, was now in Pakistan. At this rate, it seemed as if Lahore, which is now in Pakistan would slide over to India. Perhaps the whole of India might become Pakistan. It was all so confusing. And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely disappear from the face of the earth one day?

So, again, these absurd assumptions are reflective of the bigger absurdity in question over here, what if India becomes Pakistan, what if the country of Pakistan gets dissolved into India and what if both countries disappeared one fine day. So, what is going to

happen to all these ideas of identity, citizenship, division, you know all these things will just be completely meaningless.

Now, the point here is, and I will stop at this point. The point here is these are questions about the purposelessness of partition because they are also asking essentially that you know if we can divide one landmass into two who is to guarantee the two will not become three or four. And how what is the guarantee that all these landmasses will coalesce together to form one different land mass with a different name. So, what is going to stop that from happening? Right.

So, whole idea of partition of division, classification, reclassification, all these become very absurd activities over here which have no resonance whatsoever with an emotional location of these people. So, what we have in a nutshell is a complete you know lack of synchrony, a complete incompatibility as it were, a complete rupture, as it were between the psychological location, the existential location and the emotional location and on the other hand the geopolitical locations which are formed and manufactured ad hoc, out of political necessities.

So, in one hand we have these ad hoc constructions of identity, the ad hoc manufacturing of identity in terms of giving names for landmass etcetera and on the other hand we have this emotional existential locations, and psychological locations which have nothing to do with these ad hoc injunctions which are imposing them. So, you know it again comes back to the question of agency, the complete lack of agency that these people suffer from and it is the madman's rigmarole, the madman's question, the madman's interrogations, the madman's supposedly inane questions actually become very potent political questions at this point of time.

So, this is the point we will stop today. And we will continue with this in the next lecture.

Thank you for your attention.