

**Twentieth-Century Fiction**  
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**Lecture - 52**  
**Toba Tek Singh - Part 4**

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10/22/2019 Toba Tek Singh by Sadat 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 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 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 measly 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 amneve the buy dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain." 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 amneve the buy dhayana the mung the dal of the Government of Pakistan." But later on he started substituting "the Government of Pakistan" with "Tobak 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 lunatic'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

So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Twentieth Century Fiction, where we are looking at and studying Sadat Hasan Manto's short story Toba Tek Singh. We have already begun with the story, so we will just move on and look at the text in some close details.

So, we as a matter of discussion in the beginning we talked about how the madhouse in Lahore over here becomes a very symbolic space in a sense that the questions that the madmen began to ask about the partition, the seemingly irrational questions, the seemingly nonsensical question answers that go on inside the madhouse. What they seemed to actually reflect or be reflective rather on the bigger irrationality, the bigger madness of partition which was engineered and bureaucratized by the leaders, by the policy makers etcetera, so in a way it becomes a critique of partition delivered by madmen. And the madmen's critique in Toba Tek Singh the short story becomes a very potent critique, a very compelling critique in some sense.

So, we look at the various figures in Toba Tek Singh and also the questions that are asked, and the seemingly random and nonsensical responses which are produced out of the questions. Like you know if what if India goes away and becomes Pakistan and Pakistan goes away and becomes India, what if both countries go away and become some other country. Now, all these questions and discussions which obviously they seem irrational and superfluous and senseless, in a sense they are actually very fundamental questions about the whole artificial quality of nation formation. How is a nation formed? What are the boundaries of a nation? How porous are the boundaries? How fixed are the boundaries of any particular nation?

So, Toba Tek Singh, the short story is a madman's critique of the constructed quality of nation formation. It is the madman's critique of the artificial engineering, engineered quality of nation formation and how nation formation is always the process which is artificial, material, illogical you know it is invested in so many different ways. But you know it seems to be a seamless thing. So, the entire sacrality of the nation formation is being questioned by madmen in Toba Tek Singh.

Like I said the madman's presence or the mad quality of the questions, the senseless, the you know insane quality, the irrational quality of the questions, paradoxically produce a more potent you know questions, a more potent critique of the madness of you know partition in the first place. So, there is a bigger madness out there against which this micro madness or the micro madmen, they have no agency, they have no voice.

So, there are two kinds of madness, two dimensions of madness as it were in Toba Tek Singh. The outside madness of partition which took away the lives of millions of people which dislocated millions of people and it obviously curated huge trauma in the minds of so many people in the subcontinent. That madness you know is now obviously a rational thing, that madness is now sort of frozen into a formatted thing, a formed thing, a fully-formed thing in the sense of two nations.

So, now the madness is now the asylum, but then we are also told in some sense how this is a lesser madness, a more innocuous madness compared to the bigger, more sinister madness which was partition. So, we come to the central character in Toba Tek Singh which is you know a person called Bishan Singh. But we also see how the Anglo-Indians in this particular madman, a madhouse, now they begin to feel anxious because they are

now told that the British have gone away partition has happened, so obviously they are no longer in a prestigious position or in a position of prestige. So, the Anglo-Indians are now fallen in grace and they are beginning to conspire with each other, they are beginning to sort of talk to each other and discuss what is going to happen to the quality of the breakfast.

So, again the fact that they are focusing on the quality of the breakfast would seem irrational to us, would seem, might seem mad and funny to us. But then that is also very symbolic because the quality of breakfast for Anglo-Indians - fearing that it is going to deteriorate, it is obviously a symbolic projection of fear that the quality of the lives might deteriorate, the quality the standard of living might deteriorate, the social status might deteriorate after the British go away which is what exactly and historically happened. So, the two Anglo-Indians we are told this should be on your screen.

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 measly Indian chapattis?

So, again this difference between bread and chapati is projected sort of obviously you know becomes big and substantial in this madman's minds. But like we said this is very symbolic. So, the fact that they will quote unquote "degrade" into chapattis would obviously be a reflection of the degradation of their social status or the social prestige. And now we come to the protagonist in Toba Tek Singh the story.

There was a Sikh who had been admitted into the asylum fifteen years ago. Whenever he spoke it was the same mysterious gibberish. And what is the gibberish? "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain.". Now, that is the Punjabi sentence, what it basically translates into is that the quality of dal, mung dal has deteriorated has fallen substantially and the gods up above do nothing about it. That is what it roughly translates into.

Now, again this is a madman's gibberish which is obviously the case. But then if you read into it we find that it is possible to look at it as some kind of a political statement, some kind of a madman's comment on what is happening outside or what is happening on a daily level. The quality of dal which is deteriorating, which is to say the quality of

consumption, the quality of food, the quality of nourishment, the quality of life is deteriorating and the gods up above are completely indifferent to it.

So, there is this God up above or gods up above, it is obviously you know it can be read as a commentary of the political power houses or the political gods controlling the fates of millions of people whose dal is deteriorating every single day, who is dal is falling in standard every single day. So, dal here like the Anglo-Indian's chapatti and bread, it becomes quite symbolic, it becomes a symbolical fall in standard in terms of what is going to happen when the British go away and what is going to happen now that India and Pakistan are two different countries suddenly two different nations have been formed. So, what is going happen to the dal? What is going to happen to the bread? What is going to happen to chapattis?

Now, these are very micro questions, these are mundane questions, these are insane, irrational questions. But in a context in a political context in which these questions are asked, they suddenly become very meaningful, very compellingly and insightfully meaningful or penetratingly meaningful and that becomes an interesting quality over here.

So, the guard said that he had not slept a wink in all the time. In all this time for fifteen years no one has ever seen him sleep. He would not even lie down to rest. His feet was swollen and with constant standing and his calves had puffed out in the middle, but in spite of this agony he never cared to lie down. So, he is someone who is obviously very anxious, he is probably living some trauma, he has not slept in fifteen years. No one has ever seen him sit down, forget about sleeping and as a result of which his feet have become swollen and his calf has become huge.

Now, it is possible again to read this body of this madman as something kind of a body of trauma, a body of violence, violence done on the body you know it is like accumulated time. It is not like normal time. It is time which is obviously one which is diseased in quality and well that diseased time enters the body, this is what happens to the body you know you your body becomes restless, the body becomes swollen, the body becomes injured, the body becomes pathological or pathologized in some sense, ok.

In spite of his agony he never cared to lie down. He listened with rapt attention to all discussions about exchanges of lunatics between India and Pakistan. So, again this is the

common conversation in the asylum now. Everyone's talking about the exchange of lunatics in India and Pakistan. People are saying well if you are a Muslim you go to Pakistan, if you are Hindu you go to India that is that is how it has been decided almost mathematically speaking.

So, obviously we talked about how there is no agency, no one is asking the madman where they would want to go. And obviously these you know you can read this in even current political contexts across the world that people are actually suffering, are not really asked in terms of what they want. The political power houses and certain centers are deciding the fate for them and that is something which you know we can see here as well in a very grotesque details, ok.

If someone had asked his views on the subject he would reply in a grave tone. "Uper the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the Government of Pakistan. So, again you know this is something related to government of Pakistan, a reference, a mysterious cryptic reference to the Government of Pakistan which is connected to the quality, the fallen quality of the dal, mung dal. But later on he started substituting the government of Pakistan with Toba Tek Singh and this is the first time we hear the word or phrase Toba Tek Singh which is we are told was his hometown, right.

And this now becomes a very symbolic space in the story the Toba Tek Singh, the village from which this person is from and he wants; the key question that he asked everyone from this point is that you know I want to go back to Toba Tek Singh. I do not want to go to Pakistan. I do not want to go to India. I reject the decision taken for me. On my behalf, on basis of my political you know of my religious identity and I want to go to my own village, my native village, Toba Tek Singh. Do I have the choice? Do I have the option the agency to do it? Of course, he does not and that is the tragedy in the story that he does not have the agency to go back to Toba Tek Singh which is his native village, which is his place of birth.

So, again this is about choice-less-ness or agency-less-ness. So, how is madness equated with agency-less-ness? So, we have seen the story how madness becomes in a sense, in a very perverse paradoxical sense, the only possibility of agency in this particular context you know the only possibility of agency is available through madness because of

madness, because madness will give you some license to say things that you are otherwise forbidden to say.

Now, he began asking where the 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 was now in Pakistan. At this rate, it seemed as if Lahore, which is now in Pakistan, would slide over to India and 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, now that the constructed quality of borders border making and unmaking are in play. Everyone is fearing that if borders can be created randomly, they can also be uncreated, they can also be you know recreated. So, Sialkot which was in India now seems to be in Pakistan, now everyone's convinced that Lahore, which is in Pakistan might slide over to India at some point of time. And there is other speculation, more wild speculation which is saying well what if India and Pakistan both disappear from the face of the earth and we have like a different landmass altogether. So, everything is possible.

So, now with this creation, co-creation, recreation of borders that is happening so randomly, it is a random recreation of so many borders, happening across the cities across two different countries people asking all kinds of questions, all kinds of irrational but possible questions. And again, this is the other key thing I want to emphasize a little bit. The equation between irrationality and possibility. Now, what appears irrational? What seems irrational? The question that madmen are asking is actually paradoxically a possibility.

Now, they are saying that if India and Pakistan are formed suddenly without any consent or any decision taken by the people who live there, who is to decide, who is to say, who is confirm, that tomorrow the different landmass might not appear or just take a different name suddenly. We are not we are not sure of that, we would that is perfectly possible, ok. And that is the conversation, that is the discourse going on in the asylum now. So, the asylum becomes as you can see a very charged political space, a very symbolic space here in a context of a story.

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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 lunatic'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. Then he had suddenly gone mad. His family had brought him to the asylum in chains and left him there. They came to meet him once a month but ever since the communal riots had begun, his relatives had stopped visiting him.

His name was Bishan Singh but everybody called him Toba Tek Singh. He did not know what day it was, what month it was and how many years he had spent in the asylum. Yet as if by instinct he knew when his relatives were going to visit, and on that day he would take a long bath, scrub his body with soap, put oil in his hair, comb it and put on clean clothes. If his relatives asked him anything he would keep silent or burst out with *Ujper the gur gur the annex the bay dhuyana the mung the dal of the laltain.*

When he had been brought to the asylum, he had left behind an infant daughter. She was now a comely and striking young girl of fifteen, who Bishan Singh failed to recognize. She would come to visit him, and not be able to hold back her tears.

When the India-Pakistan caboodle started Bishan Singh often asked the other inmates where Toba Tek Singh was. Nobody could tell him. Now even the visitors had stopped coming. Previously his sixth sense would tell him when the visitors were due to come. But not anymore. His inner voice seemed to have stilled. He missed his family, the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they used to speak to him. He was sure they would have told him whether Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. He also had the feeling that they came from Toba Tek Singh, his old home.

One of the lunatics had declared himself God. One day Bishan Singh asked him where Toba Tek Singh was. As was his habit the man greeted Bishan Singh's question with a loud laugh and then

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The hair on the Sikh lunatic's head had thinned and his bread 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. So, he was some kind of a feudal you know person. He was a gentry perhaps. He owned some land in Toba Tek Singh, the older guards knew him because he had been here for many years, fifteen years now. So, he is recognizable by everyone, recognised by everyone.

Then he had suddenly gone mad. His family had brought him to the asylum in chains and left him there. So, again this was the typical way that madmen were handled back then in Europe and also in other parts of the world. They were chained, they were coerced, there was physical, corporeal, coercion done on them. So, they were chained or made to sometimes parade in the cities, in chains and people just look at them as a spectacle of irrationality. So, he is brought in chains to the asylum over here and just left him there. So, he was abandoned by the family and was left in this asylum.

They came to meet him once a month, but ever since the communal riots had begun; but ever since the communal riots had begun his relatives had stopped visiting him. So, again the whole idea of the relatives stopping to come becomes important here as well. Because you know the communal riots, they interrupt the visitors, relatives, they

interrupt the coming of the relatives over here that obviously becomes you know that compounds his crisis, that compounds his anxiety to a large extent.

His name was Bishan Singh, but everybody called him Toba Tek Singh. Now, again this is a very good example of how he morphs into a lost space. He morphs into an abandoned space, an abandoned territory. He becomes a territory by his nostalgia for the territory, by his nostalgia of the land, that he talks about the territory all the time. So, he keeps asking people where Toba Tek Singh is. In the process he becomes known as Toba Tek Singh. He becomes the space. He becomes a story. He becomes the loss, an abandoned space.

So, you know again you can see the way how the human body and the abandoned space or the abandoned human body, he is abandoned by his family, the abandoned human body in the abandoned space, they morph into each other in a very symbolic semantic way. So, ok.

He did not know what day it was, what month it was and how many years he has spent in the asylum. So, his sense of calendar time, his sense of clock time had disappeared completely. Yet, and this is interesting; yet as if by instinct he knew when his relatives were going to visit, and on that day he would take a long bath, scrub his body with soap, put oil in his hair, comb it and put on clean clothes.

So, again he seemed to have this proprioceptive instinct, the sixth sense as it were when his relatives are going to come you know soon to visit him. So, he would wake up early that day, he would never sleep, so he would be running around more active more dynamic. He would take a bath which is something he would normally do. He would comb his hair, put on new clothes and will look presentable for his relatives to come.

But of course, we are told his relatives have stopped visiting him ever since the riots began because it is unsafe to travel in streets of Lahore as a as a Hindu because you know Hindus are getting killed in Pakistan. Muslims are getting killed in India. It is just a big slaughterhouse across the two countries that is the setting. And also that kind of violence on the streets is obviously interrupting the daily activities in life, the normal experiences, the definition of normal has changed dramatically.

If his relatives asked him anything he would keep silent or burst out with, again the same nonsensical, seemingly nonsensical line, Upur the gur gur the annexe the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain. So, again the gods up above have no concern for the fall of quality of the dal. The dal has fallen in quality, is deteriorating quality, but you know the gods up above have no concern for the same.

When he had been brought to the asylum. He had left behind an infant daughter. She was now comely and strikingly a striking young girl of fifteen. So, again she becomes the embodiment of the time that he has lost in a sense that she was a child when he was brought and now she is become almost a lady of fifteen who Bishan Singh failed to recognize. She would come to visit him and not be able to hold back his her tears. So, she becomes example of the time that he has left behind. She becomes example of the past that he cannot connect back to. So, she is not recognized by Bishan Singh. She is unrecognizable by Bishan Singh that becomes again very symbolic at a cognitive level.

When the India-Pakistan caboodle started Bishan Singh often asked the other inmates where Toba Tek Singh was. That is his primary concern, where Toba Tek Singh is. I mean he is not really bothered about where India is or Pakistan is because the whole idea of the nation does not appeal to him. And that is something which is quite symbolic in the story. Nations, they are a very modern concept which is lost on most people you know at that point of time because they were more concerned about the village about the little place they came from. The town, the village which had a name where people knew each other. A nation is this big block of anonymity was something they could never connected to or never could connect to, at a cognitive or even political existential level, right.

So, they were more concerned about the village, the town, the place of birth, the pond, you know the bazaar. So, all these local markers is more important to them because the local markers were basically what informed their identity in the sense that they would they recognize the place and they recognize the people around them and that is how they form their identity. So, anything that takes away that identity was a crisis to them at a political cognitive level, ok.

So, you know he would ask everyone where Toba Tek Singh was, but obviously nobody could tell them because no one quite knew which place is going where and Toba Tek

Singh is an insignificant space. It is not like Lahore, Sialkot or Amritsar or you know Delhi. So, it is not a big city where which should be classified and reclassified and during nation formation Toba Tek Singh this was a small village.

So, disappearance of Toba Tek Singh, the abandonment of Toba Tek Singh is a collateral damage in the bigger project of nation formation. And again the whole idea over here is how things get left behind, things get abandoned, how people get abandoned or spaces get abandoned in this grand narrative of nation formations. Among other things the story by Manto is also a very compelling critique of the grand narrative of nation formation which completely takes away the agency of the villager, the town people, the small person from a small place who does not quite know who is cognitively confused, is existentially confused and obviously who is politically confused because of this crisis because of this grand narrative formation. So, now even the visitors has stopped coming because of the riots we are told.

Previously his sixth sense would tell him when the visitors were due to come. But not anymore his inner voice seemed to have stilled. He misses his family, the gifts they used to bring and the concern with which they would they used to speak to him. He was sure that they would have told him whether Toba Tek Singh was in India or Pakistan. He also had a feeling that they came from Toba Tek Singh's old home.

So, again they were remnants to him of his old home Toba Tek Singh. So, and he thought that was a sort of utopia to him. It was interestingly it is utopia in a different sense because utopia is something you look forward to. But this is a utopia you look back to. It is a very nostalgic kind of a space which is perfect to him. This nostalgic perfect landscape of you know abundance, fertility, you know where no questions are asked, everything was perfect etcetera. So, it is a flawless past, flawless frame of time and space which is you know Toba Tek Singh. It is a bit like the concept that it will be useful to understand this would be chronotope, c h r o n o, t o p e t o p e; one word chronotope c h r o n o t o p e.

Chronotope was the term used by Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian philosopher and that essentially means a capsule of space and time a compound of space and time. So, and it is a very handy term in memory studies. So, you know for instance I have an article on

this, Toba Tek Singh from a perspective of memory studies which I am happy to upload in the forum.

Now, the article argues that how Toba Tek Singh is a chronotope, the this space becomes the chronotope for him. It is a reminder of a particular space and time put together, right. And that is something he wants to relate to, that is something he wants to connect to all the time. Anything else around him, any space around him, any new territory, any new territorialisation around him becomes completely meaningless to him. So, in that sense it becomes useful category, theoretical category to look at, ok. So, you know he had a feeling that they came from Toba Tek Singh. So, whoever he saw who came to meet him in his mind they all came from Toba Tek Singh, that is the only place of origin, that is the only place of solace for him.

One of the lunatics had declared himself God. Again, look at the, I mean the irrationality of this is also compelling commentary on the irrationality of power positions, the irrationality of appropriations of power in the world outside. So, someone suddenly decides that he is God in the in the asylum.

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said, "It's neither in India nor in Pakistan. In fact, it is nowhere because till now I have not taken any decision about its location."

Bishan begged the man who called himself God to pass the necessary orders and solve the problem. But 'God' seemed to be very busy other matters. At last Bishan Singh's patience ran out and he cried out: "Uper the gur gur the amaxe the mung the dal of Guruji da Khalsa and Guruji ki fatehOjo boley so nihai sat sri akal."

What he wanted to say was: "You don't answer my prayers because you a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have surely helped me out."

A few days before the exchange was due to take place, a Muslim from Toba Tek Singh who happened to be a friend of Bishan Singh came to meet him. He had never visited him before. On seeing him, Bishan Singh tried to slink away, but the warder barred his way. "Don't you recognize your friend Fazal Din?" he said. "He has come to meet you." Bishan Singh looked furtively at Fazal Din, then started to mumble something. Fazal Din placed his hand on Bishan Singh's shoulder. "I have been thinking of visiting you for a long time," he said. "But I couldn't get the time. Your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. As for your daughter, Roop KaurO" -he hesitated- "She is safe tooOin India."

Bishan Singh kept quiet. Fazal Din continued: "Your family wanted me to make sure you were well. Soon you'll be moving to India. Please give my salaam to bhai Balbir Singh and bhai Ragbir Singh and bahaan Amrit Kaur. Tell Balbir that Fazal Din is well. The two brown buffaloes he left behind are well too. Both of them gave birth to calves, but, unfortunately, one of them died. Say I think of them often and to write to me if there is anything I can do."

Then he added "Here, I've brought some plums for you."

Bishan Singh took the gift from Fazal Din and handed it to the guard. "Where is Toba Tek Singh?" he asked.

"Where? Why, it is where it has always been."



One day Bishan Singh asked him where Toba Tek Singh was. As was his habit the man greeted Bishan Singh's question with a loud laugh and then said, "It is neither in India nor in Pakistan. In fact, it is nowhere because till now I have not taken any decision about its location.

But this is very loaded as you can seem, as you can guess. This is one madman talking to another madman, a quote unquote madman. So, one madman goes to another madman and says you know and asks him do you know where my village is, and the other madman who declares himself to be God gives a loud laugh and says well you know it is neither in Indian nor in Pakistan, because I have not decided where it will go yet which is a response that he would get if you if he were to go to any political headquarter or to go to any political powerhouse, they would tell them the same thing, that we have not decided, we have not filed it as such.

So, we can see over here the equation between irrationality and bureaucracy between madness and bureaucracy which is a very complicated and complex and very disturbing kind of alliance that we see. So, the madman's voices in the asylum they come perilously close to the voices and responses that people would have got and do when they go to any bureaucratic headquarters, any power headquarters. So, the relationship between the rational or the boundary between the rational and the irrational blurs away in Toba Tek Singh in very complicated ways, ok.

So, Bishan Singh begged the man who called himself God to pass the necessary orders and solve the problem. So, again you can perfectly picture this happening in a real, quote unquote real rational political space, Bishan Singh goes to a political headquarter to a bureaucratic headquarters and begs them to basically give an order to classify Toba Tek Singh as an Indian land or a Pakistan land, you know depending on the choice.

But 'God' seemed to be very busy other matters. At last Bishan Singh's patience ran out and he cried out, "Uper the gur gur the annexe the mung the dal of Guruji da Khalsa and Guruji ki fateh, Ojo boley so nihai say sat sri akal."

Again this is nonsensical. But he wants to say were told what he wanted to say was you do not answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God had you been a Sikh God you would have surely helped me out. So, again this sounds irrational, this sounds almost funnily mad, but then this also has a lot of resonance in the political scene because you know every God has a religion, every God has classified even gods are classified in partitions. So, it is a Muslim God, this is a Muslim powerhouse and there is a Hindu God, a Hindu powerhouse and for a person from another community or another religion

to go on and seek any help from the other quarter would just be rejected and abandoned that is what Toba Tek Singh is saying, that is what Bishan Singh is saying over here.

And again, these voices, these sentences, these expressions, they are very meaningful given the context, given the situation that you know the partition is, the partition had generated; the violence that partition had generated. Because a large part of the violence of partition as you know it is not just about physical or bodily or corporeal violence which was there people were slaughtered, women were mutilated, children were killed. It was just one of the most gruesome episodes in human history.

But also at a more cognitive level, it was also violence which is which is which was out of epistemic violence at a level of knowledge, right. So, your sense of reality, your knowledge of reality, your navigation with reality changes completely or is interrupted constantly. So, today you know somewhere to be somewhere, something to be somewhere. Tomorrow you are told, it is not there something else has been reclassified, there is a new name, it belongs to a new nation and of course, all these constant reconfigurations of reality the reterritorialization of reality, it almost impacts you at a cognitive level.

So, madness in Toba Tek Singh may be seen as a fallout of these constant cognitive negotiations with realities, these constant cognitive negotiations would reterritorialize reality. So, reality is constantly being reterritorialized, re-navigated, reconfigured, rebooted all the time and that constant negotiation with rebooting reality is what makes him mad all the time. So, you do not quite know what is what. So, there is this Muslim reality, there is Hindu reality, there is the Sikh reality, there is a Christian realities. So, all realities become broken, fractured and partitioned.

So, among other things the partition over here is also an epistemic partition, the partition at the level of knowledge, the knowledge narratives begin to get partitioned, begin to get ruptured with violence. The violence over here becomes very real cognitive epistemic violence. This is something which we keep seeing in Toba Tek Singh, ok.

So, this is the response it is says gives to the Muslim, "Well, you do not answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God. Had it been a Sikh God, you would have surely helped me out." So, again this reclassification of gods become interesting over here.

A few days before the exchange was due to take place, a Muslim from Toba Tek Singh who happened to be a friend of Bishan Singh came to meet him. So, again look at the very sort of cold sinister quality with which the information is given to us. A Muslim from Toba Tek Singh who happened to be a friend of the Sikh Bishan Singh came to meet him. Now interestingly we are told that he comes from Toba Tek Singh. Now, that is a place where these divisions did not matter at some point of time whether you are Sikh or a Muslim or a Hindu did not matter at that point of time because he came from Toba Tek Singh. But now it does matter. So, it is important to be spelled out, it is important to you know spell it out there was a Muslim from Toba Tek Singh who happens to be a friend of Bishan Singh.

He had never visited him before on seeing him Bishan Singh tried to slink away, but the warden warden barred his way, "Do not you recognized your friend Fazal Din?" he said. "He has come to meet you." Bishan Singh looked furtively at Fazal Din and started to mumble something. Fazal Din placed his hand on Bishan Singh's shoulder. "I have been thinking of visiting you for a long time," he said. "But I could not get the time. Your family is well and has gone to India safely. I did what I could to help. As for your daughter, Roop Kaur" he hesitated. "She is safe too in India."

So, the key thing over here is a hesitation over here, right. So, he is saying, he is reporting about the family to Bishan Singh and obviously the report is very complicated. He says that your family has gone to India, they are safe. Your daughter Roop Kaur and he hesitates over here, and the hesitation obviously has a sinister quality. It has a very unsettling quality, and then he says she is safe too in India, right.

So, we do not quite know what safe means over here, we do not quite know what she is safe in India too means over here. So, there is a possibility something really bad had happened to her, maybe she was killed, maybe she was mutilated, maybe she was sexually attacked, we do not quite know what happened and that never gets told. But a hesitation part is there before his report comes in. It obviously carries all kinds of possibilities that is told.

So, again it is a you know good example of a short story which tells you things, but not saying certain things. There is something which we saw already in many of the short stories that we have done so far, you know Katherine Mansfield's fly for instance,

Joyce's *Araby* for instance - all are very potent examples. So, of how, what does not get told, what does not get communicated you know as actually what gets conveyed, is what gets more important at a semantic level. So, so he comes and tells this to Bishan Singh and gives him report about different things.

Bishan Singh kept quiet. Fazal Din continued. "Your family wanted me to make sure you were well. Soon you will be moving to India. Please give my salaam to bhai Balbir Singh and bhai Raghbir Singh and bahain Amrit Kaur. Tell Balbir that Fazal Din is well. Now, it becomes a bit more clear because he is saying that you know give my regards to your wife, to your brother, etcetera, but he does not mention his daughter. So, the fact that his daughter has disappeared from the address becomes a very potent, a very you know resonant thing. It just becomes most sinister kind of an absence.

So, the absence of a daughter and you can connect it back to the hesitation before. The daughter's report was given to him she too well, she too is well and safe in India and that hesitation obviously has very complicated connotations. Tell Balbir that Fazal Din is well. The two brown buffaloes he left behind are well too. Both of them gave birth to calves, but, unfortunately one of them died. Say that I think of them often and write to me if there is anything I can do."

So, I will stop at this point today. But I will just unpack this a little bit. Look at the quality of the message over here. It is very domestic, it is very small, it is very little, it is very micro, it is very mundane and that is exactly what makes it so political. He is talking about buffalos giving birth to calves, and amidst all the political turmoil, amidst all this political violence and the slaughterhouse which is happening around India and Pakistan. He comes to his friend from a different religious community and talks about how the buffalos in the village had given calves.

And that is exactly the kind of message, exactly kind of report that one villager would give to another villager in a pre-partition time, in a pre-partition time of tranquillity of love of peacefulness, of togetherness, of cohabitation, right. That becomes a thing of the past. And now this becomes completely insignificant because people want to know bigger things, the bigger questions being asked, because the violence has erupted at such a level that you know buffalos giving birth to calves becomes completely immaterial over here.

So, this comes back as an idyllic past and as an idyllic territory, point in time where buffalos giving birth to calves was a news that had to be conveyed to a friend from a different community, from a different religion. So, you know this little message that Manto would you know describes, foregrounds over here, where Fazal Din who is obviously a Muslim comes and tells Bishan Singh who was a Sikh that you know you remember, the two brown buffaloes in our village they have given birth to calves and they are left behind as well, you know one of them died.

So, all this very mundane micro information becomes very important and very intimate in quality and that is something which we find in Toba Tek Singh, that the first thing that goes away during partition when all this epistemic violence is taking place, the first thing the first casualty is intimacy, intimacy goes away, trust goes away, simplicity of things goes away. And so, we have a suspicion, grand narratives, everyone wants to know bigger questions everyone wants to know where he is located and trust, intimacy all these different human elements which were there in the pre partition time disappeared completely from the cognitive radar. And so, people keep asking about the dislocation, the alienation and they get completely alienated from intimacy.

So, among the different kinds of alienation that partition generates is one big alienation from intimacy, from trust, from simplicity. And this particular message that Fazal Din delivers to Toba Tek Singh is a remnant from the past, where intimacy was still possible, where simplicity was possible and it existed in a perfectly peaceful coexistence across communities between people who consider each other as brothers, rather which is something that he addresses Toba Tek Singh or Bishan Singh's family as give my regards to brother Balbir, give my regards to sister Amrit Kaur. So, they are all like, there's this lovely family-like relationship which is there in a pre-partition time.

So, we get a sense of what had really been partitioned. It was not about territory, it was not about landmasses, it was not about geopolitical divisions, it is about human trust, it is about human relationships, it is about human bonds of love. Those are things which were partitioned. So, there is a very human quality about this message is what makes it so political in quality.

So, I stop at this point today and I wind up with this story in the next lecture.

Thank you for your attention.