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HIRAETH: HOME IN THE MIND AND MIND IN THE HOME

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partition has many such examples where people long for their favorite places, homes, countries where they now cannot return, or which do not exist anymore. But their heart goes back to those places and spaces which once were very dear to them or were a part of their emotional existence. The paper intends to focus on the notion of 'hiraeth' in Diaspora and partition fiction.

KEYWORDS: Home, nostalgia, sense of loss, memories, borders.

ABSTRACT

Migrations whether forced or willed during Partition of India and Pakistan, and Diasporas stories across borders cross every now then. These stories have one thing in common, the concept of 'home'. A Welsh word 'Hiraeth' seems to be most fitting for their feelings towards home and homelands. " 'Hiraeth' which means homesickness for a home to which you cannot return, a home which may be never was; the nostalgia, the yearning, the grief for the lost places of your past." ¹

Hiraeth, pronounced [hɪrɪəθ], is a Welsh word that has no immediate English interpretation. 'The University of Wales, Lampeter

endeavors to characterize it as yearning to go home tinged with sorrow or trouble over the lost or withdrew. It is a blend of aching, longing, sentimentality, contemplation, or a sincere craving for the Wales of the previous.' ²

As per Martin Llyod "It is difficult to define hiraeth, but to me it means the consciousness of man being out of his home area and that which is dear to him. That is why it can be felt even among a host of peoples amidst nature's beauty; like a Christian yearning for heaven..." ³

During Indian partition some eight million people were moving to either sides and some sixteen million were approximately displaced. The literature or fiction that is about

INTRODUCTION

Home in mind or mind in home; human beings wherever they go, carry a certain feeling, which is 'at homeness.' This gives them comfort, security, refuge, warmth and what not! Hence our homes are the places/spaces where we are most relaxed and comfortable (feel wanted). Sometime this extends to the neighborhood, a particular place, a restaurant, a village or a city, or even any country where one feels homely. This notion of home is geographical, mental, emotional, and

sometimes political and it is dominated by the said factors too. During partition thousands of people had to migrate whether willingly or forcefully. They had to leave the places where they have been dwelling from centuries. They had to leave the towns, which before the line was drawn were part of the same country and were within reach. Though the distance is the same but today one has to do the whole rigmarole to cross the same border, and surprisingly nothing is the same across borders politically, socially, and emotionally as well, especially regarding the parted country Pakistan. One's desire to revisit the old places, homes and the longing for those places have occurred quite often in diasporic and partition literature. The paper deals with Urvashi Butalia's 'The Other Side of Silence', 'Bend in the Ganges' by Manohar Malgaonkar, and some running references where the feeling of 'Home' is prominent.

In his book 'Long-remove Nationalism' Zlatko Skrbis characterizes wistfulness as "an excruciating condition identified with the country. Home, in her book 'Home Matters' Roberta Rubenstein clarifies that house is: "Not just a physical structure or a geological area however dependably a passionate space . . . 4⁴

Zlatko Skrbis recognizes that 'it is conceivable to be a 'very much coordinated' transient in another nation and still love, and express the way of life of, a country. He contends as takes after:

"The relationship between ethnic gathering individuals and their country and its political foundation ... is one of the fundamental pointers of their connectedness to their ethnic pasts. The relationship between individuals' loyalties to an ethnic country, and their joining into the new host society, is not really a fundamentally unrelated one. . . . On the other hand put another way, it is conceivable to hold a rootedness in the past with fruitful coordination into another general public."⁵

Close to the hills of the Partition, millions of people (the exact figure is difficult to ascertain) migrated from the East to the West and from the West to the East. With that all that the people had cherished for long, their ancestral homes, the soil they owned, the graveyards of their ancestors, the tradition and culture of their families and villages, their joys and sorrows had all been destroyed once for all. They were thus forced and faced with the challenge of rebuilding their lives and overcoming terrible hardships.

Immigrants thus migrated were not very sure whether they would ever come back to their birth place to see their kith and kin. The images of horror that they had undergone on their route the 'freedom' are etched permanently in the albums of their mind. How so ever they try, these images refuse to leave, but try to come out for an occasional outburst from the formidable forts of their resolute breasts. Also, there is a hidden element of exasperation, a sense of helplessness in the victims even after many years of partaking the volcanic eruptions. They are naturally at a loss to understand the meaning of existence.

In a paper, "A Unique Grace" by Kavita Panjabi, appeared in "Partition The Long Shadow" edited by Urvashi Butalia, kavita says 'Some say the sense of a homeland left behind forever remains as a powerful memory of loss, handed down from generation to generation. Yet, indefatigable creatures that we human beings are, we do carry our sense of home with us and remake it as we traverse geographies and histories....⁶

She further mentions that her father and her 'chachas and mamas had not set their eyes on their hometown, Shikarpur, since 1947. "We had grown up hearing of the sacks of golden grain at home; the *sheeras* made every day; the kababs at Haathidwar; the classrooms in which they learnt their *aliph, be, pe, All their lives they had wondered what had become of these places, what they may have begun to look like in the decades that followed; just once more they yearned to go back to the sindh of their childhood, to see Shikarpur.yet ten years ago, just as we were on the verge of actually getting their visas for Pakistan, they all let the plan drop abruptly.the only thread that takes me towards a reason is the fear Dad had voiced, he had said, on a halting broken note: 'you will find nothing there... they will have razed all our homes to the ground.... nothing will be the same...' maybe they all stepped back at the last moment because of the fear that the lost homeland carries no more the sense of home, that it can remain intact only in memory?'even if the houses still existed, they did not have the same concrete, intimate referents of home, of their families, their possessions, their land. What, I wondered, could a homeland mean without a sense of actual territorial possession?"⁷*

In the famous novel 'Bend in the Ganges' by Manohar Malgaonkar, Gian is returning from arduous trials at Port Blair and somehow rescued and finds himself walking towards *Konshet*, his native place, almost unaware of the fact. Malgaonkar narrates the details and coordinated it with his state of mind thus, *"In the moonlight, the little house looked just as neat and well kept as in Hari's days, the shadows obscuring its blemishes. He could almost picture Aji waiting behind the door, clutching the tray with the oil lamps and the parched rice to propitiate the evil spirits.*

.....there was nothing in the house except a layer of dust. All the rooms and both the verandahs were absolutely empty. There was no furniture of any kind; not a single bed or chair or a table. The cooking pots from the kitchen, the big copper handa for heating the bath water, the farming implements in the store-room at the back, everything had gone.

*His legs felt weak as the explanation came to his mind: a demonstration of the Governor's revenue collector's tremendous zeal. They alone had the power to distraint all movable property from a farmer's house if the tax on the land was not paid. Almost forcibly, he brought his mind to the present. The little house had nothing to offer him. There was no use of lingering, feeling, sick over the past. It was almost an afterthought, surrender to quirk of sentiment that made him go into the prayer room behind the kitchen; there, in the beam of his torchlight, stood Shiva. They had not dared to take shiva away. The certainty of the anarchy of the God of destruction had deterred them. Relief flooded his mind. They had spared the family god- perhaps the most valuable single object in the Little house.'*⁸

The meticulous details Hari misses, are the sign of their deep imprints on his psyche. When somebody utters the word 'Home', waves of images crowd up in the mind. In the blog 'No Place Like Home' the author Sujata Ramchandran shares her images, "A few years ago when Toronto experienced an unusually warm summer, I briefly savoured that distinctive yet heady aroma produced by the first raindrops on parched earth. This *mitti ki sondhi khushboo* (as it is described in the Hindi language) is a particular smell I associate with the "home" I left behind in India. And it never fails to evoke strong recollections of childhood, of happy times spent with family and friends in New Delhi. Nostalgia or that frequent act of remembering the past through familiar sights, sounds, scents and even tastes, connects me to my filial "home".⁹

Another aspect that seems to be most related to this feeling of Hiraeth is that of 'Enemy Property'. An article published in the daily 'Indian Express' titled 'A Stranger in One's Own Land' regarding this enemy property says,

*"Mauj-E-Khoon Sir say guzar hi kyun na jaaye
Aastaan –e yaar say uth jaaein kya." 10 (regardless of the possibility that I suffocate in influxes of blood/How would I be able to surrender the home my dearest)*

"... the bleeding occasions of parcel eclipsed Independence. A long way from being an occasion in the removed past, parcel is a procedure that keeps on unfurling. Drawing a line over a guide did not consider the bunch routes in which segment could quite end. The chaotic and confused relocation of individuals would keep this, and in fact, eventually inquiries will undoubtedly emerge about how dialect, culture, history and for sure families, the bearers of human encounters, can be apportioned.

... ..the meaning of "adversary" now incorporates Indian residents who happen to be the legitimate beneficiaries of individuals who went to Pakistan. Confronted with a decision amid segment, a large number of Muslims selected to stay in India. Tragically, the new changes make some Indian nationals' personalities completely dependent upon whether a relative went to Pakistan. My dad has spent a large portion of his grown-up life doing combating for his rights." (An outsider in one's own particular land, Ali Khan, Mahmudabad, the essayist is partner educator at Ashoka University and reporter for the Urdu Daily "Inquilab." His family is influenced by the foe property statute and the instance of sub-judice in the Supreme Court. Perspectives are close to home. Indian Express Monday March 21, 2016)

Here though the case is of judiciary, still if the belongingness is denied an individual faces certain kind of loss. The legal matters may vary but the emotional ties are very hard to break.

Not just in the cases of partition or Diaspora but migrations within the country also resulted in the feeling of up rootedness and homelessness. The divisions for whatever reasons bring along with them some sort of separations. The convenience that might have solved some of the basic problems but they caused discomfort at mental and moral level. And people wherever they go they carry this peculiar kind of feeling in their minds that where they belonged or grew up, is now either out of their reach or does not exist at all, for them to revisit it again and again, except their mental planes.

Following lines from the volume *'For the Love of Pork'* by a North Eastern Indian poet Goirick Brahmachari whose grandparents migrated from East Bengal underlines the fact of a race of people, who suffers belonging to nowhere,

“How does it feel to travel on the border of
two states?
A road that does not connect, but separates.
Meghalaya to my right
Assam, on my left
Meghalaya where I cannot make a home
Assam, where I am told, I am not from
Then, where is Home?”¹¹

His cry comes out of the denial from his roots, denial of the right to identity and belonging. His yet another poem on Silchar also talks of the loss

“We left you to never return again
We live now in hatred in dry cities
With a hope to come back to you someday.
Every now and then we when we look
At you, there is nothing that there was.
There is no longer anything that is you.
Where do we go then
When we are tired?
Where do we then return?”¹²
(The Hindu, Sunday, April 10, 2016, Nowhere People, Easterine Kire)

Thus the images, symbols, words that stand for many as 'Home' are missed by the migrants and people living in diaspora. *"It is a unique grace, of claiming belonging without possessing"*¹³. But people find it very difficult to cope with this emotional loss and the peculiar pain of 'lost' or 'being away from home' continuously haunt their mental horizons. And the crave to return is irresistible. The word 'hiraeth', is so evocative of these thoughts, right from Malgaonkar to Urvashi Butalia's narratives the peculiar feeling, related with home, feelings of memories amalgamated with nostalgia and fused with loss are reflected in the shades of meanings of this word. At the same time the emotional attachment with the house, its warmth, and other things which are counted as house/home too come into the orbit of this word.

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- 3) The Other Side of Silence, Urvashi Butalia
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