

Subedar Himmat Khan's camp.

Himmat Khan called out loudly, "The brave are never afraid ... Go back!" And he fired a shot to scare the dog.

The dog stopped again.

From the other side, Jamadar Harnam Singh fired his gun. The bullet whizzed by, past the dog's ear.

The dog jumped and flapped its ears violently.

From his position, Subedar Himmat Khan fired his second shot that buried itself near the front paws of the dog.

Frightened out of its wits, it ran about – sometimes in one direction, sometimes the other.

Its fear gave both Subedar Himmat Khan and Jamadar Harnam Singh, in their respective places, a great deal of pleasure and they began guffawing.

When the dog began running in his direction, Jamadar Harnam Singh, in a state of great fury, uttered a terrible oath, took careful aim and fired.

The bullet struck the dog in the leg and its cry pierced the sky.

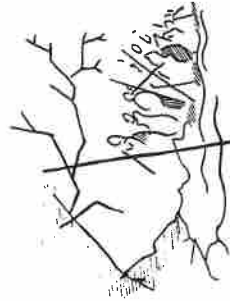
The dog changed its direction and limping, began running towards Subedar Himmat Khan's camp.

Now the shot came from this side – just to scare it. While firing Himmat Khan shouted, "The brave pay no attention to wounds. Put your life on the line ... go back ..."

Terrified, the dog turned the other way – one of its legs had become useless. It had just about managed to drag itself a few steps in the other direction on three legs, when Jamadar Harnam Singh aimed and fired. The dog fell dead on the spot.

Subedar Himmat Khan expressed regret, "Tch tch ... the poor thing became a martyr!"

Jamadar Harnam Singh took the warm barrel of the gun in his hand and said, "He died a dog's death."



"Tetwal ka Kurta" was first published in Urdu during Manto's lifetime. The translators have relied on the Devnagari version, published in *Sa'adat Hasan Manto: Dastavez*, vol. 2, eds. Balraj Menra and Sharad Dutt (Delhi: Rajkamal, 1993), rpt. 1998, while consulting the original as well.

Karneshwar
HOW MANY PAKISTANS?



Such a long journey. And yet I don't understand why this Pakistan confronts me at every turn. Saleema! I never did anything to hurt you ... then why did you do this to yourself? You laugh ... but I know, this laugh of yours conceals arrows dipped in poison. These are not mehandi flowers, Saleema, which release their fragrance only when the wind blows.

The wind! Makes me laugh to think of it. Remember how you said there was something in the air ... that it had gone to my head?

Of course you remember. Women never forget anything, only pretend to. Life would become difficult otherwise. To think of you as a woman or even Saleema, feels so odd. I want to call you Banno. Banno of the mehandi flowers. I remember those sighs, Banno, the smell of your breath mingling with the fragrance of mehandi flowers. You'd bring the flowers close to my nose and blow on them, making their fragrance waft up, and say, "Their scent rises only when the wind blows."

Well, it was the wind that got to me. That something in the air, Banno. But now I hesitate to call you Banno – I don't know if even you can bear to hear this name now. Does this name have any significance, anymore? That night, I wanted to go back, up the stairs, to ask you, to make you remember ... But was there anything you didn't remember?

God knows how many Pakistans were made! With the making of one Pakistan, somehow, somewhere, everything got tangled up. Nothing could ever be resolved.

That night was like the other one. Was it the peepal in the backyard that spoke, or was it Badru miyan – "Kadir miyan! Saala Pakistan has been formed ... Bhaiyon, a brand new Pakistan has been formed ..."

What a terrible night that was – that moonlit night, you lying in the courtyard below, Banno, milk-bathed in moonlight, the peepal rustling in the backyard and Badru miyan's voice coming as if from the nether world – "Kadir miyan, saala Pakistan has been formed ..."

Friend! This long journey has three points of rest – first, the fragrance of Banno's mehandi flowers which got to me. Second, that moonlit night when I saw Banno naked for the first time. And third, Banno standing in the doorway, her hand on the doorframe, asking, "Anyone else?"

Yes, there was, there was someone else! ... Someone ...

Banno, why did you laugh after one trembling, blind moment? When had I harmed you? Who were you taking revenge on? Me? Munir? Or Pakistan? Who were you shaming – me, yourself, Munir, or ...

This Pakistan comes between us again and again. For us – for you and me – it is not just the name of a country, it is a painful reality. It is that thing or cause that separates us further, that comes between our conversations like a gulf of silence. It renders shallow the depth of one's feelings for your family members, for people of the same religion. And then their pain does not seem as painful to one, as it really is, nor their happiness hold the same for one as it really should. Somewhere, something is diminished. It is this deadening of feeling that is called Pakistan – just as there are mehandi flowers, but no breeze, or no one to blow on them to spread their fragrance. Like flowers without colour, or with colour but no fragrance, or with fragrance but no breeze. This stagnant wind of feeling is what Pakistan is.

Listen, if it wasn't so, why would I have had to leave Chunar and become a dervish? Chunar – the land of mehandi flowers. Near the boundary walls of the mission school ... from where we'd walk to the peepal on the Ganga's bank, and sit sucking imli on the broken wall of King Bharathari's fort.

I distinctly remember that evening, when compounder Zamin Ali had come to Dada and said, "It isn't anything much, but people won't listen. Please send Mangal away for a few days. If he stays here, the reference to Banno will come up again and again. Their marriage is not possible, but a riot certainly is."

You cannot imagine what I went through. Leave Chunar! But, I left it behind. The nights in Chunar ... the water of the Ganga, the boats going towards Kashi, the deserted walls of Bharathari's ruined fort, the one-roomed toll office at the riverside, the roof on which I would sit and look out for Banno. The dry, cracked drains through which Banno always tried to wend her way to the riverside, but never managed. Waiting ... waiting ...

We never realized when we began to be seen as grown-ups, when our innocent meetings became the cause of such major events.

We never imagined this would lead to tension in the basti. How and

why did this happen, Banno? But how would you know? We never even spoke after that.

The three landmarks came and went – we never managed to stop and talk. Not even when the scent of mehandi flowers got to me, not when I saw you naked that moonlit night, and not when, with your hand on the doorframe you asked, “Anyone else?”

Mehandi flowers.

Chunar! My home, your home! A brick lane passed in front of my house, leading to the town bazaars. Winding along the banks of the Ganga, it reached the big gateway of Bharathari Maharaj’s fort.

Where the lane turned towards the fort there was a toll office. Taxes were levied on the goods brought in by the boats, and unloaded at the Ganga ghat. Fish, crabs, turtles were brought; mangoes too, in the right season. The munshi at the toll office went about his work, muttering the name of Ram to himself all day, and collecting grain in lieu of tax. He poured holy water on the Shiva idol under the peepal tree at least ten times a day, and tutored some boys on the rooftop.

Near the toll office was an elbow turn. On the left, a brick road went towards the fort. The road coming in from the left that joined it was unpaved. Running water had made gullies for itself in that lane, drains almost, the water slowly drying up on the sandy riverbank. Many small lanes went parallel to the gullies – lanes crisscrossed by water channels. These were Banno’s lanes.

Where Banno’s lanes came to an end, a paved road began, which went up to the mission school – a reconverted English bungalow. Here one found the mehandi bushes, and the maidan, overgrown with thorn-apple bushes.

These dhatura bushes had caused me much grief. When tension arose in the basti about me and Banno, she somehow managed to come to the toll office one day, and said, “If Maulvi sahab and his supporters create a ruckus, Mangal, I’ll take dhatura and sleep – forever! Don’t leave the town and go. If you go, don’t forget – Gangaji is right here.”

We couldn’t talk for long. She had to go. I couldn’t even tell her about the commotion in my house, about how Dadaji was being threatened daily by unknown men in the bazaar. Everyone feared I would be

murdered someday, that the Muslims would break into the house in the middle of the night.

Pakistan had been formed, Banno, and your Abba was still writing the *Bharatharinama*.

Earlier penance made me king,

From king I would be fakir now.

Hearts would meet at the time of death.

My used clothes, my words, I give up here.

Destroy my empire and wander about a hermit.

People said the Drillmaster had lost his mind to be writing the *Bharatharinama*. He is only a low caste convert, he does not have true Turk blood in him. It was then that we learnt that only the Iranians and the Turks were “true” Muslims – not the ones from here. Everyone had isolated the Drillmaster from their midst, and yet everyone wanted to interfere in Banno’s affair. As though they were the supreme guardians of morality.

You don’t know, Banno, but I do. Drillmaster sahab did not say anything, except to go along with whatever Maulvi sahab and the others thought best. He was unable to think for himself. One day, he came secretly to meet Dadaji, and wept bitterly in front of him. After that day, he never dared to show anyone his work on the *Bharatharinama*. That he was still writing it, I learnt only when – because of my family’s anxiety and my own confusion and indecision – I was leaving town. Bidding me a silent farewell, Munshiji had slipped a piece of paper into my clammy palm.

That was a fearful night. Kaal hovered over the basti. Everyone was terror stricken. Anything could happen. Any moment chants of “Yaa Ali” could rise, and bloodshed ensue. The Ganga, as if in sympathy, had been turbulent all day. The peepal at its bank was also restless. There was a strong wind whistling through the fort. Dada, along with some Hindus – yes, Banno, I have to say it, with some Hindus – had gone with me to the railway station, so that I could go somewhere else, somewhere far away, and live. At first it was proposed that I go to Jaunpur where Mama lived. But then, somehow, it was decided that I should go to Bombay and stay with my mausa who worked in the railway workshop at Kurla, and find a job there.

What a night that was, Banno. And such a humiliating exit. A thousand hammers were pounding inside my head. One part of me wanted to go back, pick up an axe, and charge those "Mussalmans" of yours. To win you in a bloody fight, and if not, to kill you and seek a watery grave in the Ganga.

But somewhere I was also afraid, and couldn't forget that after all, Drillmaster sahab hadn't said anything. He hadn't even put up an opposition — except to say nothing. He only wanted to write the *Bharatharinama*. It seems to me now that if he hadn't been writing the *Bharatharinama*, there might not have been so much opposition ...

The town seemed lifeless, dead. Dada had been told to get me out of there by the next morning. Consultations went on till midnight. Only the night's last train, the parcel train to Mughalsarai, was yet to go.

Yes, some Hindus escorted me to the railway station. We didn't even go through the bazaar, but took the deserted lane that passed the fort. Munshiji, lantern in hand, had walked with us till the beginning of the paved road, and it was there that he had slipped that piece of paper into my sweating palm. There was no light there, and everyone clustered together at the station. The train left at two thirty in the night. Dadaji was worried sick. Everyone was scared and humiliated, and therefore, perhaps, bloodthirsty. It looked like riots would break out as soon as I was safely out of the way. Now it was these Hindus, who would attack on their way back. In the waning night they would butcher the sleeping Muslims. It is so agonizing for a Hindu to be a Hindu, Banno. When this happens, something precious lessens in value ...

It was a painful parting. There was a nip in the night air, and the stone floor of the station was cold. Before us, the Vindhya Hills and their pine trees stood silent, motionless.

What can I tell you ... Who would've imagined, someday I'd be homeless? A man humiliated in his hometown cannot be at peace anywhere. I thought of the lanes that Banno would try to take, to come to me. I would sit for hours at the toll office, waiting. Finally, defeated, afraid, I would walk those lanes. Mehandi flowers scattered on the ground marked the point till where Banno had managed to come. She had not been able to come further. Someone must have spotted her, questioned her, stopped her.

To tell you the truth — from that very day a Pakistan had pierced my heart like a sword. People's names seemed changed, incomplete. The wind seemed to have stopped blowing in the basti. Banno seemed surrounded, trapped. Shame, fear, anger, tears, blood, exhaustion, madness, love — were boiling, seething inside me. After all this, it didn't really matter, whether or not I got Banno. What had to happen, had already happened.

Sitting in the parcel train, I read that piece of paper. You, Banno, had the same things to say as Master sahab. And I also got to know that Master sahab was continuing his work on the *Bharatharinama*.

Why become a dervish leaving troops, army, cavalry.

Why live in the wild forests, leaving nargis filled gardens.

Why wear saffron robes, leaving brocade and silk.

Why wander from door to door leaving Kamrup, Dhaka, Bengal.

Why become a madman. Forget all kingly splendour.

Yes, madness is the word. Brocades and crimson flowers — we had everything. Were neem, aakh, mehendi and dhatura flowers any less than the nargis, Banno? But what could we have done with that Pakistan?

The train ran on, and I silently became a dervish, a wanderer. After that, I never even felt the desire to return home.

I knew that Chunar was becoming stifling for Master sahab too. I knew nothing about Banno's existence. Only felt sometimes that she must have drowned herself in the Ganga. She is, she must be, somewhere, with someone — laughing, crying, grumbling, happy. Warming someone's bed at night. Giving affection and receiving beatings. Having to put up with rape. Asking blessings for her husband like a dutiful wife, applying mehendi. Wiping her children's bottoms. Happy, regretful. Must have forgotten everything. And what she didn't manage to forget — that stilled time must have become her Pakistan. To torture her ...

Anyway, Banno ... What happened had to happen. I came to Allahabad from Mughalsarai, and from there to Bombay. Mausea got me a job at the railway workshop in Kurla. After some time I went to Poona — to a limb

factory in a hospital, where wooden arms and legs were made. I knew no one could live any more in that place called Chunar – not my family, not your family. But I did not know that Dada would come so far and bring so many families with him.

In fact, to tell the truth, what was there in Chunar now? Whenever a Pakistan is formed, it leaves man sundered in two. Crops are destroyed, the roads shrink, and the sky is shredded into pieces. Clouds dry up and the winds are still, imprisoned.

Years later, Dada's letter informed me that some households, along with families of weavers and carpenters, had set out from Chunar in search of the old crops, roads, sky, clouds and wind, and had reached Bhiwandi. What it did not tell me was that Banno's family had also come. What would the Drillmaster come for? Dada's coming here was understandable. He was a trader in cotton cloth. They had come to Bhiwandi with eight families of Muslim weavers, and two families of Hindu carpenters. God knows what problems they had had to face in the beginning.

I got to know of you, Banno, only when Dada came to Poona to see me. He mentioned very casually that the Drillmaster sahib's family had also come. He had got a position in a school in Bhiwandi, and that he had also got Banno married. His son-in-law stayed nearby and worked at the loom. A fine silk weaver.

The deliberate, forced quality of Dada's casualness was not lost on me.

But I was not told, Banno, that Dada and you lived in the same house in the Waje mohalla, he upstairs and all of you on the ground floor. The other families were in Bengalpura and Nai Basti. Perhaps Master sahib had done this to be able to forget his former regrets. I badly wanted to go and see you, but if you really ask me, I was upset. Somehow, hearing about your presence here, being married only made me feel worse. And then Dadaji had hinted indirectly that it would be best if I didn't come to Bhiwandi – out of respect for Master sahib. He knew that Master sahib had not done anything, and he did not want to shame or upset him by my presence. Such a strange situation – couldn't I have a place in that house? You and I could have been together at least, if not one.

So many painful thoughts inside me – what if all this buried anger erupted some day? What if the pulsating Pakistan within me erupted? If

I stopped your husband from sleeping with you? If I managed to evict him from Bhiwandi, the way I had been evicted once? If some night, I lost control and burst into your room?

I know both Dada and Master sahib were trying to assure each other of their innocence. But what assurance did I get? What had they lost? The loss was entirely mine. Since then I had been roaming around with a mask on my face, gloves on my hands, and a dagger at my waist.

But Banno, the riots broke out in Bhiwandi as well. Not because of me and you – because of that same diminished feeling. I was struck dumb when I heard. God knows what had happened this time! Five years ago, I might have been the cause, but this time I wasn't even there. I hadn't even been to the place, only because I knew I would see you and start a riot.

But what a state you were in when I *did* see you.

The night was moonlit and Banno was naked

When I reached Bhiwandi, it had been almost a fortnight since the riots. Black mounds here and there greeted the eye. Some houses, then a charred maidan, then a cluster of houses, beyond it another black maidan. Ashes flying in the wind, no more smell of fire and cinders. Ash has a peculiar smell of its own – the smell of burnt alkali, a pungent smell that sears through the nostrils and penetrates deep inside.

Listen, you too must have experienced this smell of ash – is there anyone in this country who hasn't? It was evening when I alighted at the S T bus stand. There was no evidence of the terror that rises at the sight of patrols. Some policemen were chatting in front of a wall plastered with film posters. The buses were mostly empty. All were standing silently. Forget about buses going to Sanganner, Alibagh, Bhirwada or Sinnar, there was not one going even to Shirdi.

Under the tin shed of the bus stand there were a few more policemen. They had set up a makeshift household there, like wandering gypsies. If their rifles hadn't been lying in a corner like a pile of sugarcane, no one would have known they were policemen.

Both roads were empty. At the dak bungalow where the collector was staying, a few people could be seen. There were no taxis going even to Thane or Kalyan.

Maybe you knew how it was to pass through a riot torn street. I didn't. A strange kind of silence, or a dull beat. Deserted roads, and an almost tangible emptiness. People look but don't see you. And if they do, they look closely, but without any sense of human bonding. Why does this happen? Why do feelings die like this? Or is it faith that gets shattered so completely? Why did the Hindus do this ... Can any human being live in the midst of this silence?

Even in that small township, it was difficult to ask people for the way to Waje mohalla. Somehow, I managed to reach there and locate the house, but it was steeped in silence.

I knew Banno, Drillmaster sahab, your husband Munir – everyone would be there, my family members too. But the upper storey was lost in darkness. If it hadn't been a moonlit night, I would have panicked.

Really, for a moment I felt that if I hadn't left Chunar, the same would have happened there. Then, Banno, I thought of you. How would I face you? My blood, raging till now, went cold. As though I had entered those very lanes in Chunar ... Gone back in time.

The door to the house was open. I slowly stepped inside, into something like a courtyard. A couple of earthen pots stood in a corner. Beside them, two dark shadows. Both women. One of them was naked from the waist upwards. The other, squatting beside her, was continually stroking her from neck to waist, massaging her naked breasts. I had no idea what she was doing. But I could see a woman's naked back. What those women were doing sitting there, I couldn't understand. I came out, bewildered.

Suddenly Drillmaster sahab came into view. He took a minute to recognize me. But there was no welcome. He was at a loss as to how to deal with me. What day, what year, was he to begin his conversation from, with what relationship? Before he could say anything, I saved the situation. I asked him about Dadaji as I would ask a stranger.

"He left for Chunar the day before yesterday," Master sahab said.

"The day before ..." What could I say?

"Yes, he wouldn't stay. Many people went back," he said.

And I immediately understood, that despite everything, Dadaji could still return to Chunar but not Master sahab. Master sahab's leaving

Chunar did not mean the same as Dadaji's leaving it, or mine. Only a few people had issued my exile. His was a decree issued by fate. It is not easy to return from such an exile.

My family was no longer there, and I didn't know what to say. A riot-stricken town – where would I find refuge? Master sahab's putting me up at his house was not possible. Banno was there. And yet things had not reached the point where he could shut his door on me, leaving me standing outside like a stranger.

"Have they taken all their things?" I asked further.

"No, most of the stuff is here," he said.

"Have they locked up?"

"Yes, but I have a spare key." He hesitantly offered me help.

"I only need to spend the night – I'm leaving tomorrow evening, anyway." I elaborated unnecessarily, since this was no help. Where could I have stayed in a strange town?

He went inside and returned a moment later, carrying a candle and a key, and began walking up the stairs. Opening the door, he handed me the lock, and asked, "Have you eaten?"

"Yes," I said, and went inside.

"If you need anything just say it ..." he said, and went downstairs. The poet of the *Bharatharinama* knew how to be subtle. Say it! Not ask ...

Banno, what a strange night it was. You didn't even know that I was upstairs. Who knows whether Master sahab mentioned it or not? He could have said anything. If the police hadn't come early next morning, you would probably never have known who the wandering shadow on the terrace was.

A resounding silence, a stillness all around.

A moonlit night. A windless night. I had pulled my cot out on the terrace to get some air, or perhaps to get a glimpse of Banno. I lay down for a while, tossing and turning. Waiting expectantly for some sound, some sign, from you. But then my heart sank. No matter how hot, a woman has to lie beside her man.

The peepal in the backyard stood bathed in moonlight. I had positioned my cot in such a way that I could view the courtyard below – but what a dreadful view it was.

Two cots lay in the courtyard – Ammhi on one, and Banno on the other. It was so strange to see Banno lying ...

The moonlight streamed down on Banno, who, with her blouse open, dhoti pushed down to the waist, was lying naked. Her exposed breasts throbbled like water balloons, and she writhed slowly like a dying fish.

“Hai Allah ...” This was Banno’s voice.

“Sleep, sleep,” Ammi said.

“They are bursting,” Banno said, and pressed her breasts so hard as if to squeeze them dry.

Ammi sat up. “Let me massage them.” Saying this, she began to rub Banno’s full breasts. Thin jets of milk squirted from Banno’s breasts while she moaned and writhed on her cot. Broken streams of milk, like a bottle of perfume with a blocked nozzle. Then suddenly some drops would fall, glistening in the moonlight. A few droplets entered the creases of her stomach and sparkled like mercury. The milk in her navel shone like a large pearl.

Ammi would keep soaking up the milk with the corner of her odhni, and squeeze it out, from time to time, in the drain beside them. A thin snake of watery milk would crawl some distance in the muddy drain and then disappear.

Oh Banno! What was this I had seen? I stood petrified with terror. My body was bathed in perspiration. Writhing, cries of pain, and two swollen breasts suspended in the sky. Some fear, some confusion, some repentance at having seen something terribly wrong ...

I paced the terrace till late at night. It was only when everything was quiet below, and I saw Banno lying down fully covered, that I could lie down. What kind of scene was this? All across the sky there hung breasts dripping with milk ...

I had just dozed off when there was a clatter in the backyard. Someone was crying and sniffing and saying, “Kadir miyan. Saala Pakistan has been formed. Bhaiyon, a brand new Pakistan has been formed ...”

The crying stopped. A little while later the same voice said, “Kadir miyan, now this is where we’ll bind the ihram and say the talbia. Our Haj is complete, understand, Kadir miyan!”

If it wasn’t for the peepal in the backyard, I might have tried to run

away from that voice coming from the netherworld. Pictures flashed before my eyes – the sky dripping blood, corpses running helter-skelter in the dark. Fountains of blood erupting from amputated bodies standing in the bazaar. People dancing naked in the midst of flames ...

If the peepal hadn’t rustled, I would have been petrified with fear. The rustling of the leaves sounded like the clerk typing on his typewriter in the hospital office ... This was the only familiar sound. Everything else was new, frightening, of another world.

In the morning my head was heavy. My eyes were burning and my limbs were numb. But I had to get up because the Police had come. Master sahab came to wake me up. He seemed scared. He said, “The Police is asking for you ...”

“Why?”

“All outsiders are under surveillance. They asked us, “Who came at night, where did he come from, why did he come?”

I began to burn with anger. Tell me, when I was made to leave my home in the dead of the night, had anyone come to ask who was going, where was he going, why was he going?

Understanding, or trying to understand, not the whole man, but only an incidental part of him is what Pakistan is, Banno. When the Police woke me up that morning and took me to the Police Station, I understood that you and I – both of us – are trapped in this Pakistan together ... But what a painful togetherness.

I was subjected to a long cross-examination at the Police Station. Why had I come here? What could I tell them? Why does a man go somewhere? The Police would have given me no end of trouble, if Master sahab hadn’t come there himself. He was the one who gave them all the details. At that point, his being a Muslim proved useful. A Muslim vouching for a Hindu’s innocence was solid evidence. But I wondered, was Master sahab not repeating the mistake he had made when he began working on the *Bharatharinama*?

Answering questions in the Police Station was simple as well as tricky. Finally, we got out of there, walked across and sat on a pile of logs. Master sahab wanted me to regain my composure – I was looking deathly pale.

Two or three other people were sitting nearby. They too had probably

come for someone's bail or inquiry. They had long faces and sad expressions. There was fear in the Maulana's eyes. He was saying to the others, "The prophet says that the trumpet will be blown thrice. At the first sound, people will panic. At the second sound, everyone will die. And at the third, the dead will rise and assemble before God ... This will come to pass. This is the first sound of the trumpet ..."

"Are you still writing the *Bharatharinama*?" I asked.

"Yes ..."

My soul is wandering, let us rest here tonight.

*Talk through the night, and dawn will come
sooner ...*

Master sahab was looking at the tiny yellow flowers growing on the grass, lining the deserted terraces as he recited these lines. Doves would jump out of the dense grass like tiny fishes. Plucking the yellow flowers from the grass stems with their beaks, they would fly away. If the flowers fell from their beaks, they would come back to pluck more — their popping up from between the dense grass, their plucking of the yellow flowers, and their flying back — the flowers circled as they fell from the air and they returned from the sky to pluck more ...

Master sahab was watching all this in silence. At last I spoke — "Last night ..."

"Yes, that was Badru — he's lost his mind. He had forty looms — they were all set ablaze. Now he keeps sitting under the peepal in the backyard. Cries all night, shouts out abuses ..." Master sahab said.

"Something at home ..." I said hesitantly. Master sahab, sage-like, understood me perfectly, and said, "Yes, Banno is not well. She delivered a child three days before the riots broke out. She was at Dr Sarang's maternity home. The rioters set that on fire too. With the doorways blocked, the women were asked to jump off the second floor to save their lives. The children were thrown down too. There were nine women. Two died. Five infants died — Banno's child among them. People were being killed all around. The next morning, we somehow brought Banno home. Now the milk in her breasts gives her pain."

We both fell silent. The birds were plucking the yellow flowers and

flying around. Looking for an excuse to get up, I said, "I think I'll leave for Poona this afternoon."

"If possible, go to Chunar. See your Dada," Master sahab said.

"Why, has anything happened to him?"

"Yes, his arm was cut off. The rioters came to the house. If it weren't for him, we probably wouldn't have survived. The attack was directed at us. He came down to intervene. He was attacked. His left arm was cut off — it fell to the ground. And yet his courage — he picked up his own severed limb and continued fighting, a torrent of blood flowing from him. The severed arm became his weapon — the rioters threw bombs and ran away. Shreds of his blown up arm lay scattered around him. When we went to him, he had lost consciousness. One hand still clenched the other's severed wrist. A thousand thanks to the Almighty. We took him to the Thane hospital. He returned after eight days. The very next day, he left for Chunar."

"How was his arm?" I asked, stunned.

"All right. He could walk around. He assured us he would get the wound dressed regularly at Chunar hospital. Yaa Khuda, have mercy. It'll help if you went and saw him," Master sahab said, and shaded his eyes with his palms.

I felt like I was losing my grip on reality. What was this world I was living in? Who were these people around me? These few people who looked like human beings — were they for real or part of a sinister dream? Only broken, torn men seemed real now. People with complete, whole bodies, struck terror in the heart.

I came back and lay down in my room. Master sahab went inside. Then, voices floated up from downstairs. Everyone was there — Ammi, Master sahab, Banno's husband Munnir, and Banno. Munnir was saying, "I don't understand this obstinate resolve to stay here."

"You won't understand." The voice was Banno's. "We will first get back our child from this very soil where we lost it. Then we can go anywhere — wherever you say."

I peeped below. Munnir's thin wiry frame was shaking with anger. He screamed — "Take your child from here then, from whomever you like."

I stood shocked. Was this ... Was this a reference to me? But I was

probably wrong. Banno retaliated with – “How can I expect a child from you? You, who have wasted yourself, selling blood for drink.”

Tadaak! Munir must have hit Banno. A minor commotion arose.

Banno went on with her diatribe, “Don’t I know? Whenever he goes to Bombay, he sells his blood. Then lies trembling on the bed all night.”

What was this I was hearing, Banno? Another Pakistan was howling within you too. Aren’t all of us writhing under the burdens of our own individual Pakistans? Partial, incomplete, cut into pieces.

It was so dark that night – the night I left Bhiwandi in the same manner that I had once left Chunar. A taxi was going to Thane from the bus stand. I took a seat. Till we were clear of the township, charred maidans could be seen intermittently. The strong acrid smell of ash penetrated deep into me. The swollen breasts stayed suspended in the sky. Fountains of blood kept spouting from the headless bodies in the bazaar.

Thane! From Thane, a bus to Bombay. From Bombay a train to Poona, where I lay burning with fever for many days.

I wanted to forget everything, Banno, wanted to curl up within myself. How unsightly is this journey called life, where a man, cut into pieces, bloody all over, has to keep going on.

And in this lonely journey if one hears a voice saying, “Anyone else?” – nobody can begin to understand what one can go through. Not even you, Banno.

“Anyone else?”

Four or five months had passed. Dadaji had sent a letter saying he had returned to Bhiwandi. The Sindhis and Marwaris, with their larger shares in the market did not leave much scope for other traders. Some looms had to be shut down as well. The loss of an arm had destabilized the balance of his body. He had even jokingly mentioned that people were beginning to call him “Tonta.”

The only other piece of information he gave was that Munir had gone to Bombay and had taken Banno with him. God knows whether they had stayed on in Bombay or gone over to Pakistan. Master Sahab had gone partially insane – he did his drill in the house and kept writing his tome in school.

If I hadn’t come to Bombay that day, I would not have met you, Banno! And how painful that meeting was. Later, I kept wishing it had been me instead of him. You, on your part, must’ve thought that this is all I do. To be honest, Banno, I have been doing all this, but not with you. Perhaps, because of you.

That friend was not from Poona. He was from Bombay. His name is Kedar. He’d stayed for a while with me in Poona, and we had become friends. I was going to Bhiwandi, and had stopped at Bombay on the way. Then I felt restless – what would I do in Bhiwandi? Why was I going?

You had nothing to do with that evening, Banno. Kedar and I wanted to spend that evening together. We’d been drinking at a club in Colaba, after which we strolled towards Handloom House.

A lane next to it – I will recognize it if I go there, but can’t remember it now. Kedar and I entered it. A little way on, I think, we turned to the right. We crossed a shack, selling cigarettes. Cars were parked all around. It seemed like a Bohra Muslim locality. Very peaceful and clean.

The building had a lift. The staircase was clean too. We used the stairs. I was panting with the exertion of climbing five floors. The fragrance of cooking wafted out from open windows. The sixth floor was deserted. The flat at which Kedar stopped and pressed the doorbell, did not seem as clean as the others.

The door opened to reveal a Sindhi panting like a hippo. He took us to a sort of waiting room, lined with cheap sofas. The Sindhi was still breathing heavily. It seemed that if he talked too much, he would lose his breath and never get it back.

I was troubled. I went and stood at the open window for some fresh air. Dirty rooftops, as far as the eyes could see. Of all shapes and sizes. Kedar told the man that I would sit there and wait. The wheezing Sindhi brought a bottle of coke for me, and took Kedar to his table. There he began showing Kedar a bundled up black burqa. I couldn’t catch what he was saying.

After this, they both disappeared somewhere. After a minute or two I heard Kedar laugh.

Kedar didn’t return to where I was sitting, but the Sindhi did. Panting heavily as before, he said, “Beer ...” The rest of the sentence was

swallowed up by his wheezing – “Would you like to drink?”
 “Okay ...” I said, and he breathlessly asked the servant to get one. He didn’t drink himself. I sat there, drinking on my own.
 “You ...” He was panting as before. “Bombay ...” He meant, “Don’t you live in ...?”

“No, I stay in Poona,” I said.

“Business ...?” the panting continued.

“No, some personal work. I’m going to Bhiwandi.”

After that he sat there panting till Kedar came and stood before us. Seeing him, the Sindhi got up in confusion. I too was feeling confused. I drained my glass and walked towards Kedar. The three of us came out to the big central hall. Kedar was just paying for my beer, when a side door opened. I saw a woman’s hand give Kedar his comb and keys. Seeing me there next to the panting Sindhi, a voice asked, “Anyone else?”

I turned to look – hand on the doorframe, in a blouse and petticoat, you stood there, Banno! Asking – “Anyone else ...”
 Yes! Someone – there was someone else.

After a blind, trembling moment, you recognized me, and a twisted smile came to your lips. A smile steeped in poison. Or was it a smile of absolute rejection? Or was it just a smile – I don’t know.

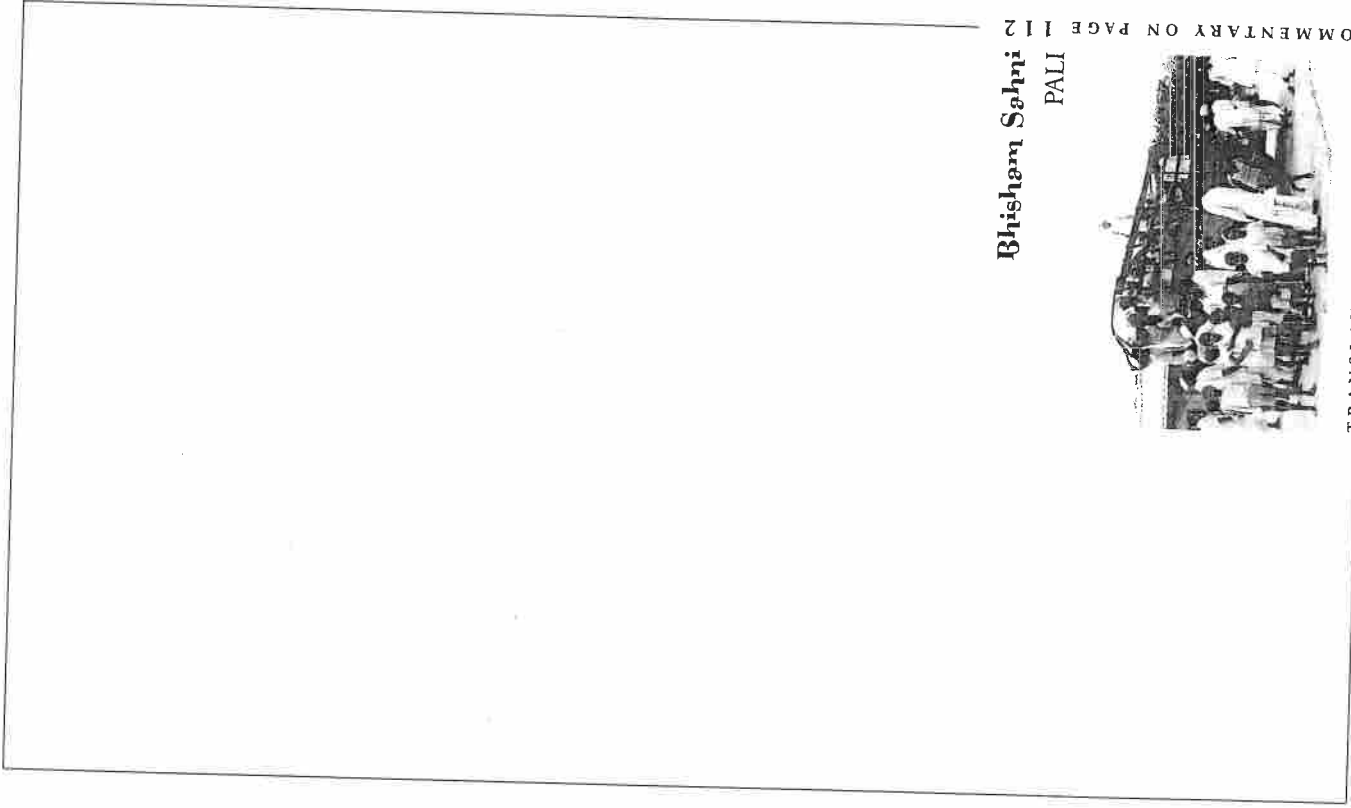
Who were you taking revenge on, Banno – me, yourself, Munir, or Pakistan?

I descended the stairs with Kedar behind me. I had a sudden impulse to climb back up the stairs and ask you, Banno! Was this inevitable? Was it fated to be like this for me?

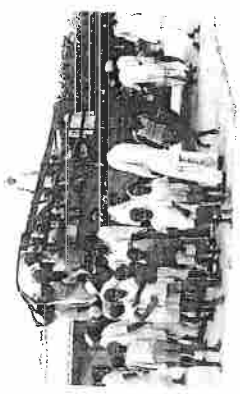
Now, from which other place can I flee? Where can I run to escape from Pakistan? Is there any place where there is no Pakistan? Where I can become whole again, and live with all my emotions and desires intact?

Banno! Every place is a Pakistan that wounds you and me, defeats us. It still hasn’t stopped beating and humiliating us.

“Kitne Pakistan” was originally written in Hindi in the 1966-67 period. Later it appeared in the collection *Kohra* (Delhi: Rajpal, 1994).



Bhisham Sahni
 PALLI



COMMENTARY ON PAGE 12

TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR

OUR RECENT RELEASES

Short Fiction

- Inspector Madaden on the Moon
By Harishanker Parsai
Trans C M Naim
- Seven Sixes are Forty Three
By Kiran Negarkar
Trans ShubhaSlee
- Selected Fiction: Hindi Short Stories
Trans & Ed Sara Rai
Waterness
- By Na Muthuswamy
Trans by Lakshmi Holmström
- Downfall by Degrees
By Abdullah Husein
Trans by Mohammad Umar Memon
- The Resthouse
By Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi
Trans by Faruq Hassan
- Katha Prize Stories 12
Ed Geeta Dharmarajan
- Best of the Nines: Katha Prize Stories 11
Ed Geeta Dharmarajan
The End of Human History
By Hasan Manzar
Trans by Mohammad Umar Memon

Non-Fiction

- Links in the Chain
By Mahadevi Varma
Trans by Neera Kuckreja Sohoni
- Travel Writing and the Empire
Ed Sachidananda Mohanty

ALT (Approaches to Literatures in Translation)

- Ismat: Her Life, Her Times
Eds Sukrita Paul Kumar & Sadique
- Translating Partition
Eds Ravikant & Tarun K Saint
- Translating Caste
Ed Tapan Basu
- Translating Desire
Ed Brinda Bose
Vijay Tendulkar

Trailblazers

- Ambai: Two Novellas and a Story
Trans by C T Indra,
Prema Seetharam & Uma Narayanan
- Paul Zacharia: Two Novellas
Trans by Gita Krishnakantty
- Ashokamitran: Water
Trans by Lakshmi Holmström
- Bhupen Khakhar: Selected Works
Trans by Bina Srinivasan,
Ganesh Dey & Naushil Mehta,
- Indira Goswami: Pages Stained with Blood
Trans by Pradip Acharya

Katha Classics

- Pudumaippittan
Ed Lakshmi Holmström
- Basheer Ed Vansajam Ravindran
Mauni Ed Lakshmi Holmström
- Raja Rao Ed Makarand Paranjape
A Madhaviiah: Padmavati
Trans by Meenakshi Tyagarajan

Katha Novels

- Singareva and the Palace
By Chandrasekhar Kambar
Trans by Laxmi Chandrashekar
Listen Girl!
- By Krishna Sobti
Trans by Shivanath

YuvaKatha

- Lukose's Church
Night of the Third Crescent
Bhiku's Diary
The Verdict
The Dragonfly

FORthCOMING

- Mountain of the Moon
By Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay
Trans by Santanu Sinha Chaudhuri
- Short Shorts Long Shots
By Uday Prakash
Trans Robert A Hueckstedt & Amit Tripurareni

**TRANSLATING
PARTITION**

Stories by
Attia Hosain, Bhisham Sahni,
Joginder Paul, Kamleshwar,
Sa'adat Hasan Manto,
Surendra Prakash
Essays • Criticism

Edited by
Ravikant & Tarun K Saint

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Toba Tek Singh by Gulzar	viii
Transcription in Hindi by Anisur Rahman	ix
English translation by Anisur Rahman	x
Introduction by Ravikant and Tarun K Saint	xi
<u>Stories</u>	
The Dog of Tetwal by Sa'adat Hasan Manto	1
Translated by Ravikant and Tarun K Saint	
How Many Pakistans? by Kamleshwar	11
Translated by Stuti Khanna	
Pali by Bhisham Sahni	29
Translated by the author	
Dream Images by Surendra Prakash	53
Translated by M Asaduddin	
Toba Tek Singh by Sa'adat Hasan Manto	63
Translated by M Asaduddin	
Phoenix Fled by Attia Hosain	73
Thirst of Rivers by Joginder Paul	79
Translated by Atanu Bhattacharya	
Pandit Manto's First Letter to Pandit Nehru by Sa'adat Hasan Manto	87
Translated by M Asaduddin	
<u>Critical Commentaries</u>	
"The Dog of Tetwal" in Context: The Nation and its Victims by Ravikant and Tarun K Saint	94
"How Many Pakistans?": An Overview by Stuti Khanna	104
"Pali" and Communalism Today by Anuradha Marwah Roy	112
Against Forgetting: Memory as Metaphor in "Dream Images" by M Asaduddin	120



KATHA

First published by Katha in 2001

The collection as a whole © 2001 Katha.
The individual contributions
© 2001 the respective authors.

KATHA is a registered nonprofit society
devoted to enhancing the pleasures of reading.
KATHA VILASAM is its story research and resource centre.

Studies in Culture and Translation

SCT Committee: Krishna Sobti, Malashri Lal, K. Satchidanandan,
Sukrita Paul Kumar and Geeta Dharmarajan
Assistant Directors, Marketing: Tanmoy Roy Chowdhury and Amrita Akhil
Book and Cover Design: Geeta Dharmarajan
Line Drawings: Vikram Nayak

Katha books are distributed by
KATHAMELA
distributors of quality books

A3 Sarvodaya Enclave, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 017
Typeset in 11.5 on 14.5pt Lapidary333 BT by Suresh Sharma at Katha
Printed at Pauls Press, New Delhi

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any
means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information
storage or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN 81-87649-04-6
3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4