Saadat Hasan Manto

Native name
Saadat Hasan Manto

Born
May 11, 1912
Samrala,
Ludhiana, Punjab,
British India

Died
18 January 1955 (aged 42)
Lahore, Punjab,
Pakistan

Occupation
Novelist,
playwright,
essayist,
screenwriter,
short story writer

Nationality
Pakistani

Period
1934–1955

Genre
Drama,
nonfiction, satire,
screenplays,
personal correspondence
### Saadat Hasan Manto

Saadat Hasan Manto (; Urdu: سعادت حسن منٹو, pronounced ; 11 May 1912 – 18 January 1955) was an Indo-Pakistani writer, playwright and author considered among the greatest writers of short stories in South Asian history. He produced 22 collections of short stories, 1 novel, 5 series of radio plays, 3 collections of essays, 2 collections of personal sketches and his best short stories are held in high esteem by writers and critics.¹ Manto was known to write about the atrocious truths that no one dared to talk about. Manto is best known for his stories about the partition of the subcontinent immediately following independence in 1947.²

Manto was tried for obscenity six times; thrice before 1947 in British India, and thrice after independence in 1947 in Pakistan, but never convicted.³

### Contents

- 1Writings
- 2Biography
  - 2.1Early life
  - 2.2Early career
  - 2.3Migration to Pakistan
  - 2.4Life in Lahore
  - 2.5Legacy
- 3Charge for obscenity
- 4Bibliography
- 5Further reading
- 6Manto's works online
- 7References
- 8External links

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**Notable works**
- Toba Tek Singh;
- Thanda Gosht;
- Bu;
- Khol Do;
- Kaali Shalwar;
- Hattak

**Notable awards**
- Nishan-e-Imtiaz Award (Order of Excellence) in 2012 (posthumous)

**Spouse**
- Safiyah

**Children**
- Arif (died a few days before his first birthday)
- Nusrat Jalal
- Nuzhat Arshaf
- Nighat Patel

**Relatives**
- Ayesha Jalal

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Writings

Manto chronicled the chaos that prevailed, during and after the Partition of India in 1947. He started his literary career translating work of literary giants, such as Victor Hugo, Oscar Wilde and Russian writers such as Chekhov and Gorky. His first story was "Tamasha", based on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar. Though his earlier works, influenced by the progressive writers of his times, showed a marked leftist and socialist leanings, his later work progressively became stark in portraying the darkness of the human psyche, as humanist values progressively declined around the Partition. His final works, which grew from the social climate and his own financial struggles, reflected an innate sense of human impotency towards darkness and contained a satirism that verged on dark comedy, as seen in his final work, Toba Tek Singh. It not only showed the influence of his own demons, but also that of the collective madness that he saw in the ensuing decade of his life. To add to it, his numerous court cases and societal rebukes deepened his cynical view of society, from which he felt isolated. No part of human existence remained untouched or taboo for him, he sincerely brought out stories of prostitutes and pimps alike, just as he highlighted the subversive sexual slavery of the women of his times. To many contemporary women writers, his language portrayed reality and provided them with the dignity they long deserved. He is still known for his scathing insight into human behaviour as well as revelation of the macabre animalistic nature of an enragd people, that stands out amidst the brevity of his prose.

Saadat Hasan Manto is often compared with D. H. Lawrence, partly because he wrote about taboos of Indo-Pakistani Society. His concerns on the socio-political issues, from local to global are revealed in his series, Letters to Uncle Sam, and those to Pandit Nehru. On his writing he often commented, "If you find my stories dirty, the society you are living in is dirty. With my stories, I only expose the truth.

Biography

Early life

Saadat Hassan Manto was born in Paproudi village of Samrala, in the Ludhiana district of the Punjab in a Muslim family of barristers on 11 May 1912. His father was a judge of local court. He was ethnically a Kashmiri and proud of his Kashmiri roots and the remnants of Kashmiri culture in his family. In a letter to Pundit Nehru he suggested that being 'beautiful' was the second meaning of being 'Kashmiri'.

The big turning point in his life came in 1933, at age 21, when he met Abdul Bari Alig, a scholar and polemic writer, in Amritsar. Abdul Bari Alig encouraged him to find his true talents and read Russian and French authors.

Early career

Within a matter of months Manto produced an Urdu translation of Victor Hugo's The Last Day of a Condemned Man, which was published by Urdu Book Stall, Lahore as Sarguzasht-e-Aseer (A Prisoner's Story). Soon afterwards he joined the editorial staff of Masawat, a daily published from Ludhiana.

This heightened enthusiasm pushed Manto to pursue graduation at Aligarh Muslim University, which he joined in February 1934, and soon got associated with Indian Progressive Writers' Association (IPWA). It was here that he met writer Ali Sardar Jafri and found a new spurt in his
"A writer picks up his pen only when his sensibility is hurt."[4]

-- Manto to a court judge

Saadat Hasan Manto had accepted the job of writing for Urdu Service of All India Radio in 1941. This proved to be his most productive period as in the next eighteen months he published over four collections of radio plays, Aao (Come), Manto ke Drame (Manto's Dramas), Janaze (Funerals) and Teen Auraten (Three women). He continued to write short stories and his next short story collection Dhuan (Smoke) was soon out followed by Manto ke Afsane and his first collection of topical essays, Manto ke Mazamin. This period culminated with the publication of his mixed collection Afsane aur Dramey in 1943. Meanwhile, due to a quarrel with the director of the All India Radio, poet N. M. Rashid, he left his job and returned to Bombay in July 1942 and again started working with film industry. He entered his best phase in screenwriting giving films like Aatth Din, Shikari, Chal Chal Re Naujawan and Mirza Ghalib, which was finally released in 1954. Some of his short stories also came from this phase including Kaali Shalwar (1941), Dhuan (1941) and Bu (1945), which was published in Qaumi Jang (Bombay) in February 1945. Another highlight of his second phase in Bombay was the publication of a collection of his stories, Chugad, which also included the story 'Babu Gopinath'. He stayed in Bombay until he moved to Pakistan in January 1948 after the partition of India in 1947.

Migration to Pakistan

Manto and his family were among the millions of Muslims who left present-day India for the Muslim-majority nation of Pakistan.[23]

Life in Lahore

When Manto arrived in Lahore from Bombay, he lived near and associated with several prominent intellectuals including Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Nasir Kazmi, Ahmad Rahi and Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi among others. They all used to gather at Lahore's iconic Pak Tea House, witness to some of the most fiery literary debates and passionate political arguments back in 1948-49. Pak Tea House holds a special place in the memories of those who know about Lahore's vibrant literary and cultural past. "There was absolutely no external influence and people would share their opinions on any subject without fear even during the military dictators' regimes."[24]

Legacy

On 18 January 2005, the fiftieth anniversary of his death, Manto was commemorated on a Pakistani postage stamp.[25]

On August 14, 2012 which is Pakistan's Independence Day, Saadat Hasan Manto was posthumously awarded Nishan-e-Imtiaz award (Distinguished Service to Pakistan Award) by the Government of Pakistan.[26]

Manto was a writer whose life story became a subject of intense discussion and introspection.[27] During the last two decades many stage productions were done to present his character in conflict with the harsh socio-economic realities of post partition era. Danish Iqbal's stage Play 'Ek Kutte Ki Kahani' is one such production which presented Manto in a new perspective on occasion of his birth centenary. In 2015, film director Sarmad Sultan Khoosat made and released a movie titled 'Manto' about his life, and upcoming film directed by Nandita Das will star
Nawazuddin Siddiqui as Manto

Charge for obscenity

Manto faced trial several times for obscenity in his writings in both India and Pakistan. Three times in India before 1947 ('Dhuan,' 'Bu,' and 'Kali Shalwar') and three times in Pakistan after 1947 ('KholDo,' 'Thanda Gosht,' and 'Upar Neeche Darmiyaan') under section 292 of the Indian Penal Code and the Pakistan Penal Code in Pakistan's early years. He was fined only in one case.

Regarding the charges of obscenity he opined “I am not a pornographer but a story writer,”

Bibliography

- Atish Paray (Nuggets of Fire) - 1936
- Chugad
- Manto Ke Afsanay (Stories of Manto) - 1940
- Dhuan (Smoke) - 1941
- Afsane Aur Dramay (Fiction and Drama) - 1943
- Lazzat-e-Sang-1948 (The Taste of Rock)
- Siyah Hashiye-1948 (Black Borders)
- Badshahat Ka Khatimah (The End of Kingship) - 1950
- Khali Botlein (Empty Bottles) - 1950
- Loud Speaker (Sketches)
- Ganjey Farishtey (Sketches)
- Manto ke Mazameen
- Nimrud Ki Khudai (Nimrod The God) - 1950
- Thanda Gosht (Cold Meat) - 1950
- Yazid - 1951
- Pardey Ke Pechhey (Behind The Curtains) - 1953
- Sarak Ke Kinarey (By the Roadside) - 1953
- Baghair Unwan Ke (Without a Title) - 1954
- Baghair Ijazit (Without Permission) - 1955
- Tobha Tek Singh( "powerful satire")-1955
- Burquey - 1955
- Phunduney (Tassles) - 1955
- Sarkandon Ke Pechhey (Behind The Reeds) -1955
- Shaiytan (Satan) - 1955
- Shikari Auratein (Women of Prey) - 1955
- Ratti, Masha, Tolah-1956
- Kaali Shalwar (Black Pants) - 1961
- Manto Ki Behtareen Kahanian (Best Stories of Manto) - 1963
  
Tahira Se Tahir (From Tahira to Tahir) - 1971

Further reading

- Manto Naama, by Jagdish Chander Wadhawan.1998, Roli Books, Reference submitted by Dr. Priyanka Puri, Assistant Professor, Miranda House, University of Delhi (Lt. Sh. Wadhawan’s grand daughter).
Manto's works online

- Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto
- Short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto
- Toba Tek Singh. Translated by Frances W. Pritchett.
- 'Toba Tek Singh' in Hindi or [4]
- 'Thanda Gosht' (Cold Meat) in English
- A collection of short stories in Hindi
- 'Mera Sahib' - Manto's writing about Muhammad Ali Jinnah
- 'First Letter to Uncle Sam'
- 'Second Letter to Uncle Sam'
- 'Third Letter to Uncle Sam'
- 'A Dog of Tithwal' in English[32]

References

He claimed allegiance not only to his native Punjab but also to his ancestors' home in Kashmir. While raised speaking Punjabi, he was also proud of the remnants of Kashmiri culture that his family maintained-food customs, as well as intermarriage with families of Kashmiri origin-and throughout his life he assigned special importance to others who had Kashmiri roots. In a tongue-in-cheek letter addressed to Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, he went so far as to suggest that being beautiful was the second meaning of being Kashmiri.

By virtue of his disposition, temperament, features and his spirit, Manto remains a Kashmiri Pandit.
Manto and his stories
Saadat Hasan Manto on IMDb, Retrieved 12 August 2015
Remembering Manto on his 101st birth anniversary
Manto, After Fifty years; A tribute at BBC Hindi
Watch Video Play of Saadat Hasan Manto

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People from Ludhiana
Punjabi people
Writers from Lahore