Azadi by Chaman Nahal: A Book Review

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Abstract

Azadi is one of the novels of Gandhi Quartet. It is considered as Chaman Nahal’s best novel. In 1977, it won for him Sahitya Academy Award and also The Federation of Indian Publisher Award. Nahal was encouraged to compose this novel from his own experiences of having lived in Sialkot during the period of Partition. Nahal calls “Azadi as a hymn to one’s land of birth, rather than a realistic novel of partition” (Nahal Writing a Historical Novel 40). He elaborates by saying that this fact “does not absolve the novelist’s obligation to history; paradoxically, it increases that obligation, where the novelist should be able to dramatize actual events. For historical fiction to carry a deeper meaning, it must succeed at the realistic level first” (Nahal Writing a Historical Novel 41). The novel is the story of the terrors of the partition and the holocaust created by the communal agitation and it also gives an intensive picture of the effect of partition on the lives of the people living in the border town of Sialkot. Nahal’s Azadi begins with the announcement of the partition and this is where Manohar Malgonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges ends. So it appears that Nahal has picked up the thread of partition from where Manohar Malgonkar has left it.