

Tribhuvan University

Memory and History: Thin Representation of Partition Violence in Bhisham Sahni's

Tamas

**A Thesis Submitted to
The Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English**

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Raju Malla has completed his thesis entitled “Memory and History: Thin Representation of Partition Violence in Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from November 2010 to April 2011. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for *viva- voce*.

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Supervisor

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Memory and History: Thin Representation of Partition Violence in Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas*, ” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Raju Malla, has been approved by undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Raju Malla

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Abstract

A traumatic historical event usually finds the artistic/literary response twice: once, during the event or immediately following it, and again after a lapse of time, when the event has found its corner in the collective memory of the generation that witnessed it. The initial response tends to be emotionally intense and personal in character, even melodramatic. On the other hand, when the event is reflected upon with emotional detachment and objectivity, a clearer pattern of the various forces that shaped it is likely to emerge. *Tamas* is the reflective response to the partition of India – one of the most tragic events in the recent history of the Indian sub-continent.

Sahni witnessed the turbulence of the period as an adult. That was a period of intense turmoil – people sacrificing their lives for the freedom of the country, people dying fighting. The unprecedented communal violence provoked by the callous manipulation of religious sentiments of different communities, by the elements that chose to use religion as a weapon to achieve political objectives, heightened his sensitivity towards human suffering and also strengthened his commitment to secularism. As a writer, Sahni rarely gives sentimental and dramatic response to immediate events. His creativity is characterized by deep reflection upon and understanding of the complexities and nuances of contemporary reality. Thus, in *Tamas* while narrating the partition and its violent aftermath, Sahni does not take the side of any community. His approach to violence is moral, for events come through the view points of the sufferers.

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