

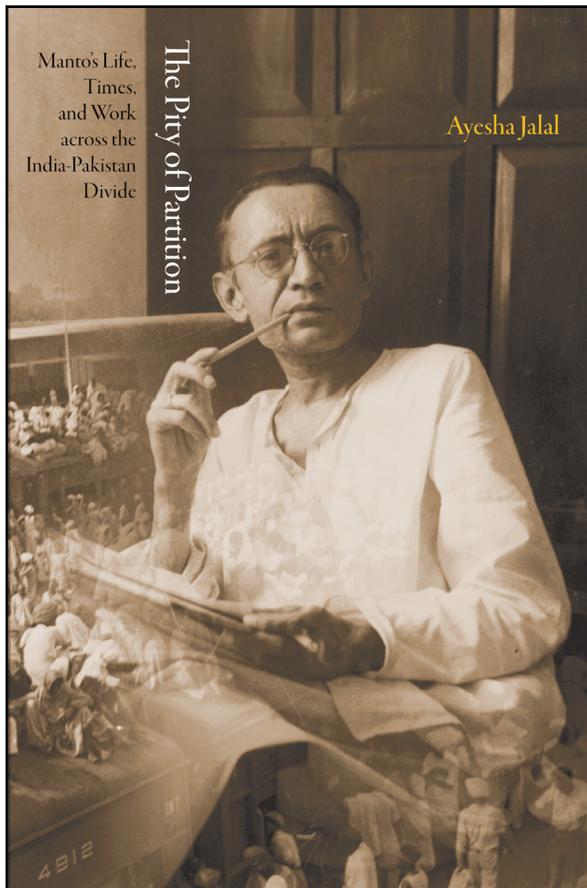
The Pity of Partition

Manto's Life, Times, and Work across the India-Pakistan Divide

by Ayesha Jalal

"This is a masterful historical study of partition as seen through the life and writings of one of the subcontinent's foremost storytellers—Saadat Hasan Manto. A work at once scholarly and emotive, panoramic and personal, gripping and empirical, this is Jalal at her spectacular best."

—Seema Alavi, author of *Islam and Healing*



Saadat Hasan Manto (1912–1955) was an established Urdu short story writer and a rising screenwriter in Bombay at the time of India's partition in 1947, and he is perhaps best known for the short stories he wrote following his migration to Lahore in newly formed Pakistan. Today Manto is an acknowledged master of twentieth-century Urdu literature, and his fiction serves as a lens through which the tragedy of partition is brought sharply into focus. In *The Pity of Partition*, Manto's life and work serve as a prism to capture the human dimension of sectarian conflict in the final decades and immediate aftermath of the British raj.

Ayesha Jalal draws on Manto's stories, sketches, and essays, as well as a trove of his private letters, to present an intimate history of partition and its devastating toll. Probing the creative tension between literature and history, she charts a new way of reconnecting the histories of individuals, families, and communities in the throes of cataclysmic change. Jalal brings to life the people, locales, and events that inspired Manto's fiction, which is characterized by an eye for detail, a measure of wit and irreverence, and elements of suspense and surprise. In turn, she mines these writings for fresh insights into everyday cosmopolitanism in Bombay and Lahore, the experience and causes of partition, the postcolonial transition, and the advent of the Cold War in South Asia.

The first in-depth look in English at this influential literary figure, *The Pity of Partition* demonstrates the revelatory power of art in times of great historical rupture.

Ayesha Jalal is the Mary Richardson Professor of History at Tufts University. Her books include *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850*, and *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan*.

*"This lovingly written, informative, and thoughtful book by Ayesha Jalal is a fitting tribute to the life and work of her great-uncle, Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the leading writers of modern South Asia, on the occasion of his centennial birthday. Jalal moves deftly between history, biography, and literature, experimenting with a narrative method that succeeds in capturing the sense of 'cosmopolitanism in everyday life' that Manto championed. *The Pity of Partition* deserves a wide readership."*

—Dipesh Chakrabarty, University of Chicago



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