

The Aspects of Partition in the novel *the Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh

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Abstract: Khushwant Singh's tells the tale of a made-up village's ordeal during the summer of 1947 in *The Train to Pakistan*. Khushwant Singh gives it reality, terror, and credibility by focusing on the human aspect of the tragedy rather than only the political circumstances preceding the separation. Mano Majra, the made-up village on the border between Pakistan and India where the narrative takes place, is populated by Muslims and Sikhs, and is the setting for this examination of struggle and bloodshed. Singh reveals how, outside of the hamlet, they were constantly threatened by mobs of both Muslims and Sikhs who hated each other, while living in relative harmony there. The residents relied on rumours and word of mouth to learn about the world outside the boundaries of their town. For this reason, they are more susceptible to the criticism of others. There was once peace in Mano Majra, but after two trains went through the village station carrying human remains, panic spread. The gloom of those days and the horrors that unfolded undermined the trust of the people. Phase of spectacular disillusionment and a disaster of ideals depict a condition of sorrow and breakdown shared by the characters in *The Train to Pakistan*. Villages were dominated by a lynch mob that ran amok, destroying property, kidnapping residents, and even stabbing to death the holy animals of neighbouring towns. One of the deadliest massacres in Indian history occurred during the war for independence, and the country ultimately suffered more from internal strife. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine how the novel *The Train to Pakistan* handles the topic of division.

Keywords: partition, train, Pakistan, Mano Majra.

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I. Introduction

Khushwant Singh was born in West Punjab, on 2 February, 1915. He is a historian, short story writer, essayist, novelist, editor and journalist. These achievements make him a versatile author of Indian writings in English. In 1956, *Train to Pakistan* was published and obtained the Grove India Fiction Prize. As a writer, Khushwant Singh is best known for *The Train to Pakistan* and *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*. After the publication of the novel *The Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh became one of most respected literary figures with international renown. *The Train to Pakistan* describes the tragedy of the division of India and Pakistan, an event as a way to remembered as one of the blackest chapters in human history of conscience.

This novel is separated into four sections: the first "Dacoity", the second "Kalyug", the third "Mano Majra" and the fourth "Karma". Khushwant Singh clearly builds on the turbulent days of division in these four sections of this novel. He describes cataclysmic scene in the first part of the novel "Dacoity" as follows:

The summer before, communal riots precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan, had broken out in Calcutta, and within a few months the death toll had mounted to several thousand. Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed... both tortured. Both raped. From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west to Noakhali in East-Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus, to Bihar where Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullahs roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. Hundreds of Thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier abandoned their homes and fields towards the protection of the predominantly Sikh and Hindu communities in the east... By the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced ten million people-Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs- were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror or in hiding. The only remaining oases of peace were a scatter of little villages lost in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Majra." (1)

In this section, the assassination of Ram Lal by a gang of bandits from a neighboring thorp is the indication of the main theme of the tragedy. The bandits have caused amputations and victimized innocent people. Police arrest Jaggut Singh and Iqbal and suspect them of murder. The village's sudden activity sets the story in motion.

The second section, "Kalyug", explains the novel with a universal view: all the bodies brought by train from Pakistan to be incinerated in Mano Majra are believed to have existed in the old world. In a mass cremation event, Mano Majra's fragments were completely destroyed. Everyone in the village treats the train as a harbinger of bad times. Even Mit Singh said to Imam Baksh, "This is kalyug, the dark age" (84). This was the first night in Mano Majra's history that, "Imam Baksh's sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of God" (89). All these subtleties in Mano Majra's life suggest that the termination has come.

The third section, "Mano Majra" revolves around a modified village. With the appearance of a ghost train packed with corpses, Mano Majra unable to follow its ideal isolation and becomes involved in the dissolution of the state. The Chief Constable divides the villagers into his two groups, Sikhs and Muslims. Sikh refugees shared atrocities with Pakistani Sikhs and Hindus. As Khushwant Singh explains, "There was complete confusion. People ran hither and thither shouting at the tops of their voices" (144). Despite this, the villagers have sworn to protect their Muslim brothers. Numberdar assures Imam Baksh, "This is your village as much as ours" (133). Another young man said, "If anyone raises his eyebrows at you, we will rape his mother" (133). Imam Baksh said, "What have to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers" (133). However, the fire of hatred flared up. Everyone fears the angry and wounded refugees from Pakistan. The irony of fate is revealed when the state of mental anguish and conflict between Hindus and Muslims becomes apparent. A Muslim house is robbed.

The fourth section is "Karma", which describes the metaphysical aspects of the novel. In this segment, the story reaches a devastating dramatic ending as Juggut Singh gives away his own life to save the life of his fellow Muslims and his beloved lover Nooran. The novel ends with an ironic reversal of order with bandit Mali becoming the custodian of a Muslim estate and Jaggut Singh sacrificing his life. In this passage, "Karma" captures the human being, who, by free will, fights fate and tries to retrieve the last soul. Khushwant Singh, thus, sums up his novel as:

The engine was only a few yards off, throwing embers high up in the sky with each blast of the whistle. Somebody fired another shot. The man's body slid off the rope, but he clung to it with his hands and chin. ... The rope had been cut in shreds.... The engine was almost on him. There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan. (172)

The Train To Pakistan describes the difficult relationship between Muslims and Sikhs. In the process of partitioning, the situation in the country deteriorated miserably. Twelve million people were displaced from their homes, more than one hundred thousand of women, young and old were abducted, forced and killed. They escaped both sides of the border in search of safety and refuge. Manohar Malgonkar says, "Every citizen was caught up in the Holocaust. No one remains aloof... the administration, the police even the armed forces, were caught up in the blaze of hatred" (341).

The main reason for the split was the common mistrust planted by the politicians. The deputy inspector was outraged at the sins of Delhi's politicians. They are the key players behind the brutality in Punjab occurred after the split. The deputy Inspector expresses regret after telling gruesome scene in Pakistan. He said to Hukam Chand (Deputy Director):

What is happening on the other side in Pakistan does not matter to them. They have not lost their homes and belongings; they haven't had their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters raped and murdered in the streets. Did your honour hear what the Muslim mobs did to Hindu and Sikh refugees in the marketplaces at Sheikhpura and Gujranwala? Pakistan police and the army took part in killings. Not a soul was left alive." (22)

Similarly, in Bhisam Sahni's *Tamas* set in a little metropolis frontier province in 1947, simply earlier than partition the unconventional calls the tale of a sweeper who's bribed and tricked with the aid of using a nearby Muslim political leader to kill a pig. The next morning, the carcass is determined at the step of the masjid and the metropolis already anxiety oppressed, bursts forth enraged Muslims bloodbath ratings of Hindus and Sikhs, who in turn, kill each Muslim they could find. The area's British directors, finally, name out the armed forces to save people in violence. The fatalities forestall however not anything can erase the lousy

reminiscences from the insights of the minds of the overlivers, nor can be numerous groups ever accept as true with each other again.

Shortly after the split announcement, the train was filled with Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan and Muslim refugees from India. One day in early September, a ghost train came to Mano Majra from Pakistan. It was full of corpses. The train was displayed as:

There were women and children huddled in a corner, their eyes dilated with horror, their mouths still open as if their shrieks had just then become voiceless. Some of them did not have a scratch on their bodies. There were bodies crammed against the far end wall of the compartment, looking in terror at the empty windows through which must have come shots, spears and spikes. There were lavatories, jammed with corpses of young men who had muscled their way to comparative safety.(90)

The scene was terrible, as Shahane says:

The train implies the movement of vast communities, torn from their links of nativity, from their places of birth and upbringing and areas of traditional growth in search of a new Jerusalem. It indicates the harrowing process of this change, the awful and ghastly experiences of human beings involved in a historical, objective and almost dehumanised process.(21)

The corpses were omitted from the train and thrown one above another. Hukam Chand started to moan and, "he sat up with a look of terror in his eyes" (90). In the mean time, a police officer ordered the people, "Everyone get all the wood there is in his house and all the kerosene oil he can spare and bring these to motor trucks on the station side" (86). It was for the mass cremation. The novelist describes the scene in which those dead bodies were burned:

Red tongue of flame leaped into the black sky. A soft breeze began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning kerosene, then of wood. And then— a faint acrid smell of searing flesh. The village was stilled in a deathly silence. (88)

Khushwant Singh, in *The Train To Pakistan* tells the same accounts of atrocity caused to females of different religions. It narrates the story of a lass - Sundari. She went to Gujranwala with her husband on the fourth day of the wedding. Her arms were still wearing red bangles and her hands were sparkling with henna (mehndi). That day, she daydreamed as she went to her new home with her husband. Suddenly, they were attacked by muslims. Her husband was stripped naked and slaughtered in front of her eyes; she is raped by a gang:

The mob made love to her. She did not have to take off any one of her bangles. They were all smashed as she lay in the road, being taken by one man and another and another. That should have brought her a lot of good luck. (47)

Generations of brotherhood were shrouded in discord. People felt threatened and alienated. Facts infiltrated Mano Majra. Appearance of refugees and ghost trains out of Pakistan, the brutalities being committed to Hindus and Sikhs have become terrifyingly alive. This strengthens the process of separation, discrimination and security of Muslims by Mano Majra became more and more unstable. Finally, Muslims decided to depart for Pakistan, but the train that attempts to bring them to Pakistan was said to have been attacked by violent vengeful Sikhs, who engage the judgment users. Mali and his gang and a small number of people from village joined the group. They wanted to send a alike ghost train to Pakistan which has arrived to India from Pakistan. They were ruthless, inhumane, and destructive. Their plot to avenge was:

For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. For each train load of dead they send over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attacked, attack two.(157)

All the villagers were shocked and disappointed after this incident. All locations from borderline is full of this kind of carnage, along with Mano Majra. S.P. Swain points out:

Everywhere there is mass madness and Mano Majra too reels under the opprobrious and ghastly scene of communal frenzy. (85)

Mahesh Datani's *Fina Solution* draws parallels between violent division in 1947 and violence happens during the 2002 Gujarat riots through the character Daksha. The current grandmother, Hardika was 15 year old bride, 1940s Daksha. First entry on Daksha's Dairy was inscribed on 31/03/1948 in which she describes the insignificance of life and the liberty of the country as a 'terrible thing'. Her naive observation has an echo of the truth. Her father was a revolutionary warrior who fight for liberty during his life. He is very happy when the Britishers eventually left their country but his father died in communal disturbance that broke out before and after partition and demanded the lives of innumerable naive people. Daksha and her mother were assaulted at home in Hussainabad. On the similar day, Daksha's father was striked to death by rioters in the street of Hussainabad while Daksha and her mother were hoping that he will come and rescue them. The injustice of the past and present merges for Hardika and she says, " Yes, things have not changed that much." (6). The gist of

the story chronology can be seen in the fact that India's pain of division persists in the Indian mind. Memories are bearer of trauma and sadness have shaped conscience, cultural sensibilities and capabilities of a Indians.

As Singh points out right at the starting of recounting, the best positive reality of rumours approximately scenes of injustice, spreading uncontrollably amongst people that Hindus and Muslims murdered, setting up a circular argument wherein rumours approximately worsen violence have been used as proof to location the censure at the enemy and valid the use of pressure as a reasonable reaction. They have an effect on of rumours ignited and sustained communal violence. Singh backgrounds the reality that the speedy degeneration of bonds among Muslims and Sikhs became decided via way of means of the mental stress of rumours telling unverified scenes of assault and bodily harms, in no way as soon as mainly stated via Singh himself or through recounting, that progressively growth unbearableness and a choice for personal or collective revenge in the contributors of one network toward the other. For example, in recollecting the reader of the riots that afflicted Calcutta on the time, Singh makes it in order that the reader is shocked via way of means of a thing best obliquely hinted via way of means of the author: the reality that they ignited at the easy concept of a department among Pakistan and India. Distrust became frequent, as became the situation in Mano Majra, now no longer on particular occurrences of violence, however on time-honored rumours approximately it, whose unsurity made it all of the greater thraetening and horrifying, able to converting an acknowledged buddy right into an ability enemy:

Rumours of atrocities committed by sikhs on muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala began to spread. They had heard of gentlewomen having their veils taken off, being stripped and marched down crowded streets to be raped in the market place. Many had eluded their would-be ravishers by killing themselves. They had heard of mosques being desecrated by the slaughter of pigs on the premises, and of copies of the holy Koran being torn up by infidels. (102)

'Train to Pakistan,' a play based on the book, was performed at Lamakaan, an open culture centre in Hyderabad, India. In this case, it was the Aami Theater Group who put on the performance. Krishna Shukla reworked the play and led the production. This was his third time performing the piece, and his most recent performance was on August 26th, 2014.

Bela Theatre Karwaan first performed their December 29, 2019 production of the Usha Mahajan–translated, Suman Kumar–acted, and Amar Sah–directed Hindi play Mandi House, Delhi, at Kamani Auditorium (Mandi House, Delhi) on January 10, 2020. The play ran until January 23, 2020. Each performance ended with a standing ovation.

Narrative reports on breakup trauma situations gave movie producers plenty of leeway to conquer painful recollections of the split of the subcontinent. A lot of movie authors were inspired from literary resources. *The Train to Pakistan* (1998) is a graphical representation of the novel of the same name. Its direction was done by Pamela Rooks and was nominated in Cinequest San Jose Film Festival 1999 in the Best Feature Film class.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Scenes from the movie *The Train to Pakistan* released in 1998 featuring Nirmal Pandey as Juggut Singh and Smriti Mishra as Nooran .

II. Conclusion:

To sum up, we can say that Khushwant Singh helps us through his characters grasp the tragic history of the split, the most significant occurrence of the struggle for freedom of India. The divide was a dark age, and darkness was everywhere in those days, India or Pakistan. Millions of refugees have been forced from their homes. The breakup was indeed a traumatic experience in history. It suddenly led to a prolonged and common

history and cultural doctrine. The train played a key role in breaking the split news when finally corpses can be seen crossing the border from both sides via train. *The Train to Pakistan* painted ghostly horror paintings that are licensed throughout the border region in the horrible days of division.

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