

RE-MEMORIZING BRUTAL PARTITION IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

Shriya

Ph.D. Research Scholar (English Literature), Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur

Abstract

"The wounds will take decades to heal, centuries to overcome the trauma."

(Gulzar)

Literature gets affected by the historical events and the writer cannot ignore the reality. History can be called the upholder of past events. History establishes an illuminating bridge between reality and imagination. India, which once known as Golden Bird got partitioned in 1947. India is the land of Gods, Saints and Seers where people from different religions live together with love and affection but the incident of partition has changed all these values. The partition of sub-continent in 1947 was not merely the division of land but also the division of feelings, love and the unity of the innocent citizens that got butchered. Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan portrays the horrible experience of the partition as millions of people have to leave their ancestral homelands. Truth meets fiction with incredible affect as Singh's Train to Pakistan recounts stories that he, his family and companions themselves have experienced. This research paper attempts to show how Khushwant Singh describes the realistic tale of the Partition of India and Pakistan. The purpose behind Singh's writing this novel was to highlight the holocaust which happened during Partition on India Pakistan border which affects the psyche of the people till today. The Partition of 1947 has compelled the Hindus to leave Pakistan and Muslims to leave India. After studying Singh's Train to Pakistan one can himself creates a moving picture before the eyes, what had happened during the time of partition?.

Keyword: Partition, Trauma, Train, Brutality, Violence, Religion

1. ABOUT KHUSHWANT SINGH

Khushwant Singh, one of the significant writer, columnist, historian, out-standing observer and commentator-all rolled into one in the field of contemporary Indian English novels was born on February 2, 1915 in Hadali in West Punjab (now in the Punjab province of Pakistan). He was educated at Government College of Lahore, St. Stephen's College of Delhi, King's College and Cambridge University and at the Inner Temple London. He joined Indian Foreign Services when India got Freedom in 1947, he worked as Public Relations Officer and he was appointed Journalist in the All India Radio in 1951. His novel *Train to Pakistan* won him Grove Press Award in 1954. He was the founder-editor of *Yojana*, the *National Herald* and *Hindustan Times*. He was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1974, but returned it on June 8, 1984 as a protest, when the Indian Army attacked the Golden Temple of Amritsar. In July 2000, he was conferred the honest man of the year Award by the Sulabh International Social Service Organization for his honesty in his writings. His autobiography *Truth, Love, and a Little Malice* was published in 2002. In 2007, he was awarded with country's second highest civilian award of Padma Vibhushan. Singh has won worldwide acclaim for his magnum opus *Train to Pakistan*.

His important works are:-

1. The Mark of Vishnu and other Stories(1950)
2. Train to Pakistan(1956)
3. I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale(1959)
4. Delhi: A Novel(1990)
5. Burial at the Sea(2004)

Khushwant Singh's writings were characterized by a sense of realism and humour.

2. PARTITION IN CONTEXT OF INDIAN HISTORY AND IN SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

The year 1947 is remembered for 2 events:-

1. India gained Independence.
2. Due to Partition, two newly independent nations, India and Pakistan were created.

Partition was the decision of government which has been faced by the common men as an awful reality of our past. Country was celebrating the most awaited freedom from the British rule, yet the Partition announced the obliteration, mental trauma and massacre. The Partition of India in 1947 is one of the greatest setbacks in the history of India's integrity credited to the British's Divide and Rule Policy. Women were mainly the sufferers of this period, fathers killed their own daughters for the respect of their families. Crossing a border during Partition means adopting new situations and cultures. When the people were migrated from one place to another, trains full of murdered bodies from across the border were sent with the message "With love from India" and "With love from Pakistan". Such deliberate acts of barbarism and fierceness added more fuel to the fire and resulted in slaughter of human beings. As a result of Partition, people started migrated from borders of India and Pakistan. They carry with them sad stories of displacement, murder, rapes and so on. People were not given enough time to make preparations for the journey they had to take. The real beginning of this violence started from cities and sparked its fire to small villages.

Many writers, both from Pakistan and India, have written on the theme of Partition in their literary works. Most prominent among them are:-

- i Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*
- ii Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*
- iii Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*
- iv Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*
- v Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*
- vi Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas*

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* was published in 1956, almost ten years after the Partition of India and Pakistan. This novel appeared under two titles:

1. *Mano Majra*
2. *Train to Pakistan*

It was the first English historical novel written on the theme of Partition. He relates the trauma and tragedy of Partition through his symbolic techniques, life-like characters and with realism. Khushwant Singh presents the peaceful circumstances as well as the violence in rural and urban areas to show how the situation was worsened by the sudden decision of Partition. Many innocents without knowing the real reason either lost their life or virginity. Both communities that were living in peace and harmony for generation, blame each other for violence. The story is about the people of a village named Mano Majra. The story is divided into four sections:-

1. Dacoity
2. Kalyug
3. Mano Majra
4. Karma

2.1. Dacoity

'Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it.'
(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 33)

About village Mano Majra, Communal Violence, Importance of Train, Murder of Ram Lal, Love story of Jugga and Nooran, Hukam Chand and Haseena, Arrest of Iqbal and Jugga, all these are explained in this phase. Here, Khushwant Singh introduces all the main characters of the novel. *Train to Pakistan* depicts a story on account of the trauma of Partition in the Indian village of Mano Majra situated on the banks of river Sutlej. At the beginning of the novel, the people of Mano Majra – Sikh, Hindus and Muslims live peacefully. There is a close association between people, religion and train. Singh raises a question by giving background of ill omen and the account of summer 1947 as the weather itself is emblematic of muddled situations:-

'The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year.

It was hotter than usual, and drier and dustier. And the summer was longer. No one could remember when the monsoon had been so late. For weeks, the sparse clouds cast only shadows. There was no rain. People began to say that God was punishing them for their sins.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 8)

The village is portrayed as peaceful and harmonious place until the seeds of hatred and suspicion are sown. The violence spread in both countries and they enhance the killings of Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India.

"The riots had become a rout. But 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 village lost in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Manjra."

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 8)

He describes the life of a tiny village namely Mano Majra situated on India-Pakistan border. Mano Majra has a single-track railway station. The signals of the passing trains across Sutlej Bridge regulate life in Mano Majra. Train is used as a powerful medium to report the viciousness that happened during Partition in India and Pakistan Border. All trains don't stop at Mano Majra, infact, only two of the passenger trains- one from Delhi to Lahore in the morning and the other from Lahore to Delhi in the evenings stop there. Only the goods train regularly stop there. Life in the Mano Majra is regulated by trains. When the mail train rushes to Lahore, the village wakes up. The whole village rises and shines with the echoes of Mullah's Allaho-Akbar from the mosque and the Sikh priest's prayers from the Gurudwara. By the time the 10.30 train from Delhi arrives, Mano Majra settled to its daily routine. In the village of Mano Majra, population is half-Sikh and half- Muslim with only a Hindu in the village, the peaceful and harmonious life of the village is disturbed when a group of robbers kill the local money lender Ram Lal, who is murdered by Malli and his gang. After this incident they goes to Jugga's house to shame him for not joining them.

'O juggia,'he called in a falsetto voice, 'Juggia!' He winked at his companions. 'Wear these bangles and put henna on your palms.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 12)

At the time of the murder of Ram Lal, Jugga is with her beloved Nooran. The sub-inspector asks Hukum Chand, 'Why nothing has so far happened in this border village of Mano Majra, where Sikhs still consider Muslims as their brothers, may be the Muslims are paying them for protection? The police arrests Juggat Singh, a local notorious dacoit and a newly arrived young man namely Iqbal in connection with the murder.

2.2. Kalyug: - (The Dark Age)

Coming of Ghost Train, Death and Violence started in this phase. The timings of the train changes. Instead of goods, dead bodies start coming. People who lived together for generations were uprooted from their ancestors land. Even at the village of Mano Majra, the situation changes and the Muslims are ordered to leave the village and to take shelter in a refugee camp. The Muslims of the village understood the situation that the Muslims of Pakistan have killed innocent Sikhs and Hindus. To be on the safe side, Muslims decided to leave Mano Majra. People started to migrate from borders. 'Early in September, the time schedule in Mano Majra started going wrong. Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as though the alarm had been set for the wrong hour.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 50)

All trains coming from Delhi stop and change their drivers. People stand on the roofs of their houses to see what is happening at the station. . Dead bodies were in heaps, it was very difficult to crimate single body, so Deputy Commissioner and Inspector decided to crimate all the bodies together. Banta Singh orders the villagers to bring firewood and kerosene they have in their houses at the railway station

'The northern horizon, which had turned a bluish grey, showed orange again. The orange turned into copper and then into a luminous russet. Red tongues 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.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 54)

2.3. *Mano Majra*

'God is punishing us for our sins'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 76)

Sikhs versus Muslims, Nooran visit to Jugga's mother to tell her about her pregnancy in this phase. A serious thoughtful silence descended on the village, when people see trains full of corpses instead of human beings. Singh in his novel *Train to Pakistan* tells that Sikhs live with brotherhood at the time of Partition in the village of Mano Majra, they consider all peoples as brothers and sisters irrespective of considering their religion. They shared each other sorrows and happiness and were ready to save them at any cost. Now the violence also started in Mano Majra, the Sikhs started uttering, 'Never trust a Mussulman,' they said. The last Guru had warned them that Muslims had no loyalties.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 76)

Women jumps into the wells, burns themselves rather than falling into the hands of Muslims. Those who did not commit suicide were paraded naked in the streets, raped in public, and then murdered. Khushwant Singh uses word **pig** for Muslims to show the hatred of Sikhs for them.

'What are we to do with all these pigs we have with us? They have been eating our salt for generations and see what they have done! We have treated them like our own brothers. They have behaved like snakes.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 77)

These words clearly show how much hatred and intolerance had grown with a single incident of Partition. When Imam Baksh is asked to leave Mano Majra for Pakistan, tears roll down from his eyes, Imam Baksh wipes his tears

'What have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors? We have lived amongst you as brothers.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 79)

'The whole village was awake. In most houses she could see the dim flickers of oil lamps. Some were packing; others were helping them to pack. Most just talked with their friends. The women sat on the floors hugging each other and crying. It was as if in every home there had been a death.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 80-81)

From these lines, one can get the idea of depression faced by the people at the time of migration. They are compelled to leave the land of their ancestors. They are uprooted from the place where they have been living for many years. On the day of their departure, they visited each other and hoped that everything will be alright and they will meet soon. This shows their innocence.

Noora discloses with Jugga's mom about his pregnancy, Jugga's mother is stunned to discover that Jugga, a Sikh peasant, has vowed to wed Nooran, a weaver's daughter. The old lady vows to let Jugga know about Nooran's departure to Pakistan as soon as he is released. Muslims from Mano Majra began leaving their ancestors land. There was no time to make arrangements and no time to say goodbye to the loved ones.

2.4. *Karma: - (Deals With Human Tragedy)*

The swelling Satluj River and Trains were overloaded with corpses. Trains give the appearance of Ghosts. Khushwant Singh gives a pathetic description of death-like scene. It appears as if a village has been swept away by the flood, along with its men and cattle.

'The river had risen further. Its turbid water carried carts with the bloated carcasses of bulls still yoked to them. Horses rolled from side to side as if they were scratching their backs. There were also men and women with their clothes clinging to their bodies, little children sleeping on their bellies with their arms clutching the water and their tiny buttocks dipping in and out. The sky was full of kites and vultures. They flew down and landed on the floating carcasses.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 89)

Nobody among the villagers dare protest against the impudent boy.

'Do you know how many trainloads of dead Sikhs and Hindus have come over? Do you know of the massacres in Rawalpindi and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura? What are you doing about it? You just eat and sleep and you call yourselves Sikhs- the brave Sikhs!

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 92)

Violence spread in different parts of India, the people of that village try to keep peace inspite of the heterogeneity of the village.

'For each Hindu or Sikh, they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they rape, abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. For each trainload of dead they send over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attacked, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we also play this game of killing and looting.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 92)

Thousands have become homeless, helpless and assassinated during Partition. Singh's *Train to Pakistan* highlights the crimes that were done on women. He describes the tragedy of Sundari, who after the fourth day of her marriage was going to Gujranwala with her husband to her new house. She was dreaming of her new life with her husband but no one knows what will happen in next minute, the bus was attacked by the Muslims. Her husband was stripped naked and she was gang raped.

'She who had not really had a good look at the Mansa Ram was shown her husband completely naked. They held him by the arms and legs and one man cut off his penis and gave it to her. The mob made love to her. She did not have to take off any off 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!'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 108)

The Sunder Singh, a brave soldier, recruited by Hukum Chand for the Army was impelled to kill his own family

for the sake of some water. The train stopped at the station for four days where no one was allowed to go anywhere. But the scorching heat of the Sun made Sunder Singh's children thirsty and they cried for water, but he was unable to give them water. So, he provided them his own urine to drink but it did not work properly and their thirst for water grew even more. So, he was forced to pullout his revolver and shoot his children to death. Singh depicts the reality of the cruel human nature where a father gives his urine to his sons, killing his family first and then himself.

'Only the Sun and the sand...and no water. At all stations there were people with spears along the railings. Then the train was held up at a station for four days. No one was allowed to get off. Sunder Singh's children cried for water and food. So did everyone else. Sunder Singh gave them his urine to drink. Then that dried up too. So he pulled out his revolver and shot them all.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 108)

Hukum Chand does not like the killing of people or destruction. He thinks that violence would not benefit anyone. Meet Singh, thinks that there is no reason to punish the Muslims of India for the crimes which Muslims of Pakistan are doing. When Sikhs saw the train full of mutilated bodies at first time, they did not retaliate, but after watching the second train full of dead bodies of Sikhs, they lost their temper and attacked the trains of Muslim refugees going to Pakistan. Hukum Chand is mystified when he comes to know about the conspiracy of Sikhs. He determines to save all the Muslims as there is Haseena, a prostitute whom he loves very much. He thinks that Jugga's beloved Nooran is also there in the train. So, he informs Jugga about the conspiracy of the Sikhs and releases him in order to save the lives of people that are going to Pakistan in the train. 'The plan is this. Tomorrow after sunset, when it is dark, we will stretch a rope across the first span of the bridge. It will be a foot above the height of the funnel of the engine. When the train passes under it, it will sweep off all the people sitting on the roof of the train. That will account for at least four to five hundred.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 95)

This was the full proof plan for a Muslim people who were going on the train to Pakistan. The plan was they

should not go alive to Pakistan but Jugga is concerned with the welfare of Nooran and comes to know about Nooran's pregnancy and his immediate concern is about Nooran and how to save others.

"He pulled himself up, caught the rope under his left armpit, and again started hacking with his right hand. The rope had been cut in shreds. Only a thin tough strand remained. He went at it with the knife, and then with his teeth. 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."

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 110)

Though he is a culprit, he believes in the philosophy of Guru and he realizes, 'If you are going to do something good, the Guru will help you; if you are going to do bad, the Guru will stand in your way. If you persist in doing it, he will punish you, till you repent and then forgive you.'

(Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 106-107s)

The release of Jugga and Iqbal was a matter of strategy of the Deputy Commissioner and the Sub-inspector only to let the train go to Pakistan safely which he did. He plays the most important role in the novel and he does not care for his own life. He does the supreme act of self-sacrifice for the sake of humanity. Jugga who is known as badmash, gives a message of love for humanity by sacrificing his life for the Muslims. Jugga's love for Nooran was personal love but that changes into the love for the entire community of Muslims that were going to Pakistan at that time in the train. Jugga tries to save the train and he succeeds. The train went on to Pakistan, safely because of Jugga's bravery. Jugga, a criminal made the supreme sacrifice of his life for his pregnant beloved.

3.CONCLUSION

"Every Dark cloud had a Silver Lining"

After reading *Train to Pakistan* one can himself feel the live view of Partition and the pain of separating from their homelands. It can be said that the Partition of India is one of the greatest traumatic experiences in our recent history. Reminding ourselves what happened in

1947 and realizing the possibilities of its recurrence, we should resolve that we will never let it happen again. Singh describes the unified India after Partition in two phases: Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. Khushwant Singh has accurately depicted the real picture of the adverse effects of Partition and showed the sufferings and physical torture that people were made to experience and suffer. Singh presents multiple voices of characters showing different perspectives. Khushwant Singh consider Partition as a trauma. Singh has opened the true mirror of the physical torture and the division of feelings, hearts before us. Khushwant Singh through his debut novel vividly portrays the aftermath of Partition in the form of brutal murders, rapes, destruction of wealth, loss of life and many more things. Love and Affection were the true identity of the village of Mano Majra but this all changes after Partition. Jugga's sacrifice reminds us of Valmiki, who was like Jugga Singh, turns into a wise person, who wrote the holy book of Ramayan as a result he is remembered and worshipped by all. Khushwant Singh tries to make a union of both Muslim and Sikh religions through the love of Nooran and sacrifice of Juggat Singh (badmash number ten of the village). A Sikh youth saves the lives of Muslim when his community were killing. Due to Partition, religious conflicts started between human beings, who lived together for generations but it was love that saved the Muslim people by giving the lesson of unity irrespective of caste and religion. Love has no boundaries. Love has the power to transform a criminal like man into a courageous human being who sacrifices his own life for the well-being of the other people irrespective of their caste, color and religion.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ahsan, Syrrina. Khushwant's Singh's Train to Pakistan: The Heteroglot World of Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus in a Sikh village. *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 1.4 (December 2015).
- [2] Bhalla, Alok. *Partition Dialogues: Memories of a Lost Home*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- [3] Butalia, Urvashi. *The other side of silence, Voices from the Partition of India*. New Delhi: Viking, 1998. Print.

- [4] Dar, Bilquees. The Theme of Partition in Khushwant Singh's novel Train to Pakistan. International Journal of English Language and Linguistic Research 1.1 (June 2013): 21-23.
- [5] Sehrawat, Anil. Love Sacrifice in the time of Partition: A Study of Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan. American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences 4.2 (November 2013): 128-130. ISSN 2328-3734.
- [6] Singh, Khushwant. Train to Pakistan. Penguin 1956.pdf, DigitalEscobar.com. 10th October 2019.
- [7] Thakur, Sakshi. Train to Pakistan: A Direct Gaze at the ugliness of Partition. The Criterion, International Journal of English 5.1 (2014): 306-313. ISSN 2349-2147.