

TREATMENT OF HISTORY IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

Asst. Prof. Neelima G. Chaudhari
Government Arts and Commerce College,
Fort-Songadh (Dist-Tapi)

ABSTRACT

History is one of the most affecting elements in any literature. In fact we can say that sometimes history goes parallel to literature. Whatever happens in any society or country affects at a large extent to literary writers. So the writers are forced to include their ideas about any historical events of their contemporary world in their works. So far as concerned with the history of India, partition has influenced all the factors of post independent India. Northern part of India was generally considered as area of Muslim Community and Southern part was meant for Hindus. After independence, an urge for independent country for Muslims raised to an extent that it became compulsory to divide India into two parts. Northern part which was meant for Muslims became Pakistan and other was formed as Hindu nation. This simple looking incident created a lot of turmoil and chaos among the people. It became the reason for increasing hatred and enmity among Hindus and Muslims. The people who lived in harmony with each other for centuries became severe enemies. Partition of India created an atmosphere in which every one started doubting each other. This great incident of partition became one of the most discussed topic among the contemporary writers. In his novel, *Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh, one of the most renowned writers of post-independence literature, portrays the theme of partition. This present article discusses about how an historical event of partition affected the people of Mano Majra.

INTRODUCTION

Khushwant Singh, primarily named as Khushal Singh was born on 2nd February, 1915. He was Indian writer, lawyer, journalist, diplomat and politician. He was honored with Padma Bhushan (1974) and Padma Vibhushan (2007). He has written many works during his literary career of which *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall never Hear a Nightingale*, *The Portarit of a Lady: Collected Stories*, *Why I Supported the Emergency* and *Delhi: A Novel* are very famous.

Train to Pakistan is one of the excellent novels of Khushwant Singh which deals with the theme of Partition. It was published in the year 1956. It is a novel that brings forth a picture of bestial horrors enacted on the Indo Pakistan border during the partition days of August 1947. The novel discusses the tragic story of the dividing India and Pakistan and the events that followed, which will never be forgotten as one of the darkest chapters of human history. It focuses on the events which took place after the partition. Partition affected most of the villages of northern part of India. The novel also throws light on the theme of identity which got lost because of the partition. The novel, in particular, talks about the people of Mano Majra, which was situated at the border between India and Pakistan.

ELEMENTS OF HISTORY IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

The novel, *Train to Pakistan*, throws lights on the Sorrow which was brought with the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The novel is divided into four parts: Dacoity, Kalyug, Mano Majra and Karma. All the parts of the novel are titled significantly. The first part of the novel begins with the real description of the year 1947.

“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. Some of them had good reason to feel that they had sinned. 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 the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. 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 fled towards the protection of the predominantly Sikh and Hindu communities in the east. They travelled on foot, in bullock carts, crammed into lorries, clinging to the sides and roofs of trains. Along the way—at fords, at crossroads, at railroad stations—they collided with panicky swarms of Muslims fleeing to safety in the west. The riots had become a rout. 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.” **[Decoity]**

The very beginning of the novel helps to create an atmosphere of upcoming danger of Partition. On the one hand, Indian Freedom Movement was going to come an end. It was the biggest reason for happiness for Indian sub-continent as it would be the end of almost 200 years of slavery but on the other hand news of division of Indian subcontinent was also spreading with increasing speed. It was confirmed that India was going to be divided into India, a Hindu nation and Pakistan, a Muslim country.

When the novel opens, Mano Majra, a fictional village, which is situated at half a mile away from Sutlej river and in border line between India and Pakistan, a newly formed Muslim Country, was totally unaware of the partition. It was only when, Hukum Chand, a district magistrate brings the news of it. But the people of Mano Majra where three communities – Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs – were unaware about it or better to say that didn't care for it were living in harmony. As they had been living together for centuries. They never feel any hatred and respect each other's religion.

As the title suggests the name, “Dacoity” there takes place an incident of dacoity. Ram Lal, a money lender, is robbed and murdered by Mali, a leader of dacoit's and his gang in Mano Majra. While returning, they throw robbed bangles into Jugga's house and all the blame is fall on Juggut Singh (Jagga), who is notorious for his misdeeds, known as Badmash gets arrested for the crime even though he is innocent in this matter. The incident is important as it helps to build the plot of the novel.

Another important character which is introduced in the first part is Iqbal. He is a person with unfixed identity. People who belong to Hindu community believe him as Iqbal Chand, a Hindu; people who belong to Muslim community believe him as Iqbal Mohammad, a Muslim whereas, Sikhs believe him a Sikh, Iqbal Singh.

The Second part of the novel is, “Kalyug”. The title significant in its own way as it describes about all the characteristics of Kalyug. According to Hindu philosophy, it is a time which believes to be the last phase of cycle of human existence. It can be used as symbol because it is actually the time of last phase of relations between India and Pakistan as it is a time of partition. The title is also very appropriate from the perspective of Ram Lal's murder. According to another striking characteristic feature of Kalyug, everything goes wrong and the good people are punished without their fault. Same happens in Ram Lal's murder and arrestment of Juggut Singh.

One day evening, a Lahore-Delhi train comes to Mano Majra loaded with a load of corpses of Hindus. It results into the revenging thought in the minds of Hindus and Sikhs who decides to send same corpse loaded train Pakistan with Muslims. In the end of the second part, the news of partition reaches to the village and Mano Majrans become aware about the upcoming horrors. They begin to discuss'

“No, no, I just went round the servant's quarters. You're early. I hope all is well.

“These days one should be grateful for being alive. There is no peace anywhere. One trouble after another...”
[Kalyug]

The third part, a Mano Majra discusses about the effects of partition which reaches to Mano Majra finally. Hatred is spread everywhere in all the three communities of Mano Majra. It is also the end of severe drought and beginning of monsoon, Cool breeze is blowing and when the morning breaks it's raining heavily. It is also decided that all the Muslims of the village must leave to Pakistan and arrangement is made for their departure. Nooran, a daughter of Old Imam Baksh and beloved of Juggut Singh has to leave with other Muslims.

The final part, “Karma” forms the climax of plot. Juggut Singh along with Iqbal get released from the prison by the order of Hukum Chand. Hukum Chand hopes that Jugga would save the departing train of Muslims of Chundnugger to Pakistan. It is actually a conspiracy of Sikhs and Hindus of the village to send a corpse loaded train to Pakistan a “Gift to Pakistan”. Jugga comes to know about the conspiracy and also about the leaving Nooran by the same train. He decides to let go the train safely to the other side of the border. He, without thinking about his own life, cuts the rope which is meant to kill the people who are on the roof of the train. Jugga sacrifices his life. The train runs over and moves to Pakistan safely.

“He went at it with his 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 at the center as he fell. The train went over him and went to Pakistan.” **(Karma)**

When we come across the novel we can surely get an idea that Khushwant Singh has taken history of partition as his document and justifies it with his own imaginative characters, plot and setting.

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