



## **KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN: A CRITIQUE OF PARTITION**

**DR. TOTAWAD NAGNATH RAMRAO**

Asst. Prof., Dept.of English,  
Vivekanand Arts, S.D.Commerce &  
Science College, Samarthnagar, Aurangabad.  
(MS) INDIA

### **ABSTRACT**

The Partition of Indian Subcontinent have uprooted many and forced to give up their belongings and move to a land which was not theirs and they don't know anything about it (not seen and heard about it). Partition has moved the whole nation, innumerable losses experienced by the people. As one writer says, 'it is dangerous to forget and difficult to remember'. The ideal villages like Mano Majra; in which everyone was living happily suddenly became violent when Ramlal, a Hindu Money Lender's house was robbed and he was murdered. Mano Majra is the center of the novel. The novel was originally titled as Mano Majra but later it changed as Train to Pakistan. Train is the only source of their rising, praying, working and so on. Symbolic in nature, the title is very suggestive and the train is the only source of information of the people of Mano Majra. It is a very tiny but an ideal village, which was situated half a mile away from the river Sutlej. It was the time people were living in the perfect harmony and no one knew that the British had left the country and the country was divided into India and Pakistan. It's true that the arrival and departure of trains have made an impact on their lives (and on them).

**Keywords:** Partition, division, migration, kidnap, death, violation etc.

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Train to Pakistan* (1956) by Khushwant Singh is a well-known Indian Partition Novel. The novel deals with the historical renderings of partition of 1947. The novel is a blend of history, politics and reality of the time of 1947. *Train to Pakistan* is a symbolic novel, through the symbol of train; the novelist depicts the harsh reality and mass migration of the time from India to Pakistan, and Pakistan to India. Mano Majra is a typical village at the border of Pakistan is a central of the novel. The specialty of the village is that the people of Sikh and Muslim are equal in number. The novel highlights the characters like Iqbal, Jugga, Nooroon,

**DR. TOTAWAD NAGNATH RAMRAO**

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**UGC Approved Journal No 48520 (Arts & Humanities) ENGLISH**

**VOL 3, ISSUE 5 www.punereresearch.com/english SEPT – OCT 2017**  
**(IMPACT FACTOR 3.02) INDEXED, PEER-REVIEWED / REFERRED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL**

Hukumchand and Ramlal etc. The novel is based on the theme of partition like other novelists & their works: Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*, Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*, Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar*, Salman Rushdies' *Midnight's Children* and so on.

*Train to Pakistan* also gives much attention on Iqbal Singh and Juggut Singh. Iqbal Singh is a well educated social worker from Britain. On the other hand Juggut Singh is a towering, muscular and uneducated person, better known as badmash or dacoit. Both the persons are of different characteristics but both are arrested for the same reason of Ramlal's murder which they had not committed. Iqbal and Juggut Singh came to know upon their release that some religious agitators came to Mano Majra and instills the local Sikhs against Muslim and convinces them for mass murder. Both, Iqbal Singh and Juggut have the potential to save the lives of the people in the train, though they may be Muslims, peoples of Mano Majra or Nooran his beloved. Juggut Singh sacrifices his life and saves the life of many.

*Train to Pakistan* centers on the village Mano Majra (fictional town). The village Mano Majra or many border villages like it have religious diversity. The people of various religions like Hindu, Muslim and Sikh have been living side by side happily and unanimously since many generations. The Government officials and the Britishers have not taken any serious account of these villages and the great violence erupted in them. Mano Majra is a central village maintaining its order (peace) and also a centre of conflict. The novel and film begins with the incident of robbery and murder of Ramlal, the only Hindu Family in town.

*Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh highlights the fact of partition and various opinions and dialogues of Sikhs, Muslims and officials like Hukumchand. The writer narrates the violence at both the sides of the border in a very effective, vivid and graphic manner. The novel, *Train to Pakistan* revolves around a single incident from the beginning to the end of the novel. The incident was the murder of Ram Lal and dacoit at his home by the gang of Malli. This is foregrounding of the communal violence. The study of the novel focuses on such issues which are not the accidental instead these are the preludes of the communal violence to know which are innocent. The murderers of Ram Lal are Malli and his gang but arrested for the crime to those who are unknown and innocent to the murder, the persons like Iqbal Singh and Juggut Singh. Besides this, the happy and peaceful town Mano Majra disturbed a lot by the trains, its delayed and its arrival full with corpses. The same time rumors spread in the border villages about the communal riots.

As a writer, Khushwant Singh very well portrays the dual nature of the people, whatever caste / religion they belongs. The Muslim and Sikh people in Mano Majra has been living happily since many decades. The land was of the Sikhs and Muslims work upon it. The partition of India separated these people into two; the very word hatred which both the people

have never towards each other, very soon converts into rape, murder and kidnapping. As soon as the Muslim people moved to refugee camp to go to Pakistan, one group of Sikhs came to Mano Majra to pour the poison in the minds of Sikh people and the result they became the victims of them. The intension of this group is to incite the villagers to communal passion but at the very beginning much opposition to their thought. As the villagers have lot of attachment towards their Muslim brothers so they couldn't think of their loss.

The Novel is also about the simple and innocent life of the people (Hindu, Muslim and Sikh) of Mano Majra. The people witnessed the horror of Partition of 1947, in which number of innocents meet to their death. Being a Sikh & a writer, Khushwant Singh has very well recorded the faithful & silence reactions of the people. According to William Walsh, *Train to Pakistan* is a tense economical novel thoroughly true to the events and the people in the story. As a novelist, Khushwant Singh has freely expressed the true realities / incidents of the time of Partition without any partiality, attachment and subjectivity Mano Majra, the center of all happening was totally silent. And the important thing is the people of the village are very happy and sound, they don't have any jealous or hatred towards anyone. Everyone in the village was busy in their work and the priests and Mullah's were busy in the praying.

*Train to Pakistan* is highly a symbolic novel, highlights various symbols throughout the novel. *Train to Pakistan* covers a period of one month. As the novel begins we came to the change in climate & delay of monsoon. Monsoon is a constant symbol in the novel that is close to human destiny. Train is a dominant symbol in the novel that stands for the routine of the people of Mano Majra. The regular activities of the people run parallel to the systematic arrivals and departures of trains. The day broke with the mail train rushes to Lahore as it approaches the bridge blows two long whistles. This sound is the symbol of day broke / rising of Mullah and Bhai of masque and Gurudwara to begin Morning Prayer. By the time 10.30 passenger train from Delhi comes in and the men found in their fields. As the midday express goes by Mano Majra people stops for rest & lunch. When the evening passenger from Lahore comes in everyone gets to work again. The cattels are rounded up and driven back to be milked and locked in for the night. Women cook the evening meal and eat their supper. The arrival of goods train is a sign of sleep comes to say good night. The Mullah again calls for his closing / last prayer and the Sikh priest murmurs the evening prayer. The midnight train is also stands as a signal like the days. All the people / peasants of Mano Majra in deep sleep the midnight train passes. This train is not a signal for everyone but only for few. It is a signal for the people like Mali, the leader of dacoit gang to rob or kill anyone because at that time everyone sleeps sound. As soon as they listen the long whistles they enter Ramlal house. On the other side Juggut Singh / Jugga waiting for the proper time to enter Nooran's house for fulfilling his lust. Train was the signal of leaving the place and to move towards their goals.

The novel, *Train to Pakistan* focuses on various themes like love, politics, society (social novel). In short it is a blend of many themes. *Train to Pakistan* is a social novel that depicts the society around 1947. It is the society also known as politics polluted society. The politics also plays a dominant role under which the bureaucrats' like HukumChand are helpless and they often abuse the Delhi people. Besides this, love also is an important theme of the novel. According to the novelist love is the only redeeming grace of human life. Love is the only impulse to which all human beings respond instinctively.

The love of Hukum Chand for Haseena is the ideal example of sacrifice and humanity. Due to his love for Haseena, he became an embodiment of good tries to save the train in which Haseena is leave for Pakistan. Hukumchand releases Juggut Singh saying that the gang of Malli (Sikhs) attacking on the train in which Nooran is travelling. Through Juggut Singh he wants to fulfill his purpose (reach to his goal) because he knows Jugga loves Nooran a lot and he will do anything for her. The love story of Jugga and Nooran is a saga of human suffering and sacrifice. Jugga and Nooran's love towards each other is noteworthy, though they belong to Sikh and Muslim religion respectively. Jugga visits Nooran at the time when everyone in deep sleep. Being Sikh and Muslim, the religious barrier couldn't allow the lovers to meet and enjoy. The night train was only the signal for both to meet. Nooran is a daughter of Muslim Bhai, a weaver who can't see. On the other side Juggut Singh is a son of dacoits from a criminal background. His identity is also as a criminal or badmash no. ten in police record. Besides such difference and contrast background, both loved to each other. The novel, *Train to Pakistan* also makes a harsh satire on the politics of the Government officials and their corrupt attitude of the time. The officials like Hukumchand orders to arrest anyone they want for any reason, mostly without their own benefit. As the result of it the people like Iqbal and Jugga were arrested and kept for a long time without any fault of their own.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, the novel *Train to Pakistan* very well focuses on the pre and post Partition atmosphere. The love of Hindu and Muslim religious people towards each other is also an ideal example of humanity. Mano Majra is like the state of Eden before Partition. Khushwant Singh also known as a master of art of characterization. He has portrayed very well the characters like Juggut Singh, Hukumchand and Lambardar. Jugga is a combination of good, evil and humour. Though at the very beginning he is labeled as 'Badmash no. ten', but he has not killed anyone or robbed anywhere. Jugga is a victim of violence who lost his Nooran, and also stands as a symbol of goodness & virtue. Jugga's scarification for the sake of the people of Mano Majra (Muslims) by ending his life when the police authorities couldn't control or failed to control the mob of Sikhs. Jugga has much concerned towards Nooran who is also going to Pakistan in the same train & to save her life. According to the novelist, Jugga is the

harbinger of peace and humanity who tries to establish harmony between the two communities. Jugga sacrificed his life and finally succeed in his plan of saving Nooran and others.

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