



TRAUMA OF PARTITION: A STUDY ON KUSHWANT SINGH'S "TRAIN TO PAKISTAN"

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Abstract:

The pathetic partition of India and the associated bloody riots debated on many platforms including literary circles and inspired many creative minds in India and Pakistan to create literary depictions of the partition. While some creations depicted the massacres during the refugee migration, others concentrated on the aftermath of the partition in terms of difficulties faced by the refugees in both side of the border. Even after 74 years of partition, the nightmares and impressions failed to disappear from the minds of the people of both the countries. The works of fiction are reflected the situations of partition elevating the human cost of independence. The present study upholds the trauma of the partition reflected in Kushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan" (1956) and presents how the scenes and incidents are impressed the minds of the countries even after decades.

Keywords: *Bloody riots, Literature, Religion, Reflection, Partition.*

Introduction

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

“One of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling; the novel as we know today was an importation from the West”. (99)

Indian writing in English is a voice in which India speaks and greatly influenced by the writing in England. In its own way indo-Anglican literature has contributed to the common pool of world writing in English-the major partners in the enterprise being British literature and American literature. Indian writing in English has emerged as a distinctive literature

Explanation:



The twentieth century began with novelists of more substantial output. Romesh Chandra Dutt translated two of his own Bengali novels into English: *The Lake of Palms: A Study of Indian Domestic Life* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra, an Indian Historical Romance* (1909). The first, a realistic novel, seems to have been written with the aim of social reform with its theme being widow remarriage, while the latter is set in the Mughal period. Khushwant Singh's first novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956), originally entitled *Mano Majra*, and is one of the finest realistic novels of post-World War-II Indo-Anglian fiction. The Plot and the narrative sequence of the novel are divided into four parts:

- a. "Dacoity"
- b. "Kalyug"
- c. "Mano Majra"
- d. "Karma".

Mano majra, a tiny village in the Punjab, serves as the fictional setting of *Train to Pakistan*. It is situated on the Indian border, half a mile away from the river Sutlej. In spite of bloodshed and rioting in the frontier area, life in Mano Majra remains to be peaceful. The Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus are living in harmony and amity. Partition has not touched Mano Majrans...

"no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan." (132)

Atmosphere:

Life here is regulated by trains with their arrival and departure. The villagers are not acquainted with the progress of science and ignorance of scientific progress is bliss to them. The novel begins with a reference to the summer of 1947 which was noted for its scorching heat and rainless period and marked for hot and dusty atmosphere. 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 several thousand had been killed. The Muslims said that the Hindus had planned and started the killing. The Hindus, on the other hand, put the whole blame on the Muslims. The truth was that both sides had killed. People belonging to both sides were shot, stabbed, speared, tortured and raped. From Calcutta the riots had spread north and east and west. In Noakhali in East Bengal, Muslims massacred Hindus and in Bihar Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullahs were reported to have roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. The Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier were made to abandon their homes and flee toward the Sikh and Hindu communities in the east. They had to travel on foot, in bullock carts, cram into Lorries, cling to the sides and roofs of trains.

Argument:

The Peaceful life in Mano Majra comes to a jolt when on an August night 1947 the village money-lender Ram Lal's house is raided by Malli, a dreaded dacoit. On the roof of his house, the money lender was beaten with butts of guns and spear handles and kicked and punched. He sat on his haunches, crying and spitting blood. Two of his teeth were smashed. When Ram Lal, the moneylender failed to hand over the key of his safe, one of the dacoits lunged at the crouching figure with his spear. Ram Lal collapsed on the floor uttering a loud yell with blood spurting from his belly. The dacoity had its evil effects on Juggut Singh who was a resident of the village. The dacoits dropped bangles in his house and later he was arrested as the suspect of murder and dacoity. He was in love with Nooran which in a sense cut across religious barriers. After his release from police custody, he came to know that Nooran had visited his mother before leaving for the refugee camp carrying his child in her womb. Nooran was a Muslim weaver's daughter. His father and grandfather were also dacoits and were hanged for murder. But they were reported not to have robbed own village folk. According to Meet Singh, Juggut had disgraced his family through his acts. Hukum Chand plays an important role in the novel.

A lot of women were abducted and sold cheap. Police stations were concentration camps and third degree methods were adopted to extricate 'truth' from those who were caught. Hindus were pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policemen sitting on them. Testicles twisted and squeezed till one became senseless with pain. Powdered red chillies thrust up the rectum by rough hands, and the sensation of having the tail on fire for several days. All this, and no food or water, or hot spicy food with a bowl of shimmering cool water put outside the cell just beyond one's reach. Some succumbed to hunger and others to the inconvenience of having to defecate in front of the policemen. The arrival of the ghost train is another important 'event' in the novel which makes the reader flabbergasted. The arrival of the train in broad daylight created a commotion in Mano Majra. People stood on their roofs to see what was happening and all they could see was the black top of the train stretching from one end of the platform to the other. Later the villagers were asked to get all the wood there was in their houses and all the kerosene oil they could spare. They were asked to bring them to the motor trucks on the station side for which they would be paid. The villagers soon 'smelt' something wrong:

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 smells of searing flesh. (100)

Khushwant Singh best illustrates the tragedy of Partition and indirectly suggests the shortsightedness of Indian leadership who failed to foresee the consequences of division and to handle the situation ever after Churchill's forecast of blood-bath. Communal discord was not a future of Indian rural scene but it was engineered first by the British Government under

the policy of divide and rule and then by the nationalist leaders, with attitude tinge, though unintentionally

Conclusion:

The first published novel on Partition, Train to Pakistan, emerges out of the trauma of Partition. It opens with a reference to the severe summer of 1947 signifying the process of the world of man turning into a human wasteland. The scene is laid in India on the eve of Partition in 1947 when about ten million people are in flight – Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India. Nearly a million are killed in the large scale communal disturbances. Only Mano Majra, a small village, a microcosm of rural India, remains unaffected by the communal frenzy. But events move fast and the fate of the people in Mano Majra is affected by the catastrophic events of the Partition. Muslims of the village are evacuated to a refugee camp, later to be transported to Pakistan by a train. Hindu fanatics hatch a plot to blow up the train which was averted by Jugga and in the process he gets killed. His Muslim lover is saved and so do the Muslim passengers on the train symbolizing hope and light in the cruel world of darkness and despair.

Khushwant Singh and being the native of Sialkot, (Pakistan) had firsthand experience and knowledge of the horrors of the Partition. In a way the novel, Train to Pakistan is read as the trauma like anger, bitterness and hatred that an individual family is concentrated to show the effect of Partition on it. Kushwant Singh discussed Gandhian theory of non violence. If Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan depicts brutality of the Partition, it also reveals humanity and compassion while witnessing the violence from close quarters. Thus it projected that violence cannot be an answer to violence.

Every part of the novelist finds an uncertain solution to the Partition of communities and conflicts. It is a fictional or idealistic solution- love affair between a Hindu or Sikh boy and a Muslim girl. In Train to Pakistan we have the love- affair between Juggat Singh, to execute the heroic act of rescuing the train to Pakistan. From the epigrammatic appraisal of the history of the Partition it becomes clear that mainly it was the Muslim separatism mannered by the communal Muslim League's Two Nation Theory and the divide and rule policy of the British that resulted in the Partition. Originally, though the Congress was not ready for any kind of division of India, finally the leaders were constrained to accept it as an `inevitable alternative` though the humiliation of the Partition goes mainly to Jinnah and his Muslim League, he was not the first man to sow the seeds of separatist tendencies. It was even before 1867 that some Muslim leaders visualized a separate Muslim nation. Later on the antagonistic tendencies of Hindus and Muslims on the grounds of religion and the increasing dominance of Hindus and Sikhs in politics, administration, education and economic affairs widened the emotional rift between them. Unfortunately, the Indian leaders failed to keep the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslim together and resultantly it was in 1947 that India was partitioned.

Though the Partition novel is a species of historical novel, it is realistic to the core and has in it a very little scope for the passionate element. Fictionizing realism is perhaps the most



difficult task for a creative writer. Again, for those witness-turned-writers, the writing is all the more difficult and challenging. Our study of the novels shows the most of the novelists are from North India and comparatively a few from the south on the basis of community. The novelists fall into three groups-Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims and that a majority of the novels are by Sikhs.

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