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**EXPLORING POLITICAL LIBERATION IN KUSHWANT SINGH'S *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN***

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**Abstract:**

Literature is a vast and diverse realm of creative expression. Encompasses various forms like novels, poems, plays, essays, it serves a multiple purposes and holds significant value in society. Literature provides a medium for storytelling. Writers weave narratives that captivate readers and transport them to different worlds, times, and perspectives. Indian literature is generally acknowledged as one of the oldest in the world. India has 22 officially recognized language and a huge variety of literature has been produced in these languages over the years. Khushwanth Singh one of the pioneers of Indian English Literature made his contribution through his debut works. One of the most notable work is *Train to Pakistan*. It explores several themes that are central to the partition and its aftermath. These themes include communal tensions, religious identity, and the impact of political decisions on ordinary people, the breakdown of societal norms, and the struggle for survival amidst chaos.

**Keywords:** Political Liberation , Partition, Religious Identity, etc.

**Introduction:**

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* serves as a profound social and political commentary on the partition of India and its devastating aftermath. Through this novel, Singh delves into the destructive role of religious intolerance, the failure of leadership, and the futility of violence in addressing conflicts. Widely regarded as a landmark work in Indian literature, *Train to Pakistan* narrates the lives of ordinary villagers in Mano Majra, who, after living harmoniously for generations, are suddenly forced to confront the reality of partition and its painful consequences. The characters, particularly the Sikh and Hindu villagers, are torn between their deep attachment to their land and the desperate need for survival. As communal tensions rise, the peaceful coexistence in Mano Majra collapses into distrust and bloodshed.

**Political Liberation in *Train to Pakistan*:**



Khushwant Singh's *\*Train to Pakistan\** vividly portrays the horrors of communal hatred and mass violence during the partition, one of the darkest periods in Indian history. The novel captures the collapse of humanity as mobs butchered men, women, and children alike, driven by blind communal frenzy. Trains, which were once symbols of connection, became instruments of death as their passengers were slaughtered. Through its stark realism, symbolic elements, and ironical diction, the novel delivers a naturalistic depiction of the brutal realities of the time.

At the heart of the story is Juggat Singh, a Sikh and the novel's protagonist, whose actions drive the narrative. Other key Sikh characters include Bhai Meet Singh, the priest at the village gurdwara; Iqbal Singh, a mysterious visitor; Banta Singh, the village leader; and the Sikhs who arrive from Pakistan. The novel explores the deterioration of communal harmony between Muslims and Sikhs in Mano Majra, a village that had been peaceful for centuries. This bond is shattered by the violence of partition, turning the village into a battleground of divided loyalties and deepening conflict. The failure of the authorities, such as the magistrate and the police, to contain the violence reflects the broader failure of leadership during the partition.

### **The Role of Juggat Singh:**

Mano Majra, situated on the banks of the Sutlej River, is a quiet village where the only significant event is the passing of a train over the railway bridge. This tranquility is destroyed when a group of young Sikh villagers, led by Malli, tries to incite violence against Muslims fleeing to Pakistan by train. However, it is Juggat Singh, once considered the villain of the story, who becomes the unlikely hero by sacrificing his life to prevent the attack.

Through conversations between deceitful characters, Singh introduces Juggat as a notorious criminal (or "badmash") known for his lawlessness. Although viewed as a rogue, Juggat is portrayed as a deeply passionate and honorable man, especially in his love for Nooran, a Muslim girl. Their love story cuts across religious divides, symbolizing hope amid hatred. Despite his reputation, Juggat's love and morality stand in contrast to the evil plans of Malli and his gang, who frame him for their crimes? His love for Nooran becomes a redeeming force, propelling him towards self-sacrifice.

### **Symbolism of the Train and the Ghostly Arrival:**

The arrival of a train filled with corpses from Pakistan profoundly impacts the village. The Lambardar (village head) and Hukum Chand, the bureaucrat, see it as a symbol of the dark times of Kalyug, a period of chaos and moral decline in Hindu cosmology. This haunting image, where a train carrying lifeless bodies silently crosses the border, shatters the villagers' understanding of Pakistan and introduces an overwhelming sense of fear and conflict.

The scene of the ghost train, described as arriving without lights or whistle, is a chilling moment in the novel. It is a symbol of death and destruction, driving home the horrors of partition. The slogans written on the train—"Gift from Pakistan" and later "Gift to Pakistan"—capture the nihilistic undertones of the novel. These trains poisoned the previously harmonious environment of Mano Majra, transforming it into a place of deep despair. Characters like Malli and the Sikh migrants represent the nihilism that had overtaken the once peaceful village.

### **Juggat Singh as a Symbol of Redemption:**

Despite the surrounding darkness, Juggat Singh emerges as a symbol of redemption and self-sacrifice. His courage and determination to save the Muslim villagers in the climax of the novel



reflect the triumph of humanity over hatred. His act of heroism—rooted in his love for Nooran—transcends communal divides, reinforcing the theme of love and peace amid the chaos of partition.

While *Train to Pakistan* depicts the widespread violence and breakdown of societal order, it also conveys a message of hope. Juggat's final sacrifice is a testament to the nobility of the human spirit. Though he is illiterate and often seen as an outlaw, Juggat's innate wisdom and moral strength shine through, making him the hero of the story.

### **Conclusion:**

*Train to Pakistan* paints a harrowing picture of individual lives caught in the massive tragedy of the partition. Through his portrayal of Juggat Singh and the villagers of Mano Majra, Khushwant Singh expresses his disillusionment with the human values that were eroded during this violent time. The novel showcases how communal violence devastated long-cherished relationships and highlights the senselessness of hatred. At its core, however, the novel is a tribute to the resilience of love and sacrifice, embodied by the character of Juggat Singh, whose heroism transcends the darkness of partition and affirms the essential goodness of humanity.

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