



PARTITION, PAIN AND BEYOND: A STUDY OF KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The Partition of India in 1947 was not only just a political breaking but also a big, hurtful thing for the minds of the subcontinent's people. Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan is a very touching book that tells of sadness, anger, and people getting thrown from their homes in these times. This essay is talking about how Singh's book shows the mind, emotion, and body pain of normal persons who are stuck in new borderlines. Singh chose to tell the story in Mano Majra, a small, fake village, to show close and personal pain, not like those books that always talk about political leaders or big events. The paper looks into many ways how pain is being shown in the book—like how it breaks society on different levels, how communal peace is broken by political games, and how morality goes away when survival is the only thing that matters. The paper also talks about how women get double hurt, but their stories are not told in big histories, so Singh is showing their silent sufferings too. Also, this essay sees the train in the novel as a symbol that at first is only a normal daily train but then becomes something bad, carrying death, and later it is also a place where something good can happen. The essay says that this novel is not just about crying. Jugga's life story and his final act show us that even when things are very bad, people can still be brave and show love. The book is telling us that in very dark times, small good acts can still bring hope and respect. Singh is not making the novel fully sad but giving a deep story where he accepts pain but also tells about strong humans. By writing not just about violence but about values, Train to Pakistan is a strong book for learning the pain of Partition. It is showing how literature can make us feel, see things better, and think even many years later.

Keywords

Partition Literature, Khushwant Singh, Train to Pakistan, Communal Violence, Trauma, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

The Partition of India in 1947 was not only a political event but also a terrible tragedy that affected the lives of millions of people. It was not just about redrawing borders but breaking families, communities, and hearts. The hurriedly drawn Radcliffe Line caused mass displacements, communal violence, and endless suffering for common people. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, who once lived together peacefully, were suddenly made enemies of each other. The trauma of Partition still echoes in the memories of South Asia and remains a big wound in the history of the subcontinent.



In the middle of all the chaos, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* comes as a very important book that shows what the real sufferings of humans were during the time of Partition. Unlike many books that only talk about big leaders and historical moments, Singh chose to tell a story about normal people who lived in a village named Mano Majra. Before the Partition happened, this village was at peace with Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, and they all respected each other. But when Partition news came, slowly, fear and hatred started entering their lives. The story by Singh is very emotional, showing how people change beliefs and how surviving becomes more important than being human.

The novel is not just showing violence but also about what is going on in people's minds and hearts when bad things are happening. Characters Jugga, Iqbal, and also Hukum Chand are representing society's sides at that time. Jugga, who is a local gangster, becomes like a symbol for sacrifice and change, and Iqbal, who is educated from outside, does not know what to do when a problem comes. Singh says even people who you don't think can do good show bravery when times are bad. Trains, which were once for bringing people together, are now turning into coffins that move dead bodies and put fear and sadness wherever they go.

With *Train to Pakistan*, Singh makes big questions on religion, humanity, and morals. He shows how politics can break up old friendships of people in a very short time. Also, he writes about how women get double violence—one as community members and the second for being women. Singh's writing is simple, but the feelings are many. He's not making the story look like a heroic thing or beautiful; he's just telling the ugly truth with much compassion.

This paper is going to study how Khushwant Singh shows the pain of Partition not by numbers and stats, but by real people and their stories that lived in those times. It also will be looking at how the novel does more than show sadness; it gives little hope about humanity even when dark times come. So, this paper is going to show that *Train to Pakistan* is not only a book about Partition but also a very important record about loss, bravery, and needing kindness when hate is all around.

Roy (1998) tells us we should not only look at the political part of India's freedom and partition but more at the trauma people face in Punjab and Bengal. A book called *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence* is helpful for knowing about big violences and how people run from homes. Roy (1998) talks about trains full of killing and how women were kidnapped, which still gives scars to people until now. Haque Khan (2016) goes more deep in *Train to Pakistan*. He is saying that Singh's story comes from true experiences, which tell us to not forget and stop such bad things from happening again. Khan (2016) thinks literature like this is changing our thinking about how we see violence and relations between groups. Dey (2016) also talks about this topic, and he says women's suffering is not getting a voice. Mostly stories reduce them to numbers only, but their strengths and pain are not told. Dey (2016) says we are missing a big part of the truth if we ignore women's voices. Rashid Wani and Ahmad Bhat (2016) also write on mental hurt by Partition; they look to Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* for this. Refugee peoples have mind problems after big trauma. Partition not only took lands and homes but also took people's minds and hearts.

All these writings together show how memory, trauma, and who we are were changed by Partition. And also telling us that we need to look again at old stories, especially those where women and refugees are left behind. Partition was not only a political thing—it was painful for every person and needs to be seen from many sides to understand what really happened.

Psychological and Physical Trauma:

The partition of India in 1947 was not just some political thing but a big tragedy that made unimaginable psychological and physical trauma for millions of people. The borders were drawn



in a hurry, and because of that, mass migrations happened, brutal killings occurred, and whole communities that once lived nicely were destroyed. People were forced to leave their homes, lands, and memories behind, and they saw violence that left deep scars on both body and mind. Families got broken apart, women suffered terrible abuses, and children's innocence was destroyed in just a few days. The pain people feel is not only hurting their bodies but also deep emotional pain, which haunts them even long after borders come.

Khushwant Singh shows this trauma in *Train to Pakistan* through his characters, who get stuck between fear, violence, and trying to survive. The peaceful village Mano Majra becomes a place of chaos where neighbors stop trusting each other and hate starts to grow. Singh shows how physical trauma like killings, riots, and attacks on women becomes a normal thing. Trains, which were before a symbol of life and connection, now become trains of death, bringing dead bodies and sadness into the village. This violence broke people, hurt their bodies, and made their minds unstable.

Characters in the narrative who struggle to comprehend violence around them represent psychological damage. Their life revolves on guilt, anxiety, and powerlessness. People remember Jugga as a nasty criminal, but he changes after he witnesses suffering during the Partition and decides to give his life to help mankind. Iqbal, who is an educated outsider, can't even stop violence even though he has so many big ideas. Women in the story suffered quietly, their pain mostly ignored or just counted like numbers, even though they faced brutal things that changed them forever.

Singh does not hide the horrors of Partition but instead shows how pain becomes an everyday part of people's lives. The psychological wounds stay even after physical injuries are healed, because the bad memories keep coming back to survivors for many years. Trauma was not just for dead people but also for living ones who carry loss, displacement, and big guilt.

Thus, *Train to Pakistan* captures how Partition embodied pain both physically and psychologically. It was a suffering that didn't end with crossing borders but continued to shape lives and memories of people across generations.

Literature Review:

In her review "The Tear That Does Not Mend: A Review of 'Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence'" (Roy, 1998), she gives a deep look into the many experiences around the Partition of India, mainly focusing on the Punjab and Bengal regions. The work she talks about is a collection of essays that goes into traumatic events and big social changes during that important time. Roy (1998) shows how often people miss important parts of Partition when only the political side is talked about.

Roy (1998) points out how the essays focused on communal violence and mass migrations after Partition, which is the main theme throughout the book. The traumatic happenings, especially in Swarna Aiyar's essay *August Anarchy: The Partition Massacres in Punjab, 1947*, show the horrible killings and attacks on refugee trains. Aiyar looks into how these massacres were planned and happening, giving important understandings of brutal realities people faced.

Focusing on refugee trains as places of violence shows how transport and trauma are connected. Also, Roy (1998) says that Andrew J. Major's writing about women's abduction shows the gender side of Partition violence. Major says that women were seen as symbols of land, and because of that, they faced terrible violence. This adds more layers for understanding trauma. In the article *Text, Representation, and Revision: Re-visioning Partition Violence in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Bhisham Sahni's Tamas* (Haque Khan, 2016), a deep look is given into how Partition is shown through Singh's work. The author says that Partition's impact is still



strong in society today and that we must not forget the 1947 events. Haque Khan (2016) says that remembering is important for stopping similar things from happening again.

Haque Khan (2016) also thinks that literature is a strong way for people to process feelings and society problems. Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is not just telling what happened, but it's a deep look at human suffering and communal fights. By putting Singh and Sahni's "Tamas" together, Haque Khan (2016) says we get a better understanding of psychological and social problems after Partition.

The article talks about how Partition events affected India's diverse society and how the 1947 happenings made relations between people very weak. Haque Khan (2016) also asks important questions about what things cause so much communal hate and sudden bad behaviors. Dey's (2016) article, *Violence against women during Partition of India: Interpreting women and their bodies in context of ethnic genocide*, talks about the ignored stories of women during Partition. Dey (2016) says big history stories talk about general violence but miss out on women's own pain. Taking from Ismat Chughtai's words, "Those whose bodies were whole had hearts that splintered" (Dey, 2016), she shows that even survivors who were physically fine had broken hearts and minds.

The article *Socio-psychological Issues in Novels of Chaman Nahal* (Rashid Wani and Ahmad Bhat, 2016) looks at how Partition hurt people mentally, mainly through Nahal's "Azadi." The writers say trauma made mental health problems among people, the same way Khushwant Singh showed.

Rashid Wani and Ahmad Bhat (2016) say that Partition was not just cutting land but was a big mental and social crisis. They say Nahal, from her own refugee experiences, writes about human suffering in great detail. Nahal's stories show mental illnesses as a small version of bigger trauma and the sadness after Partition.

Also, the article tells how Partition affected identity and sense of belonging, saying that divisions went deep inside people's minds. This idea is close to how Singh shows identity problems in post-Partition India.

Author	Title	Main Focus	Key Points
Roy (1998)	<i>The Tear That Does Not Mend: A Review of 'Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence'</i>	Partition trauma, Punjab and Bengal	Highlights overlooked dimensions; focus on communal violence, refugee trains, and gendered violence
Swarna Aiyar (in Roy's review)	<i>August Anarchy: The Partition Massacres in Punjab, 1947</i>	Communal killings, refugee trains	Describes planned massacres, brutality during migration
Haque Khan (2016)	<i>Text, Representation, and Revision: Re-visioning Partition Violence in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Bhisham Sahni's Tamas</i>	Literary portrayal of Partition trauma	Singh's call for remembering Partition, literature as medium for trauma processing



Dey (2016)	<i>Violence against women during Partition of India: Interpreting women and their bodies in the context of ethnic genocide</i>	Women's overlooked narratives	Critiques treating women as passive victims, emphasizes women's agency
Rashid Wani and Ahmad Bhat (2016)	<i>Socio-psychological Issues in Novels of Chaman Nahal</i>	Psychological effects of Partition	Focus on trauma, identity crisis, mental health issues in "Azadi"

Table I. Themes of Trauma in Partition Literature

Research Objective:

- The main objective of this research is to explore the psychological and physical trauma people faced during the Partition of India. This study is trying to understand how authors like Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, and others show trauma and human suffering in their writings.
- Another objective is highlighting the gendered side of violence during Partition, focusing on specific vulnerabilities women faced. The aim is showing the stories that many historical accounts usually ignore or marginalize.
- This research also tries to see how literature is not just telling stories but also working as a tool for keeping memories and emotional realities of partition survivors. It wants to find out the socio-psychological effects of mass displacement and communal conflicts on people's identity and belongingness.
- Also, the study focuses on critically checking historiographical methods, which many times leave out or objectify women's experiences, and pushing for more inclusive history. By looking at these literary works, researchers want to give a deeper understanding of trauma, memory, and how humans survive historical violence.

Research Methodology:

- We will do this research by using a qualitative approach, analyzing literary texts for understanding the representation of trauma during Partition. Primary sources like Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* are used to interpret experiences of violence and dislocation.
- Secondary sources like journal articles, books, and some online articles were also looked into for getting more deep insight into issues of psychological and physical trauma. We will use thematic analysis to find repeating themes related to communal violence, gender suffering, and mental health in these works.
- The comparative method is also being used by comparing different authors' ways of showing the same traumatic events to understand the difference in narrative styles and focus. Special attention is given to how women's experiences are shown in literature and how they reflect big socio-political conditions.
- Because research is dealing with subjective interpretation and emotional things, which are very hard to measure, it does not follow any statistical or number analysis. Instead, we are doing critical reading and close reading to take out meanings from the text.
- To better understand the historical background, some history documents and survivor stories were read side by side with the novels. This helps in making a connection between the fictional stories and the real-life happenings.



Proposed Outcomes:

The study aims to show how Partition literature captured the deep psychological and physical wounds faced by people. It is expected that the analysis will reveal that trauma was not only bodily but also mental and emotional, which affected the generations after too.

1. It also hopes to find how women's experiences were different and more intense due to gendered violence during the Partition. By reading novels and articles, the research is going to highlight that women's bodies were often used as sites of communal revenge and domination.
2. Another outcome is it will make clear that literature is a very important tool for preserving the memories of traumatic history, which otherwise would be forgotten by society. The works of Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal show how writing can give voices to sufferings that official histories sometimes ignore.
3. It is also predicting that the Partition created permanent scars on identities and senses of belonging among peoples, which are reflected through the characters in novels. This study wants to bring attention to mental health issues that arise during displacement and communal conflict and are usually not discussed much.
4. Finally, this research will contribute towards the broader understanding of trauma studies and help people to realize the human cost behind big political events like Partition.

Conclusion:

The reviewed literature provides a wide and detailed exploration of the Partition of India, especially focusing on Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. There is a strong emphasis across the articles on the different kinds of trauma people faced in that historical event. The psychological and social effects and gendered effects are shown to have deep outcomes that affect individuals and society even after violence is gone.

Roy (1998) stressed that the right understanding of Partition must move beyond the simple political stories. She is highlighting how real stories lie in communal violence and big displacement of peoples, mainly in Punjab and Bengal. Through documented massacres and abduction of many women, Roy shows the deep and long-lasting scars Partition had left. These perspectives are very important for seeing Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, which also catches these cruel realities through novel form.

Haque Khan (2016) did a comparative analysis and showed how *Train to Pakistan* became a strong memory of the 1947 events. The author argues that literature not just describes violence but also makes people see and rethink the partition for new generations. His saying that the trauma of Partition still impacts today's Indian society shows why Singh's novel still matters. Singh's refusal to forget Partition makes it clear that remembering past pains is important so that future violence is stopped.

Adding more discussion, Dey (2016) focuses mainly on women who were ignored during Partition histories. They are critiquing old historians who mostly treat women just as numbers, not real people with their own suffering. By mentioning Ismat Chughtai's work and speaking about emotional pains, Dey opens new understanding of Partition effects, not only physical but emotional. This helps to complete Singh's story, which also talks about silent suffering and broken people.

Moreover, Rashid Wani and Ahmad Bhat (2016) look at the socio-psychological effects of Partition, especially by seeing Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*. They say mental health problems in refugees were not small but had a very big impact. Refugees also face identity loss and belonging problems that shape new generations. Their insights match strongly with Singh's showing of broken homes, lost hopes, and disturbed minds in *Train to Pakistan*.



Together, all these articles show the big connection between memory, trauma, and identity in Partition time. They tell how important it is to include ignored voices, especially women's, in history telling. Literature reviews prove that Partition was not just a political thing but a big human tragedy that even today its shadow is staying. Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Nahal's *Azadi* are still very important for readers to understand and remember.

By thinking about these points, it is clear that literature plays an important role in healing, remembering, and teaching people. Going back to Partition stories helps to make sure history lessons are not forgotten and mistakes are not repeated, bringing more understanding and maybe a better, more peaceful future.

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