



TRAIN TO PAKISTAN BY KHUSHWANT SINGH: A PARTITION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Train to Pakistan is a well-known partition novel by Khushwant Singh. Khushwant Singh was awarded with Padma Bhushan award in 1974 for his excellent service to the Indian Society and culture. In 2007, he was awarded with Padma Vibhushan the second highest civilian award in India. In the Year 2000, he was conferred as the 'Honest Man of the Year Award', by the Sulabh International Social Service Organization for his courage and honesty in his writing. Khushwant Singh was one of the well-known writers, Journalist, Politician and the dominant voice of Sikh religion. Besides all, he was appointed as a Member of Parliament of Rajya Sabha from 1980-1986. As a writer, he has written number of novels, volumes of history of the Sikhs, number of translations and nonfiction books on Delhi.

Keywords

Partition, Separation, Death, Tragedy Violence, Loss, etc.

Full Article

The Partition of Indian Sub-continent 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. Partition has moved the whole nation, innumerable losses experienced by the people. The ideal villages like Mano Majra; in which everyone was living happily suddenly came to violence when Ramlal, a Hindu Money Lender's house was robbed and he was murdered.

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 gives the news of partition & so on. It is a very tiny but an ideal village, 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 into their lives.

Khushwant Singh also highlights the characteristics of the people, both Sikh and Muslim and their faith on each other. The routine of the people begins with the mail train which does not stop at Mano Majra. It rushes through on its way to Lahore & approaches the bridge of Sutlej River with two long blows of whistles. The sound of whistles awakens the Mullah in the Masque and he begins for the prayer. After the Mullah's prayer, the priest of the temple gets up and begins to pray at the early in the morning, it is the ideal inter dependence on each other.

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 dark reality 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, Hukumchand and Ramlal etc.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* highly focuses on the pleasant atmosphere of multicultural India in which people of all color, caste, communities and religions lived together happily and peacefully



like a heaven on earth. The time of 1947, the separation of India into Pakistan, brings sudden change in the minds of the people. The change turns the minds of the people into anger and disliking for each other. The people who have been living together peacefully and unanimously since long time now hate each other; Sikhs hate Muslims while Muslims hate Sikhs. Mano Majra, the happy and sound village disturbed a lot, on each and every day the train brings lots of corpses from Pakistan of Hindus and being at a border every dead body cremated at Mano Majra. Government was planning to shift all Muslims to Pakistan for their safety. No Muslim community member was ready to move. And on the other hand everybody was ready to face the problem unanimously. As they have spent many generations together happily. The people like Lambardar and Imam Baksh, the representatives of Sikh and Muslim Community respectively convince to each other.

The novel, *Train to Pakistan* also makes a harsh satire on 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.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* is also adapted into a movie of the same title in 1998. The film *Train to Pakistan*, Hindi film adapted from Khushwant Singh's 1956 classic historical novel based on Indian Partition of 1947. The film is directed by Pamela Rooks. The well-known stars are Nirmal Pandey, Ranjit Kapoor, Mohan Agashe, Smriti Mishra, Mangal Dhillon and Divya Dutta. The film set in Mano Majra, a village situated at the border of India and Pakistan, very closer to the railway line and the Sutlej River. The film begins with the scene of robbery at Ramlal's home (only Hindu Money lender of Mano Majra) and his death. Most of the section of the film was devoted to the robbery / dacoit at Ramlal and search for his murderers. The film also centers on the love affair of Juggut Singh / Jagga (Sikh dacoit / criminal record badmash no.10) with a local Muslim girl Nooran. The villagers include Sikhs and Muslims who lived in harmony, and peace.

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 around the village Mano Majra. 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 center of conflict. The novel and film begins with the incident of Robbery and murder of Ramlal, the only Hindu Family in town.

Khushwant Singh's *Train of Pakistan* is set in Mano Majra a small border village of Indo-Pak. The village is of seventy families equally divided in Sikh and Muslim families. A single Hindu family is in the midst of Sikhs and Muslims. The village is a perfect picture of communal harmony having different religions. All people venerate a three foot slab of sand-stone, the doe and when in need visit it. The two main characteristics of the village are the Sutlej River at the Eastern and the railway station. The year 1947 saw the sudden change in the atmosphere and disharmony in the many border villages.



No doubt Mano Majra was an oasis of peace and paradise on earth. The Sikh and Muslim people were still living happily and peacefully. The incident of train arrival at the railway station across the border full with corpses of Sikhs and Hindus changed the atmosphere. The villagers came to know what is happening, they sure something wrong is happening. The officers came to the Lamberdar of Mano Majra for oil and wood. The people came to know about the bad times and just discuss about the condition. But they couldn't come to know what has happened. Khushwant Singh highly portrays the touching human experience through the dialogues. The Partition, according to the novelist is irrational and absurd, dividing the people on the basis of religion.

In short, thus, Khushwant Singh's award winning bestselling novel *Train to Pakistan* is a Partition novel. The novel is a tragic tale of separation, suffering, love, loss, separation, violence and death. *Train to Pakistan* is a symbolic novel mainly focuses on the declaration of Indian Independence and Partition of the two countries, India and Pakistan. The novel focuses on the communal clashes and riots which will be remembered and known as the one of the blackest chapters in human history.

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