

Since the dawn of civilization, women have always existed in the region of 'otherness'. They have had only informal power by emotional hold over their husband and sons. For a long time, the same prejudice prevailed in the creative field also. The words of G.H. Lewes, "My idea of a perfect woman is one who can write but won't" sum up the attitude of men towards women writers. The phrase 'women's poetry' is not necessarily a synonym for feminist poetry. It is rather a discourse which encapsulates a wide range of interests and concerns about women as poets, women as readers, women as objects and subjects. For a long time the women poet dealt with sentimental issues in their poetry like love, God, marriage, motherhood etc and hence got removed from competing within the male space. However with time and increasing subordination it became imperative for the women poets to voice the concern of women's identity, independence and selfhood in their poems. Parveen Shakir as a poet does exactly the same. She claims her right to self determination, confronts gender conformity and aims to achieve an equal status as the men of the society. One of the unique traits of Shakir's poetry is that she is not against the love relationship of man and woman. She is not disillusioned by love, infact she has celebrated man-woman relationship in some of her iconic *ghazals*. However, she is against the patriarchal ideology which perceives a woman as self-effacing, dependent and helpless victim at the mercy of men. Literary critics argue that Shakir does not strive towards absolute autonomy or independence. It can be said that the females of her poems are not boisterously revolting and outspoken as in the poems of Sylvia Plath or Kamla Das but at the same time one cannot overlook that she discusses the predicament of the women caught in the patriarchal enclosures of the society. At the same time she tries to make the readers aware of the wide spectrum of emotions of a woman. The subjects of her poem might appear as captive in the male-dominated frame work but certainly they do not accept their fate silently. There is a spirit of resistance in the melodies of Shakir through which she and tries to reconceptualise the space provided to a woman in the patriarchal society.

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A Study of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*: Realism, Sacrifice, Affection, Brutality and Theme of Division

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Abstract: This paper attempts to bring forth the various aspects and the consequences of partition in India after the independence in 1947. It also reflects that how seeds of contempt sown due to colonization which led only to destruction and violence. *Train to Pakistan* is a book about the terrors of civil war and how a small village finally becomes an area of religious hostility and communal destruction. It describes the myriads of human sentiments which arise in critical times and portrays how nothing is definite in life. Khushwant Singh states with this book that there is no categorical discrimination of a person as good or bad and that even the best of relationships, which are made upon the merits of friendship and empathy, *Train to Pakistan* is a story of human tolerance and struggle through a mass movement. Independence brought us our own government, our own flag, our own nation, but for a commoner he lost his own home, his own relatives, and his own complete individuality.

Keywords: Discrimination, Contempt, Tolerance, Colonization, Violence, Struggle, Empathy

Khushwant Singh's name needs no introduction in Indian literary history as one of the finest novelists, a political commentator, and a remarkable observer and social critic. His vast and sound knowledge and understanding of India's history, political systems, and literary heritage is reflected truly. He was a renowned novelist, short story writer, essayist, journalist, columnist, historian and editor. His major topics were the traditions, ethical problems, and sociopolitical predicaments of typical Indian life. He had established himself as an eminent writer of social realism with the publication of his maiden novel, *Train to Pakistan*. The term social realism means the description in literature of social reality in its true sense. Khushwant Singh was a product of western culture but he was at heart a Sikh and an Indian. Realism is the most prominent feature of Indian English novel in which Indian sensibility is articulated through a foreign language. Realism shows real life, facts in a true way. It omits nothing that painful and idealizes nothing. The term 'realism' truly means a theory of writing in which the familiar ordinary aspects of life are presented in a matter of fact, straight forward manner designed to reveal life as it is in a way that presents descriptions of every day life, often the lives of so-called middle class. Realism which signifies to the content and art of literary creation has been evident in literature from its beginning. The theme of the novel is as simple and common as possible – a small

peaceful village, regular corrupted officers, ordinary villains and saints. The novel starts with these lines:

The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. It was hotter than usual, and drier and dustier. And the summer was longer.....there was no rain. People began to say that God was punishing them for their sins (*Train to Pakistan* 01).

The partition of India and Pakistan is a highly disputable and arguable incident. At the time of division there was no systematic strategy to effectively shift people from the places where they had lived their complete lives and to establish them in foreign place. They were not provided enough time to make preparations for the journey they had to manage. There were no arrangements and facilities to maintain law and order in a highly sensitive atmosphere of religious tension. Vandals looted the masses and murdered people belonging to different religions. Women were raped and killed brutally. There was chaos and total disorder all over and everybody was struggling to get life of peace. Humanity seemed to be vanished or almost dead. But amidst this atmosphere, there were some people who did not lose their human values and did not take part in killing or vandalism. They went up and raise their voice against their own community in saving the lives of people belonging to other religion. The paper deals with one such character named Juggut Singh in the novel *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh who put his life on stake in an attempt to protect the lives of migrating Muslims. Unlike other partition novels, the main focus of the novel is not the killings and vandalism. It is the feelings love and compassion that we see on the pages of *Train to Pakistan*. Khushwant Singh by his wonderful narration transforms “the horrendous raw theme into a fine fiction that is steeped in human compassion and love” (Kumar 38-39).

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* reveals the futility of blaming one another for the unfortunate and horrible event. The novel is the most effective works on partition. The author has quite objectively treated the event, without blaming a community or religious minority for it. He has tried to stay away from the blame. “Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame” (Singh 1).

According to him, “The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped” (Singh 1). Though there is no. of book written on partition but *Train to Pakistan* stands out as it does not displays the usual themes of indiscriminate killings of people. The violence is undoubtedly a part of it but not the central theme. His focus shifts to the other related themes at the time of partition. Bhatnagar says:

Khushwant Singh was the first Indian novelist in English to write about the horror and holocaust of partition with great artistic concern in *Train*

to Pakistan. It is not partition but what it gets associated with and what it becomes symbolic of that attracts the attention of the writer (Bhatnagar 152).

The most heart-moving passage in the book is when the government makes the decision to uproot all the Muslim families from Mano Majra to Pakistan. The shocked villagers were not able to react. The Muslims leave with their minimum belongings within ten minutes and the Non-Muslim neighbors do not get a chance to say Goodbye. The scene is full of agony at many levels; particularly the poverty in which those people lived, the destiny, they were thrown into. *Train to Pakistan* is Khushwant Singh's classic achievement. It is one of the realistic novels of Post-world war II Indo Anglian fiction. It has a well structure, plot, an absorbing narrative and wonderfully portrayed characters. It has many features – symbolic framework, meaningful atmosphere and a powerful way of expression and style. Khushwant Singh has correctly depicted the true picture of the partition and the sufferings that people were bound to tolerate. He paints a vivid picture of the separation between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the summer of 1947. The novel in short clearly shows the issues of Independence and partition using as the larger picture of the devastation and bloody birth of nations. It majorly highlights on the consequences of division, avoiding the graphic presentation of the terrific events. Roy says:

... in *Train to Pakistan*, the violence that erupted at the time of the partition is represented in a very unusual way. There is no detailed description in the novel of the train journey undertaken by the refugees-in terms of neither the practical difficulties faced nor the dangers involved. More importantly, we are also not shown the violence happening: for there is not even a reported description of the incidents in the novel. We are just informed about the end result of the violence: the trainloads of corpses that arrive at Mano Majra. What is detailed by Khushwant Singh is the after math of the violence... (Roy 36).

The novel gives the description of accounts of the haunting scenes of train load of butchered Hindus arriving from Pakistan with their raped women and stabbed children. This novel entirely depicts the dark, naked, barbaric, bitter, brutal and dirty truth of Indian Independence, which we call PARTITION and no one got what they wanted. The venomous effect of partition has been realistically expressed in scathing attack in *Train to Pakistan*. The novel portrays with bold and the brutal story of political hatred during the turbulent days that preceded and followed the division of British India when air of communal frenzy and emotional zeal for self – expression was fumbling with the masses. It is true that partition touched the whole country and Singh attempt in the novel is to observe events from the point of view of the people of Mano Majra, a small village.

The division of Indian was the process of separating the sub-continent along sectarian lines, which occurred in 1947 as India got its

independence from British Empire. The northern part majorly Muslim, became Pakistan and the southern predominantly Hindu became the republic of India, the division however wrecked both India and Pakistan as the process claimed many lives in violence, riots, rapes, murders. The two countries initiated their freedom with destroyed economies and lands without an established, experienced government, not only this but also around 14 million people were shifted from their homes. The division of India was a significant event not only in the history of the India but in the world history. Its main cause was the communal attitude of both Hindus and Muslims; but the circumstances under which it took place, made it one of the worst event of the history of India. The fanatic political persons of both communities played an eminent role in blazing the fire of communalism. The partition was exceptionally violent and unleashed misery and devastation of lives and property as millions of refugees fled either India or Pakistan.

Train to Pakistan opens in the imaginary village Mano Majra and depicts how the entire village gets involved in the carnage during the division. The bloodshed could not be stopped in spite of the repeated peacemaking efforts by many people in the village. The novel describes how everything changed and made people react in unusual way. Commenting upon the theme of the novel, Rao and Rani say:

Train to Pakistan is the touching tale of a village, Mano Majra, struck down by the hate and the violence that came with the division of the subcontinent when a train-load of massacred men, women and children arrive in the village. It reveals with pitiless precision a picture of the bestial horrors enacted on the Indo-Pakistan border during the days of 1947. The predominant features of the novel are its stark realism, its absolute fidelity to the truth, and above all, its trenchant exposure of the partition horrors (Rao & Rani 32-33).

This novel provides detailed accounts of the massacres of Hindus and Muslims, on the border towns of India. Train loaded of innocent dead bodies used to arrive from Pakistan to border station of Atari. They were filled with corpses of men, women, and children. On the bogies of those trains filled with corpses Pakistanis wrote – Gift to India from Pakistan. These events lead to carnage of Muslims in India, people were killed without mercy. Men were killed with swords and spears while their women and sisters and mothers and daughters were ruthlessly gang-raped and then their breasts were cut with spears while their children were slaughtered and women left to bleed to death.

The resentment among the people belonging to different religions was something that had fermented suddenly.

“Before partition, cultural integration between Muslim and Hindu and Sikh in the subcontinent was harmonious and mellifluous but turned into enmity after partition” (Pathak & Mishra 83).

In the novel we see that the general atmosphere was peaceful and people did not as such mind the presence of people belonging to different

religions. Mano Majra remains uninfluenced as the sub-inspector of police says: "No communal trouble in the area?...'we have escaped it so far, sir'" (Singh 20).

They never neglect the fact that they had been living together for donkey's years and a momentary determination should not be strong enough to break those bonds. Even after the communal annoyance envelops most of the regions, Mano Majra controls to maintain the peace and tolerance in spite of the heterogeneity of the village:

The riots had become a rout. By the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced, ten million people-Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs were in fight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of Northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. The only remaining cases of peace were a scatter of villages lost in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Majra (Singh 1).

In the novel, Jugga is a thug, infamous for his bad character. He is in love with a Muslim weaver's daughter with whom he often rendezvoused in the night. One night, when he is out of the village and the local money lender gets killed by someone, he is blamed for the murder and arrested. The next morning, a "Mona Sardar" and social worker, Iqbal, reached in the village to stop any riots in the area. But as soon as he finds rest, he is arrested for the murder of the moneylender too. The novel recounts when the disturbance starts in Mano Majra, Juggut was in police custody and another character was Iqbal, educated in England and an expert in giving sermons on Hindu-Muslim unity. Police set them free from the custody expecting that both of them will assist in preventing the villagers from killing the Muslims who were leaving to Pakistan through train. While Juggat loses his life and make a sacrifice, Iqbal, a political worker, an idealist and nationalist has worldly wise approach and keeps him away from the trouble.

In the novel, Iqbal is highlighted as a slightly effeminate, educated, atheist social worker from Britain who thinks politically and cynically. Juggut is a, muscular, and uneducated villager who places action over thought and is known for some arrests and criminal record. They were both arrested for the same murder they did not commit, and were placed in adjacent cells, on their release; they came to know that a gang was planning to ambush the train taking Mano Majra's Muslim people to Pakistan. They each had the capacity and strength to protect the train, but only Juggat did it. Juggut, sacrifices his life to save the train. Iqbal passed his time in dilemma to take action whether he should do something, exposing a moral contradiction on the way:

"The bullet is neutral. It hits the good and the bad, the important and the insignificant, without distinction. If there were people to see the act of self-immolation...the sacrifice might be worthwhile: a moral lesson might be conveyed...the point of sacrifice...is the purpose. For the purpose, it is not enough that a thing is intrinsically good: it must be

known to be good. It is not enough to know within one's self that one is in the right" (170).

The conversation of Iqbal that he has with himself during the end of story is great to read. The protagonist talks about religion and the limited and constipated perception that it has in India. He revealed about the irony of proving one's Sikhism to stay alive in an insane asylum that India had become in that period. He expressed about the uselessness of talking about logics and morals in front of people who have become bloodthirsty. They will rather attack with a sword on your stomach and proceed and call you a traitor rather than listen or understand to the morality you are talking about.

Iqbal is the only person who put his life in danger to save a train full of Muslims who are refugees in their own motherland and are going to Pakistan while an army of crazy men armed with all kinds of modern and traditional weapons waiting to kill and rape and abduct those innocent Muslims going to Pakistan, a land where they will be called 'Muhajir' (refugees) and will be seen with an eye of contempt because they came from India, and will again become refugees in a country that was made for them. The inhabitants of Mano Majra, both Hindus and Muslims, become victims of the circumstances they think of one another not as individuals but mere religious beings; a serious threat to their own protection and religion. Khushwant Singh has used the character of Juggut Singh to show the importance of love in saving philanthropy and compassion. His relationship with Nooran, who is a Muslim girl, hints at the uselessness of the differences and enmity on the basis of religion. His love for her inspires him go against his own people who were making efforts to kill innocents. It was his true love which makes him to sacrifice his life for the people who called him a criminal.

Khushwant Singh has nicely divided the novel into four parts and the fourth part named '*Karma*', emphasizes the philosophy of '*Karma*', that is an action, as depicted in *The Bhagavad Gita*. Here the story reached to its catastrophic dramatic end with Juggut Singh sacrificing his life to protect the lives of his beloved Nooran and other Muslim refugees. When Nooran comes to know about her father's resolution to leave the country, she gets nonplussed at it as she was in love with Juggat Singh. Juggut was in police custody at that time. She did not wish to leave him but couldn't do anything in view of the existing circumstances. She tells her that she is pregnant with his child and does not want to leave him, but all in vain.

Mostly the Indian novelists show a passionate awareness of life in India - the poverty and hunger of the peasants, the social awakening and protest, various dimensions of the struggle for freedom and the tragedy of division, political changes and the suffering of individuals. Most of Khushwant Singh's critics have discussed about his realistic portrayal violence, Khushwant Singh is, no doubt, a writer of social themes but not only sex and violence. Unlike the other social authors Khushwant Singh

chooses his material from the variety of life and his vision is really comprehensive.

At the end of the story, people make a strategy to attack the train taking the Muslims including those of Mano Majra to Pakistan. The Sikhs of Mano Majra who, just one day before, were ready to lay down their lives for their Muslim brothers, now at once become fully prepared to kill them. They determined this at the suggestion of the Sikh boy who excites their religious passions to revenge to the brutality of the Muslims. But when Juggut Singh comes to know about his beloved Nooran and the people's plan about the train, he did the act of self-sacrifice to save the lives of people. Though there were other people also who knew about the plot and wanted to curb their plan but they were not able to check the plot against the fleeing Muslims. Juggut Singh does not care for his own protection and impede the plot to ambush the train, letting it to roll over his body to Pakistan.

Khushwant Singh's contribution exists in the portrayal of political life in India. Sex and violence are not the only the harsh realities, Singh's novels transcend this ideal boundary and present the true picture of society, encompassing the humanity. His characters enliven the contemporary Indian life. Khushwant Singh's fictional world depicts the depth of his apprehension of reality; he deals with different aspects of social reality. He has seen all the incidents of partition as belong to that age and time; he is the witness of pre-partition national movement, post-partition, Freedom, and the modern complicated world. He is interested in human relations; his East-West education and modern-traditional life assist his fictional world to record contemporary socio-political annoyance. *Train to Pakistan* is a story of individuals and communities involved in the holocaust of partition of the sub-continent into two states India and Pakistan in 1947. *Train to Pakistan* is a realistic novel and its social realism is found in characters, plot, scenes and language. As D.Premapati says:

What sort of social realism does one find in *Train to Pakistan*? The formula which got this novel its well deserved popularity was: A sincere belief in traditional moral and social standards of Indian society and a charming narrative skill.... It is, therefore, obvious that *Train to Pakistan* is a documentary novel with no claims whatsoever to the artistic technique and extra artistic philosophies of social realism and naturalism (Three Contemporary Novelists 113-114).

In the novel *Train to Pakistan* Violence is another fundamental aspect. But the final aim of Khushwant Singh is not only to highlight communal violence, death, disaster, hate, disorder and but also to highlight the path of humanism. His objection against violence, bloodshed and hatred is not only a physical phenomenon but a long process of humanity. At the end of the novel Khushwant Singh gives the glimpses at the classic humanism through the love story of Nooran and Juggat. Pure Love has wonderful impact in human life and it is the only resisting human power

against all inhuman forces. At that time of Partition, the communal riots, the human relationship among the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims determines the human values; man - woman relationship has greater power and force than the other evil powers. It was revealed that no evil force may subdue love in respect of time or society as the author presents in the novel. Singh gives information about both religions involved to better understand the situation surrounding the partition of India. The book throws light on the different religious practices of both Sikhs and Muslims in India. If people of the novel are examined on a closer level then the picture is full of contempt as Government officials were corrupt, manipulative of villagers, and arrest anyone they chose for any cause, for their own benefit. The law was completely at the whim of the local government, truly means that in practice, there was no law. Number of educated people was less and they were trying to instill in people democratic, communist, or other western ideologies, though the people or villagers were turned off and in dilemma by their unorthodoxy. When one educated man was talking to a villager about liberty, the villager explained:

“Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians—or the Pakistanis” (48).

Khushwant Singh's point of view is also shaped by his dedication to human interest as his *Train to Pakistan* describes the indomitable spirit of man in the face of mighty forces of *Wickedness and Sadism*. The novel shows Khushwant Singh's optimistic and positive attitude and thinking and his enduring trust in the values of Love and Humanity. Singh creates a background of moral commentary which rose up with main characters in their attitude and their actions. Hukum Chand is the regional magistrate, and the most influential character in the novel. He is a morally corrupted man who has used his power over the years with unethical ways. Khushwant Singh very nicely portrays the true picture of the contemporary society and the social, political and religious behaviour of the mass. As we find in *Train to Pakistan*, the original looks of the village Mano Majra before and after division, the love story of Nooran and Jugga, the greedy people, trauma and violence. Khushwant Singh shows the serene co-existence of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh in a multi-religion nation which has three brick buildings, one of them is the home of Hindu money lender Lala Ram Lal. The other two are the Sikh Temple and the Mosque. Their common sharing of the 'large peepal tree' is the common heritage shared by various religions in India.

Khushwant Singh had the capacity to write passionately about *Society, Religion and Politics* because he had been personally engrossed with the subject matter. His childhood memories are those of his grandmother reciting holy words from the Granth Sahib and the Sukhmani. Later he was a spectator to the terror unleashed by the division. He was also a