



Review Article

Train to Pakistan, A Novel of Partition

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Abstract

Train to Pakistan deals with the theme of the partition of India and Pakistan. It is a novel by Khushwant Singh. The novel was published in 1956. The partition was the incident that occurred following the Independence of India. India got freedom in 1947. The partition was the post-independence incident. The partition was on the basis of religion. The theme is developed through the fictional village Mano Majra. Dacoity, Kalyug, Mano Majra, and Karma are the four chapters of the novella to depict the episodes of partition. Mainly two different religious communities lived in the Indian village adjacent to the Pakistan border. They are Sikhs and Muslims. Sikhs were the majority and Muslims were the minority. They lived peacefully until the moneylender Lala Ram Lal was murdered. They were quiet until a trainload of dead bodies of the Sikhs arrived. Love between Juggut Singh, a Sikh and Nooran, a Muslim girl, is portrayed to show communal harmony. Hukum Chand's lovemaking with a Muslim prostitute, Haseena, shows the ambiguous nature of the government. Juggut Singh and Muhammed Iqbal were arrested. The gang of Malli was arrested. Again, they were released. Food in the Sultej river represents the havoc of anarchism. Drought in the village stands for a breach of the relationship between the Sikh and Muslim. Juggut Singh's sacrifice symbolizes his patriotism, love to Muslims, and fraternity.

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INTRODUCTION

Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh deals with several themes like love, hatred, polygamy, violence, murder, rape, and anarchism. But those themes developed with the main theme partition. The novel deals with the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Social, political, and religious matters caused the partition. The novel was published in 1956, and it was made into a film in 1998. The theme of partition is developed through a fictitious border village, Mano Majra. The violence, murder, rape, and separation happened between the two religious communities, Sikh and Muslim. The shock of separation made

the village overwhelming. The novel consists of Kalyug, Karma, Mano Majra, and Dacoity chapters. The leading characters in the novel are Imam Baksh, Meet Singh, Banta Singh, Muhammed Iqbal, Juggut Singh, Alam Singh, Moneylender Lala Ram Lal, Deputy Magistrate Hukum Chand, Jugga's mother, Haseena, Nooran, the gang of Malli, Sultan Hooligan, Sub-inspector, and Coachman Bholeya. Juggut Singh is the protagonist of the novel. He sacrificed his life to save his sweetheart, Nooran. For Nooran, the trainload of Muslims is saved, and she goes to Pakistan along with the Muslims safely.

Dacoity

The gang of Malli broke into the house of moneylender Lala Ram Lal. They murdered Lala Ram Lal brutally when he refused to give the key to the locker. The gang threw broken glass bangles at the house of Juggut Singh. They discussed and insulted the illicit love affair of Nooran and Juggut Singh. Besides, they taunted the breasts of Nooran. Those convicted gangs were glad to use such vile language about the Muslim weaver girl. They were ferocious people. They were arrested on suspicion of the murder of a moneylender. When they were bailed, they were given to protect the houses and property of the shifted Muslims. The Malli gang began to loot everything instead of guarding the left homes and property of the Muslims who were shifted to the shelter camp. The people of Mano Majra were frightened.

Haseena and Hukum Chand's illicit relationship

A severe chaotic situation prevailed in Mano Majra following the partition of India and Pakistan. A kind of famine started everywhere. Many helpless women resort to prostitution due to poverty. They became the victims of political and religious exploitation. Hukum Chand was a corrupt deputy magistrate. He had lost his wife and children. He was a clever and cunning government official. When there was a riot and violence, his duty was to control and pacify them; instead, he would be involved in sexual satisfaction with a Muslim whore, Haseena. He raped the young prostitute for about three days continuously. Sometimes his conscience would prick him, but his physical needs drowned him. Sex made him almost mad. When the satisfaction was deep, he tried to coax the girl with the false promise of marriage. As it was Haseena's profession, she could not but was compelled to surrender herself to such a pyorrhoea-stench man. She wanted to escape from his clutch, but she could not, as she was poor and famine-stricken of partition. But this polluted government was also punctual in its duty. Muhammed Iqbal was arrested on the charge of murder of Lala Ram Lal without proper identification of name and address. So, he was somewhat angry at the sub-inspector and constable. He felt remorse only when a trainload of dead bodies turned up. The hag who had introduced herself as the grandmother of Haseena. To earn sufficient money from the magistrate, she oiled him. She appeased him for more earnings. This lecherous, frivolous government was absorbed in an illicit love relationship with a Muslim prostitute, Haseena. Here, Khushwant Singh has tried to bring communal harmony during partition by the love relationship between a Hindu and a Muslim.

Juggut's Family members and Nooran

Juggut Singh is the protagonist of this novel of partition. Jugga had been a badmash number ten, only to love a Muslim weaver girl Nooran. He had been imprisoned only for his patriotism. He sacrificed his life only to save his lover, Nooran and his Muslim neighbours. Juggut Singh was born and bred in a Sikh family in the imaginary village Mano Majra. His father Alam Singh was a dacoit. His grandfather was also a dacoit. So, it is clear that he

belonged to a robber family. Anything he did, it was for the well-being of his neighbour Muslims who were deprived of their right to live in their homeland. Juggut was on probation for leaving home at night. But he violated the law to meet and make love and sex with his beloved Muslim weaver girl Nooran on the excuse of chasing wild pigs that damaged their crop. His mother smelt the forthcoming peril in Juggut's life. She forewarned and forbade her son from leaving home at night with the spear. But Juggut disobeyed his mother and went to meet with his girlfriend, Nooran. As Thomas Hardy confirmed in his poem 'In Time of Breaking of Nations', three activities like love making, fire, and agriculture will go on with their own sweet will, so here in this novel 'Train to Pakistan', India was separated from Pakistan, yet the love of Juggut and Nooran was going on uninterruptedly. A murder of a moneylender happened. Juggut witnessed the murderer. But he remained silent. He was with his sweetheart, Nooran. He was absorbed in love with Nooran. On that night, Juggut Singh made Nooran pregnant. The unconscious Juggut came back home, but someone observed him and reported the police. Police did not delay in arresting Jugga. They behaved with Juggut like a wild beast. He was beaten and shackled before his mother. Juggut Singh and his mother requested the police not to torture him ruthlessly as he confessed that he had not hand in killing their neighbour Lala Ram Lal because that man helped his mother with money to get his father released from jail. He could not be ungrateful to such a benevolent man. But he did not reveal the names of the robbers involved with the murder. He was taken away from his slumber at home. The police perhaps avenged Jugga. As Juggut was the tallest man in Mano Majra, the police were jealous of him. He was not only a serious man, but he was humorous too. When the police laughed at him and insulted him, he also used witty remarks. He made fun of the coachman Bhola. In the jail, Malli mocked and taunted him. He did not make any mistakes by replying to him. He even proceeded to beat Malli. The Muslim League leader, Muhammad Iqbal scolded him. Then he lost his temper with Iqbal. But Juggut Singh indeed praised and loved him. Yet he turned out to be ungrateful. He could forget such a grateful person. The police tortured him. They exploited him. They beat him ruthlessly to know the name of the murderer of Lala Ram Lal. Under pressure, he was compelled to reveal the name of the murderer of the moneylender. He was released from jail. Some Sikh militants planned to kill the trainload of Muslims and their beloved Nooran. He sacrificed his life to save the Muslim train passengers en route to Pakistan. But the partition of India and Pakistan was successful. The shifting of the Muslims from India to Pakistan was successful. It cannot be denied that for his life, Juggut sent the Muslims and his sweetheart Nooran to Pakistan safely.

Iqbal as a social worker

When there was communal disharmony, when there was violence, where there was partition and separation, Iqbal came to Mano Majra village. He was given shelter in a Gurdwara. Everyone was surprised by his polite manners, greetings in

English, and name without title. His appearance was sceptical. General Sikhs were curious to know his original identity. He informed that he was an atheist. Actually, he was born in the Jhelum district in Pakistan. He stayed abroad for several years. When some Sikhs said that in culture, one slept with other wives if they wished. So, they were alleged as immoral. But Iqbal remonstrated that the Western people were not so dishonest and liars as most Indians were. They wanted to know who Iqbal was. He would be a Hindu if it were Iqbal Chand. He would be a Muslim if it were Muhammad Iqbal. He would be a Sikh if it were Iqbal Singh. He introduced himself as a social worker. It was uncertain of his religion. He arrived at Mano Majra after the murder of moneylender Lala Ram Lal. He was arrested on suspicion of his involvement in the murder. Hukum Chand became angry at the constables because they arrested him with proper knowledge of his identity. Iqbal was stripped of his pyjamas. He was detected as a Muslim. He was the leader of the Muslim League.

Nooran and Juggut Singh's mother

Juggut Singh's mother was strict. She was the victim of partition. She was the sufferer. She became a widow because her husband was a robber. Her husband, Alam Singh, was hanged to death. She also lost her father-in-law. All were the victims of the division of India. She had the experience of losing his near and dear ones. She tried to make Juggut free from all scandals. So, she frequently warned him to follow the law and order imposed upon him. Her son had an illicit love with a girl outside of his caste and religion. It was a bolt from the blue when a Muslim girl, Nooran, claimed that she bore the child in the womb of her son Jugga. She was hurt. She was shocked. She was afraid and emotional at the information provided by the Muslim weaver girl, Nooran. The scene was a pathetic one. Both of them began to sob over the plight. They did not know what to do at the moment. They were frightened and panicked after the revelation. Juggut's mother tried to assure her that she would inform her when Juggut came back home. She would receive her as a daughter-in-law. The effect of partition was known from the phenomena concerning the secret love and pregnancy.

Imam Baksh and Partition

In Train to Pakistan, a fictional village, Mano Majra, is presented to state clearly the elements of partition. In this village, two religious communities, Sikh and Muslim, lived peacefully. The Sikhs were the majority religious community. The Hindus and Muslims were in the minority. The Sikhs were the owners of the land. The Muslims were tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Yet there was no kind of disharmony, violence, or communal riots. They dwelled happily. They lived with social unity. When the Imam in the mosque gave azan in a sonorous voice, facing the west, putting two hands to their ears, the Sikh priests also would be ready to pray to their Gurus. No complaints, no problem, no jealousy prevailed anywhere in the village. But everything changed all in a sudden when a trainload of "ghost train" with dead bodies of the Sikhs arrived

at Mano Majra. The Sikhs became aggressive. They became vengeful. Reports of rape, murder, violence, robbery, and anarchism began to come in. Manasha Ram, his wife, and children were murdered. A totally diabolical situation drowned everything.

Drought and Flood

A severe drought was there along with the partition of India and Pakistan. People were illiterate. People were superstitious. As everything was drying, the general masses believed that God was punishing them for their sin. It was the Kalyug or the dark age. The suffering of the panicked people was indescribable. The train passengers were the most afflicted. They had no hope. The natural catastrophe of rainlessness created havoc. The geographical situation of the site caused dryness and restlessness. Lack of education was the root of superstitious orthodox beliefs. The mere natural disaster was misinterpreted as the curse of God. As it was the Kalyug, everything of that kind of natural incident happened. Extreme drought caused floods in the Sutlej River. Corpses of cattle, men, women, and children were floating on the river water. Nobody was spared from the drastic deluge. Poor, rich, literate, and illiterate, everybody was equally punished. Many naked dead bodies stench. The minority Muslims were helpless. They could not make out that the situation was natural, not artificially preplanned. The partition was pathetic.

CONCLUSION

The novella Train to Pakistan is a partition one. Khushwant Singh has depicted the incidents and episodes in support of the partition. From the beginning to the end, the situations are created in such a way that they resemble the real incidents of written and unwritten Indian history. The border area village Mano Majra consists of people of both religions of Sikh and Muslim. They had no problem. A unique communal harmony existed there. Actually, they forgot themselves as their distinct religious identity. But rape, murder, anarchism, aggression, sex, and riots made a hellish environment. A ghost train upturned everything. Murder of moneylender Lala Ram Lal by the Malli gang added fuel to the fire. A Sikh militant planned to take revenge on the Muslim refugees on a loaded train going to Pakistan. The Sikhs were excited by emotional blackmail. The government tried to soothe the upcoming riots by shifting the Muslims to the refugee camp. Juggut was arrested. Muhammed Iqbal, the leader of the Muslim League, was arrested. At last, the Malli gang was also arrested. When again the conditions of Mano Majra were heated under the indulgence of a Sikh militant, Juggut, Iqbal, and Malli gang were released from jail. The protagonist Juggut Singh was able to save his lover and the endangered Muslims and send them safely to Pakistan by sacrificing his own life. So, Train to Pakistan is absolutely a partition novel in the true sense of the term.

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