

## ELEMENTS OF POWER AND CORRUPTION IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN: A STUDY IN CULTURAL MUTATIONS

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### ABSTRACT :

*The Partition of India and Pakistan brought the bloodiest upheal in the history of India. It presents agony to man in the name of religion. It also made people shudder with dismay at cruelty. People looked and burnt shops and houses killed small children, and made refugees as wild beasts. Women were abducted and raped. In this way, the event was unfathomably tragic. In fact, the year 1947 is worthy to be rendered for independence of India or for the massacre during involuntary migration of a huge man of people for their existence. Thus, the partition was accompanied by massive migration of Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India. The tension between the two religion groups was exacerbated. The present paper accounts for power and corruption of Khushwant Singh's **Train to Pakistan** (1956) because the novelist has treated the theme of partition in detail here. **Train to Pakistan** is the first novel in English on the partition presents the brutal killing in the Bengal and Bihar. It also depicts the retributory consequences of the Punjab. This novel has characters like Juggat Singh and Hukum Chand who underwent a complete metamorphosis. A fearful dacoit named Jugga sacrificed himself and became a tragic hero. Here the story is depicted about the power of English men and corruption of people of frontier between India and Pakistan. It had become the scene of rioting and bloodshed. The communal harmony between the Muslims and the Sikhs existing for centuries was shattered by a series of tragic events. Khushwant Singh, a novelist, journalist and diplomat is one of the major novelists who emerged after independence in 1947. His **Train to Pakistan** powerfully depicts the mass hysteria and senseless communal violence that followed the partition of India. This was indeed a novel of power and corruption where he described the tragic tale of the partition of India and Pakistan and mass passion during freedom movement.*

**Keywords:** Freedom, Partition, Suffering, Violence, Anxiety, Loss, Horror, Displacement, Love, Hatred; Mutilation.

### INTRODUCTION:

**Train to Pakistan** portrays the life of the frontier India and Pakistan that had become the scene of rioting and bloodshed. The communal harmony between the Muslims and Sikhs existing for centuries was shattered by a series of tragic events. Death, the result of man's cruelty, overpowered the trains and disturbed the age-old harmony of the Muslims and the Silks even in the peaceful villages. The novel is divided into four parts- 'Dacoity,' 'Kalyug,'

‘Mano Majra’ and ‘Karma’. The titles of these parts are typically India since the novel presents kaleidoscopic picture of a turbulent phase of Indian history and the sordid aspect of its life with visionary power. These different sections deal with a realistic story of political hatred and inhuman violence during the partition.

- 1.1 The first part ‘Dacoity’ constitutes true – to life description of an actual robbery committed in Mano Majra village. The word ‘Dacoity’ is an anglicized form of Hindu word meaning robbery. What we feel in this section is that humanity itself has been robbed of its human attributes. The dacoity in Mano Majra is a material expression of man’s inner spiritual deprivation.
- 1.2 ‘Kalyug’ implies the inversion of human values and their suppression by forces of destruction, disruption, division and negation. It is felt that the spirit of Kali has interred into vast masses of men in both India and Pakistan at the time of Partition. Everything becomes topsy-turvy and voices of affirmation are drowned in the abyss of negation. The view of the world marked by order and harmony gives into a world view characterized by conflict and disorder. In the world of Mano Majra, a strange train having ‘ghostly train’ arrived from Pakistan. Its arrival was followed by various activities on the part of the police and the Sikh soldiers. The villagers became anxious over the arrival of the ghostly train. Banta Singh, the lambardar, Imam Baksh, the Muslim Mullah, Meet Singh, the Sikh Priest and many other villagers discussed among themselves but could not find any clue regarding the arrival of the train. They meet in the Gurudwara only to exchange expression of despair and regret. The train had carried about fifteen hundred corpses and when “Red tongues of flame leaped into the black sky a soft breeze to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning Kerosene, then of wood. And then—a faint acid smell of searing flesh.”<sup>1</sup> Everyone knew the horrible reality of the massacre. This was how the Kalyug straits its going in Mano Majra spreading darkness over the land.
- 1.3 ‘Mano Majra’ the third chapter of the novel depicts the reign of Kali. Mano Majra was a small village where Sikhs and Muslims lived together in peace for generation but the small world had become invaded by larger world of India- Pakistan division or Sikh-Muslim conflict.
- 1.4 The fourth part of the novel entitled ‘Karma’ is a kind of crescendo of the waves of action and feelings that rise and fall into disturbed world of **Train to Pakistan**. In One hand, it implies the successive cycles of his existence, thought of as determine his fate in the next phase of his life, while on the other, it indicates the Hindu view of life, seeking a report with and establishing a co-relation between man’s worldly experience and cosmic design. Karma takes hold of man but man, too by virtue of his free will fights against his destiny and tries to reclaim his lost soul. The novelist has described this awful sight very graphically:

Horse rolled from side to side

as if they were scratching

their backs. There were also  
men and women with their clothes  
changing to their bodies; little  
children sleeping on their  
bodies with and their tiny buttocks  
dipping in and out. The sky was  
soon full of kites and vultures.<sup>2</sup>

#### THEMATIC ANALYSIS :

**Train to Pakistan** opens with a significant reference to Summer of 1947 which was not like other Indian Summer because the weather 'had a different feel in India that year, this summer in 1947 was 'longer drier and dustier'. The entire experience reflected the feelings of heat, hatred and anger. There was nothing but only killing everywhere. Partition founded the whole country in general and Mano Majra in particular. It affected very badly the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. They lived in perfect harmony and they were not aware of the fact that the British had left the country and the country was divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. Lala Ram, the money-lender's house was raided by a group of dreaded dacoits. When he refused to hand over the key of his safe, one of the dacoits hit him hard with the spear. Dacoity has its evil effects on Juggat Singh better known as Jugga. After robbing Seth Ram Lal, the dacoits dropped some bangles in the house of Juggat Singh, cursing him, "wear these bangles Juggia", wear these bangles and put henna on your palms."<sup>3</sup>

Hukum Chand, the magistrate and Deputy Commissioner is a major figure in the novel. He is the counterpart of Buta Singh, the second Civil servant in **I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale**. His meeting with Haseena has an exotic touch. Iqbal, a city-dweller came to Mano Majra and approached Bhai Meet Singh with a request for shelter. The latter immediately allowed him to stay in the thinking that he was Iqbal Singh. In the end, he was arrested in suspicion. The basic human and social tension of the novel arises out of the entire action of two forces – forces of partition and forces of caste-division. Love symbolizes the spiritual world where the holiness of the heart desire reigns supreme. Kalyug projected itself on Mano Majra creating chaos and the nightmarish atmosphere. Khushwant Singh's portrayal of the horror of the ghostly train and its effect on Hukum Chand recalls to our mind the nightmarish description of the novels of war in Evelyn Waugh's **Decline and Fall** (1928), **Men and Arms** (1952) and Norman Mailer's. **The Naked and the Dead** (1948). The might of the dead in the ghost train deeply affected even the sun dried bureaucracy, Hukum Chand and made him aware of the horror of death. He firmly believes that:

... the only absolute truth was  
death. The rest- love, ambition,  
pride, values of all kinds – was  
to be taken with a pinch of salt ...<sup>4</sup>

The significance of the title 'Kalyug' partly lies in the fact of Malli', the real culprit in Ram Lal's murder was freed whereas Jugga and Iqbal, who were innocent, remained behind the bars.

While the Muslims were preparing to leave their homes Nooran visited Jugga's mother and said that he had promised to marry her. At first, his mother was surprised but later on she assumed that Jugga would take her back to his home. She went back and packed her belongings, carrying with her, 'the piece of broken mirror in her hand.' Here 'the broken mirror',

symbolizes her fate as well as the future of Jugga's life. The Sikh and Muslims villagers who were so deeply attached to one another could not even say good-bye.

The sub-inspector carried out the order at once by releasing both Iqbal and Jugga and also informed the latter that all Muslims of Mano Majra were to be evacuated to Pakistan by train that night. Iqbal is a Muslim name but it has been adopted by Hindus as well as Sikhs. Jugga's main concern was the fate of Nooran and her welfare. He reached to Gurudwara to seek the blessings of the Guru. He climbed up the steel space of the bridge and stretched himself on the rope near the point of knot. The leader sheered and fired at him and the main leg was hurt and it began to dangle in the air. His body was subjected to a volley of shots and he collapsed and fell but the rope was at last cut in the air. The quality of disaster in **A Passage to India** is very different from the quality of the destruction of humanistic value in **Train to Pakistan**. Forster has described at length the mysterious and extraordinary Marabar caves and paves the way for transmitting to the reader. To him the atmosphere sad and somber soon dissolves, the jollity into uncanny despair:

The hues in the east decayed  
hills seemed dimmer, and a  
profound disappointment entered,  
with the morning breeze... The  
Sun rose without splendor. He was  
presently observed training yellowish  
behind the trees or against  
insipid sky, and touching the  
bodies already at work in  
the fields.<sup>5</sup>

#### Aspects of Disillusionment:

The following are major aspects of disillusionment in **Train to Pakistan**:

- The novel deals with the issues of Independence and partition using it as a means to explore other issues.
- The novelist has presented the real picture of the adverse effects of partition and the suffering that people were made to experience after independence of India.
- Owing to the partition, there is chaotic situation everywhere. Independence was welcome but there is no exultations of rejoicing in **Train to Pakistan**.
- To the battle cry of Ali Jinnah, **Lekar Rahenge Pakistan, Larke Lenge Pakistan**, partition was successful and a fearful dacoit named Jugga sacrificed himself and became a tragic hero.
- Hindus and Muslims both offered bitter taste of partition. The freedom of India and the creation of Pakistan didn't bring any joyful event:

Thus arrived the long cherished  
moment of freedom with pangs  
of partition. In Delhi, there  
was jubilation led by Nehru  
and his cabinet while in  
Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi  
observed fast keeping himself  
aloof from all celebrations.<sup>6</sup>

The people of Mano Mara encountered ghastly scene of swelling Sutlej river. When they saw floating dead bodies of men, women and children on the flood water they felt it very awful.

**Phase of Imitation :**

**Train to Pakistan** offers four phases: **Dacoity**, **Kalyug**, **Mano Majra** and **Karma**. In **Dacoity**, the novelist has tried to reveal the central theme hinting the catastrophic situations regarding natural and social. **Kalyug** depicts the age of Kali, the mother of death and destruction. In **Mano Majra**, the novelist describes a peaceful village of Mano Majra at the border of India and Pakistan becomes the center of communal suspicion, tension violence and hatred. The last phase, **Karma** evokes the law of Karma that deals with the crescendo of action and feeling in the novel. Thus, the novel presents anger, disenchantment and disillusionment with religions, social and political values during partition. Jugga's sacrifice in the novel got religious sanction. Bhai Meet Singh read out the following verse when Jugga went in the darkness of the night to seek Guru's blessing for his sacrifice:

By thought and deed be  
judged forsooth,  
For God is True and dispenseth Truth,  
There the elect his court adorn,  
And God Himself their actions honors.  
There are sorted deeds that were done  
And bore fruit,  
From those that to action could never ripen  
This, O. Nanak, shall hereafter happen.<sup>7</sup>

The incidents of the novel lost faith in the values of peace and non-violence. Hence, Swain has remarked:

**Train to Pakistan** is a tragedy written in mock-comic tone, criticizing the celebration of freedom with mass murder and bestiality and ingeniously delineating the pity and horror of the two-nation theory.<sup>8</sup>

**Conclusion :**

**Train to Pakistan** is a leading novel in which Khushwant Singh exhibits a genuine faith in the humanistic ideal depicting a real Jugga laying down his life for Nooran, the girl, he loves. It has well-conceived structure and well regulated architectural pattern. The idea of structure includes and covers areas of the knot, the sequence of events, the narrative and episodic arrangements. It has almost conventional structure since it grows out of a chronological sequence of time. However, the structure is not purely traditional because it is suspected by an intangible current value and also an evolving form. It is not circumscribed by the areas of action and character but transcends them and enters the area of value judgments. In relation to the conventional aspects of its structure, Edwin Muir has described **Train to Pakistan** as a novel of action and character and in past as a dramatic novel. The dramatic novel, according to Edwin Muir is "limited in space and free in time, whereas a novel of character and action is limited in time and free in space".<sup>9</sup> To conclude, we can say that **Train to Pakistan** alternates between the dramatic novel and the novel of character, between growth in space and movement in time and therefore, simultaneously develops both these dimensions.

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