

The Theme of Partition in Kushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan

Dr. Vaishali Vijay Takode.

Dept. of English,

Shri Shivaji Arts & Commerce

College, Amravati.

Abstract:-

The Partition of India was the process of dividing the sub-continent along sectarian lines, which took place in 1947 as India gained its independence from British Empire. The northern part predominantly Muslim, became the nation of Pakistan and the southern predominantly Hindu became the Republic of India, the partition however devastated both India and Pakistan as the process claimed many lives in riots, rapes, murders and looting. The two countries began their independence with ruined economies and lands without an established, experienced system of government, not only this, but also about 15 million people were displaced from their homes. The Partition of India was an important event not only in the history of the Indian subcontinent but in world history. Its chief reason was the communal thinking of both Hindus and Muslims; but the circumstances under which it occurred made it one of the saddest events of the history of India. No doubt, the Hindus and the Muslims were living together since long but they failed to inculcate the feelings of harmony and unity among themselves. The fanatic leaders of both communities played a prominent role in stoking the fire of communalism. The partition was exceptionally brutal and large in scale and unleashed misery and loss of lives and property as millions of refugees fled either Pakistan or India.

Keywords: - theme, partition, train, Pakistan

Introduction:-

Train to Pakistan published in 1956, is Khushwant Singh's third and most famous work. The novel draws upon Singh's own experiences during and after the Partition of India in 1947, and details the chaos and violence in the forming of Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The partition resulted in the displacement of approximately 15 million people, and saw violent acts perpetrated by Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims alike. Rather than take a macro lens perspective of the conflict, Singh analyzes it with a micro lens, from the view of a small village that is eventually torn apart by the partition. The novel is set in Mano Majra, a fictional village located in India but on the border of Pakistan, where the population is mostly Sikh and Muslim. At the beginning of the novel most of the village's inhabitants are unaware of the religious and nationalistic violence happening in India and Pakistan, and live in peace across religious lines. This quickly changes when a train from Pakistan full of murdered Sikhs arrives in Mano Majra.

In addition to providing a deeply human and poignant portrayal of a key moment in the histories of modern-day India and Pakistan, Train to Pakistan is a critical piece of the literary canon. The novel was written in the aftermath of World War II when countries such as England, Germany, and France were losing power gained via imperialism and colonialism. During this period, postcolonial literature that used the language of the colonizer to critique and denounce colonization was prevalent.

Other works roughly contemporaneous with *Train to Pakistan* include *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *Black Skin, White Masks* by Franz Fanon, and *Waiting for the Mahatma* by R.K. Narayan. Train

to Pakistan's historical fiction content and deeply personal approach make it similar to other works of postcolonial literature. However, Singh's satirical humour in the face of violence and tragedy helps to set his work apart from other novels in the postcolonial canon.

Khushwant Singh's novel, *Train to Pakistan*, brings forth a picture of bestial horrors enacted on the Indo Pakistan border during the partition days of August 1947. It tells the tragic tale of the partition of India and Pakistan and the events that followed, which will be remembered as one of the blackest chapters of human history. Just on the eve of independence, India was partitioned causing a great upheaval in the whole continent. Independence brought in its wake one of the bloodiest carnages in the history of India, the upshot of this, was that twelve million had to flee their home nearly half a million were killed. The harrowing and spine chilling events of 1947 had shaken the faith of the people in the innate goodness of human beings. It had driven them into a state of wonder over what man has made of man. To Khushwant Singh, this was a period of great disillusionment and crisis of values, a distressing and disintegrating period of his life. The beliefs, he had cherished all his life were shattered. Giving vent to his inner struggle and agony, he says: 'the beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man but the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country. He says, I had believed that we Indians were peace loving and nonviolent that we were concerned with matters of the spirit while rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of autumn 1947, I become an angry middle aged man, who wanted to show his disenchantment with the world..... I decided to try my hand at writing. The sinister and venomous impact of partition and the indignation it spawned on him has been realistically expressed in scathing attack in *Train to Pakistan*'. Originally entitled *Mano Majra*, the novel portrays with bold and unrelenting realism the brutal story of political hatred and violence during the turbulent and fateful days that preceded and followed the partition of British India when spirit of communal frenzy and passionate zeal for self – expression was fanning and fumbling with the masses. Every citizen was caught up in the holocaust. No one could remain aloof; no one could be trusted to be impartial. It is true that partition touched the whole country and Singh's attempt in the novel is to see events from the point of view of the people of *Mano Majra*, a small village which is considered to be the backdrop of this novel. As P.C.Car writes, Singh weaves a narrative around life in this village, making the village a microcosm representing a larger world". [International Journal of English Language and Linguistic Research Vol. 1, No.1, pp 21-23, June 2013 Published by European Centre for Research, Training and Development UK (www.ea-journals.org) 23] Khushwant Singh recreates a tiny village in the Punjabi countryside and its people in that fateful summer, when the flood of refugees and the inter-communal bloodletting from Bengal to the North West Frontier at last touches them. Many ordinary men and women are bewildered, victimized and torn apart. The most heart – rending passage in the book is when the government makes the decision to transport all the Muslim families from *Mano Majra* to Pakistan. The dumbstruck villagers are overtaken by the events. The Muslims leave with the barest minimum of their meagre belongings within ten minutes and the Non-Muslim neighbours do not get a chance to say goodbye. The entire scene is painful at many levels; particularly the poverty in which these people lived, the uncertainty, they were thrown into and the eclipse of people's humanity. *Train to Pakistan* is Khushwant Singh's Supreme achievement. It is one of the finest realistic novels of Post-world war II Indo Anglian fiction. It has a well thought out structure, a well- conceived plot, an absorbing narrative and beautifully portrayed characters. It has many notable features – symbolic framework, meaningful atmosphere and a powerful way of expression and style. Khushwant Singh has accurately depicted the real picture of the adverse effects of partition and the suffering that people were made to experience. Khushwant Singh upheld his unique mirror to reflect upon the physical torture and psychological outburst that became the order of the day, when the division of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan. He paints a vivid picture of the separation between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the summer of 1947. The novel in short, portrays the issues of Independence and partition using it as a means to explore other issues which then emerge as the larger picture of the devastation and bloody birth of nations.

Conclusion: -

“The wounds will take decades to heal, centuries to overcome the trauma”. [Gulzar]. Literature gets affected by the historical events and the writer cannot ignore the reality. History can be called the upholder of past events. History establishes an illuminating bridge between reality and imagination”. India, which was once known as the Golden Bird got partitioned in 1947. India is the land of Gods, Saints and Seers where people from different religions live together with love and affection but the incident of partition has changed all these values. The partition of the sub-continent in 1947 was not merely the division of land but also the division of feelings, love and unity of innocent citizens that got butchered. Kushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan portrays the horrible experience of the partition as millions of people had to leave their ancestral homelands. Truth meets fiction with incredible effect as Singh’s Train to Pakistan recounts stories that he, his family and companions have themselves experienced. In this book, Kushwant Singh describes the realistic tale of Partition of India and Pakistan. The purpose behind Singh’s writing this book was to highlight the holocaust which happened during the partition on India Pakistan border which affects the psyche of people till today. The Partition of 1947 has compelled the Hindus to leave Pakistan and Muslims to leave India. After reading Singh’s Train to Pakistan, one can himself create a moving picture before the eyes, what had happened during the time of Partition.

Sources:-

1.] Singh, Khuswant. Train to Pakistan New Delhi penguin, 2007 Print.

2.] THE THEME OF PARTITION IN KHUSWANT SINGH'S NOVEL ...
<https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads>

3.] THE THEME OF PARTITION IN KHUSWANT SINGH'S NOVEL TRAIN TO. PAKISTAN

4.]the impact of partition: khushwantsingh's train to pakistan

<https://www.academia.edu> > THE_IMPACT_OF_PART...

IJCIRAS, RE-MEMORIZING BRUTAL PARTITION IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN 2019 •

IJCIRAS Research Publication

5.] Train to Pakistan Study Guide | GradeSaver

<https://www.gradesaver.com> > train-to-pakistan