



The Theme of Love and Sacrifice in Kushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan.

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Abstract:-

In, Train to Pakistan also titled "Mano-Majra", Khushwant Singh gives us a detailed picture of the love and affection of Sikhs and Muslims who lived together in peace for hundreds of years. The partition of India and Pakistan is an example of one of the most unfortunate and bloody religious clashes in India. The people, who loved one another, started hating one another. Train is the most important symbol in the novel. With the changing description of train the tone of the novel also changes. After the news of the partition of India and Pakistan the killings started in Mano Majra, the question arises who is responsible for these killings Hindus said that the Muslims had planned and started the killings followed by rape. But Muslims said that Hindus were to blame. The fact was that both sides killed, both shot and stabbed, speared, clubbed, tortured and raped. But in all this hatred there was a character who lived for humanity and who sacrificed his life only to save the lives of others and his name was Jugga. (Juggut Singh)

Unlike other partition Novels, the major focus of the novel is not the killings. It is the feelings of love and compassion that we see and read on the pages of Train to Pakistan.

Key words:-

Partition, Killings, Hindus, Muslims, Love, Hatred.

Introduction:-

In the summer of 1947 ten million people crossed the border what was known as "the partition". Due to religious and ethnic hatred, two million people were killed. Mano Majra is the place of action of the novel. It is a tiny village situated on the Indian border, half a mile away from the river Sutlej where trains' arrivals and departures were a part of the daily life cycle of the villagers. The Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus lived in perfect harmony in this village and there was a time when no one in this village knew that the British had left the country and the country was divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. Life for the villagers of Mano Majra begins to change suddenly when the first ghost train [train full of corpses] arrives. Partition began to takes its toll in this tiny village also. The partition touched the whole country and Singh attempts to look at the tragic and

terrible events from the point of view of the people of Mano Majra.. He doesn't blame any particular community for the riots, rather he says that both the sides are equally responsible.

The routine life of the villagers was disturbed in August 1947. The village money lender, Ram Lal's house was raided by dreaded dacoits. His murder creates tension and the arrival of the ghost train from Pakistan spoils everything and triggers off the killings. Khuswant Singh has used the character of Juggut Singh to highlight the importance of love in saving humanity and compassion. His relationship with Nooran, who is the Muslim girl, hints at the futility of the differences and enmity on the religious basis. His love for Nooran makes him go against his community who were trying to kill hundreds of innocent people. Train to Pakistan also tells us about the sacrifice of one man to save a few hundred lives while insanity prevails everywhere. It is the story of one man struggling with his thoughts and debating with himself whether it is correct to stand in front of 50 men waiting to kill hundreds of their own species, or to stop because what they are going to do is immoral.

A close reading of the novel gives us a faint understanding that Iqbal is associated with the Communist Party of India. He may be a person living in the world of utopia; he may have no connection with the ground reality; he may be an unpragmatic person. But he is one of those sensible ones who loathe the killing of people. He is a champion of class struggle in India although the possibility of intensifying the class struggle may be an absurd proposition in Indian context at that particular point of time. He has sympathy for the underdog and the downtrodden. He is in favour of a Government that will protect the interest of the poor. He tells Meet Singh:

Morality, Meet Singh, is a matter of money. Poor people cannot afford to have morals. So they have religion. Our first problem is to get people more food, clothing, comfort. That can only be done by stopping exploitation by the rich, and abolishing landlords. And that can be done by changing the government. (*Train to Pakistan*, P.37)

Iqbal is against the exploitation of the poor by the rich. The sincerity of his conviction is unquestionable. One may agree or disagree with what Iqbal professes. He is against the partition of India. He believes that no good will come out of this partition, violence and the transfer of population for the people of India and Pakistan. He is the man who requests repeatedly to Meet Singh, the priest in the Guruddwara at Mano Majra, to stop the violence and killings. He comes to know that near the bridge at Mano Majra, the Sikhs and the Hindus are planning to attack the train that will carry Muslims of Chundunnugger and Mano Majra to Pakistan. This plan of mass-destruction will take place under the aegis of the militant boy leader. Iqbal passionately requests Meet Singh:

“You cannot let this sort of things happen! Can't you tell them that the people on the train are the very same people they were addressing as uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters?” (*Train to Pakistan*, (Pp.159-60)

Iqbal underlines Indian values of life. His vision of life registers the ultimate triumph of man's human values over the menacing lunacy overtaking the country during time of the Indian partition in 1947.

Juggut Singh, a social marginal at Mano Majra, who lives at the outskirts of the village, is a diehard daredevil. He is involved in several 'train robberies, car hold-ups, dacoities and murders'. He has an affair with Nooran, the daughter of Imam Baksh, who is the priest of the mosque at Mano Majra. At first, Juggut Singh is unaware of the event that a gang of dacoits from another village under the leadership of Malli has attacked the house of Lala Ram Lal, a moneylender at Mano Majra. The robbers kill Lala Ram Lal and loot his cash and jewelry. It is then mid-night and at that time of dacoity, Juggut Singh makes love to Nooran at a nearby cultivating land. The police naturally suspect Juggut Singh and put him behind bars. When the communal tension reaches the point of outburst at Mano Majra, i.e., when the Sikh and Hindu fundamentalist forces plan to attack the train near the bridge carrying the Muslim migrants to Pakistan, the local police Inspector on the instruction of Hukum Chand, the District Commissioner, releases Juggut Singh from the police custody.

Juggut Singh after his release comes to know the blueprint of the train attack by the boy leader. He also comes to know that Muslims along with Imam Baksh and his daughter Nooran will be travelling to Pakistan by that train. The social marginal, Juggut Singh, rises to the occasion and decides that he should save those Muslims travelling by that train. Sisir Das comments: 'The revenge plan of the Hindus to blow up the train is aborted by the notorious gangster Jugga, whose beloved Nooran, daughter of a Muslim weaver, also was aboard the train. Love triumphs over hatred: it is the love of an individual for another individual that saves the train. 'The train went over him, and went to Pakistan.'¹

Khuswant Singh introduces the love story between Juggut Singh and Nooran in *Train to Pakistan* to show that the religious difference between Juggut Singh, a Hindu and Nooran, a Muslim does not stop Juggut even from the sacrifice of his own life to save the life of Nooran. The authorial narration of the suffocating situation when the train is to approach the Railway Bridge at Mano Majra and to meet the gruesome and dastardly attack of the boy leader and his associates makes readers breathless for a moment.

The train runs fast to the Railway Bridge, the approach of which is ready with this horrendous death trap to greet the train travelers. Suddenly a man is found 'climbing on the steel span'. The boy leader and his accomplices waiting for the train to come notice the man when he has almost climbed the top where the killer rope is tied with the two ends. Confusion among them is there at the beginning. They first think that the man is on the top to test and tighten the knot. The train with a huge number of human beings sitting on its roof is coming closer and closer. The man then whips out a sword from his waist and starts hacking at the rope. The boy leader then fires at the man. Khushwant Singh concludes the novel thus:

The engine was only a few yards off, throwing embers high up in the sky with each blast of the whistle. Somebody fired another shot. The man's body slid off the rope, but he clung to it with his hands and chin. ... The rope had been cut in shreds.... The engine was almost on him. There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan. (*Train to Pakistan*, P.172)

Khuswant Singh divided the novel into four parts. In the fourth part Jugga sacrifices his life for other Muslim brothers. It is this moment that makes this novel different from other partition novels. When Nooran comes to know that her parents have decided to go to Pakistan she gets bewildered as she is in love with Jugga and wants to live with him forever but she couldn't do anything in these prevailing conditions. Nooran goes to his mother and tells her that she is pregnant with his child and doesn't want to leave him but all in vain.

Towards the end of the novel, people makes a plan to ambush the train taking the Muslims including those of Mano Majra to Pakistan. The people of Mano Majra especially Sikh who were ready to sacrifice their life for Muslims a day before now are ready to take the lives of others in view of the prevailing condition. Khuswant Singh was himself very surprised that how a man can change in a day. Is it the effect of the situation but when Juggut Singh comes to know about this planned massacre on the train, he performs the act of supreme self sacrifice to save the lives of the people. Though there were others who also knew about the plot and wanted to do fail their plan but they were unable to prevent the plot against the fleeing Muslims. Juggut Singh, on the other hand does not care for his own safety and foils the plot to ambush the train, letting it roll over his body to Pakistan.

Conclusion:-

Juggut Singh in spite of knowing the possible consequences of his decision, does not change his mind. The love becomes dominant and he forgets other things. His self-sacrifice is motivated by his love for Nooran. When he came to know from his mother that Nooran visited her before leaving for the refugee camp and she carries his (Jugga's) child in her womb, he cannot bear the separation from his beloved. On the day when the train was attacked by the planners Juggut Singh appears on the bridge and cuts the rope, Stretched to sweep off the people

sitting on the roof when the train passes through the bridge. The leader of the gang fires shot at Jugga and he falls down.

“There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell the train went over him and went to Pakistan.” Juggut Singh follows the granth and tries his best to save the lives of other people and does not care about caste, religion and colour. Violence cannot be conquered by violence and it is only love that can pacify the hatred in human beings. Love has the power to transform a criminal like Juggat Singh into a courageous is human being.

Readers heave a sigh of relief. The human disaster is thus averted. And the man is Juggut Singh, the so-called social marginal. He sacrifices his own life to save thousands and thousands of those Muslims migrating to Pakistan from Chundunnugger and its surrounding areas during the Indian partition in 1947. Shikoh Mohsin Mirza comments on the role Juggut Singh plays towards the end of the novel thus: ‘*Train to Pakistan*, like the best of Partition literature, explores humanity under duress, as well as the moral probity and courage of the individual. The book encourages introspection and is very relevant even today. It does not end on a pessimistic or a bleak note...Juggut Singh succeeds in his mission, and the train crosses over safely into Pakistan, thus negating the passionate arguments of the frenzied youth. The novel explores and lays bare the mysterious wellsprings of courage, endurance and affection, from which human beings draw inspiration at moments of distress to rebuild their lives and to sustain faith in themselves.’ Juggut Singh’s sacrifice of his own life for saving human beings is a ray of hope amidst the menacing madness of the dark days during the partition.

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