

## **Communalism, Violence and Hatred in *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh and which eventually results in to Partition of Indian sub-continent.**

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### **Abstract**

In this vast universe, there are millions of people living in different corners of the world having same physical features but having different religions, belief and faith. When the political leaders, religious preachers and great intellectuals are advocating brotherhood, peace and communal harmony, still the entire world is in the grip of one problem or the other as people fight against one another in the name of religion, caste, creed and colour and same happened in Indian sub-continent in 1947. When the Indian sub-continent was under colonial rule of British, majority of people living here was Hindus and Muslims and there was no communal harmony and it ultimately gave birth to violence and hatred and massacre of both Hindus and Muslims. The purpose of the study is to describe the conflict of cultures and clash of violence between two races, Muslims and Hindus, caused by an acute sense of fundamentalism. The author tries to recapture the period when Sikh Muslim antagonism reached its climax with the division of the Punjab and captured the trauma of partition and haunting events.

**Key Words:** Communal Violence, Sub-continent, Partition, Massacre.

The partition of Indian sub-continent was an important event not only in the history of Indian sub-continent 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. For times immemorial in india, the Hindus and the Muslims were living together but they failed to inculcate the feelings of brotherhood, harmony and unity among themselves. The fanatic political leaders and extremist religious preachers of hindus and

muslims played a key role in sowing the seeds of communalism and hatred. The partition was extremely brutal and there was destruction of property and desecration of religious places, besides loss of lives and millions of refugees fled either Pakistan or India.

Train to Pakistan is the first novel written on partition by an indian writer, it was originally titled as 'Mano Majra' but later on Khushwant Singh changed the title as '*Train to Pakistan*'. In fact the partition touched the whole country and Khushwant Singh attempts to look at the tragic and terrible events from the point of view of the people of Mano Majra, a small village in Punjab, India. In the opening pages of the novel, the novelist has described the communal violence in entire india, and both hindus and muslims blame each other. But the fact is that both are killed, in addition there was rape and torture, and the writer depicts gloomy picture of indian subcontinent. In punjab muslims roam with boxes full of human skull, believed to be killed in Bihar and people simply believed these rumours, adding more tension and riots in the already disturbed area. These incidents gives a gloomy picture and there are no hopes of any peace and brotherhood, as a mere rumour will add fuel to the fire.

In the back drop of these incidents, the writer narrates the story of a small village named as Mano Majra, living close to the border. When the entire country is in the grip of communal riots, but people living here in peace and there are no communal riots. The majority of the people are sikhs and muslims and there was only one hindu family, whose name was Lala Ram Lal, a famous money lender. The sikhs own all the land and muslims are tenants and share the tilling with the owners, besides there were some few families of sweepers whose religion was uncertain, and American missionaries want to convert them to christainity, but who are fickle minded as some times they visit sikh temple, some times they wear khaki sola topees and join American women folk in singing hymns. But only object that is venerated by all people of Mano Majra is a three-foot slab of sandstone that stands upright under a kekar tree beside the pond. It is the local deity and Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims seek blessing whenever they are in need. The novelist focuses on the communal harmony, brotherhood, peace and love among all people irrespective of their religious beliefs. They help each other in times of need and lend money to each other as one can notice there was least impact of what is happening in other parts of india.

The village is close to railway station and a small colony of shopkeepers and hawkers grew up around it to supply travelers with food, betel leaves, cigarettes, tea, biscuits and sweetmeats. When Hukum Chand, the magistrate and deputy commissioner asked the Inspector about the situation in Mano Majra, he says peace and harmony about the village in these words:

Well, inspector Sahab, how are the things? The Inspector joined the hands. 'God is merciful. We only pray for your kindness.' 'No communal trouble in this area?' 'We have escaped it so far, sir. Convoys of Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan have come through and some Muslims have gone out, but we have had no incidents.' (Singh 20)

The whole peaceful environment was changed abruptly when the rich moneylender namely Lala Ram's house was ransomed and when he refused to handover them key of safe, he was brutally killed. This was the first incident of violence in the village and in the entire village the atmosphere changed completely and people looked each other suspiciously. The mood of the entire village was changed completely when a train arrived from Pakistan carrying dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs, killed in Muslim majority areas of Pakistan. Every body in the village believes that evil times are ahead and the rhythm of the village was completely changed. There was a commotion in Mano Majra and people stood on their roofs to see what is happening at the station and the incident of mass cremation completely changes the peace and harmony of the village as writer says about mass cremation.

Red tongues of flame leaped into the black sky. A soft breeze began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning kerosene, then of wood. And then—a faint acrid smell of searing flesh. The village was stilled in a deathly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan. That evening, for the first time in the memory of Mano Majra, Imam Baksh's sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of God (Singh 89).

There were haunting images of hindus and sikhs, killed in pakistan as every one was bewildered and frightened. ‘Fifteen hundred innocent people! What else is Kalyug? There is darkness over the land. There is only one spot on the frontier. I suppose similar things are happening at other places. And now I believe our people are doing the same’(p-102). Hukum Chand, the magistrate does not sleep all night, as images of dead bodies comes to his mind. He has apprehensions now that similar things will happen in our side and there will be complete anarchy, and very difficult to maintain law and order. People have started migrating to safer places and refugee camps. Muslims living in this side have started migrating towards pakistan, the sub-inspector briefs the magistrate about the current scenario of an area, when the latter asks him

What about the Muslims in these villages? ‘That is what I came to report, sir. Muslims of some villages have started leaving for the refugee camps. Chundunnugger has been partly evacuated. Pakistan army lorries with Baluchi and Pathan soldiers have been picking them up whenever information has been brought. But the Mano Majra Muslims are still there and this morning the lambardar reported the arrival of forty or fifty Sikh refugees who had crossed the river by the ford at dawn. They are putting up at the temple’(Singh 102).

Mano Majra, which was unshaken by communal violence, after the train incident people are living in fear and there was a complete silence in the entire village. People came to know the truth about massacre of sikhs in Pakistan and muslims in Mano Majra feel insecure. All communal harmony and brotherhood lost its significance, and the long cherished bond of fraternal feelings between the sikhs and the muslims of the village has been shattered by the unfortunate developments. ‘A heavy brooding silence descended on the village. People barricaded their doors and many stayed up all night talking in whispers. Everyone felt his neighbours hand against him, and thought of finding friends and allies’(p-124).

The refugees who came from Pakistan as a result of partition bring with them tragic stories such murders, persecution of hindus and sikhs, and rapes of hindu women. There is tension in the

village and it no longer remains unaffected. When tension rose, the head constable divided the village into two halves and there were rumours that sikhs have committed atrocities on Muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala. Some miscreants were spreading the news that muslim women were raped openly in the market place and mosques were desecrated by the slaughter of pigs and copies of Holy Quran torn up by the infidels. First time sikhs in Mano Majra became stranger, barbarous and anti-muslim. Sikhs now utter a word Pakistan, a place where there are no sikhs and now they are angry and believes that muslims are cruel and communal. Mano Majra which was isolated and unaffected, communal violence reaches its peak as writer says:

The sikhs were sullen and angry. 'Never trust a Mussulman,' they said. The last Guru had warned them that Muslims had no loyalties. He was right. All through the Muslim period of indian history, sons had imprisoned or killed their own fathers and brothers had blinded brothers to get the throne. And what had they done to the Sikh's? Executed two of their Guru's, assassinated another and butchered his infant children; hundreds of thousands had been put to the sword for no other offence than refusing to accept islam; their temples had been desecrated by the slaughter of kine; the holy Granth had been torn to bits. And Muslims were never ones to respect women (Singh 128).

Sikh refugees who came from Pakistan told horrible stories, and everyone was astonished and feels pity on Sikh refugees. There were rumour mongers spreading fake news and nobody questions them source of information. And lastly the village was echoed with the cries 'All Muslims going to Pakistan come out at once. Come! All Muslims. Out at once'(p-140). The news spread like a fire and Muslims began to come out of their homes driving their cattle and their bullock carts loaded with utensils, clothes, charpais and other things. People were asked to carry only their clothes, jewellery, cash and other small things as there is no space for bufallows and bullock carts. When muslims left the village it was a terrible scene to witness and Sikhs too watched them till they were out of sight. They wiped the tears off their faces and turned back to

their homes with heavy hearts. The writer has described the condition of village and its people on the eve of departure of muslims from there in these words:

Not many people slept in Mano Majra that night, they went from house to house-talking, crying, and swearing love and friendship, assuring each other that this would soon be over. Life, they said would be as it always had been(140).

In Mano Majra Balli, who had earlier killed the famous money lender Lala Ram, was appointed the custodian of the evacuated muslim's property and as a custodian what he and his gang did to the property can't be described in words. People sat in their homes and stared despondently through their open doors watching Malli's men and the refugees ransack Muslim houses. Thousands were killed on both sides of the border and lakhs of people migrated from both sides and thousands were killed on their way. Partition of indian-subcontinent was blot on humanity and every intellectuals, writers mourn for this. Khushwant Singh was the first indian writer, who felt the pain of partition and wrote this novel which gives us detailed information about partition. The effects of partition are still visible and writer gives special message that we must abjure violence, hatred and have religious tolerance, otherwise we have to face other horrible things.

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