



# SECTARIAN VIOLENCE IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S "TRAIN TO PAKISTAN" : A CRITICAL APPROACH

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- **INTRODUCTION :-** Khushwant Singh is a partition novelist. His "Train to Pakistan" is a partition novel in Indian English Writing. Its central theme is partition tragedy in general and sectarian violence in particular. The partition of India is nothing but creation of the new dominion of Pakistan and union of India on 14 August, 1947 and 15 August, 1947 respectively. It caused a terrible human tragedy through previous communal riots and transfer of human masses on the name of Hindus and Muslims. The communal riots and transfer of masses brutally brought horror. More than 15 lakh individuals victimized. Partition horror includes the disemboweling of pregnant woman, the slamming of babies' heads against brick walls, the cutting of the victims limbs and the display of head and corpses.

Migration of the common masses was in full motion by any travelling sources. The trains became important sources of transfer of masses from boundaries in the sectarian tragedy of the days. The present novel "Train to Pakistan" describes tragedy of it. As Vijay Singh observes-

*"The narratives of partition are full of glory accounts of train loads of dead passengers arriving on platform. The images of train carrying dead passengers have since become a symbol for endangered humanity. Infact sending trains loads of dead passengers across the borders become a mad competition on both sides of the divide community to kill ever greater number of people to be sent across the other community."*

Here the partition theme in partition novels is cleared by Vijay Singh in very meaningful words. This novel refers this human tragedy which caused on the name of communal enemyship of Hindus and Muslims. The opening of the novel describes the burning flame of communal riots as –

*'The summer before, communal riots, precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, had broken out in cut, and within a few months the death roll had mounted to several thousands. Muslims said the Hindus hand planned started the killings. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is both sides were killed. Both shot and stabbed and spread can clubbed. Both tortured from Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, Punjab and the frontier province with boxes of human skulls said to be those Muslims killed in Bihar hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the northwest frontier abandoned their homes and fled towards the protection the predominately Sikh and Hindu communities in the east. They travelled on foot, in bullock carts, crammed into Lorries clinging to the sides and roofs of trains.'*

Khushwant Singh describes a real picture of sectarian violence. The whole society was divided as Hindu and Muslim. They became busy in the game of flesh and blood as enemy of each other. Balaswamy writes –

*'As the events portrayed in that novel had been witnessed in flesh and blood just nine years ago, the work created a sense of solid reality and a feeling of danger, desperation and violence of unpredicted scale.'*

Khushwant Singh was eyewitness of this violence. He and his family went under experience. N. S. Gundur rightly comments –

*'Khushwant Singh, who underwent the ordeal, his had the first hand experience of agony of partition.'*

## • TWO GHOST TRAINS :

The present novel gives detailed picture of the dance of death on the eve of partition. As per the text of the novel, on one morning train stops at mano Majra railway station. It is from Lahore means from Pakistan. They were of Hindus and Sikhs as passengers in it. The train was attacked by muslim mob and killed all Hindu and Sikh passengers. Then sent train to India as gift of dead bodies. It is nothing but the result of Hindu

Muslim sectarian hatred. Immediately within a gap of very few days, the same type of train arrived from Lahore to Mano Majra station with the load of the dead bodies of Hindu and Sikh passengers. At the third time railway had to go from Indian Chandan Nagar station to Lahore, to carry Muslim passengers. This time Hindu and Sikh militant youths made very perfect plan to attack the train before crossing Indian border and send dead bodies of the Muslim passengers as gift to Pakistan. In those days, the train became the symbol of violence.

As Vijaya Singh remarks –

*‘The train in partition accounts its use at multiple levels; as a narrator as the site for killings, as a means of escape and at the metaphorical level a symbol of dislocation.’*

- **SUTLEJ TRAGEDY –**

It is also very sorrowful example of killings of Hindus and Sikhs by Muslims. The magistrate Mr Hukum Chand recollects the tragic memories of newly married young girl Sundari. The innocent Muslim tenants are driven from Mano Majra and made them homeless and now here by the sectarian madness of Hindus.

P. Balaswamy comments –

*‘Even as the novels major the measure the mindless communal violence the impact of partition on innocent lives and the deep chasm that was same place on religious lines.’*

The communal riots not only kill the lives but also kill the human relations. The present novel is an example of pity and horror of sectarian violence.

Dr Chhote Lal Khatri comments-

*‘As a piece of fiction Train to Pakistan is cleverly contrived and articulate of the pity and horror involved in the partition tragedy.’*

Generally it is said that the human tragedy because of sectarian hatred is a political error. It is right also. But there is a personal communal hatred.

In short it can be concluded that the great bloody human tragedy took place only because of sectarian hatred on the eve of partition. A deep reading of “Train to Pakistan” makes us to realize that the poison of sectarian violence burns the human lives and relations. So it would be better to suggest to modern reader to realize the horror and give up the path of bloody game and walk on the path of love and peace to achieve human welfare on the earth.

## REFERENCES

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