



# Reality in Fiction: Analyzing the Realistic Portrayal of Train To Pakistan by Khushwant Singh

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**Abstract :** This research paper is to analyze the realistic portrayal of “Train to Pakistan”, a novel by Khushwant Singh, set during the 1947 partition of India. It is a powerful commentary on the human condition and the consequences of political upheavals. The novel follows two central characters, Juggut Singh and Iqbal Singh, who become unlikely friends entangled in the chaos and bloodshed that engulfs their village. The novel also delves into wider political issues during the partition, such as the British colonial rulers, who are in a hurry to divide India and leave, and the Indian politicians and leaders, who are corrupt and selfish. The novel is known for its raw and intense portrayal of the partition, making it a significant contribution to Indian literature. It has been debated if the events depicted in the novel are historically accurate, but it still remains a powerful novel that sheds light on one of the darkest periods of Indian history. The novel highlights the devastating impact of violence and division on a community, and the idea of sacrifice and the willingness of individuals to give up their own safety for the well-being of others.

**IndexTerms** -Massacre,Bloodshed,Realism, Life-like ,Pakistan.

## INTRODUCTION

“Train to Pakistan”, a novel by Khushwant Singh, presents a real life depiction of the Partition of India in 1947. The riots and clashes that marked his country left an indelible impact on him since it was during this time that he wrote Train to Pakistan in 1956. The book is set in Mano Majra, a fictional village close to the border of India and Pakistan. Muslims and Sikhs had been living together peacefully but all that changes when they learn about the partition. As they witness each other’s brutality, the villagers must confront their own prejudices and loyalties.

The main story of the novel follows two central characters named Juggut Singh and Iqbal Singh. Juggut is a Sikh but from one of the lowest castes known for its brute strength while Iqbal is an educated young idealistic Muslim. They become unlikely friends entangled in the chaos and bloodshed that engulfs their village. As violence escalates, Juggut and Iqbal have to weave through conflicting loyalties among their respective communities to make hard choices that will steer their common destiny.

The novel also delves into wider political issues during the partition .The British colonial rulers, who are in a hurry to divide India and leave, are portrayed as indifferent and detached, while the Indian politicians and leaders are portrayed as corrupt and selfish. As the characters struggle to come to terms with the reality of the Partition, the readers are given a glimpse into the larger themes of identity, nationalism, and the consequences of blind loyalty to one’s community or religion.

## REALISM IN LITERATURE.

The 19th century saw the emergence and growth of realism in literature. Realism was against glorifying or beautifying of life in the past. It was meant to embody truthfulness and authenticity regarding daily existence, society and human conduct. The novel as a form of literary writing gained much from this movement. Novels which are lengthy fictional prose narratives offer deep understanding into human experiences and emotions through their complex stories, well-defined characters, and theme that could be easily identified by many readers. Realism in Indian English literature extends beyond the portrayal of society and its people. It also delves into universal themes such as love, loss, and identity, making it relatable to readers from all backgrounds. Novels like 'The Inheritance of Loss' by Kiran Desai and 'The White Tiger' by Aravind Adiga explore these themes through the eyes of their Indian protagonists, giving readers a poignant and realistic perspective. Through their writing, authors have given readers a glimpse into the complexities and realities of life in India, making it a powerful and influential literary movement. These novels continue to be relevant and provide insight into the human experience, making them timeless and significant works of literature.

## REALISM IN “TRAIN TO PAKISTAN”

Realism is a literary technique that aims to portray events, places, and characters in a realistic and believable manner .One of the greatest examples of realism in literature is the novel “Train to Pakistan” by Khushwant Singh. The novel that is set during the 1947 partition of India, portrays the brutal and chaotic aftermath of the divide between India and Pakistan. The author’s keen attention to detail and accurate depiction of historical events make the novel a powerful commentary on the human condition and the consequences of political upheavals.

The most striking examples of realism in “Train to Pakistan” is the character of Juggut Singh, a simple villager who is falsely accused of murder. The reader is immediately drawn to his struggles and can empathise with his plight as he is a victim of the communal tensions and violence that engulfed the nation during the partition. Through Juggut’s character, Singh highlights the devastating effects of blind hatred and the loss of innocence in times of war.

Moreover, the author's descriptions of the train journey in which the villagers are forced to leave their homes and migrate to their respective countries showcase the harsh realities of the partition. The overcrowded, filthy, and inhumane conditions on the train depict the unimaginable suffering endured by the people during that time. The author's use of stark imagery and his unwavering focus on the everyday struggles of the common people add a sense of authenticity to the novel.

In addition, the author's use of real-life events, such as the massacre at the train station in Mano Majra, further enhances the realism of the novel. Through his depiction of this tragic event, Singh exposes the brutal nature of human beings and the extent to which they are willing to go in the name of religion and politics. The bloodstained details and the devastating aftereffect of the massacre leave a lasting impact on the reader, making them question the very fabric of humanity.

## HISTORICAL ACCURACY

The novel is known for its raw and intense portrayal of the partition, making it a significant contribution to Indian literature. However, it has often been debated if the events depicted in the novel are historically accurate. The answer to this question is not a straightforward one, as there are arguments to support both sides.

On one hand, the novel presents a realistic and vivid picture of the atrocities committed during the partition. The gruesome violence, the sense of fear and uncertainty that looms over the characters, and the struggle for survival are all too familiar aspects of the partition. This is because the author was born in a village near Lahore and had firsthand experience of the events that unfolded during the partition. Singh's proximity to the events adds a layer of authenticity to the novel, making it an accurate portrayal of the horrors of that time.

On the other hand, some critics argue that the novel is not entirely historically accurate. They point out that the novel focuses solely on one village, omitting the wider context of the partition. For instance, the novel does not mention the role of the British government and their policies that ultimately led to the partition. Moreover, some characters and their actions are seen as exaggerated and stereotyped, which could potentially distort the portrayal of the events.

While there may be some disparities in the historical accuracy of "Train to Pakistan", it still remains a brilliant and powerful novel that sheds light on one of the darkest periods of Indian history. Whether or not the events and characters are entirely factual may be debatable, but the emotions, struggles, and consequences depicted in the novel are undeniably real and offer valuable insights into the human experience during times of conflict.

## CHARACTERS

The novel introduces us to a plethora of characters, each with their own unique personalities, backgrounds, and struggles. The main character, Juggut Singh, is a typical village youth who spends his days in carefree pursuits and his nights in the arms of his lover, Nooran. However, as the chaos of the partition engulfs the village, Juggut is forced to confront his own identity and make choices that will have lasting consequences. He is torn between his loyalty towards his village and his love for Nooran, who belongs to the enemy community. Juggut's character evolves throughout the novel as he experiences the horrors of the partition and is forced to grow up and take on responsibilities beyond his years. Another significant character is Hukum Chand, the magistrate of the village who tries to maintain peace and order amid the escalating tensions between Hindus and Muslims. He is a complex character who is torn between his duty as a magistrate and his own personal biases and beliefs. As the novel progresses, we see Hukum Chand's character being tested as he is faced with difficult decisions and has to navigate the murky waters of politics and religion. Then there is Iqbal, a young lawyer who becomes a victim of circumstance and is falsely accused of a crime he did not commit. Iqbal represents the innocent victims of the partition who were caught in the crossfire and suffered at the hands of violence and hatred. His character is a symbol of hope amidst the chaos and destruction that surrounds the village. Other intriguing characters include Imam Baksh, the leader of the Muslim community, who is torn between his duty towards his community and his own fear of the impending violence and death; and Haseena, a young widow who seeks revenge for the atrocities committed against her family. Each of these characters adds depth and complexity to the novel, and their stories intertwine to give us a poignant and vivid picture of life during the partition. Through the analysis of these characters, we not only get a glimpse into the individual struggles and dilemmas faced by people during the partition, but also a broader understanding of the impact of communal violence and the consequences it can have on both a personal and societal level. Khushwant Singh's masterful portrayal of these characters leaves a lasting impression on the readers and highlights the harsh realities of the partition that are often overlooked in history books.

## THEMES AND SYMBOLS

One of the main themes depicted in Khushwant Singh's novel, "Train to Pakistan", is the devastating impact of violence and division on a community. Set during the Partition of India in 1947, the novel highlights the horrors and chaos that ensue when religious differences are exploited for political gain. The symbol of the train, which serves as a means of transportation for people fleeing the violence, also represents the loss of innocence and the destruction of peaceful coexistence.

Another prominent theme in the novel is the idea of sacrifice and the willingness of individuals to give up their own safety for the well-being of others. This is exemplified through the character of Juggut Singh, who, despite being a member of the Sikh community that is being targeted, risks his own life to save the Muslim villagers in his village. His selfless actions showcase the power of human kindness and compassion amidst the chaos of war and strife.

Furthermore, the theme of identity and belonging is also explored in the novel. As the people of Mano Majra are forced to leave their homes and struggle to find a sense of belonging in a new land, the reader is presented with the question of whether identity is defined by religious beliefs or by the acceptance and unity among individuals. The symbolism of the village of Mano Majra, an isolated and peaceful place, being torn apart by the Partition reflects the larger struggle of India as a nation in finding its own identity and unity amidst religious differences.

One of the most powerful symbols in the novel is that of the mango tree, which holds a significant meaning for both the Hindu and Muslim characters. It represents the shared history and culture of the two communities, and the loss of this tree due to the violence serves as a metaphor for the loss of harmony and coexistence between them.

In addition, the novel also sheds light on the theme of hope and resilience in the face of adversity. Despite the atrocities they face, the characters in the novel, especially the women, show remarkable strength and determination to survive and rebuild their lives. This resilience is also reflected in the symbol of the train, which eventually brings the villagers back together as they strive to rebuild their broken community.

"Train to Pakistan" is a powerful representation of the ravages of war, the strength of the human spirit, and the enduring impact of violence and division on a society. The themes and symbols in the novel offer a thought-provoking commentary on the consequences of communal violence and the importance of unity, sacrifice, and resilience in times of turmoil.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Khushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan" is a prime example of realism in literature. With his masterful storytelling and attention to detail, Singh captures the harsh realities of the partition and its aftermath. The novel serves as a powerful reminder of the atrocities committed during the time and sheds light on the human condition in the face of adversity. In the words of Singh himself, 'realism is not about portraying the world as we would like it to be, but as it truly is. And "Train to Pakistan" accomplishes just that, making it a timeless literary masterpiece.

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