

Religious Zealotry in Train to Pakistan

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Abstract:

Khushwant Singh highlights the tragedy of Jugga and Noora through religious zealotry. There is peace in village because local Sikhs are terrified of Jugga Singh and Noora is a beloved daughter of a Muslim. Khushwant Singh's keen-insight, focused attitude provides a reflection on issue of effects of colonialism, loss of tradition and other issues and he has become a true icon of secularism in this communally sensitive society. This paper examines Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and explores stereotypes of the Muslim and marginalized Sikh people.

Keywords: Zealotry, laceration, religious fanaticism.

Discussion's: Train to Pakistan was published in 1956. Its plot setting is at the time of partition and it presents the realistic picture of the pre-partition era, the communal riots, the freedom struggle and exploitation of women Manomajra is a peaceful town and through this Khushwant Singh wants to expose how a small village like this turns into a battlefield due to racial fanaticism. There is a bloodshed everywhere in the town after the arrival of Ghost train. Hundreds and thousands of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh are killed in the riot in the village. Khushwant Singh writes: "By the summer of 1947... ten million people Muslim and Sikh were in flight. By the time the Monsoon broke, almost of millions of them were dead and all of northern Indian was in arms, interror----- or in hiding".

The seed of this tragedy has been showed by the leaders of the nation. To make people their subject and to get hold on the empire like India they made people fight with each others. For promoting their respective political and economic interests they used and manipulated the religious forces. It was the religious zealotry which was the main cause of suffering of Nooran and her love with Jugga is crushed under the name of religion. This is symptomatic of victimization of women in love. As novelist says "Zar, Zoru and Zameen" (Wealth, Woman

and Land) (Preface, Train to Pakistan), all three so beloved to man were brutally violated. Zealotry is defined as “emotions being filled with excessive, uncritical zeal particularly for an extreme religions or political cause or with an obsessive enthusiasm for a past time or hobby” (Medical Dictionary). Acc to a philosopher

“Fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim”

Nooran’s a daughter of Muslim weaver is in love with Jugga, tragedy is highlighted by Khushwant Singh through religious zealotry. The potentially dangerous relationship function to keep Mano Majra at peace until the outside world interviews and Nooran is forced to leave Mano Majra. The situation gets out of control by a train which stops at the station and is full of dead bodies. Mano Majra has become a battlefield which once was very famous for the brotherhood. Khushwant Singh reveals a sound historical sense like Manohar Malgonkar. Both Train to Pakistan and A Bend in the Ganges are successfully experiments by them in presenting the personal and historical idea and perspectives in a fictional techniques and style. The partition has given a birth to two political boundaries India and Pakistan respectively. O.P. Mathur remarks:

“Singh’s deep love for Delhi, makes him to works for twenty years, as he says, to writes a novel of its past, a novel..... portrayal of the historical times, some of the important rulers and some unknown commoners through their own words..... and the other’s personality and views”.

The train in the novel is a symbol that stands for the daily life of Manomajra before independence. The riot that started in Calcutta spread to north, east and west engulfing a vast segment of population. In East Bengal, Muslim massacred Hindues and in Bihar, Hindus massacred Muslims. Life of the people of the Manomajra centered around the trains.

“All this has made Manomajra very conscious of trains. Before daybreak, the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore, and as it approaches the bridge the driver invariably blows two long blasts of whistle. In an instant, all Mano Majra comes awake. Crows begin to caw. The Mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for the morning prayer. By the time 10”30 morning passenger train from Delhi comes in life in Mano Majra has settled down to its ----- daily routine..... when the evening passenger from Lahore comes in everyone gets to work”. The first part of the novel “Dacoity” shows how an insignificant incident can have a

huge impact on the lives of the people. Ramlal is killed by Malli and on his return back to home he throws bangles at the house of Jaggat Singh in order to mock at his enemy. Juggat Singh who is popularly known as badmash number ten is suspected by the police and is asked not to leave the house after suspect. The affair of Jugga Singh and Nooran was going on at the time of murder of Lala. Hukum Singh is a typical representative of beaurocracy in a British governed India. Next morning when police comes to Manomajra to enquire of the murder of Ram Lal and the fame train also brings Iqbal Singh who is send by people's party in order to establish peace in the village. When people enquire Iqbal Singh of his motives during one conversation with Bhai Meet Singh Iqbal tells:

“I am social worker, Bhaji. There is much to be done in our villages. Now with this partition there is so much bloodshed going on someone must do something to stop it. My party has sent me here, since this place is a vital point for refugee movements. Trouble here would be disastrous”.

Khushwant Singh shows that brutal violence is used as a tool of partition by the politician and even by the government officials. The evidence in the novel shows that it is the people of authority who are responsible for the violence. Every part of novelist finds an uncertain solution to the partition of communities and conflicts. It is a fictional or idealistic solution love affair between a Hindi or Sikh boy and a muslim girl.

A lot of women were abducted and sold cheap. Police station were concentration camps and third degree methods were adopted to extricate “truth” from those who were caught. Hindus were pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policemen sitting on them.

The arrival of the ghost train is another important event in the novel which makes the reader flabbergasted. The arrival of the train in broad daylight created a commotion in Mano Majra. People stood on their roofs to see what was happening and all they could see was the black top of the train stretching from one end of platform to other. The villagers smelt something wrong.

“The Northern horizon which had turned a bluish grey, showed orange again. The orange turned into copper and then into a luminous russet. Red tongues of flame leaked 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 smells of fearing flesh”.

Conclusion: Khushwant Singh's first published novel on partition, *Train to Pakistan*, depicts the tragedies ----- during partition. It opens in summer of 1947. It is about the millions of death during partition and communal riots. All this violence has been sponsored by political leaders. Khushwant Singh depicted the story in a dramatic manner. It is full of symbolism. The tragedy and trauma are beautifully depicted through the story of Juggat Singh and Nooran. Partition brought millions of death with it. Hence one can conclude that *Train to Pakistan* is a valuable, social and political piece of document prepared and presented forth by Singh.

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