

Human Values in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*

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Abstract. *Train to Pakistan* is a novel by Khushwant Singh in which he has tried to draw a sketch of partition nicely on the basis of human values. The novel was first published in 1956. The author has also tried to evaluate human values during the partition of India. In this novel each character has distinct voice and perspective regarding their village Mano Majra. The main theme of *Train to Pakistan* was the violence surrounding partition. The novel also has enduring theme of love, loyalty and the most traumatic civil war. Juggat Singh alias Jugga is very soft at heart and he loves Nooran. Jugga saves hundreds of muslims on the bridge in order to save his muslim beloved who carries a Sikh child in her womb. Hukum Chand relies on the power of love and he tries to save humanity. Mr. Singh focuses upon the loss of lives, loss of properties by Indians. He has narrated the pain of deporting people without willingness. Iqbal is a muslim name but it has been adopted by Hindus as well as Sikhs in Mano Majra.

Keywords : Partition; human values; trauma; freedom.

The partition of India was an unforgettable trauma not only for the Hindus but also for the Muslims. Both the groups still have bitter taste of partition. The freedom of India from British rule and the creation of Pakistan was not a joyful event:

Thus arrived the long cherished moment of freedom with pangs of partition. In Delhi, there was jubilation led by Nehru and his Cabinet while in Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi observed fast keeping himself aloof from all celebrations. (Shaikh, 35)

These mixed feelings have shown the trauma of partition. There was the same mixed feeling in Pakistan also. The partition remained a decisive event in Indian social and political life. It was natural that it touched all who went through the partition memories.

Mano Majra was a small village in the Punjab. It was situated on the India - Pakistan border and half a mile away from the Sutlej river. It was known for its railway station. Express trains did not stop here at all. There were only two passenger trains from Delhi to Lahore which stopped for a few minutes.

The people of Mano Majra were very conscious of trains. The trains used to tell the Mano Majra exact time during day and night. There are only seventy families in the village. Lala Ram Lal's family was the only Hindu family. The others were Sikhs and Muslims, they were almost equal in number. Lala Ram Lal was a moneylender. A group of dacoits came to the house of Lala Ram Lal in August 1947 :

Received : 13th March, 2019; Accepted : 7th April, 2019

They dragged Ram Lal out by his legs. The leader slapped the moneylender with the back of his hand.

(Train to Pakistan, 18)

Ram Lal was slapped, kicked and warned of killing. He offered jewellery, cash and account books. He gave them also a bundle of notes from his pocket. But the dacoits were not ready to leave Ram Lal even after being offered these much things. They were demanding the keys of his safe. But he could not hand over the keys of his safe. One of the dacoits killed Ram Lal by spear. The dacoits went away challenging the villagers to come out and face them. But no one came out. Mano Majra became soundless like graveyard.

Dacoits moved towards the river. Juggut Singh left his house an hour ago. He went to the field to protect crops from the wild pigs. He was on probation from jail and police did not allow him to go out after the sunset. He walked along the wall till the end. He went towards the river. Suddenly he saw Nooran for whom he came out that night. He played with her as well as loved her. He became lustful and sensuous. The girl continued to protest. They had heard the gunshot. Two shots rang out in quick time. Nooran guessed something wrong was happening in the village. She feared her father but Juggut Singh was not listening to her. They were still laying in the darkness. The five men with guns passed within a few yards of them. They did not cover their face and were talking. Juggut Singh identified them. The man with torch was Malli. The dacoits disappeared. Juggut Singh and Nooran went to their houses with a promise to meet again.

There was an officer's rest house in the village just north of the railway bridge. It was a flatroofed bungalow made of khaki bricks with a veranda and in front face river Sutlej. Before the dacoity in Mano Majra the rest house had been done up to receive an important guest, Mr. Hukum Chand who was Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner of Mano Majra. Hukum Chand is one of the main protagonists in *Train to Pakistan*. When he went to Mano Majra to help sub inspector Sahib and his force with ongoing Muslim-Hindu-Sikh tension, he committed immoral things under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

The morning after the dacoity Mano Majra railway station was more crowded than usual. The morning train was only one hour late like previous days. This time the passenger was a sikh and a young man. The young man went towards the village. He reached the sikh temple for shelter. He introduced himself as Iqbal to Meet Singh. Meet Singh was a caretaker of Gurudwara. The young man did not say what Iqbal he was. He could be a Muslim, Iqbal Mohammad. He could be a Hindu, Iqbal Chand. And he could be a Sikh, Iqbal Singh. He told Meet Singh that he was a social worker. Meet Singh told Iqbal that the dacoits murdered moneylender Ram Lal last night just across the Gurudwara.

Meet Singh named Jugga for the crime because a bag of bangles was found

in his courtyard. So he knew who did it. This was not the first murder he had committed. He had done it his blood because his father and his grandfather were also dacoits. They were hanged for murder. But they never robbed their own village. Iqbal felt that there was no crime in anyone's blood. There was goodness in the blood of others. He frankly told Meet Singh that criminals were not born. Ten constables were sent to arrest Juggut Singh and two constables for Iqbal. Both of them were taken to Chandunnagar police station in a tonga. During their journey they discussed riot, separation of India and Pakistan and the soldiers on the border. Iqbal was 'A' class prisoner whereas Juggut Singh 'C' class prisoner.

There were so many stories of Hindu and Sikh refugees being killed as they fled from their homes which were now Pakistan. But the arrival of the train was the first witness for the villagers of Mano Majra. And Mano Majra turned into a battlefield which no one could control. A train from Pakistan halted at Mano Majra railway station. It had a ghostly quality because of corpses :

The Sikhs retaliated by attacking a Muslim refugee train and sending it across the border with over a thousand corpses. They wrote on the engine 'Gift to Pakistan'. (29-30)

Every Muslim and Sikh of Mano Majra was stranger now. The atmosphere of love was changed into fear and suspicion. They all had sleepless night. In this situation even an army officer looks for criminals like Mali and his gang who can do what they cannot do in their uniform. Mali and his gang were given the responsibility of looking after the left property of the muslims of Mano Majra.

The people of Mano Majra encountered with another ghastly scene of swelling Sutlej. When they saw floating corpses of men, women and children on the floodwater, soon they came to conclusion that they were not drowned. They were murdered. Khushwant Singh gave a pathetic portrayal of this ghastly scene :

There were also men and women with their clothes clinging to their bodies; little children sleeping on their bellies with their arms clutching the water and their thin buttocks dipping in and out. (143)

The corpses floating on the water made the scene horrible. The ghastly murder of these innocent people – men, women and children told the tale of partition. It was an awful sight. It was not the last nightmare in the life of Mano Majra.

The climax of *Train to Pakistan* is exciting where Juggut Singh saves the train at the cost of his life. His immediate concern was the safety of Nooran but he managed to save Muslims migrating from Mano Majra. *Train to Pakistan* stands out as a shining example of the Sikh novel where the Sikhs and Muslims are never shown up in arms against each other:

I have done all I could. My duty is to tell people what is right and what is not. If they insist on doing evil, I ask God to forgive them. I can only pray; the rest is for the police and the magistrates. And for you. (193)

Meet Singh, a good human being tries his best to resolve the problem but during the insurgency people become fanatic. Thus, he surrenders and says that now the law will take its own course. But the situation is so tense and in one sense out of control that the Commissioner Hukum Chand demands the release of Juggut Singh and Iqbal. Juggut Singh who was the gangster of the village redeemed himself by saving many Muslim lives. It was a sign of remaining humanity at Mano Majra. Hukum Chand's confrontation with Haseena who was a teenager prostitute has an exotic touch. He asked himself why he had left Haseena to go back to Chandunnagar refugee camp. He was not there with her. She was in train. He could only hear its rumble. He raised his face to the sky and began to pray. Khushwant Singh, who experiences the brunt of partition, very significantly remarks :

India is constipated with a lot of humbug. Take religion. For the Hindu, it means little besides caste and cow-protection. For the Muslim, circumcision and kosher meat. For the Sikh, long hair and hatred of the Muslim. For the Christian, Hinduism with a sola topee. For the Parsi, Fire-worship and feeding vultures. Ethics, which should be the kernel of a religious code, has been carefully removed. (195)

The novelist focuses on ethics. Even in the contemporary period of IT and Nano technology, there is importance of ethical values. *Train to Pakistan* is a leading novel in the field of partition literature. Khushwant Singh shows a genuine faith in humanistic ideal in *Train to Pakistan*. The author paints Jugga as a humanist in his final act of sacrifice. Jugga goes to Gurudwara to pay obeisance to God before final act. He goes up with his earthly character. He is hope for humanity at Mano Majra. He saves not only his beloved but also the innocent Muslims. The love of Jaggut Singh for his lover proved very beneficial for all the passengers of the train. This novel was first published in 1956 but as far as the issue discussed in it is concerned, it is still a burning problem for both the countries. The author has successfully traced the phase of partition in the novel. He has presented Mano Majra as a communal temper of the country during partition days. The two countries are grappling with the issues raised at the time of partition. It is for the politicians of both the countries to give importance to the human values. It is for them to understand its importance.

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