

Golden Research Thoughts

Abstract:-

Indian novelists could not remain a poof from these currents and henceforth they were not exclusively concerned with the exploration and interpretation of a social milieu, but dealt with new subjects of human existence and man's quest for self in all its complicated situations. As the researcher analyzes the history represented in Khushwant Singh's novels, it will not be inappropriate on the researcher's part to project some light on the origin of historical fiction. Historical fiction, viewed in this light, has greater capacity to reveal truth of its time which could not be learnt otherwise. History-fiction overlaps have, thus, undergone a considerable change and can, if not replaced, definitely supplement each other. The Partition of India was an important event not only in the history of the



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HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION NOVEL OF KHUSBANT SINGH 'TRAIN TO PAKISTAN'

Indian subcontinent 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. No doubt, the Hindus and the Muslims were living together since long but they failed to inculcate the feelings of harmony and unity among themselves. The fanatic leaders of both communities played a prominent role in stoking the fire of communalism. The partition was exceptionally brutal and large in scale and unleashed misery and loss of lives and property as millions of refugees fled either Pakistan or India.

Keywords:

Partition, Train, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* highlights the futility of blaming each other for the unfortunate event. Also, the novel is one of the first and most effective works on partition. While writing the novel, the writer has quite objectively treated the event, without blaming a community or religious minority for it. He has tried to stay away from the blame. "Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame". According to him, "The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped". Though there are numerous works written on partition but *Train to Pakistan* stands out as it does not treat the usual themes of indiscriminate killings of people. The killings and violence is no doubt a part of it but not the central theme. His focus shifts to the other associated issues at the time of partition.

Khushwant Singh's magnum opus *Train to Pakistan* is a historical novel. It centers on the theme of partition and depicts all the essential ingredients of an excellent literary work. There is an interesting fusion of sex, humour, pain, agony and violence in this novel. With all these *Train to Pakistan* also brilliantly depicts the religious animosity caused during the partition. This partition generated an atmosphere of hate, violence and bitterness between Sikhs and Muslims. Khushwant Singh has depicted Sikh-Muslim antagonism at its climax with the division of Punjab. The novel *Train to Pakistan* grows out of an achronological sequence of time with synthesis of reality on a particular historical context - partition of India in this context, and value. It expresses the creativity as to how the movement of trains, signaling time for action, rest and sleep, becomes a symbol of despair, darkness and destruction. This contrast is very suggestive (Dubey 1999).

The novel portrays the picture of the prevailing atmosphere of hatred and newly generated distrust between Hindus and Muslims at the time of partition. To depict this hatred, Khushwant Singh criticizes both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists and establishes that a man is basically animal in a frenzied mob; he writes "Mullahs roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Provinces with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims in Bihar"². He does not spare Hindus and Sikhs alike for their role in violence scene; he narrates the story of four Sikh Sardars on a killing spree in a jeep alongside the column of mile-long Muslim refugees on foot and writes "Without warning they opened fire with their Stan guns.

God alone knows how many they killed....³" Commenting on this novel Sharma and Johari opine: "Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* pictures the brutal, realistic story of political hatred and of mass passion during the tragic days that preceded and followed the partition of India. Trains were halted and the unfortunate passengers were ruthlessly butchered. Men, women and children were indiscriminate victims of mad communal frenzy: they were molested and killed by armed bands of men. The novel depicts the fateful journey of one such train vividly and powerfully."⁴

The *Train to Pakistan* is not only a depiction of violence, pain, agony and trauma of partition but also has the strength of narrative technique interspersed with trauma, sex, humour, bribery, hypocrisy, drunkenness, unfair police and bureaucratic functioning etc. The narration of Jagga's romance with Nooran is described at length which titillates the common reader and adds to overall development of this novel as a classic, because it provides an ideal back drop of everyday life of a common man: "Jagga Singh's caresses became lustful. His hand strayed from the girl's face to her breasts and her waist. She caught it and put it back on her face. His breathing became slow and sensuous.

His hand wandered again and brushed against her breast: as if by mistake."⁶ These sex scenes are an integral part of the novel. They enable the writer to gain a wider audience. Khushwant Singh portrayed holocaust, hatred, agony and trauma of the whole country at the time of partition through the depiction of a small village Mano Majra. Khushwant Singh's humanism is seen in the character of Jagga. His character is elevated to heroic dimensions at the very end of the novel. About the central significance of the novel *Train to Pakistan*, V.A. Shahane writes that the novel is "The triumph of love, humanism, faith in the invite goodness of man in a moment of real crisis and challenge mark the central significance of the novel."⁷

The greatness of the novel lies not only in realistic depiction of trauma and horrors caused by the division of India and Pakistan but also in the subtle artistry and craft of Khushwant Singh in creating such a theme and characters that transcends the actual. The beauty of the novel lies in its stark realism, bird imagery and brilliant symbolism, and in assertion of the dignity of the individual, and lastly in the expression of the tragic slenderer of a man's sacrifice for love and humanism.

Juggut draws strength from God to help himself in his noble pursuit which seems to be the novelist's plea also. Violence cannot be conquered by violence and it is only love that can pacify the hatred in human beings. Love has the power to transform a criminal like Juggut Singh into a courageous human being who sacrifices his own life for the well-being of the other people irrespective of their caste, class and religion.

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