

## I. Partition of a Nation: Partition of Identities

The political fact that India was divided into two nation states in the wake of the end of British colonial rule there had an indelible impact on the experience of the people directly affected by the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Political partition along religious lines resulted in a mass massacre of millions of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who had been living in communal harmony for centuries. This unprecedented riot and death toll could not be let go by the sensitive writers of the times. The bulk of literature on this theme has come to occupy a special position in Indian literary history. Khushwant Singh's first novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956) became the first and one of the major novels on the theme of the partition. In particular, the novel presents, in graphic terms, the horrendous atrocities inflicted by the Hindu-Sikhs and Muslims on each other. The sole reason as to why the two parties became blood-thirsty can be found on the fact that their century-long identity as Indians was shaken and even shattered by the partition of then colonial India into India and Pakistan. This partition required a new identity, that of religion, which then would decide which side of the Hindu-Sikh/Muslim divide the Indians would opt to settle on. Literally, millions of Indian Muslims became Pakistani citizens in a matter of a few days and weeks. The Hindu-Sikhs who ancestrally inhabited north-west India had to flee their lands and homes to face an uncertain fate on their way to the land where their co-religionists were in majority. The crisis was a radical one, of finding a home in a new society as well as of redefining oneself on a purely religious ground. Singh's novel precisely recounts this crisis of identity.

Born on February 2, 1915 in Hadai in West Punjab (now part of Pakistan), Singh was the second son of sir Sobha. His father was associated with the building of new thirties. Getting education in Delhi, Lahore and London, he began his career as

lawyer and also taught at the Law College, and at Princeton University in the States,- “I am Product of both East and West” what he terms Orio-Occidental (in Khuswant Singh India, 212).

Writers utilize life experiences in augmenting their literary sensibility and production. In the western world, the two great Wars of the twentieth century have been a great source of literary output. Numerous novels, stories, and notably, poems have been written in the war theme. Similarly, in the Indian context, the partition of Indian into two nation states in 1947 has proved a veritable asset for writers. The novelists and storywriters, especially, have used the simple dramatic narrative with a gaudy and spicy plot interspersed with lots of violence—rape, gore, murder, loot, and terror—to first shock and then amuse the readers. Khushwant Singh is one of the few Indian writers in English who used the partition violence and the trauma it caused in an objective and enduring way. Another writer who escaped the episodic plot in an attempt to cash the turbulent partition atmosphere is Sadat Hasan Manto. Manto objectified the disaster into a universal suffering.

The Indian society and nation, prior to the partition, was a happy confluence of the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. That was particularly true of the Punjabi society where these three communities lived in perfect harmony though they retained their communal identities. What is true of Mano Majra in the novel was true of Punjab as a whole. But, as the Mano Majrans were affected and divided by the violence of partition, so were the real people of Punjab, including the Indians over the country. This sad tale of horror and death is recorded in the Indian fiction written after the independence.

On the due course of time, Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, originally titled as Mano Majra is regarded as one of the many creative writings on partition. This widely read

novel (which won the Grove Press Award) depicts the traditional harmony that had prevailed in the Punjab village of Mano Majra, where Sikhs and Muslims lived together amicably together. Singh writes:

By the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced, ten million people –Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs –were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. The only remaining oases of place were a scatter of little village loss in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Majra. (48)

Other novels by Singh include *Delhi, A Company of Women* and *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*. Singh's second novel *Delhi* records the history of Delhi in a fictional manner taking the other view of history. His listing of details of history, historical monuments, the rulers and the ruled, marks his artistic genius. Singh's love and admiration for the city of Delhi is evident in his latest novel *A Company of Women*. Here, too he lists the shopping places, the clubs, and the food-items very realistically.

*I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* covers the freedom movement of 1942. The novel presents both the violent and non-violent in blood' and goddess Durga or Kali. Sher Singh talks of violence but is afraid of really taking up the cause of freedom. His impulsive, immature and pseudo-patriotism finds him in a jail on a suspected murder.

*A History of Sikhs* is a nicely crafted work of serious scholarship that introduced me to the fascinating history of Sikhism and the region of Punjab. The present-day specialist states that the book established Khushwanta Singh's scholarly reputation.

**The Novel: *Train to Pakistan***

*Train to Pakistan* begins with the description of the climatic condition of a small Indian village in the year of Indian independence. The action of the novel spans a few weeks of the fateful days of August and September in 1947 in Mano Majra, a border village, with a river fringing it and a railway bridge spanning the river. Though the frontier between India and Pakistan turns a scene of rioting and bloodshed, everything is quiet and normal in Mano Majra where Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims still live peacefully together as they have been living since times immemorial. Partition does not yet mean much to the inhabitants of this peaceful village. Many of them do not even know that the British have left and India is partitioned and is being governed by the popular Congress ministry.

Life in the village is regulated by the passing of trains across the Sutlej Bridge near by. The village awakes when the mail train rushes through the bridge before daybreak. The whole village then echoes with Mullah's cries of 'Allaho-Akbar' from the mosque and the Sikh priest's prayers from the gurdwara. By the time 10:30 morning passenger train from Delhi comes in, life in Mano Majra settles down to its dull, daily routine and when the id-day express passes people stop to rest and man and children come home for dinner and the siesta hour. As the evening passenger from Lahore steams in, every one gets to work again and by the time the night goods train comes in, Mano Majra gets to sleep with the echoes of the prayer of the Mullah and the Sikh priest.

'Train' has been used as a significant symbol in the novel. A veritable almanac and time-guide for the people of Mano Majra in normal times, it acquires sinister dimensions when its smooth running in and out of the village is disturbed in the wake of partition:

Early in September the time schedule in Mano Majra started going wrong. Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as though the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. On others, it was as if no one had remembered to wind it. .... People stayed in bed late without realizing that times had changed and the train might not run through at all. Children did not know when to be hungry, and clamoured for food all the time. In the evening everyone was indoors before sunset and in bed before the express came by—if it came by. Goods trains had stopped running altogether, so there was no lullaby to lull them to sleep. Instead, ghost trains went past the dreams of Mano Majra. (92-93)

The irregularities of trains presage disturbances in the smooth and quiet life of Mano Majra. A train which comes from Pakistan at an odd time the morning with heaps of mangled dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs, keeps in motion the dark force of violence and revenge, and leads to the attempted massacre of Mano Majran Muslims leaving for Pakistan by a train from which the novel derives its title. It is to let this train carrying his Muslim mistress Nooran pass safely through to Pakistan that Jugga, the protagonist of the novel, sacrifices his life. ‘Train’ thus becomes a crucial symbol in the life of Mano Majra.

People in Mano Majra, though illiterate and superstitious, are helpful, simple, god-fearing and religious. They live in amity with each other and have their own code of morality in which friendship counts above everything else:

The Punjabis’ code was even more baffling. For them truth, honor, financial integrity were “all right”, but these were placed lower down

the scale of values than being true to one's salt, to one's friends and fellow villagers. For friends, you could lie in court or cheat, and no one would blame you. On the contrary, you became a *nar admi* –a he-man –who had defied authority (magistrate and police) and religion (oath and scripture) but proved true to friendship. (54)

Very similar to this code of morality and friendship is Khushwant Singh's own credo of life: "Whatever its limitations, whatever its frustration, love is the greatest, the most exhilarating experience of life" (qtd. in Raizada 166).

The quiet of life of the village is suddenly disturbed when a local moneylender, Ram Lal, is murdered. Jugat Singh, a tall, handsome, and robustly-built farmer, known as a bad character in the village, is suspected and arrested for he is found absent from his house at the time of the incident and is unable to explain the cause of his absence. Along with him is also arrested Iqbal, England-educated and communism-inspired young man who has been sent by the People's Party of India to preach Hindu Muslim unity and stop bloodshed in the villages of the Punjab. He being a stranger in the village is suspected to be a Muslim Leaguer and is remanded to police custody.

Meanwhile the condition in Mano Majra deteriorates further and its time schedule starts going wrong because of the sudden irregularity of trains. People whisper about a train which comes from Pakistan at an unusual hour, carrying dead bodies of the Sikhs and Hindus. Simultaneously rumors are heard about Muslims being slaughtered in Patiala, Ambala, and Amritsar, Mosques being demolished, and the holy Kuran being torn by infidels. Soon the village becomes a battle field of conflicting loyalties. Though Mano Majrans still pledge to protect their Muslims brethren, yet afraid of the angry and aggrieved refugees from Pakistan, they shift them

to the refugee camps. As the flooded Sutlez brings the dead bodies of more Hindus and Sikhs, tension rises in the village. The communal fire is fanned by the young Sikh boys who come from outside and incite Mano Majrans to take revenge upon Muslims. They succeed in getting the support of bad character like Mali and dacoits of his gang who had earlier murdered the local moneylender and now hope to reap a profitable harvest by the annihilation of Muslims. They conspire to fire at the train taking refugees to Pakistan and tie a rope across the bridge to drag the Muslims down the roof of the running carriage.

Unable to stem the tide of violence and finding them selves helpless, police authorities release Jugga and Iqbal of whose innocence they are by now fully convinced. The authorities feel that Jugga, being a non-communal political worker may exert some influence on the misguided people and save Muslims from being slaughtered. Iqbal the idealist and rationalist, considers discretion to be the better part of valor and keeps himself away from the fire. But when Jugga learns of the conspiracy and comes to know that the train is carrying his beloved Nooran and other Muslims of Mano Majra, he climbs over the bridge and diverts the attention of the conspirators by cutting the rope meant for killing the Muslims. The train of Muslims refugees passes over to Pakistan without any damage but Jugga dies, being shot by his co-religionists.

The traumatic experiences of the partition shook him to the core of his beings and inhuman and savage killings of the innocent people envenomed in his heart. The mortifying and spine-chilling incidents of August, 1947 had shaken the faith of the people in nobility of mankind. Khushwant Singh is greatly disillusioned and his presumption regarding man and life is all shattered. He gives vent to all the venom and indignation felt by him at the horrifying tragedy of brutality and savagery in his

novel. He pours out the agonizing tale of human tragedy and the sinister impact of the partition on the peace loving Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of 'Mano Majra', realistically with scathing irony.

In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh not only focuses on the political realities and the predicament of the victims of the partition in the form of loot, arson, rape, abduction, mutations, murders, and displacement, but he also chooses to narrate the disturbing and agonizing impact that this event has on those who have not been the direct victims of the partition and yet been affected deep at the psychological and social levels. Partition comes to divide the people of the same community leading to tension amongst themselves.

All in all, Khushwanta Singh has designed the novel to explore and expose the brutal and hypocritical image of man and simultaneously has presented his faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity. While in an uncommon predicament, people feign the loss of rationality and freely exercise their instinctual forces of which they cannot otherwise make a show of in normal situations. But as and when a favourable pretext makes itself available, they do not hesitate to give vent to the darker impulses pent up in them. The novel becomes a witness to this.

### **Criticisms on *Train to Pakistan***

A meritorious work of literature demands appreciation and criticism from the readers. Being about so intense subject as the partition of a nation which claimed millions of innocent lives, *Train to Pakistan* has elicited genuinely concerned attention and diverse responses from readers, critics and scholars alike. Some of the pertinent and important responses to the novel will be presented here below.

Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* picks up the events of the Partition. As Kamal Meheta puts in his critical essay *Train to Pakistan: A Study of the Partition*



*and its Impact on the People:*

K. Singh explores the impact of it on a small village of Mano Majra. The village allegorically stands for India. The multiple responses of people reveal the responses of people in general. He tries to discover the true Indian response. He does so by juxtaposing the people, their views and also their actions. He tries to present the Indian/ Punjabi/ Sikh ethos and also their identity. There are many shades of this identity and the novelists succeed in showing them in categorical terms. All the while he maintains his perspective very clearly and gives each view critical treatment. He convincingly gives true Indian response to the event through this novel. (23)

The village, as Mehata writes, stands for the whole of India. Thus, the responses of the inhabitants thereof are indicative of the various responses of the Indian people at large. Clearly, the majority of the Indians were completely outraged and shocked. Bhai Meet Singh, the Lambardar and the Imam represent the conscience of the general public who have nothing to do with communalism.

Bharati A. Parikh maintains that Khushwanta Singh's *Train to Pakistan* evokes the frightening phase before and after partition of India and Pakistan. She praises the novel as an enduring work of literature in Indian literary history. To quote her:

Khushwant Singh builds a powerful series of episodes with the background of Indian landscape, Indian sights and sounds, Indian manners and gestures as only a keenly observant and sensitive novelist can depict them. *Train to Pakistan* to use the words of Professor Walsh, "is a tense, economical novel, thoroughly true to the events and

people. It goes forward in a trim, athletic way, and its unemphatic voice makes a genuinely human comment.” (100). Since its publication in 1956, *Train to Pakistan* has remained popular all throughout is a testimony of its lasting success in the annals of Indian writing in English. (67-67)

Parikh in the above-quoted lines underlines the comprehensiveness of the novel in its compactness. Moreover, its human concern over the ruthless murders has earned the novel an enduring readership.

Along the same line Suja Alexander reads the novel as the novelist’s aghast response to the unimaginable acts of cruelty people of the same land inflicted upon each other. She writes:

Khushwant Singh gives vent to all the venom and indignation felt by him at the horrifying tragedy of brutality and savagery in his novel *Train to Pakistan*. He pours out the agonizing tale of human tragedy and the sinister impact of the partition on the peace-loving Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of “Mano Majra”, realistically with scathing irony. Khushwant Singh has designed the novel to explore and expose the brutal and hypocritical image of man and simultaneously present his faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity. (68)

Thus Alexander too focuses on the hypocrisy and nobilities present in human nature as depicted in the novel. The same human beings can reach noble heights on the one hand, and can also fall into savagery on the other hand.

Rupali Burke looks at the novel from a different angle and compares the mass translocation or transposition of Indian people with the biblical exodus which recounts the story of the Jews dispersal from their land. She observes:

The word 'exodus' means a mass departure of people, especially emigrants. Human history has witnessed innumerable large –scale migrations of men, be it from famine, draught, religious, political, or social persecution. An exodus involves an abandoning of one's home, one's habitation to go to a new destination. Thus, it is a movement from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the secure to the insecure. It involves a great deal of hardships and inconvenience, and often the emotional turbulence outweighs the physical troubles. The emotional scars become hard to heal even with the passage of time. One feels completely uprooted and lost. The transplantation process that follows any exodus is as strange as a hazardous one, owing to the new environment that is strange and alien. The Exodus in the Bible and the exodus in the novel make an interesting comparison, more for the differences than similarities. (62)

According to Burke, the biblical exodus and partition exodus are strikingly different from each other. In the first instance, the Jews moved from Egypt to Israel, from slavery to freedom, from death to life. In the partition exodus of 1947, the Indians moved from their homes to rootlessness, from security to insecurity, from life to death. And the scale of death in this exodus overshadows the biblical one.

Next, Harish Raizada gives an account on the novel:

*Train to Pakistan* is, however, a classic in the post independence Indian English fiction not only because of the bold, brutal and unrelenting realism with which it tears asunder the mask of hypocrisy and exposes the sordidness and savagery of human life, but also because of the author's optimistic and affirmative world view that

emerges from it , his enduring faith in the values of love , loyalty and humanity and the unconquerable spirit of man in the face the mighty forces of wickedness and savage cruelties. (35)

Raizada finds a modern classic in the form of the novel for two reasons: first, it relates, in uncompromising and realistic terms, the inhumanity and brutality of the partition; second, and more importantly, despite the portrayal of the bleak side of human nature, the novel eventually reaffirms the values of love, loyalty and self-sacrifice.

But, and interestingly enough K. C. Belliappa differs from Raizada, and says that the novel is at best a true historical novel than a creative one. As he argues:

Khushwant Singh is in the line of novelists like Daniel Defoe who were more concerned with getting life on to the page in all its vividness than with the evaluation of human experience portrayed. A definite result of such a preference for documentary realism is the emergence of Mano Majra, the village as the true protagonist of the novel. Khushwant Singh's interests are more sociological and the result is that all the major characters are truly flat' in nature. .... *Train to Pakistan* is at best a successful recreation of the events of partition in terms of the evocation of atmosphere, the historical details and the authenticity of the locale. It is the work of a superior journalist rather than that of a creative writer. (11)

Belliappa's view thus sharply differs from that of Raizada. *Train to Pakistan*, as Belliappa argues, is more a historical document than a creative work.

But C.N. Srinath sees the novel as a creative work rather than as a social document. Comparing *Train to Pakistan* with Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, he writes:

It should be said in fairness to *Train to Pakistan* that it is not a sociological document in the grab of a novel but a creative work. But only like the train itself it runs on its parted rails, the track of partition the individual and the moment rarely become one. Whereas *Azadi* is about the longing for peace and freedom, personal freedom of man, to live and to belong to land, village and landscape which have nourished him. This crosses the frontiers of politics, race and community and hence is a more effective novel on partition than *Train to Pakistan* which is explicitly, overtly, rhetorically, a loud partition novel. Perhaps, Khushwant Singh is a better historical witness which leads us to a discussion of the historical fidelity versus imaginative authenticity. The resolution is perhaps in the mutual interpenetration of the two by the artist's magic. (66)

Srinath's comparison between the two novels attributes the quality of historical fidelity to *Train to Pakistan* and authenticity of imagination to *Azadi*. But he also makes it a point to clarify that Singh's novel is not merely a sociological document; it is a creative work.

Thus, the critics studied above focus on the outrageous impact of the partition on the Indian people. The violence was inexplicable, and the ruthless atrocities committed by both sides unbelievable. But the novel is not all about shock and disappointment. The very act of rescuing the train to Pakistan is an indication that one can save the life of thousands if one really is set upon it. The train also is a gesture of friendship and reconciliation: the Pakistanis, seeing that their people from Indian side have come safely, may reciprocate the same by letting the trains from Pakistan pass safely to India. In the personal reading of this writer, Singh has given a provocative

and enduring literary treasure to Indian literary world.

### **Outline of the Study**

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter states the hypothesis of the paper, presents a brief introduction to the novel and the novelist, and sets the methodology of carrying out the research.

The second chapter is dedicated to establishing the key concepts or critical tools which would be used in the next chapter to explicate the text. The major concept will be the concept of identity—what it means, how it is formed, and why it is important. Basically, this section dwells on how the Indians, especially the Pakistani-to-be Indians, gave overmuch importance to having their own nation erected on the religious difference from the Hindus and Sikhs, and thereby unsettled their homes. Also discussed will be the history of partition literature in India. Some other writers of note will be discussed and compared to the writer under this thesis.

The next chapter cites and analyzes the textual portions relevant to the hypothesis of this paper. Through textual evidence it will be established that the political partition of India into India and Pakistan had an indelible and adverse impact on the psyche of the people thereof. Actually, after the riot had subsided, the same people who had perpetrated violence came to shiver at the inhumanity and barbarity of their actions as well as that of their counterparts. They could not believe it was they and their neighbours who had done everything conceivable to root off their religious other.

The fourth chapter restates the underlying assumption of the thesis and shows that the hypothesis was tenable, therefore correct.

## **II. Shift from Political to Religious Identity**

This chapter is devoted to discussing the critical tools of identity, and the crisis of partition and its reflection in Indian literature. For this purpose, this thesis will undertake a brief survey of partition literature, and the various responses writers from different communities have recorded in their works. Then the question of identity and the role of one's religious convictions in defining oneself will be discussed at some length along with a reference to the then political climate when India was slithering through this unparalleled trauma. In this context, Samuel P. Huntington's observation on identity and the role of religion in forming identity will also be referred to.

### **Partition Literature: A Brief Survey**

There are varied and even contradictory versions of the political events that led to the partition of India in 1947. Literature, on its part, has kept alive the memory of the horrendous human tragedy that unfolded in its wake. Partition was indeed a momentous event, and ever since has acquired the status of a watershed in the history of modern India. Whatever historical circumstances precipitated the creation of two nations and division of land and people, political exigencies and political posturing did play a significant role to bring it about. There were conflicts and vested interests entirely associated with power and authority. In order to have their own power bases, many self-serving politicians and pressure groups launched upon concerted Machiavellian exploitation and manipulation of the differences between the masses. In the end, the people suffered: indescribable grief and misery was heaped upon them, and against their own will and aspirations, many of them were swept up in the political turmoil of the period. The gruesome violence that spread to many parts of India and Pakistan in 1947 benumbed all sensitive and thinking minds. Saner voices went unheeded, for every one was caught up in the frenzy of the times. The manner in

which humanity was trampled underfoot, and dark, evil forces took control still defies logical explanation. The nightmare of that tumultuous phase in the Indian history still haunts the nation's consciousness and both history and literature have worked together to come to terms with one of the most shocking and baffling incidence in Indian history.

Literature of the time raised its voice against the madness and bloodthirstiness which had led to killings, rapes and arsons. It did try to mute the voice of revenge and recrimination. Since 1947, India has witnessed the growth of partition literature recreating the trauma suffered by people, collectively as well as individually. As Sikha Mohsin Mirja puts: "It is both to carry out introspection and to expurgate the effects of the bewildering experience." Such literature has also played another role: To share the collective guilt with succeeding generations and to keep its memory intact, both as a warning for future and as an act of expiation. Partition literature produced since independence has taken up this role of keeping the history alive and acting as a premonition document about the possibility of the eruption of such irrationalities in future.

A wide range of topics and problems pertaining to partition and its aftermath have been covered in Indian vast literature which have been written in Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Sindhi and in other Indian languages. Surprisingly, the literature of Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu Languages is confined to the pre and post-partition events which took place in the Punjab only and the Bengali literature has covered the happenings of Bengal. A survey of the available literature brings forward a fact that period has contributed and serious work on this theme. A few notable short stories have of course been written and some novels have seen the lights of day, long after the partition. Bengali literature is quite rich in quantity and almost all the



contemporary writers have written on the partition and its aftereffects. Urdu and Punjabi writers have enriched their literature to a very great extent in the field of novels, stories and poetry. And Ramesh Mathur writes:

The most predominant theme running through the whole literature is the restoration of humanism and propagation of communal harmony between the two communities. Communal narrow mindedness and religious fanaticism are deplored. There is vivid description and depiction of the evil consequences coming out of religious madness and intolerance. (17)

Besides, these main problems, other topics such as, communal riots, refugees, their miseries, rehabilitation, camp-life, conversion, raping and kidnapping of women, recovering of Hindu women and their rehabilitation, land and property exchange, psychological sufferings of individuals and families, etc, are also covered in these writings. Of major concern to the female writers has been the atrocities both sides committed on the women of the other side. Both parties believed that they could bring shame and dishonour to their opponents by raping, denuding—in short, by humiliating and dehumanizing—the female members of the other.

Out of the vast available literature, the representative and voluminous Hindi novels and short stories and poetry are briefly discussed here.

The Hindi novel *Jhootha-Sach*(false truth) by Yashpal was published in 1957 in the volumes consisting of some 1196 pages. The story of he novel roughly covers the period between 1933 and 1957. The whole plot is based on an urban middle-class family of Lahore.

Written against the backdrop of India's partition, the novel portrays a lively word-sketch of the pre partition Punjab, especially of the middle class Hindu

society in Lahore. In Ramesh Mathur's word, "the novel projects a distinct picture of the political situation prevalent at that time, as well as depicts the ambiguity, confusion and dilemma in the minds of the people of Lahore regarding the import and consequences of the partition" (25). The Indians who had never ever witnessed and suffered communal atrocities at such a scale were shocked by the partition violence.

Amrita Pritam is perhaps the only Indian poet whose poems on the agony of Indians partition created the greatest impact and moved the largest number of people. Out of many, the following poem is perhaps the best ever composed on the theme of partition:

*Frenzy*

When religion goes to people's heads

Steel is sharpened

Tongues grow cruel

Poisoned by black snakes of hatred,

Red blood in the veins

Turn dark

Lips beautiful to kiss

Foam.... (25)

Religion makes people fanatics; it deprives them of their rational and logical as well as human capacities. Nothing but the total obliteration of the religiously other becomes the sole goal of such religiously driven minds. Nothing could be a more apt comment in this regard than Pritam's poem.

The bulk of short stories written in the aftermaths of the partition portrays the trauma of a nation and the dilemma faced by its people, individually and collectively.

Invariably, the destiny of individuals is shaped by political decisions taken elsewhere. Thus, Lalithambika Antharajanam states through her story “A Leaf in the Storm”, “Fifty bounded girls were to be given away for the fifty reclaimed. The exchange took place on the border; black bundles of rags crawled up and down, like ghosts let loose from the sepulchers” (137). She portrays the victims’ problems of rehabilitation and condemns the so-called leaders, who, according to her, were the cause of these inhuman activities.

In the same connection, Shauna Singh Baldwin in her story “Family Ties” depicts the nightmare into which the Indian nation was led by the partition. The story relates the story of a family, in Punjab which becomes the microcosm of the communal strife and inhuman violence in the wake of partition. The family still has not come to the position of integration since the partition. Baldwin states: “Because no women ... would have allowed herself to become a Musalmaan and then to have a Musalmaan’s child...” (30). The narrator’s aunt was brutally raped and was forced to be Muslim. Thereafter, the aunt has been declared as “completely Pagal” (30). The most affected people by the communal animosity became girls and women, since both sides thought it their bravery and a feat to defile the females of the enemy’s side. Actually, it seemed as if partition was carried out not on the geography of the Indian nation but on the bodies of the females. Each party took it as granted that if only they spoiled the honour of the females of the other side would they feel sufficiently avenged for the loss of honour and life on their own side.

As Gomathi Narayan has suggested, the Indian writers tried to get rid of the taint of sin committed collectively during the orgy of partition. This effort at expiation can be traced in the majority of the literary works written after partition. Commenting on Manohar Malgonker’s *A Bend in the Ganges*, Balchandra Rajan’s *The Dark*

*Dancer*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Raj Gill's *The Rape*, (1974), and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975); Gomathi writes that these novels express the feeling of guilt and shame. To quote her words:

The emotional response to Partition in the Indo-Anglian novels is a compound of guilt, shame and despair—a sense of guilt for the inhuman violence, a sense of shame that this violence should have erupted after decades of non-violent discipline, and a sense of fatalistic despair engendered by the magnitude of the evil let loose among men. As Rajan expresses it, “The pride of being Indian, of having helped to bring to its unprecedented climax a generation of struggle in which the sword had not been lifted, was submerged in an emotion in which shame was a component less compelling than helpless bewilderment at the fever and its virulence.” (*Gomathi*, p.170). (168-180)

Thus, the partition and its aftermath seem to have compelled the Indian writers, especially novelists among them, to recognize the reality of violence, and human capacity for inhuman brutality and irrationality. The writers have described the horrors of partition in unsparing details, but they have also made it a point to clarify that every form of brutality, inhumanity and immorality was let loose under the cloak of religious fervour by the truly irreligious and unscrupulous elements in the society. They also show how the simple people who are in no way fanatics can be spurred on to acts of frenzy and savagery by what they have seen around them and suffered from. The Mano Majrans are truly tolerant people, but they cannot protect their Muslim neighbors from the incoming Hindus and Sikhs who have suffered atrocities first hand at the hands of the Pakistani Muslims.

### **National versus Religious Identities**

People are born and located in a particular geographical and specific historical time. This positions them in a particular society or nation, and confers upon them a special identity as members of that society which is different from others owing to its religious and cultural practices and mode of life. Identity has many facets.

Race/ethnicity, religion, social standing, gender, and regional factors are some important aspects of a person's identity formation. Of these, religious or cultural affiliation has always been the central marker of people's identity. Though it is not to deny that identity is a dynamic process, people rarely change, nor do they desire to change their religious identity.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines identity as "the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others". Besides the generally workable concept of the term that it gives, the definition is noteworthy for the inclusion of the term 'distinguish'. Examining the significance of the term in this context, we see that one's identity is established not so much by one's intrinsic qualities or peculiarities but by one's distinctness from others. Sure enough, if all were identical or even similar in belief, character or feelings, then there would be no concept of identity. But since people over the world vary among them in terms of their political doctrines, religious beliefs and moral convictions, people happen to be different from each other.

Difference, which lies at the heart of the concept of identity, implies the inevitability of the existence of people from other cultural tradition. The simple truth is that only in relation to and contrast from others, is one's identity outlined. Textually, the Hindu-Sikh would have their distinct identity only when they have Muslims around them, and the Muslims too would stand as a people with a difference

only when they are contrasted to the former. But, ironically, the necessity of the presence of the other is denied by the two parties. In a communal frenzy arising in the post-partition riot, both sides forget the harmonious living for centuries, and come to attempting each other's obliteration from the places where they are in majority. They forget or rather do not especially want to remember that till the day before they were living in amicable terms; all were the same nationality — Indian — and had no malice whatsoever on communal grounds. But the situation disrupted all the established codes of peace, harmony and tolerance. The sense of a common nationality, the sense that they were Indians, gave way to the wave of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. In short, national identity was displaced by religious one which then fuelled the communal violence ever unprecedented and non-sequel.

Prior to the British proposal that India be divided into Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India, and prior to the ready acceptance of this proposal by the Muslim League leaders who feared their numerical minority might render bleak their future in a predominantly Hindu India, no inhabitant of the subcontinent had thought it natural that India could be divided. But when the formal British engagement in India neared its end and as the Hindus accelerated the Muslim sense of fear by venting the idea that they were about to retrieve their position lost to the Muslim invaders centuries back, the idea of a divided India became a reality within a matter of months. The partition, we can say with hindsight, established the truth, uneasy though it may be for modern humanity to accept it, that what counts most to most people is a religious and cultural identity rather than a political or a national one. India and Pakistan thus were created to fulfill the masses' sense of a distinct cultural identity. Being free Indians would not suffice for the Muslims, not because it was inevitable that they would be deprived in a

predominantly Hindu India but because they feared the possible threat from the Hindus whose land they once had appropriated.

Does religious identity hold so much importance for people in the modern world? Is not it all parochialism? Professor Samuel P. Huntington would maintain that whether in a modern or a traditional society “what is most important to most people is cultural identity”. In his book of sociology *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Huntington gives numerous instance of cultural identity has been the central defining factor for the majority of people anywhere in the world. And cultural or religious differences can never be effectively ameliorated; they can at best remain dormant in a well integrated society, but as soon as some disturbances arises people from different religious groups turn suspicious of each other. They can be ruthless and irrational in their fear, hatred and distrust of the cultural ‘other’. And yet they need the other, enemy though they may be, to be able to define themselves, for as Huntington puts “for people seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential” (20). It is interesting to deliberate upon the pertinence of what he has to say on this issue, for the novel under this study engages in one of the most horrendous communal violence the world has ever witnessed. Huntington makes a rather debatable proposition, nonetheless a highly supportable one given the frequent communal riots in the present world. As he writes:

In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. People and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms

of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against. (21)

Huntington provides numerous examples of long-drawn-out and bloody communal conflicts such as the ones between Israelite Jews and Palestinian Muslims, orthodox Serbs and Muslims. The partition of India supports Professor Huntington's claim that friendships and enmities are based on religious similarities and differences. May be, the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims could not have lived peacefully as Indians even if the leaders had shown their statesmanship in leading the nation through the shaky times of independence.

### **Communal Politics: A Nation Divided**

Appreciating the importance of a united and concerted effort in the direction of liberating the nation from the more than a century long grip of British imperialism, the Indian leaders founded the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. The foundation of INC was the first organized movement which was clearly fuelled by nationalism. The political consciousness of the Indian people had expanded to such an extent that when Lord Curzon proposed the partition of Bengal in 1905 on communal basis claiming that Muslim majority Bengal should be separated from the Hindu majority India as a whole, his plan, though sanctioned by the British parliament, was unanimously and vehemently opposed by the Bengalis as well as the whole Indian populace. As a result, the proposal was finally withdrawn in 1911.

Ironically, the Muslim League which was founded in 1906 to safeguard the



rights of the Indian Muslims was not explicitly supportive of the partition which it was soon to demand vociferously. Their demand later for a separate nation was at first not seriously considered by the leaders of Indian National Congress. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi thought it impossibility, and went so far as to announce that Pakistan would have to be founded on his dead body. Jawaharlal Nehru, another influential leader of Congress, and later to be the first prime minister of independent India thought communalism too narrow a force for politics and hence not worthy of attention. But when the partition was finally passed by the British parliament consequent to quit India plan, the leaders found themselves unable to keep the nation united. The Interim Government comprising mainly the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League was formed in 1946 for the purpose of transferring the constitutional power to the Indians. But the coalition could not function satisfactorily, thus giving credence to the claim that the two communities cannot remain united in a free India. Now the Congress leaders had to accept the partition, though with a considerable degree of grudge. But the fact that none had any definite and safe plan to evacuate and rehabilitate the people resulted in an unwanted, unforeseen but not unavoidable massacre of millions of Indians.

The British government or its representative then in India was to blame for this ghoulish killing of innocent millions. But equally unforgivable are the Indian leaders who were attending the ceremonial booming of guns in Delhi while real guns were booming across the nation between the Hindu-Sikh and Muslim communities. This disaster proved the failure of the leaders, both Muslim and Hindu, who could not carry the country safely through the turbulent days just before and after the independence.

The lack of vision in the leaders is pointed to and is frequently held up to

criticism. The police inspector says his to Hukum Chand, the Deputy Commissioner:

Sometimes, sir, one cannot restrain oneself. What do the Gandhi-caps in Delhi know about the Punjab? What is happening on the other side in Pakistan does not matter to them. They have not lost their homes and belongings; they haven't had their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters raped and murdered in the streets. Did your honour hear what the Muslims did to Hindu and Sikh refugees in the market places at Sheikhpura and Gujranwala? Pakistani police and the army took part in the killings. Not a soul was left alive. Women killed their own children and jumped into wells that filled to the brim with corpses. (31)

Of course, the leaders were so busy in celebrating such a long awaited moment of independence that they seemed to forget now it was upon them to ensure the safe translocation of the people from one country to another since the independence had given birth to a new nation of Pakistan.

Common people behaved in a saner manner than did the leader and government officers. A Sikh officer is heard telling this to Meet Singh who is sympathetic to the imperiled Muslims: "The only way people like you will understand anything is by being sent over to Pakistan: have your sisters and mothers raped in front of you, have your clothes taken off and be sent back with a kick and spit on your behind" (157-58).

The freedom that Indian independence brought did not reach and benefit the people of the lower strata of the society. This is what the Lambardar, the representative of the village in a way, says when Iqbal in *Mano Majra* speaks of the virtues of freedom brought to them by the end of the British Raj:

After a long silence the Lambardar answered. "Freedom must be good

thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes?”

“No, the Muslim said. “Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians—or the Pakistanis.” (62)

The freedom really brought nothing more than uncertainty, and then death and destruction. The people, who had been living in the same soil for centuries without so much a feeling as they are from different communal backgrounds, started eyeing their neighbours with suspicion and thought them to be their enemies. This is how the Muslims in Mano Majra feel after the arrival of a police constable in the village to investigate about the possible involvement of the newly arrived youth with a Muslim sounding name, Iqbal:

The head constable’s visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as nearly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter. Muslims sat and mopped in their houses. Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala, which they heard and dismissed, came back to their minds. They heard of gentle women having their veils taken off, being stripped and marched down crowded streets to be raped in the market place. Many had eluded their would-be ravishers by killing themselves. They had heard of mosques being desecrated by the slaughter of pigs on the premises, and of copies of the holy Koran being torn up by the infidels. Quite suddenly every Sikh in Mano Majra became a stranger with an evil intent. His long hair and beard appeared barbarous, his kirpan menacingly anti-Muslim. For the first

time, the name Pakistan came to mean something to them—a haven of refuge where there were no Sikhs. (130)

Thus, the Muslims undergo a sea change in their attitude regarding their Sikh neighbours. On the other hand, the Sikhs too feel the same toward their Muslim neighbours. They did not themselves create this antagonistic attitude for each other, but it was the inescapable consequence of the violence elsewhere which was rapidly making its way into the peaceful village.

### **III. Indians Forgo Human Self**

This chapter undertakes a textual analysis to see how the Indians lost sense of all decency, human values and tolerance as the news of partition and the killing thereafter flared the dormant communal hatred. Also, it will be shown that there were some good-nature people who did not subscribe to the politics of communalism and murder, but their number was insignificant.

There had been a deep cultural rift between the Muslim conquistador and the Hindu-Sikh inhabitants of India ever since the thirteenth century. But somehow they had lived in a sort of harmony, as the Muslims also accepted India as their homeland. Then the British occupation there brought the traditional rivals together in their struggle for independence. However, as the time for British withdrawal neared the minority Muslims feared their fate in a predominantly Hindu India. They saw the necessity of a separate nation for Muslims. But the Hindu leaders could not see the inevitability of the partition and could not prepare for a peaceful, methodical translocation of people from and to India and Pakistan. Consequently, the partition proved an excuse for the evil in human heart to exercise its ghoulis intention through open riot, mass murder, laceration, rape, loot and arson. Forces of good were not called upon by this tumult, except in very rare cases as we see in Jugga's bold act of saving the life of the train-boarded Muslims bound for Pakistan. The Indians forgot their values and even themselves; they actually discarded humanity altogether, and turned bestial.

#### **Mano Majra: A Vignette of Pre-partition India**

The novel begins with a report of how the summer of 1947, the year in which India was partitioned into the political entities of India and Pakistan, had a different political feel for the prolonged draught. Also, the news that Pakistan was to be created

for the Muslims in India had caused the flight of ten million people—Hindu-Sikhs and Muslims--to and from the nation to be divided to and from the nation to be created. The novelist aptly comments, “The riots had become a rout” (2).

*Train to Pakistan* is set in a small India village situated near the newly carved border of India and Pakistan. The village is equally populated by Sikhs and Muslims. Both the communities have been living quite peacefully so far. The people are simple, innocent and busy in their own routine of life. In spite of the partition, it has maintained harmony. The simple and peaceful lifestyle of the villagers, regulated as it were by the passing of trains at a more or less regular basis is depicted thus:

Not many trains stop at Mano Majra. Express trains do not stop at all. Of the many slow passenger trains, only two, one from Delhi to Lahore in the mornings and the other from Lahore to Delhi in the evenings, are scheduled to stop for a few minutes. The others stop only when they are held up...

All this has made Mano Majra 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 the whistle. In an instant all the Mano Majra comes awake. (12)

So, the passing by trains function as the time setters for the inhabitants of the village. Their life runs in accordance with the movement of the trains. How much the villagers depend upon the trains, though they rarely use them, is made evident in these descriptions:

By the time the 10.30 morning passenger train from Delhi comes in life in Mano Majra has settled down to its dull daily routine. As the midday Express goes by, Mano Majra stops to rest...

When the evening passenger from Lahore comes in, everyone gets to work again.... When the goods train steams in, they say to each other, “There is the goods train”. It is like saying goodnight. The mullah again calls the faithful to prayer by shouting at the top of his voice, “God is great”. The faithful nod amen from their rooftops. The Sikh priest murmurs the evening prayer to a semicircle of drowsy old men and women.... It had always been so, until the summer of 1947. (12-14)

So, the banal life of the inhabitants of this small village is regulated by the trains. But the same trains, when they arriving there not only with Pakistan fleeing Hindus and Sikhs but later with trainloads of murdered passengers, the normalcy is disrupted. Hence the train symbol sets prominent in the life of the village which had hitherto been a paradisaal abode in the sense that no communal ill-will, let alone any riot, had made its stronghold there.

The village also stands apart from other parts of India where communal hatred has gripped. The three-foot slab sandstone is the unifying element in the village:

...there is one thing that all Mano Majrans—even Ram Lal—venerate. This is a three-foot slab of sandstone that stands upright under a keekar tree beside the pond. It is the local deity, the *deo* to which all the villagers—Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or pseudo-Christian—repair secretly whenever they are in special need of blessing. (10-11)

But as a result of the partition, refugees start flowing to India from Pakistan, and the harmony is disrupted with the seeds of suspicion. They bring with themselves unnarratable sad stories of displacement, arsons, murders, rapes and so on.

Furthermore, Mano Majrans witness how the communal forces from Pakistan send a

trainload of dead bodies of Sikhs and Hindus. Also, the river of Sutlez is discovered with corpses of Hindus; the only Hindu of the village Ram Lal is murdered. All these things lead to the rise of tensions between the two communities of Muslims and Hindu-Sikhs. Now the village, or rather the villagers, cannot remain unaffected. The police want to maintain the law and order situation. It wants the Muslims to go to Pakistan for their safety and for this purpose it is ready to provide them facilities to reach Chundunnugger safely from where a train is to go to Pakistan.

At this juncture of time, a group of youths wants to take revenge on Muslims here. The leader is heard speaking that if hundreds of innocent Sikhs are being killed and women raped and abducted, why not do the same to Muslims here in order to make Pakistan Muslims stop nonsense. This is the climax of the novel.

The author focuses on the impact of the partition on the mind of the people. He presents diverse views that came on the surface then. He at the same time tries to bring to light the genuine human voice and through its ethos. He reveals these voices putting them in debate over the issues. He makes Bhai Meet Singh, the Lambardar Banta Singh and Jugga Singh represent the rural rooted true Sikhs. They have right understanding of the Guru(s) and their teachings. On the other side are Iqbal Singh, a nameless youth in military dress, Malli, and the police inspector either representing the perversion or misinterpretation of Sikhism. The simple but noble values of Sikhism get overshadowed in the blazing communal riots. Mano Majra lose its quiet and isolation with first the news of violence everywhere, and then the victims of that violence. On a broader plane, the India nation gets transformed into two different geographical and cultural spheres, namely India and Pakistan.

### **Failed Politics: Costly Communalism**

As it has already been suggested, the partition of India might have been an



historical inevitability, but the mass killing was in no way unavoidable. What was needed on the part of the British governor was a methodical, detailed plan to first transport people to their cultural majority places before announcing the formal division of the country. The leaders too must have accepted the partition.

Khushwanta Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is the poignant story of the tragedy of the Punjab happenings when people were seized by mad communal frenzy, and the disruption of life in the troubled days which followed the declaration of independence. It was on August, 15, 1947, a historically compounded date in the annals of Indian history. On this day, India and Pakistan, two independent nations were born, when an ancient country was divided in two three pieces, forming two political units on the Indian sub-continent. This catastrophic partition of India was the culmination of a thousand year old love-hate relationship between the Hindus and Muslims and as far as India was concerned it was the beginning of a portentous future. Pakistan, too, had to exist under a constant fear and pressure of having to face the mighty, Hindu majority India.

The attitude of the two major communities- Hindus and Muslims-towards their newly earned political freedom was very significant. To the Hindus, it was not freedom from the ninety year old British rule but it was salvation from subjugation and slavery of more than a thousands years. On the other hand, the Muslims were rejoicing on the creation of a separate state exclusively for themselves and on the re-establishment of their rule, if not throughout all of India at least in a good part of it. This difference in attitude was natural. The novelist through *Train to Pakistan* seems to suggest that somewhere, deep in their psyche, the people of India felt the human folly of erecting communal barriers. It was as though the thousands of years of race-memories had not been obliterated, and in times of stress and strain, despite the

external trappings of religion, their blood was conscious of the irreconcilable racial differences. The novelist projects this attitude through the setting of Mano Majra, a village in the Punjab, which was the living example of Hindu-Muslim common ground. Thus, he begins the novel through the reference to the summer of 1947 which was noted for its scorching heat and rainless ness and marked for hot and dusty atmosphere:

The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the whether had a different feel in India that year? It was hotter than usual and drier and dustier. And the monsoon had been so late. For weeks, the sparse clouds cast only shadows. There was no rain. People began to say that god was punishing them for their sins. (9)

The summer before, communal riots, precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan, had broken out in Calcutta and several thousands had been killed. The Muslims said that the Hindus had planned and started the killing. The Hindus, on the other hand, put the whole blame on the Muslims. The truth was that both sides had killed. People belonging to both sides were shot, stabbed, speared, tortured and raped.

From Calcutta the riots had speared north and east and west. In Noakhali in east Bengal, Muslims massacred Hindus and in Bihar Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullahs were reported to have roamed the Punjab and the frontier province with boxes of humans' skulls said be those of Muslims Killed in Bihar. The Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier were made to abandon their homes and flee toward the Sikh and Hindu communities in the East. They had to Travel on foot, in bullock carts, cram into lorries, cling to the sides and roofs of trains:

By the summer of 1947, when the creation of new state of Pakistan

was formally announced, ten million people- Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs- were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. (10)

The failure of the leaders, both Hindu and Muslim, to have trust on themselves and each other soon showed its contagious nature. After their fashion, the commoners also started feeling the same distrust that the leaders had felt for their colleagues from the other religion. Indian National Congress which at first had commanded a good credence from almost all groups and communities now was increasingly seen as the bastion of Hindu leaders and people. The Muslims also feared their minority plight in a Hindu nation, and deep down in their psyche wanted a safe landing in the absence of the British raj. Hence, the birth of Muslim League in 1906 was as a protector of the interest of the Muslims. The outgoing British raj too did not want India, its one time colony, to emerge as a powerful and thriving nation. Given the growing mutual distrust between Hindu-Muslim communities, the British raj would have no better opportunity than the fateful fourteen August to formally announce the birth of a Muslim Pakistan out of India which would be an independent nation only a day latter. Here is one instance of as to how the novel records a ghastly scene in a dispassionate way. The Deputy Commissioner witnesses the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs murdered somewhere up the Sutlej river:

An old peasant with a grey beard lay flat on the water. His arms were stretched out as if he had been crucified. His mouth was wide open and showed his toothless gums, his eyes were covered with film, his hair floated about his head like a halo. He had a deep wound in his neck which slanted down from the side to the chest. A child's head butted

into the old man's armpit. There was a hole in its back. There were many others coming down the river like logs hewn on the mountains and cast into streams to be carried down to the plains. A few passed through the middle of the arches and sped onward faster. Others lumped into the piers and turned over to show their wounds till the current turned them over again. Some were without limbs, some had their bellies torn open, and many women's breasts were slashed. They floated down the sunlit river, bobbing up and down! (124-125)

This is only one among the countless acts of barbarity the people on the Indo-Pak divide inflicted upon each other.

How unprepared the Indian government was concerning the migration of people is made evident in the following lines:

There was no time to make arrangements. There was no time even to say good-bye. Truck engines were started. Pathan soldiers rounded up the Muslims, drove them back to the carts for a brief minute or two, and then on to the trucks. In the confusion of rain, mud and soldiers herding the peasants about with the muzzles of their sten guns sticking in their backs, the villagers saw little of each other. All they could do was to shout their last farewells from the trucks. ... The Sikhs watched them till they were out of sight. They wiped the tears off their faces and turned back to their homes with heavy hearts. (159)

Seeing the trainloads of Hindus and Sikhs sent from Pakistan as gifts to India, the Sikhs lose patience, and plan murder in retaliation. This is what the youth in Mano Majra does when he includes Malli the dacoit in his group to finish off the train boarders. He explains how they would execute their plan:

“The plan is this. Tomorrow after sunset, when it is dark, we will stretch a rope across the first span of the bridge. It will be a foot above the height of the funnel of the engine. When the train passes under it, it will sweep off all the people sitting on the roof of the train. That will account for at least four to five hundred.” (176)

The boys take the matter very flippantly and talk about it lightly as if they were planning a picnic or an excursion. They do not seem to worry about the presence of the government and law. This is so because the India government was busy celebrating the independence with ceremonial booms and bangs while actual booms were reciprocating the ceremonial fires.

The leaders could have forestalled such incriminatory and recriminatory activities from both sides if only they had forearmed the bureaucracy for such a possibility. But, in retrospect, it seems the dividers of the nation were neither psychologically nor materially prepared to cope with the possible disturbances and anarchy that would follow in the wake of the partition. While the uncles and fathers of the nation were talking of redeeming their trust with destiny, the destiny of millions of commoners was turning bleak. More than religious intolerance, the partition riots and massacres were the result of the lack of adequate management of the translocation of the people from and to India and Pakistan.

The novel throws an ironic gaze upon the Indian leaders through the Deputy Commissioner, Hukum Chand. The sardonic jibe at the leaders, particularly at the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru is worth citing in this light:

Where was the power? What were the people in Delhi doing? Making fine speeches in the assembly! Loud-speakers magnifying their egos; lovely-looking foreign women in the visitors' galleries in breathless

admiration. “He is a great man., this Mr. Nehru of yours. I do think he is the greatest man in the world today. And how handsome! Wasn’t that a wonderful thing to say? Long ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time has come when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full but very substantially. Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, you made your tryst. So did many others—on the 5<sup>th</sup> august, Independence Day?” (201)

It was the shortsightedness of the leadership, who though recognized by the world, could not be cautious and imaginative enough to avert the catastrophe which they could easily have avoided. Communal politics and petty-mindedness of the Muslim and Hindu leaders, compounded by the divisive policy of the outgoing British Empire resulted in the horror of mass killings.

### **Jugga: Human Capacity for the Great**

Jugat Singh is a resident of a tiny village, Mano Majra, on the Indian border, half a mile away from the river Sutlej, where the action takes place in the novel. The Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus lived in perfect harmony in this village and there was a time when no one in the village knew that the British had left the country and the country was divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. The only thing that made an impact on them was the arrival and departure of trains. But soon things began to change.

Partition began to take its toll in this tiny village also:

Partition touched Mano Majrans at both levels- at the community level and at the individual level. At the community level it affects very badly the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The dark clouds of suspicion and fear arise among the Sikhs. The dark clouds of suspicion and fear arise among the Sikhs and Muslims, who have lived together for centuries.

Yet feelings of brotherliness have not disappeared, and they meet for consultation in a scene that is both intensely humor and touching. (qtd. in Surendran 104)

There were only about seventy families in Mano Majra, and Lala Ram Lal's was the only Hindu family. The others were Sikhs or Muslims who were about equal in number. The railway station occupied an important position and a small colony of shopkeepers and hawkers grew up around it to supply travelers with food, betel, leaves, cigarettes, tea biscuits and sweetmeats.

The routine life of Mano Majra was disturbed one evening in August 1947. The village moneylender's house was raided by dreaded dacoits: "On the roof of his house, the moneylender was beaten with butts of guns and spear handles and kicked and punched. He sat on his haunches, crying and spitting blood. Two of his teeth were smashed". When Ram Lal, the money lender failed to hands over the key of his safe, one of the dacoits lunged at the crouching figure with his spear. The unfortunate fellow dies a miserable and senseless death which he could have escaped had he shown the courage to readily forgo his fortune.

The dacoity had its evil effects on Juggat Singh who was a resident of the village. The dacoits dropped bangles in his house and later he was arrested as the suspect of murder and dacoity. He was in love with Nooran which in a sense cut across religious barriers: Nooran was a Muslim weaver's daughter. After his release from police custody, he came to know that Nooran had visited his mother before leaving for the refugee camp carrying his child in her womb. Jugat Singh, Meanwhile, had a dubious distinction of being 'a budmash number ten'. His father and grandfather were also dacoits and were hanged for murder. But they were reported not to have robbed their own village. According to Meet Singh, Jugat had disgraced family

through his acts.

Jugga is arrested along with the newly arrived activist Iqbal Singh. But the Deputy Commissioner, who also loves the Muslim dance girl, releases these two youths in the hope that they could do something to save the lives of the Muslims going to Pakistan in train. Iqbal deems it unwise to risk his life where his heroism would not be noticed and advertised, and so slips aside from taking the responsibility of dissuading the attackers from committing the violence. In contrast, Jugga, as soon as he comes to know of the murderous attack on the train which was carrying the Mano Majran Muslims being perpetrated by Malli under the leadership of a young Sikh, makes a good and great resolution to save the train. In risking his life to save the passengers of the train, especially his beloved Nooran, Jugga the hitherto ruffian number ten maintains a dignified stoicism, who encounter the existential buffets of destiny with equipoise and fortitude. Jugga, the romantic deviant is one such man. “The heroic spirit man”, observes Harish Raizada, “is revealed in the novel not by men who are considered religious and respectable in the public and supposed to have innate goodness but by a man like Jugga who is treated as a confirmed ruffian” (127). A “budmash number ten” Jugga is an invincible person whom neither darkness can blind nor death scare” (54). With his indomitable courage and unconquerable will, he becomes the symbol of self-sacrifice and goodness that humanity basically stands for. He redeems himself by saving the lives of thousands of Muslims in a thrilling climax:

The leader raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired. He hit his mark and one of the man’s legs came off the rope and dangled in the air....there were volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan. (207)



But all is not lost. Jugga does everything he can to assert the nobility of his self. Where the self-serving rationalizing of Iqbal, the human but not always moral Hukum Chand, the good bhai Meet Singh, and, above all, the government fails to protect the thousand passengers of the train, Jugga save them out of valor and self-sacrifice. His normal identity of a ruffian, immoral and inconsiderate fellow is suddenly transmuted into that of a good man, a passionate lover, a true Sikh. He is the only case in the novel whose shift in identity is for the better. All others reveal either communal (the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs) or hypocritical (Iqbal), or immoral (Malli, Hukum Chand), or weak (the lambarder, Meet Singh) selves. In this context, V.T. Giri writes that the only “redeeming grace” in the novel is love:

*Train to Pakistan* is not just a political novel but a social one—a politics-polluted society played with by the bureaucrats for their personal and private ends, under the pretensions of executing the so-called policies of the so-called Government. .... Love is the only redeeming grace of human life, the only impulse to which one and all respond instinctively. Hukum Chand’s love for Haseena Begum not only creates moral compunctions in him but makes him change his only if to save the train I which Haseena is to leave for Pakistan. He releases Jugga Budmash and Iqbal whose arrest order he himself had signed and had also justified it to himself. The love of Jugga for Nooran is a saga of human suffering and sacrifice elevated to epic grandeur. Jugga’s struggle and ultimate death to save the train I which Nooran is supposed to be traveling to Pakistan is truly Greek I its catastrophic effect. (51)

Some other critics also see Jugga as the sacrificial hero who must die so as both to

save his beloved (and the Muslims in the train) and to expiate the sins of the people recklessly preying at each other. That the ones in power are powerless to prevent the slaughter of the innocents at the partition is pointedly elaborated by the comparison and contrast between Jugga the dacoit and Hukum Chand the magistrate. Both have Muslim girls as their fiancée, and both are passionate about their love. But the magistrate does not have the courage to come to the front himself to protect the train which carries Jugga's girl also. Therefore he devises a devious machination of releasing Jugga and Iqbal in the hope that the two would do something to ensure the safety of the Pakistan-bound train. But Jugga, in contrast, is ever ready for a straightforward personal sacrifice. He does so in the true spirit of a passionate lover, and a true Sikh, though he has not read any treatise on Sikhism. He is also contrasted with the fanatic Sikh youth who plots the murder of the outgoing Muslims. And with Iqbal, the atheist and outwardly a communist activist but really a self serving rootless modern man, the contrast becomes complete. Juggat Singh outweighs all other in commanding our admiration and sympathy. Gomathi Narayan confers upon Jugga the badmash the stature of a saviour. She writes:

Jugga is obviously a hero... Since the events of the novel prove that he is certainly head and shoulders above the minions of law and administration, the social coordinates of Jugga which establish him as a "badmash," a criminal constantly in and out of prison, are significant: it is Jugga the law-breaker who accomplished single-handed what the Establishment fails to do. (174)

### **Politicizing Religion: Downplay of Human Values**

Khushwanta Singh made his debut as a writer more by accident than by choice. But the compulsive inner urge he felt as a middle-aged man to let tout his

disenchantment with long-cherished human values in the wake of inhuman bestial horrors and insane savage killings on both sides during the partition of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan in August 1947. By the time monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of the northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. The humanity at stake at the politics-polluted society, played with by the bureaucrats for their personal and private ends is projected through Mano Majra, a small village in the remote reaches of the frontier, by the novelist.

The harrowing incidents of 1947 had shaken the faith of all the sensitive and thinking people of India in the intrinsic nobility of man, taught by its sages and saints including Mahatma Gandhi during various stages of its cultural evolution of thousands of years. They brought great disillusionment and crisis of values in the life Khuswanta Singh also. Describing his mental agony and distressing inner conflict of this period of disillusionment, he remarks in the *Guest of Honour* Programme:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by their most savage massacres known in the history of the country...I had believed that we Indians were peace-loving and non-violent, that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became...an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world... I decided to try my hand at writing. (54)

All the venom and indignation felt by him at the ghastly human tragedy was poured by him with scathing irony and stark realism in this memorable work of fiction

depicting the sinister impact of partition on the peace-loving Hindus; Muslims and Sikhs of Mano Majra.

The downplay of human values suffered by people during this period of unprecedented human tragedy is conveyed by the author through his satirical portraiture of three characters typical of their three different situations epitomizing the civilized human life. These are Hukum Chand, the high officer in the government administration, Meet Singh, the Sikh Priest, and Iqbal Singh, the rationalistic and idealistic, non-communal political worker. But, and surprisingly enough, Jugga's moral stature stands out in strong belief against the hypocrisy, cowardice and sham of these characters.

Hukum Chand, the Magistrate and deputy commissioner of the district is a worldly wise man of easy morals. He owes his rise from a foot-constable to his present high position to his sycophancy. "He always kept the sahibs pleased and they gave him one promotion after another" (56). He is considered even by religious people like Meet Singh "a nar admi- and clever. He is true to his friends and always gets things done for them.... nothing counterfeit about Hukum Chand" (56). He is however, lascivious and carries on a liaison with a Muslim dancing girl Haseena. His fatalism has made him face the buffets of destiny with equanimity:

He had taken the loss of his children with phlegmatic resignation. He had borne with an illiterate, unattractive wife, without complaint. It all came from his belief that the only absolute truth was death. The rest – love ambition, pride, and values of all kinds--was to be taken with a pinch of salt. He did so with a clear conscience. Although he accepted gifts and obliged friends when they got into trouble, he was not corrupt. He occasionally joined in Parties, arranged for singing and

dancing--and sometimes sex--but he was not immoral. (104)

He is, however, terribly shocked when he sees the heaps of dead bodies of men, women and children huddled on a train from Pakistan. A cold numbness overtakes him and all his emotions are dead, “but a trainload of dead was too much for even Hukum Chand’s fatalism. He could not squire a massacre with a philosophical belief in the inevitability of death. It bewildered and frightened him by its violence and its magnitude” (105).

So, even a cool man like Hukum Chand is forced to acknowledge the unbearable savagery of the communalism-ridden people. He is benumbed by the brutality of it all. His official responsibilities, however, compel him to save the lives of people under his charge. Even by nature “he took life as it was. He did not want to recast it or rebel against it....His immediate problem was to save Muslim lives” (118).

Hukum Chand’s interest in saving Muslim lives, however, is not motivated by humanitarian considerations. He is only concerned about the maintenance of law and order lest his official position is compromised and endangered. The duplicity in his attitude is revealed in his conversation with the sub-inspector of police:

We must maintain law and order. If possible, get the Muslims to go out peacefully...No, Inspector, sahib, whatever our view –and God alone knows what I would have done to these Pakistanis if I were not a government servant –we must not let there be any killing or destruction of property. Let them get out, but be careful they do not take too much with them. Hindus from Pakistan were stripped of all their belongings before they were allowed to leave. (32)

Later when he feels utterly broken by the increasing incidents of arsons and

looting, he lapses into inactivity and wants just to maintain pretence of having acted responsibly: “Well, Inspector Sahib, let them kill. Let everyone kill. Just ask for help from other stations and keep a record of the messages you send. We must be able to prove that we did our best to stop them” (177). This utterance of him totally fails to uphold his image as responsible and sensitive human being. But his apathy at the face of the violence seems negligible in comparison to the atrocities that the communalists inflicted on the millions.

Meet Singh is a peasant who has taken to religion as an escape from work. He is not learned in the scriptures, nor has he any facility for conversation. But he is a man of peace and goodwill. Even in his simplicity he has the largeness of heart to say that everyone is welcome to his religion. When a Sikh boy tries to incite Mano Majrans against Muslims, he even argues with the boy: “What have the Muslims here done to us for us to kill them and in revenge for what Muslims in Pakistan are doing? Only people who have committed crimes should be punished”(171). But, when it comes to taking steps to avert the imminent danger to Muslims, he recoils in timidity. When Iqbal implores him, “Bhaiji, can’t you stop it? The all listen to you,” he replies “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” (193).

Iqbal Singh is the England educated young man of Communist leanings. No other character in the novel is subjected to such and ironic and brutal exposure as he is. He is very forthright, rational and logical in his criticism of social evils in the country as is evident from just one of his pointed remarks, “Where on earth except in India would men’s life depend on whether or not his foreskin had been removed? It would be laughable if it were not tragic” (188). He has all the theories and visions and

philosophies but lacks the courage to translate them into action in time of crises. From the very start he is found too worried about his own safety and health rather than that of the Mano Majrans. He has been sent by his People's Party of India to forge unity between Sikhs and Muslims and check them from violence, but the moment he learns of a murder in Mano Majra, he gets frightened. He busies himself in contemplating whether the murder was communal and whether his being in the village was safe to his person. He comes to the conclusion that he couldn't do much in the village which is all excited about a murder. He winces under the sharp jibe of Meet Singh who has remarked, "Why, Babu Sahib, you have come to stop killing and you are upset by one murder? I thought you had come to stop such things, Babu Sahib" (51). As the communal tension mounts in the village, to take up murderous proportions, he wishes that his leaders had sent him somewhere else, any place otherwise Mano Majra. "He would be so much more useful directing police and clearing the cobwebs from their minds" (65).

Iqbal Singh's moral inadequacy comes under the bantering ridicule of the author when he shows him funkling at the time of threatened attack on Mano Majran Muslims. Replying to Meet Singh's ironical remark, "when you came you were going to speak to them about something? Why don't you tell them now?" he says, "Bhaiji, when people go about with guns and spears you can only talk back with guns and spears. If you cannot do that, then it is best to keep out of their way" (193). Instead of resorting to bold steps to avert the tragedy, he drowns himself in pegs after pegs of whisky and muses over the futility of any action in the present situation.

If there were people to see the act of self-immolation, as on a cinema screen, the sacrifice might be worthwhile: a moral lesson might be conveyed. If all that was likely to happen next morning your corpse

would be found among thousands of others, looking just like them—cropped hair, shaven chin...even circumcised—who could know that you were Muslim victim of a massacre. (194)

Such is the fame-seeking, high-sounding but doing nothing consciousness of the ideologue Iqbal Singh. His seeming enthusiasm for the villagers at first, his comment on the petty minded leaders, and his soliloquy about the politics of the country all come out to be his safe haven of escape, not of a social and political vision.

Contrasted against these moral decrepits, respected by the civilized society, is Jugga, a robust and tall Sikh who is feared and condemned as a bad character. He has no pretensions about himself and candidly confesses before Iqbal, “I am a budmash. All governments put me in jail.” When Iqbal asks him, “but what makes you budmash? The government,” he interrupts him in the middle and replies, “No, Babu Sahib, it is our fate.... so I do something, and it is always wrong” (76)). Jugga is in reality a typical Punjabi peasant in his strength and weakness, in his courage, fearlessness, loyalty, unsophistication, roughness and bluntness. He is self-sacrificing and humane. He shows his mettle on several occasions. His heroic self-sacrifice to save the lives of the innocent Muslims of his village, that makes him put to shame all those time servers who not-withstanding their resources, power, learning and prestige falter and vacillate to take a decision. There is a rare grandeur and singular nobility of character about his heroic resolution to save Mano Majran Muslims from death-trap. He goes to gurdwara and asks Meet Singh, avoiding all necessary talk, to read “Will you just read me a few lines quickly?...it does not matter what you read. Just read it” (198). As the Bhaiji comes to the end of his recitation and tells him, “It is just the Guru’s word. If you are going to do something bad, the Guru’s will stand in your way...and then forgive you,” he gets up and goes away uttering “Sat Sri Akal”



(199). A little Later we see him twinning round a rope tied across the bridge for killing Muslims. The only hope in the novel about human capacity for great, for sacrifice, is this socially outcaste ruffian's bold self sacrifice.

### **Questioning Oneself: Crisis of Identity**

The novel contains numerous instances in which people are shown flabbergasted at the sight of communal frenzy everywhere. They turn introspective and retrospective, and ask to themselves whether their neighbours upon whom they could rely till the day before are really their neighbours any more. They are full of suspicion at any new face: are they Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs? One has to think twice before speaking in a group: is it their own group or the enemy's? One is even forced to be cautious if they should or should not hide their name. At the national level, people have to adjust in a new political division of a nation; at the personal level, they have to redefine themselves, their friends, and, most acutely, their enemies.

Iqbal Singh proves a particularly pathetic and ironic case of confusion as to his communal identity owing to his name. He prefers to identify himself as a cadre of a communist party named People's Party and being England-educated thinks himself free of all communal affiliations. He is initially known only as Iqbal which can be a Muslim or a Sikh name. But when the fire of communal hatred engulfs so distant and calm a village as Mano Majra, Iqbal has to be cautious. Now he can no longer keep his religion-- in which he does not believe!--a mystery. In a Sikh village which has witnessed trainloads of Hindu and Sikh corpses sent from Pakistan as a gift, he should not insinuate that he might as well be a Muslim. That would mean an undeserved death at the hands of the Sikh fanatics. Now his equivocal, or rather an equi-communal name really disturbs him. Exasperated and baffled by human parochialism and folly, he gives vent to his anger in the following terms which catch the absurdity

of identifying one's religion by checking one's foreskin:

Iqbal realized that it was that it was the company of Jugga and the constable, who were all Sikhs, that really saved him from being stopped and questioned. He wished he could get out of this place where he had to prove his Sikhism to save his life. He would pick up his things from Mano Majra and catch the first train. Perhaps there were no trains. And if there were, could he risk getting on to one? He cursed his luck for having a name like Iqbal, and then being.... Where on earth except in India would man's life depend on whether or not his foreskin has been removed? It would be laughable if it were not tragic. He would have to stay in Mano Majra several days and stay close to Meet Singh for protection—meet Singh with his unkempt appearance and two trips a day to the fields to defecate. The thought was revolting. If only he could get out to Delhi and to civilization! He would report on his arrest; the party would front-page the news with his photograph: ANGLO-AMERICAN CAPITALIST CONSPIRACY TO CREATE CHAOS (lovely alliteration). COMRADE IQBAL IMPRISONED ON BORDER. It would him a hero. (188)

This excerpt is revealing in more than one sense. First, it tells us that Iqbal cannot assert his atheist and communist conviction strongly when there is a highly probable menace to his life. Second, he does not like the company of Bhai Meet Singh and the company of the likes of him, albeit his mission is to stay and work with these very peasants and rural poor. The village is an uncivilized place, hence his desire to escape from there to reach the safety and glamour of the civilized Delhi. This points to the chasm between his sayings and his doings. Thirdly, Iqbal is more interested in getting

noticed for his works by the media, than in getting his works done. His desire to return Delhi is a sure pointer to this revelation.

When he arrives at the gurdwara after being released from the jail, Bhai Meet Singh is there to protect him. By now many refugees from Pakistan have taken shelter in Mano Majra, therefore the strong presence of communal malice against any possible Muslim is apparent. At such times Iqbal is a suspect name. But it is the tact of the Bhai who addresses him as “Iqbal Singhji” with a clear emphasis on “Singh” so as to remove all possible suspicion among the Sikhs that a Muslim activist has arrived in the village in such a turbulent time. Even then he is inquired of by a man:

“You are a Sikh, Iqbal Singhji?” inquired one of the men.

“Yes.” A fortnight earlier he would have replied emphatically “No,” or “I have no religion” or “Religion is irrelevant.” The situation was different now, and in any case it was true that he was born a Sikh.

(190)

What damns Iqbal is his lack of a positive religious and cultural identity. His name is common both among the Sikhs and the Muslims. Hence he can be called Iqbal Singh or Mohammad Iqbal. However this ambiguity is not in his favour; he cannot enjoy the freedom his name should otherwise have brought to him. To the contrary, it accentuates his rootlessness and faithlessness: he is neither a Sikh nor a Muslim. By contrast though a criminal in the eyes of the establishment and a budmash for the society, Jugat Singh is capable of the highest sacrifice one can make inhuman life: to embrace death in averting the death of thousand others. What enables Jugga for this sacrifice is partly his unshakable faith in the words of the Gurus. And precisely this faith is what Iqbal lacks. Hence, for him it is senseless to try to avert the mass murder in the train.

Crisis of identity is faced by Hukum Chand, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, too. He has to prove whether he is a capable government official, or a mere Hindu, or a true lover of a Muslim girl Haseena. He wants to remain true to his love and duty, and releases Jugga and Iqbal in the hope that the two with their mental and physical power combined would some devise a way to avert the slaughter of the inmates of the train to Pakistan which is carrying his Haseena.

At the national scale too, the saddest and bloodiest migration of all in the history of India proved disastrous. The displacement of a nation, of Pakistan, from India was, as Salman Rushdie writes in his novel *Shame*, “insufficiently imagined”. The people, even the Pakistanis, have not been able to forget their original land. Migration requires that we forget our past in order to survive in the present. But it is a tough matter forgetting history; how can one help recalling their past? How could the newly named Pakistanis who had been Indians from very beginning act as if they were simply Pakistanis and nothing more? The only thing that was to unite the Pakistanis was the fact that they were all Muslims. But can a religion--Islam here--be an authentic uniting thread for people from a vast country? What went wrong with the creation of Pakistan was that the Muslim leaders tried to completely cut their history off from the India, but the apparition of the stronger and bigger India kept on frightening the Pakistani consciousness.

#### IV. Conclusion

*Train to Pakistan* is a major historical novel in English dealing with the theme of massacre of millions of people that the partition of India caused. The novel explores into humanity's psyche and behaviour when they are under duress. It shows that when their commonsense becomes something uncommon, people cannot have it at their disposal to act sensibly and to rely on. The best in man takes no time to turn into the beast in him, given the circumstance that enveloped the inhabitants of India around the partition and liberation of the nation.

What is thought impossible or abominable for one to embrace, to act, becomes not only imperative but desirable too to execute when circumstanced. Of the millions of Muslims, who had ever imagined what they would do to their neighbours from another religion? And which Hindu and Sikh had planned to carry the dance of death on their Muslim neighbours? But when the circumstance arose, every one rose up to the demand of the violent urge within him/her to avenge the undeserved death of his/her co-religionists. This further perpetrated the violence, instead of teaching each other the lesson of peace and harmony, as both parties had so simplistically assumed. In face of communal hatred and violence, the best judgement in people gave way to revenge through various acts of cruelty: murder, rape, arson, mutilation, and humiliation. The Hindus and Sikhs on the one side had not imagined that they would be upon their Muslim neighbours. Nor had the Muslims thought they would have to go so far in terms of cruelty and insensitivity to hack their Hindu-Sikh neighbours. But under unforeseen, unprepared circumstances the beast in the human heart and mind escapes out, directing the masses to accomplish deadly feats. *Train to Pakistan* makes a study, as it were, of the human capacity for bringing about death and destruction and reveling in it. The novel presents the reader with a glimpse of an

inferno let loose by the fundamentalist forces which voiced the two-nation theory to create a Muslim Pakistan without ever so much as once pondering what trouble and loss of life, displacement and migration it would bring about if executed without preparation and foresight.

The partition of India is perhaps the source of the saddest and bloodiest migration of all, giving rise to a new nation of Pakistan. The migration did not take all to a new land of safety. Rather, it required them to relinquish their past without, however, ensuring their present and future. They could not forget their history, and the lived history of the bloodshed. Therefore many writers took to recording the same in their works. Many novels are written on the theme of Indian partition and the aftermath thereof. The bulk of literature on the same, in poems and short stories too is considerable. They all express shock, disgust and disbelief to the fact that millions of Indians fell prey to one of the most horrendous massacres in the history of modern world. Of the literary works on this subject, Singh's novel is by the common consent the most objective one in rendering the theme of violence in literature. The novel presents a balanced perspective when, talking about the claims from both sides that it was the other side that was murdering their people, it comments on the complicity of the Hindu-Sikhs and Muslims in the acts of horror, by reporting that both sides killed. The objectivity involved in this act of narration is, however, not insensitive to the inhumanity and savagery of the mass massacre.

The partition of India had a tremendous and terrible impact on the life of millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. The creation of Pakistan in no way alleviated the trauma that the identity-seeking nations or rather people wrought upon themselves. Partition involved mass migrations of people leaving their homes, their seats of culture, for new land appropriated for the sake of that divisive element called

religion. That is, there were instances of Muslims from all over India migrating across different worlds, to Pakistan, their promised homeland united by Islam alone. And there were Hindus and Sikhs leaving the Pakistani areas for a safe haven which was safe in the only hope that there they would not be slaughtered by the Muslims. But the real trouble was the hasty and unplanned transmigration of people. That created a terrible stampede in which both sides lost a large number of its members on their way to their destination: they were blocked, staved, and stabbed on the way to their destinations. The impact of partition and the magnitude of migration were insufficiently imagined.

By exposing the irrational and the illogical in human beings that is so ever ready to pop out, Khushwant Singh has exposed the mob psychology of the people active and over-stirred during the restless and uncertain days around the declaration of the division of the Indian nation in 1947. Faced with an unforewarned crisis, people undergo the crisis of identity. They forget or rather do not especially want to remember, who they are, what their duties are, and what is right and wrong. This exposition of the crisis of identity of the Indian people at the turbulent times of partition has made the novel *Train to Pakistan* an indispensable book to refer to while on is talking about Indian partition literature. This thesis has studied the novel for its portrayal of people under stress and trauma.

Although the novel is not all about depravity and inhumanity evident in the supreme sacrifice of Jugat Singh who risks his life in saving the life of his beloved along with the thousand Muslims on board the train to Pakistan, and one of affirmation of humanity's essential virtues of selfless sacrifice, love and devotion, it nevertheless is a powerful study of the crisis of identity of people during the troubled times as the holocaust of partition.

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