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TRIUMPH OF LOVE IN THE MIDST OF COMMUNAL HATRED AND UNLEASHING OF
VIOLENCE IN *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*

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ABSTRACT

The history of partition abounds in the depiction of violence springing from communal hatred that goaded human beings to think and act like beasts sacrificing the very foundation of human sensibility. It was such a horrendous time that the people who lived like brothers and helpful neighbours just few days back, became savagely blood-thirsty against each other and crossed all limits of atrocity and brutality to feed their innate bestiality. Indeed, Khuswant Singh's classic text *Train to Pakistan* marvelously recreates the harrowing experience of all those victims who were sacrificed on the altar of jingoism based on religious identity. It presents a good of number stunning episodes that depict heart-rending experiences and genuinely they trigger to well up tears in our eyes besides evoking the impression of helplessness and painful responsiveness. Yet at the same time the novel perhaps attains an altogether different dimension when the novelist parallelly fosters the theme of love in the midst of such doomsday. Truly Jugga, the local dacoit stands out as an epitome of love and life in the midst of a surrounding where both love and life have become futile and his love for Nooran, a Muslim girl transcends the narrow barrier of religious segregation. In this paper my objective is to explore how Khuswant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* has rendered the love between Jugga and Nooran in order to make us believe the triumph of love in the midst of communal hatred and unleashing of violence.

Keywords: Violence, love, sacrifice, religious hatred etc.

Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is a wonderful rendition of two instinctive and contrary attributes of human beings – love and hate. If one can visualize the unleashing of violence and the indiscriminate bloodshed of human beings in the novel, one can also feel the strong emotion of love running simultaneously in the design of the novel. In fact, it is this parallel processing of the treatment of love and hate that paves the way for its artistic beauty and widespread recognition. The novel presents the story of Mano Majra, an ordinary village at the border of two nations – India and Pakistan that suddenly becomes extraordinary when there takes place the arrival of a 'ghost train' in the railway station of Mano Majra. Its arrival in the broad daylight crated a commotion in the village. The otherwise peaceful and simple village gradually becomes site for communal tension and mistrust. The villagers were so far away from political upheavals of the time that they were even unaware of the

departure of the British from India and owing to such ignorance of political consciousness there was no acute religious rift amongst the villagers. In fact, they lived like brothers and fellow neighbours without having religious grudge against each other. Imam Baksh, the mullah of the mosque was venerated by Hindus and Muslims alike and he was known to the villagers not as Imam Baksh or the mullah but as a chacha or 'Uncle'. Thus the identity of an individual was not based on his religious belief but on his humanitarian values and that is how the villagers have lived together for generations.

The ambience of the village has always been conducive to peaceful co-existence. Imam Baksh, the mullah of the mosque, Bhai Meet Singh, the man of Gurdwara and others shared their opinions freely and everybody paid attention whenever the reverend Imam Baksh expressed his views. However, the tranquility of the village gets seriously disrupted with the arrival of the so called 'ghost train', which ultimately challenged the unison existing between the Hindus and the Muslims. The discovery of the train with full load of corpses resulted in a heavy brooding silence in the village. Everyone felt his neighbour's hand against him and thought of finding friends and allies. The 'ghost train' came from Pakistan and carried corpses of Hindus and Sikhs- savagely mutilated and murdered. Soon the religious unison makes room for mistrust and soaring hatred amongst the villagers of Mano Majra. It got sharply divided into two halves and the familiar atmosphere of the village becomes alien. Besides the 'ghost train' from Pakistan several other reports of massacre of the Hindus and the Sikhs made the Sikhs of Mano Majra skeptic about the true nature of the Muslims of their village and they started to believe, 'Never trust a Mussulman'. On the other hand the same impression of mistrust worked on the minds of the Muslims about the Sikhs when rumors of atrocities committed by the Sikhs against the Muslims in Patiala, Ambala, Kapurthala etc. poisoned their minds and suddenly every Sikh in Mano Majra became a stranger with an evil intent.

The reports of women being raped and cruelly tortured on both sides of the border made both the communities angry and inhuman against each other. The Sikh refugees unlocked their harrowing experience of women jumping into wells and burning themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Truly such events are inexplicably horrifying and painful. Somehow these mishaps of molestation and mutilation of women's body fuelled everyone and it only required a single spark to create a conflagration. Mass killings went on randomly and it appeared that human lives have become absolutely valueless at a time when darkness looms large. The evil power is at its height and it celebrates each day by quenching its thirst with fresh human blood.

In midst of such a horrendous backdrop, the novelist has sowed the seeds of love and passion with sheer brilliance. Juggat Singh, the local dacoit in Mano Majra falls in love with Nooran, the daughter of Imam Baksh and the love culminates in self sacrifice on the part of Jugga in order to renew the lease of life for his love, Nooran. It is truly awe inspiring that against the background of such communal tension and unrest, these two lovers have found the way of their world. In spite of their religious difference they did not stop love making with each other as they were not blinded by the curtain of communalism. They went on meeting secretly and their clandestine love only blossomed with time. In fact, Khuswant Singh depicts a passionate scene of love between them quite romantically in which there is every implication of sensual fulfillment. The scene is wonderfully designed with the womanly negation and at the same time with manly haste in experiencing the corporeal contentment.

However, the depiction of amorous scene between Jugga and Nooran doesn't get renewed later on as the novel follows a different course of action with the murder of Ram Lal, the money lender. Though it was not a communal murder, yet it somehow resulted in tension and anxiety in the village. Jugga was arrested on the ground of suspicion along with a stranger Iqbal Singh (later on renamed as Mohammad Iqbal). With this arrest of Juggat Singh the love story between the two comes to an end for good. In fact, it was Jugga's last encounter with his 'Nooro' and after Jugga's arrest there started a sequence of disasters in the life of the villagers that swept away everyone including that of the love between Nooran and Jugga.

Mano Majra by this time has already started to boil under the heat of communalism and the flame was aggravated by the news of different atrocities that took place in Pakistan where thousands of Sikhs were brutally murdered and trains loaded with mutilated dead bodies came to India. The emotion of the Sikhs of Mano Majra

got blazed up when a trainload of Sikhs massacred by Muslims had been cremated in Mano Majra and innumerable Hindus and Sikhs came to take shelter in Mano Majra after being tortured in Pakistan. The graphic unfolding of atrocities and butchery of the Muslims against these refugees fired up the Sikhs of Mano Majra. Already the Muslims of the adjacent villages have been evacuated and given shelter in refugee camps in order to avoid any massacre of the Muslims as retaliation to the massacre of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan.

Yet it goes without saying that the communal ambiance in Mano Majra was comparatively more stable and peaceful and there was no communal riot or retaliation. It is only lately there has been a fume of unrest and anxiety in the village as the after several days once more a train came from Pakistan loaded with corpses. This time the dead bodies were not put on funeral pyre; rather buried in a rectangular trench almost fifty yards long with mounds of earth on either side. The undercurrent of tension was fuelled by some strangers who met with the Sikhs of the village and provoked them with reference to the massacres in Rawalpindi, and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhupura in which Hindus and Sikhs faced the violence and atrocity of the Muslims and women were ravished. The provocative speeches of the speaker cast its spell over the Sikhs present over there and one after another more than fifty men agreed to join the horrendous plan of murdering the Muslims who were to be sent to Pakistan in that train. What is interesting to point out is that few of them were such people who had recently wept at the departure of their Muslim friends. Indeed, when it comes to the question of religion, people become blind to their humanitarian qualities and respond to the beast within.

The Muslims of Mano Majra like all other adjacent villages had to be evacuated to the refugee camps; although the news was like a shock to Nooran. She was not ready to leave the village and go to Pakistan. After all she is going to be the mother of Jugga's child and to her this village is everything- having all the memories of her love with Jugga. Desperately she tried to be here and implored Jugga's mother and informed her about the child in her womb. Jugga's mother consoled her that Jugga would bring her back to this village and with this consolation she decided to go to Pakistan with her father. However, the intensity of love between the two can be felt without doubt and it even touched Jugga's mother who was initially rude and unsympathetic to Nooran.

On being released from the jail, Jugga returned to the village and his immediate concern was the fate of Nooran. His love for his 'Noroo' made him feel that the villagers would definitely stop Imam Baksh leaving Mano Majra, but contrary to his expectation they had already left the village. On the other hand a full proof plan has been hatched as to the operation would take place that night. Minutely the plan has been discussed so that there remains no scope for its failure and as per the plan all the members have assembled in and around the station. The motto was to kill as many Muslims as possible and to send a message to Pakistan that if they commit further crime they would face double consequence. All is set and finally the appointed hour comes.

The assailants prepared a rope, stiff as a shaft of steel adjacent to the bridge so that when the train would pass it might cut many people sitting on the compartment in two like a knife slicing cucumbers. Everything was going as per their plan and suddenly a man was noticed climbing the steel span and approaching the rope. The man gradually reached the spot where he wanted to be and whipped out a small kirpan from his waist and began to slash the rope. The leader of the attackers sensed danger and fired at him. The man was shot at his leg and it dangled in the air. Yet he was pursuing his task and then someone fired another shot. The body of the man slid off the rope, but he clung to it with his hand and chin and desperately he continued hacking the rope with knife and his teeth. Then a volley of shots was fired at him and he shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped as he fell and "The train ran over him, and went to Pakistan."

It is to be noted that critics have interpreted the ending of the novel differently. M.K. Naik, for example, finds 'the conventionally romantic motif of the love of Jugga, the Sikh village gangster, for (of course) a Muslim girl, in saving whom he duly sacrifices his life' to be a 'flaw' in the novel; and impatient with the depiction of such inter-religious romances, asks: 'Why must Hindu heroes of Partition novels fall, with monotonous regularity, in love with Muslim girls alone?' However, beyond such religious bracketing of the perspective there is broader humanitarian horizon too.

Juggat Singh, that is Jugga sacrificed his life in order to save his love, his 'Noroo'. However, his self sacrifice did not only save the life of his beloved but thousands of Muslims who might have been killed in that train. So it

is not only Noora who is saved by his sacrifice, rather his sacrifice saves humanity at a time when fellow human beings have become blood thirsty for each other. Truly Jugga's love for Nooran has been so genuine that it ennobled his being and emboldened him to sacrifice his life on the altar of love. His sacrifice is an emphatic message to all that howsoever cruel and heinous may be the form of communal hatred, true love triumphs over all such narrow minded emotions. Juggut draws strength from God to help himself in his noble pursuit which seems to be the novelist's plea also. His love for Nooran ennobles him to a higher state and he is inspired by the noble force of love. His sacrifice reminds us of Christ who too sheds his blood in order to redeem mankind of sin. It strengthens our belief in love in particular and we retain our faith in the championing force of goodness in life.

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