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CONFLICT BETWEEN COMMUNALISM AND HUMANISM IN THE TIME OF
PARTITION: A STUDY OF KHUSHWANT SINGH'S *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*

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Abstract:

In this research paper I have taken a trifle endeavour to look into the traumatic condition of the people in India during the time of partition and how the bloody religious clashes incite a conflict between religion and nationalism, and between communalism and humanism. Incidentally, India gained its independence from British Empire in the year 1947. But unfortunately it was, therefore followed by a heinous event —partition of India which was nothing but one of the bloodiest upheavals in Indian history that claimed millions of people from both sides were compelled to leave their homes and more than half a million were killed. Khushwant Singh in his novel *Train to Pakistan* goes on to show how the peaceful atmosphere of Mano Marja, a small village which is close to Indo-Pakistan border becomes the seat of communal suspicion, tension, hatred and violence. Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus lived in this village happily for centuries with love, affection and brotherhood. But the partition of India turns the thorn less condition of India into a relentless, bloody brutal and heartless. Humanity seems to be

dead. Women were raped and killed brutally.

Keywords: partition, communalism, humanity, religion, identity, love.

The author of the novel *Train to Pakistan* Khushwant Singh was an Indian author, lawyer, diplomat, journalist and politician. *Train to Pakistan* (1956) is a masterpiece of Mr. Singh's literary oeuvre. It is due to this novel Mr. Singh was acclaimed as a distinguished Indian writer "with an individual status in modern Indo-Anglican Literature" [Sahane, 344] and received award of Grove Indian Fiction. V. A. Sahane, the author, editor and critic divides the novel *Train to Pakistan* into four phases: Dacoity, Kaliyuga, Mano Marja and Karma. In the

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first section, 'Dacoity', the novelist introduces the murder of Ramlal by a gang of dacoits. All the major characters are introduced in this section. In the second section "kaliyuga", Kaliyuga becomes Kaliyuga, the age of Kali, the mother of death and destruction. Kaliyug comes at the end of the order of ages when the old order is destroyed. Here, the novelist unveils the lives of the people at Mano Marja turn into misery with the arrival of communal hatred and suspicion. For generation they happily and peacefully but due to the stigma and upheaval of partition their harmonious cosmos turns into a violent chaos.

In the third section "Mano Marja", a replica of India in microcosm where Sikhs and Muslims have lived together for hundreds of years but then one day, at the end of the Summer, the "ghost train" arrives with the corpses of thousands of refugees brings 'everlasting bonfire' in the village. Consequently, the Muslims were forced to leave their 'home' and the psychological trauma they underwent is described in this section. In the last section, the novelist reveals the meaning of 'Karma' and its result, the misery of India. While the partition of India is 'Karma', the communal tension in India is the result of 'Karma'. The result ends at the outskirts of a dark and grim note of violence and butchery. This is how, Mr. Singh evolves the blood curling and hidros is backdrop of India during

partition on which Bhatnagar says Khuswant Singh was the first Indian novelist in English to write about the horror and holocaust of partition with great artistic concern in *Train to Pakistan*. It is not partition but what it gets associated with and what it becomes symbolic of that attracts the attention of the writer. [Bhatnagar152].

It is to be noted that in the desert of communal riots there is a heart-soothing oasis where communal destruction is not yet taken place, where people of all communities live in together peacefully and with harmony and brotherhood. It is the tiny border village named Mano Majra, situated about a mile south of a railroad bridge on the Sutlej. The majority of population of this village is Sikh and also has Muslim inhabitants and there is only one Hindu family of Lala Ram Lal. All the inhabitants of this village live in this bucolic setting, as it were, under the halo of idyllic rose-garden. Mano Majra is a very sensitive place and minds of the villagers remain unchanged until the communal relation is disturbed with the arrival of the ghost train.

The place in the village is reflected that this village is yet unaware of the partition and also about the independence of India. Interestingly, the life-styling of the gullible villagers is depended on the arrival and departure of trains through Mano Marja.

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The regular and systematic rhythm of the village life is relied on regularity and punctuality of passenger trains and goods trains through Mano Marja. At the very outset of the novel a dacoity and murder of Ram Lal took place. Therefore, his family fell into a deep shock and grief and nobody extends their helping hands for their rescue as everybody is afraid of the dacoits. So, the condition of Ram Lal's family becomes miserable. Subsequently, Jugga and Iqbal Singh are falsely arrested for the crime; Jugga for the murder of Lala Ram Lal, while Iqbal Singh is presumed to be a Muslim and a member of Muslim League and it is assumed by the fundamentalists that Iqbal is a Muslim who is engaged in spreading communal frenzy. In the Police Station the police tried to collect information from them but they were not mild cheese to be chopped off. It is to be noted that Jugga is a large young man who is outwardly a black sheep but inwardly is good at heart.

He is the lover of Nooran, the daughter of a Muslim weaver who is blind and Imam of a mosque. The relationship between a Sikh peasant Juggut Singh and a Muslim girl Nooran epitomizes love, humanity and compassion. His love for Nooran is a pungent attack on those extremists who tries to attack and kill innocent people. Juggut Singh is presented in such a way, as it were; he is embodying Tagore's idea of the spiritual unity among human beings. Rabindranath Tagore, an

epitome of spiritual humanism wants *Mukti* from fundamentalism, extremism, casteism, injustice and religious riots and intends to establish India as a 'Utopian World' where all things run through 'spiritual humanism'. In the context of the novel 'Train to Pakistan', the small village Mano Marja is unveiled as an emblem of Shakespearean tragic backdrop where issues like horror, suspicion, terror, murder and damnation are inherent but in a horrendous setting like Mano Marja Juggut Singh encourages humanitarian oneness with the universe and love for all humanity. 'Spiritual humanism' does not believe in detachment from worldly pleasure, asceticism and deliverance rather it preaches to embrace the aesthetic beauty of the world and to admire all worldly creatures".

The perspicuous and luminous idyllic 'hamlet' Mano Marja turns out to be Shakespearean fearsome 'Hamlet' at a crucial juncture when the ghost train full of corpses arrives in the village. The people of the village, therefore, become dumb founded. The arrival of a ghost train leaves Hukum Chand shaken as well, and he is compelled to cling Haseena, a young Muslim prostitute the sub inspector arranged for him for his sleep. This incident of violence results in a shell shock among the gullible people of Mano Marja. Consequently, thousands of people became homeless, helpless and were looted and assassinated. Women were raped randomly. Henceforth, the Muslims had to

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leave the village, their original place and rebuild a 'home' in another place which is not of their own place. The people of India because of partition had to face a diasporic identity crisis crossing the border of divided India. At this crucial juncture in a small village Mano Marja the Muslims and Sikhs embraced each other loudly and wept like children on their separation.

It insinuates separating the idea of 'oneness' among human beings. It is not because of common villagers but because of extremist politician who made India divided into two halves. Incidentally, a fetus, which is inside the womb of Nooran and the father of the baby (yet to born) is Sikh, is presumed to be a victim of communal hatred. This was really a scar of the then society that a child is yet see the light of the world, is assumed to be killed in Pakistan because the father of the child is not a Muslim. It is unrolling nothing but a drastic religious and political fanaticism prevailing during the partition across the whole nation. At this crucial juncture, Jugga and Iqbal were released from the custody hoping that both of them will help in stopping the villagers from killing the Muslims who were joining to Pakistan through a train to Pakistan. Therefore, Jugga, a Sikh learning from his mother that Nooran visited her before leaving for the refugee camp and she carries his child in her womb, tries heart and soul to save his love.

As per plan the stranger and other fanatics assembled along the railway line only kill all the Muslims and to send all the corpses to Pakistan as a 'gift'. Incidentally, a thick rope was tied horizontally above the railway line and it was twenty feet above the track. Therefore, Juggut Singh appears on the bridge and cuts the rope and saves all the Muslims sitting on the roof, thereby the train passes through the bridge. Thus, Jugga sacrifices his life for the sake of his life. "There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him and went to Pakistan." [Singh 190] .

Thus, Jugga saves the lives of thousands of Muslim on the train that went to Pakistan while the purpose of Jugga was to save the life of Jugga and its fetus, the purpose of Hukum Chand was to save the life of Haseena, his beloved who was also on the same train. A Sikh youth appears to be an ideal example of communal love and affection. Consequently, morality and humanism appear to be winner, while violence and communal hatred loses its conflict. Thus, a train to Pakistan was not merely a train which went to Pakistan safely but a message of love went to Pakistan—a deep message of humanity, morality and togetherness that Tagore epitomizes surpassing the grim note of violence and butchery. It has something kind of Shakespearean tragedy about it. While the

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partition of India enhances the spiritual decadence of human beings, Juggat Singh by saving humanity provides a tonic to cure the fragmented and displaced bones of India, the then waste land and gives *mantra* for the purpose of providing inner peace and tranquility. "Shantih Shantih Shantih "[Eliot, The Waste Land].

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