

Hostility and Violence as Consequences of Turbulent Partition in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*

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Abstract— The present paper is an attempt to study the violence and hostility in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. To achieve the aim of the study, the violence and hostility which emerged from the partition of British India are evaluated by the parameters: Sikhs and Muslims, India and Pakistan, People and Government, Men and Women, and Peace and Conflict. How the partition affects the people of Mano-Majra? This has been evaluated through these parameters of the study. Here the study is an attempt to explore the consequences which affected the people of both side of the borders; India and Pakistan. The rise of violence and hostility among the dwellers of Mano-Majra, the neighbors of centuries are affected due to this phenomena. Partition shook their roots of togetherness and created fear and anxiety. At the end they got nothing except suffering, human and property lose, woman were raped and shattered their faith against violence and hostility prevailing everywhere in the crisis of identity, individuality and liberty. What factors lead the consequences primarily hostility and violence, have elaborated in the paper.

Keywords— violence, hostility, Sikhs, Muslims, India, Pakistan, consequences, Mano-Majra.

I. INTRODUCTION

Train to Pakistan is a novel based on the partition of India, first published in 1956. It describes the whole atmosphere of partition of India. Partition was a political move and it has not only affected two countries but also played an important role in violence, women oppression, and displacement of people. Independence divided the British India into two parts; India and Pakistan. Here this study is an attempt to explore the consequences which affected the people on both sides India and Pakistan. The purpose of the paper is to evaluate these consequences violence and hostility by measuring relations between: Men and women, Sikh and Muslim, India and Pakistan, people and government, and peace and conflict. The paper will analyze *Train to Pakistan* in light of above parameters. The novel is divided into four different parts: Dacoity, Kalyug, Mano-Majra, and Karma. All these parts of the novel describe the different aspects of partition. The first part of the novel is titled Dacoity, starts with a tragic note, "The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. It was hotter than usual". (K. Singh 1) The novel begins with the

description of daily routine of residence of Mano-Majra, a fictional village near India-Pakistan border.. In the first part of the novel all most all characters are introduced in Mano Majra, there is a mixture of many religion. All the people whether they were Hindus-Sikhs or Muslims lived peacefully in the village. First of all the murder of Lala Ram Lal, is the first act of violence were presented. Lal Ram Lal's family was the only Hindu family in Mano Majra. In next part of the novel, the gradual change in the schedule of the trains created sense of fear and curiosity in the heart of people living in Mano-Majra. Their sense of fear came true when a train from Pakistan carried corpses brutally killed; women were raped and dragged by Muslims from Pakistan. The District Magistrate and Commissioner named Hukumchand tried to maintain law and order in Mano-Majra and District as well. There is a character named Juggut Singh, a dacoit, known as badmash number 10, truly loves a Muslim girl Nooran. At the end of the novel when government failed to maintain law and order, and to resist violence and hostility, Juggut Singh sacrificed himself to save his lover and refugees from the killing by Sikh fanatics. He represents an example of savior of humanity.

Sikhs/Hindus and Muslims:

Train to Pakistan is set as the backdrop of the partition of India which shook the roots of human existence in India. The novel is set in a fictional village Mano-Majra, a tiny village, situated near India Pakistan border. In the early part of novel partition has not yet affected Mano-Majra. But very soon the violence and hostility between Hindu/Sikh and Muslim deeply affected the peace of Mano-Majra. The trains regulated daily routine of the villagers. One train in the morning and one in the evening mark their beginning and end of the day.

The Novel is also about the simple and innocent life of the people (Hindu, Muslim and Sikh) of Mano Majra. The people witnessed the horror of Partition of 1947, in which number of innocents meet to their death. Being a Sikh & a writer, Khushwant Singh has very well recorded the faithful & silence reactions of the people. According to William Walsh, *Train to Pakistan* is a tense economical novel thoroughly true to the events and the people in the story. As a novelist, Khushwant Singh has freely expressed the true realities / incidents of the time of Partition without any partiality, attachment and subjectivity Mano Majra, the center of all happening was totally silent. And the important thing is the people of the village are very happy and sound, they don't have any jealous or hatred towards anyone. Everyone in the village was busy in their work and the priests and Mullah's were busy in the praying (Ramrao 3)

But the sudden change in the timings of the trains was realized by the villagers, which makes people scared. One day, the train loaded with corpses arrived at Mano Majra, Hindus and Sikhs brutally killed by the Muslims from the Pakistan side.

From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, where Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullah roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. Hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier abandoned their homes.... (K. Singh 1)

Above description at the beginning of the novel presents the violence and hostility prevailing in Sikhs/Hindus and Muslims. But still the people of Mano Majra don't know about all these riots and turbulence outside the village going

on. Very soon the violence and hostility affects the people of Mano Majra and Muslims are forced to evacuate Mano Majra by the army and government to refugee camp. The partition affected all of them whether they were Muslims, Sikhs or Hindus. Khushwant Singh remarks in the beginning of the novel, "According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped". (K. Singh 1)

Men and women:

Khushwant Singh has vividly presented the picture of hatred and women violence in *Train to Pakistan*. In this political move, women were subjugated. They were raped in the crisis of value at the time of displacement of people from both the side of Pakistan and India. This hostility in the hearts of people emerged from the move of government that is partition which only caused lose of human values and the dignity of women and men from both sides.

Women are considered as things not only to use but also for insult, revenge, etc. Army officer listed women with property and goods as land, house, etc. However, stress on women is more highlighted in the descriptions. Women abuse is not only taken as the tool to suppress the society but also the revenge. Army officer used women abuse to irritate Sikhs against Muslims efficiently as: One should never touch another's property; one should never look at another's woman. One should just let others take one's goods and sleep with one's sisters. 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 behinds. (Nehera and Bhabad 393)

As decided by the government after the independence of British India that the western part mostly Muslims is known as Pakistan and opposite side of that is known as India mostly Hindus and Sikhs. Violence and hostility to each other for example Muslims vs. Sikhs, another example is India vs. Pakistan, creates turbulent in the live of people from the both the sides. And this turbulence aroused the feeling of fear and people from either side become more animal. All these turbulences and communal riots in Mano-Majra, forced women to sacrifice dignity and life. When the trains from Delhi to Lahore and Lahore to Delhi carrying corpses from either side and mostly women were subjected to satisfy their vengeance. Many a time women are killed, raped, and dragged in this war of ego which is created by partition of India. When people of Mano-Majra assembled to discuss what they had

to do in this crisis Imam Baksh, a mullah in the village spoke,

All the neighboring villages have been evacuated. Only we are left. If you want us to go too, we will go'one of the younger men spoke. 'It is like this, uncle Imam Baksh. As long as we are here nobody will dare to touch you. We die first and then you can look after yourselves.' 'Yes' added another warmly, 'we first, then you. If anyone raises his eyebrows at you we will rape his mother'. Mother, sister and daughter, added the others. (K. Singh 133)

Peace and conflict:

In the beginning of the novel, the peace was everywhere. The trains from Delhi to Lahore and Lahore to Delhi and some other expresses make Mano Majra's day awake. In the first part of the novel as described by Khushwant Singh that trains regulate the lives of Mano Majra's people. This is how schedule of trains awake the people of Mano Majra and regulate their lives at daily basis. "Hindus and Sikhs are fleeing from their homes in Pakistan to shelter in Mano Majra. Now a train load of Sikhs massacred by Muslims has been cremated in Mano Majra. This is the clear example of cultural confrontation". (K. Singh 223) But these trains gradually become less punctual and this change in the schedule of trains creates the sense of fear and anxiety about something bad may happen. And the time comes when one of trains from Pakistan carries a number of dead bodies brutally killed from Pakistan side. This is the first taste of hostility and violence among Muslims and Shikhs. Khushwant Singh describes,

Before daybreak, the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore, and as it approaches the bridge, the driver invariably blows comes awake. Crows begin to caw in the keekar trees. The mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for the Morning Prayer. By the time 10:30 morning passenger train from delhi comes in, life in mano majara has settled down to its dull daily routine. Men are in the fields. Women are busy with their daily chores. When the evening passenger from Lahore comes in, everyone gets to work again. The cattle are rounded up and driven back to be milked and locked in for the night. The women cook the evening meal. The mullah again calls the faithful to prayer by shouting at the top of his voice, 'God is great. (K. Singh 4-5)

By the conversation between Hukumchand, district Magistrate and Commissioner and constable; it is informed that though the communal riots and turbulence created disturbance in most of the region, Mano Majra was the only exception. Hukumchand inquired, "What is the situation in Mano Majra?" (K. Singh 24) Constable replies, "All is well so far. The *lambardar* reports regularly. No refugees have come through the village yet. I am sure no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. Some of them know about Gandhi but I doubt if anyone has ever heard of Jinnah". (K. Singh 24)

India and Pakistan:

Partition is a very sensitive issue which divided India into India and Pakistan. This partition was made by the majority of the religion of people. Most Hindus and Sikhs were transferred to the west which is known as India and the most Muslims are forcefully transferred to the east which is known as Pakistan. This issue is elaborately depicted in the novel *Train to Pakistan*. To quote from the novel, "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 fight. 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". (K. Singh 2)

As far as violence and hostility are concerned, belongingness to that particular country creates disturbance in the lives of people. For example, the trains between Delhi and Lahore were scheduled to run on daily basis. As it is informed that the partition is on its height and the Muslims are forced to leave India by the trains to Pakistan. But some fanatics provoked innocent people to kill Muslims and in turn Muslims fanatics do the same things by provoking people. As a result, India and Pakistan were caught up in the swirl of partition- the stigma in the history of both.

People and Government:

When the corpses were going to burn, government took over the situation. People wanted to know what was going on. Imam Baksha tried to inquire, "Salaam, sardar sahib. The officer looked away. Imam Baksha started again, 'everything is all right, isn't it, Sardar Sahib?' The officer turned around abruptly and snapped, 'Get along. Don't you see I am busy?' Imam Baksha, still adjusting his turban, meekly joined the villagers" (K. Singh 87). People were forced to evacuate from Mano Majra those who were Muslim. In the novel characters like Hukumchand, head constable, Iqbal are bureaucrats. They tried to maintain law

and order in the village but failed in it. In one of incidents when people and government's representative army officer tried to evacuate muslims, "You can say what you like and you can be angry with us, but we will not touch our brothers' properties. You want us to become enemies?" 'wah, wah, Lambardar sahib', answered the Muslims laughing loudlyyesterday you wanted to kill them, today you call them brothers. You may change your mind again tomorrow" (K. Singh 142) and in the replied to this officer said, "The only way people like you will understand anything is by being sent over to Pakistan: have your sister and mothers raped in front of you, have your clothes taken off, and be sent back with a kick and spit on your behinds". (K. Singh 143)

II. CONCLUSION

Though the novel *Train to Pakistan* is controversial in nature but it depicts the true picture of human sufferings from both the side of partitioned British India. Sudden change in the attitudes of people of Mano Majra is the effect of partition. The communal riots and turbulence which created the sense of fear and anxiety among people and they led to violence and hostility between Sikhs and Muslims, India and Pakistan, Men and Women, People and Government. As novel starts with peaceful description of Mano Majra, later on, the place became the battlefield of religion as partition's effects; violence and hostility came into action. In the first part of the novel, these effects were found when dacoit Mali and his gang of nearby village killed Lala Ram Lal, a only Hindu and his was the only Hindu family in mano majra. This is the first taste of violence. Later hostility and violence were found when a train from Lahore Pakistan stopped at Mano-Majra with full of corpses, women were brutally killed and raped. Both these consequences are measured by the parameters; Men and Women, Sikhs-Hindus and Muslims, people and government, india and Pakistan, peace and conflict. People were lived their lives like brothers in Mano-Majra but violence and hostility created by turbulent partition of India led to human suffering and lose of human dignity.

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