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A NEW HISTORICIST TRAIN TO PAKISTAN: UNDERTONES REAPPRAISED

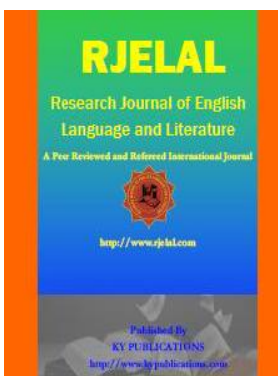
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ABSTRACT

Unique identity of Train to Pakistan, with an unshorn lure for researchers, purveys continuous reevaluation of authorial intent. Never being a mere narrative of partition gory, it is not a mere lamentation as well. Written in the wake of violence, a thorough grasp of the conditions that precipitated the violence formed the novel's basis and vehemently discussed from multiple foci. The drama in small village, when extrapolated, is a cross-section of Indian societal dynamics. The author equates Mano Majra to India by discussing the dilemma in politics, culture, bureaucracy, ethics and religion along with its decisiveness in public life. India is read through Mano Majra is far from being over ambitious for every pulse of Indianism is preserved in the characters created. History, when removed from the events and merely considering the novel for the armchair aestheticism is unyielding, as the grip of the fiction provokes any curious reader to research on reality factor. The lens of history to descry the authorial intention can explain India's predicament in the miniscule of Mano Majra.

Key Words: Partition, New Historicism, *Mano Majra*, Khuswant Singh



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"The beliefs that I have 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 the 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 matter 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 this view. I became... an angry middle aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the

world. I decided to try my hand at writing.¹

1. INTRODUCTION

Envisaging India's radiant future, the palpable fervor in Jawaharlal Nehru's debut speech in the Indian parliament on the eve of India's independence bore a partition induced disquiet concomitant with ebullient political freedom. Indian English writers left no stone unturned in materializing this aspect: the birth of a new genre titled 'partition novels' with partition and the related incidents as the main plot. Partition and its aftermath inspired Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, a penetrating and multiple focal portrayal of hatred induced violence, its repercussions and a medley of public opinion. Distant from being polarized in opinions, the novel opens with

uneasiness “Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. 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”²(1). Dialectics capture the febrile apprehension of a political and social contingency sans precedence. The author’s vehemence reveals the bureaucratic mindset, ethos, their alacrity and otherwise tinged with the surge of an ideology that was diametrically oppositional to Gandhian non-violence. The generic convention of history-fiction association fuses fictional representation with historical facts and with a perspective of reality, the characters and events of the narrative bear verisimilitude as historical reflections. Apparently, the author’s appreciation of partition and violence is comfortably devoid of scholarly jargon and wooden expressions of a history book and bare journalese respectively. The novel’s uniqueness is evident in fiction writer-journalist vantage that is permissive of sentimentalism coupled with perspicacity.

2. New Historicism and *Train to Pakistan*

Veeseer notes that New Historicist approach points at the undertones implicit in a narrative and the first of the four underlying principles of this theory embeds every expressive act in a network of material practices. Second, every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling preys to the practice it exposes. The third principle makes literary and non-literary texts complement mutually and the fourth rejects discourse, imaginative or archival as approach roads to unchanging truths or expresses inalterable human nature (ix). Veeseer’s espousal to forsake outmoded vocabulary, allusion, symbolisation, allegory and mimesis by New Historicism seeks less limiting means to expose the manifold mutual interactions of society and culture. The discernment of a literary text with history as foreground and background is problematic since criticism, in its pursuit of metaphors, narrows its concerns to the devices by means of which literature reflects or refracts (xii). Stephen Greenblat explains the origin of a certain terminology [read methodology] in literary criticism relating artistic work and historical events with allusion, symbolization, allegorization,

representation, and above all mimesis. Though indispensable, the inadequacy of these terms in cultural phenomenon further extends to aspects of contemporary and past culture and Greenblat locates the ways in which one discursive sphere transfers material information to another to make it aesthetic property² (10). With a unique expression couched in basic Indian English, as if a report is dramatised, Khushwant Singh eroded the literature - history discrimination. Otherwise a bland narrative, the author seasoned it with Indianisms,³ to capture the essence of India psyche persistent in the temperament of the colonized. Little restraint is evident in Paul Varghese rating the novel as “mere sensational journalism” however, Zoha Alam moderated the same by finding an *avant gardist* in Khushwanth Singh’s attempt to “revolutionize journalism by moving it into the precincts of fiction” She exclaims the novel as a new model of journalism which interspersed reporting and techniques of fiction (26). Alam highlights the ‘expressionist’ element that stems from a journalist-writer through a sumptuous portrayal of reality in allegorical, allusive and metaphorical representations.

3. Indian Partition: Multiple Views

Of many censorious theories on partition and on the concomitant violence, Sumeet Sarkar, Anil Kumar Banerjee and Bipin Chandra inculcated the British and their ‘divide and rule’ policy with its roots in Bengal’s partition. The British widened the crevice between Hindu and Muslim that culminated in the country’s partition. British historians asserted that partition ramifies out of the chronic discord between Hindus and Muslims. Godfrey Nicholson vituperative against “amazingly flawed plans” of Cripps as a “direct invitation to the Muslim League to stick to their toes in and hold for Pakistan” and the so called “shock” with which Cripps aimed to reconcile the warring Congress and League. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was decried for his fractiousness while Ayesha Jalal lauds his confessions of being ‘a staunch Congressman’ and his repudiation of any ‘love for sectarian cries’. Jalal absolves Jinnah and Muslim League from the ‘reproach of separatism levelled against *Mussalmans*’ which in Jinnah’s words is ‘singularly inept and wide of the mark’⁴. Her solidarity with

Jinnah's glorifies the League as a, "great communal organization [was] rapidly growing into a powerful factor for the birth of United India.(7). Hodson however absolves Mountbatten saying "it certainly can't be said that it (Mountbatten's Plan for partition) was imposed without the fullest consultation with India's political leaders or that it was contrary to the ultimate consensus of their views. It may certainly be said that it was not he, but the Indians who divided India⁵" (247). Emotions stirred from all directions and every emotion was equally strong and heedless of its counterpart. Amrik Singh evaluates with sobriety, the partition and the related incidents as, "the climax of a certain process which had been at work for almost two centuries." He incriminates every group and party as not being "blameless" and with a palpable distrust for "saviours" who eventually and possibly stigmatized by the "mised" (xix).

4. *Mano Majra*: Khuswanth's India

The outcome of this chaotic big picture is encapsulated in the incidents of a non-descript hamlet, *Mano Majra*. The author never politicizes any historical or political event or decision yet, in his coarse expressions, the facts of partition are perspicuous in the garb of incidents and characters. A microcosmic, allusive version of the pervasive nation-wide dialectics is presented and revealed objectively. The novel is a fictitious representation of the historical, political, cultural and administrative conditions of the period. The paper relates the incidents in the narrative foregrounding historical versions and highlights the author's objectivity in projecting the historical facts through the events that transpired in *Mano Majra*. Viscosity of drama is achieved as emotional dichotomies like compassion and hatred, trust and cynicism, benevolence and avarice mutually countervail to evoke contingencies in social integrity. In an era when media wasn't able to penetrate into the drawing rooms of every house in India, Khushwant Singh, through his *Train to Pakistan* could have served as a powerful torch bearer for the facts of the partition with his riveting narrative skills and skilled interspersions in not forsaking reality from the melodramatic affects of fiction.

A medley of affairs precipitated the partition holocaust that coupled weirdly with freedom; chaos with parochialism aiming for a *carpe diem*; a helpless submission of authority to anarchy; surge of disruptive, anti-social, sectarian violence and the excesses of the power mongering elements and a nothing like the cloud of uncertainty and disinformation to flare up mutual hatred and cynicism. *Iqbal* envisages a proletariat revolution that can be possibly forged out of the communal strife if and only when the unprivileged were incited on lines of economics than religion (54). Like a primoparous mother, ambivalence reigned with freedom induced ecstasy alongside a chaotic pain of partition smiling faintly at visitors reviewing the features of the new-born while the stupor is waning slowly hinting the imminent post-natal afflictions. Instances highlight the context discussed when the bureaucrat *Hukum Singh* and other officials worried about the chaos after their indulgence and prejudices had their way. Khushwant Singh employs the metaphor of nature at the break of summer and onset of monsoon - the change of old order and new unwieldy aspects launched in the transition - a perfect recipe to let loose anarchy: 'With the monsoon, the tempo of life and death increases. Almost overnight, grass begins to grow and leafless trees turn green'; 'Snakes, centipedes and scorpions are born out of nothing. The ground is strewn with earthworms, ladybirds and tiny frogs. At night, myriads of moths flutter around the lamps'; 'They fall in everybody's food and water. Geckos dart about filling themselves with insects till they get heavy and fall off ceilings.'; 'Inside rooms, the hum of mosquitoes is maddening. People spray clouds of insecticide, and the floor becomes a layer of wriggling bodies and wings.'; 'Next evening, there are many more fluttering around the lamp shades and burning themselves in the flames (98)

5. Representation of Violence

Grujic explains the nuances that associate with the words persecution, pogrom, massacre and genocide. The first he says is an "isolated or irregular maltreating of a definite group of people" while pogrom appears as a "stronger form of persecution with killing or banishing". He calls "accidental massive killing, in sense not preconceived" as a

massacre and defines genocide as a “systematic extermination of a well defined sub population in a wider region for the reasons which are not under the control of the subjects of persecution” (165). From the definitions above, the plight of the refugees during partition suffices to be rated as a combination of all the above. In the *tonga*, the police man accompanying *Jugga* and *Iqbal* mentions of the Muslim police in Pakistan opening fire on people⁶ (71) while the hurried evacuation of *Mano Majra* by authorities is not far from banishment of the docile Muslim folks. Contextually, the author describes ‘genocide’ in the train loaded with butchered refugees and ‘massacre’ suffices in the imagery of the corpses afloat in the deluge. From the harangue of the boy in an khakhi shirt and revolver in his holster, Brass’ quotes on Grimshaw’s definition of *Genocide and democide* (58) by ascertaining the partition violence as ‘retributive genocide’⁷(72) shall suffice.

6. Systemic Failure

The author laments the inefficacy and desperation of the state’s machinery⁸ in containing the violence through the discussions of *Hukum Chand* and the Sub Inspector (163-64). Historian Nirad C. Chaudhari compares the systemic failure of 1946 to that of 1729 when *Mughal* Empire was on decay and the riots ensued “In India, when empires decline, such things inevitably happen. In 1729, when the Mogul Empire was breaking up and Muhammad Shah was Emperor, there was a notorious Hindu-Muslim riot in Delhi [...] but all he could do was to stand helplessly near the north gate, while even the men of the Imperial artillery joined in the fray (843). Chaudhuri analogizes showing the “Complete ineffectiveness of the state. It could not resist foreign invasion, put down internal rebellions, suppress Hindu-Muslim riots, could not ensure efficient administration and was not successful in any project it initiated”; “The effect of the decline of the power of the state on the masses was twofold. It made one part predatory and the other panicky.”; “Lastly, there grew up a habit of tolerance of anarchy and corruption, or at all events resignation to them” (859-60). The boy in uniform lambastes the failed government machinery and preaches self defence by taking law into one’s own

hands (156-58). The perpetration of uniformed personnel is asserted by Pandey quoting Mayaram’s record of an army officer’s confession of a ‘counter action’ to “contain the violence”. The army officer asserts, “I was the ADC to HH *Tej Singh*, the ruler of *Alwar* [...] It had been decided to clear the state of Muslims [...] The killings of *Hindus* at *Noakhali* and *Punjab* had to be avenged. All the *Meos* from *Firozpur Jhirka* down were to be cleared and sent to Pakistan, their lands taken over. [Because] the refugees from Pakistan were coming in (179-81).

6.1. Britain’s Role

This anarchy reminds the vested interests of the imperialists behind their abrupt withdrawal. Adrian Fort clarifies that the World War II disastrously weakened Britishers to forgo their tenacity over the subcontinent. Fort discusses the politico-economic agenda in the relinquishment of India by Britishers to impress USA for grants which preferred to see Britain “take its troops out of these trouble spots and leave them to their [Indians] independence”. Fort further asserts “As the imperative for Indianisation gathered force, it brought a concomitant increase in difficulty of recruiting Europeans. Recruiting had ceased in 1939 and by 1946 the Indian Civil Service could boast a mere 500 British soldiers; there were only 500 British policemen and the Indian Political Service [...] In India’s fast changing conditions 1,200 men, however wise and just, were no longer enough for administration of the country of more than 1.5 million square miles, containing 400 million people of 300 different ethnic groups. Fort quotes Prime Minister Clement Atlee: “We do not consider that a reversal of our policy and pledges to India and reassertion of United Kingdom authority by force would, [...], be likely to lead to any solution of Indian problem or it may be desirable from the point of view of our international reputation. [...] We do not think opinion in this country would support the measures necessary, or be prepared to shoulder the costly burdens of responsibility in Indian under such conditions for another fifteen years. Apart from this, the necessary troops are not available” (401-03). Britain is aware the undesirable Communist Russia’s influence and despises the idea seeing Russia as

India's strategic ally and of course, ventures of Russia is evident in the role of *Iqbal* in the novel.

7. Personification of Indian Muslim Predicament

Novic observes, "To understand something historically 'is to be aware of its complexity, is to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists, motives and behavior" (3-4). *Jugga's* affiliation with *Nooran* clarifies his distance from sectarianism. *Jugga's* depiction as a hideous criminal forces an anti-climax in *Jugga* martyrdom. *Nooran* desperately visits *Jugga's* house at night and she was disparaged by *Jugga's* mother and latter commiserates to the plight of the girl. *Nooran's* father hoped of Hindu-Muslim compatibility. The two families have a boy and a girl where faith separates them while love binds them: a symbolic of the tenuous Sikh-Muslim unity. *Nooran* and *Jugga* affair though a sub-plot, Khushwant Singh has much to tell from this love pair and their families. When *Nooran* yields to *Jugga* by staking her honour, clouds of partition, unseen until then, suddenly appear to cause separation. People before and after partition had no mutual ill-will bred with faith as a reason. Apparently, an expository of Hindu-Sikh-Muslim unity can extrapolate to a more complex cross-section of Indian society without ignoring the subtlety in Sikh-Muslim relations.

Frank Lentricchia observes that the prime anti-humanistic assumption of Historicism replaces original self of idealism explaining all cultural and social phenomenon as effects of 'imperious agents' of causality comprising cultural traditions, institutions, race, ethnicity, relations of gender, economic and physical environments, dispositions of power (231). When *Nooran* informs *Jugga's* mother of the affair, the latter berates, "Get out you bitch. You a Muslim weaver's daughter, marry a Sikh peasant! [...] Go to Pakistan! Leave my *Jugga* alone" (138). *Jugga's* mother however softens yet, her compassion can be reasoned by the poverty induced bleakness in fetching *Jugga* a bride. *Jugga's* mother presents a dilemma where a *Sikh* woman detests the idea of a Muslim daughter-in-law and her sympathies are not far from her shrewdness. Three aspects are interspersed in one context: a prejudiced *Sikh* woman; a woman who identifies her

own desperation with that of another; diplomatic enough to acquiesce to a Muslim daughter-in-law. Khushwant Singh presents a medley of prejudices, sentiments, sympathies, desperation and economics and communalism is only like a kite tied to many strings. Religious differences do not estrange common people invariably and they hardly erode humanism in people is espoused by the author. "There are only about seventy families in *Mano Majra*, and *Lala Ram Lal's* is the only Hindu family. The others are *Sikhs* or Muslims, about equal in number. The *Sikhs* own all the land around the village; the Muslims are tenants and share the tilling with the owners" (2). Social and economic interdependence hardly allow communalistic concerns. In peaceful situations, faith was not decisive to alienate them. Paradoxically, while public emotions are spurred to draw swords against each other, the same drew them closer with remorse replacing their instincts towards the end.

Jugga-Nooran's pairing clarifies Khushwant Singh's appreciation of Hindu-Sikh-Muslim relation. *Nooran* is impregnated by *Jugga* and it is unthinkable for her to reveal her illegitimacy in bearing *Jugga's* child. She fiercely refuses the forced exile: "I will not go to Pakistan" (136) while her father reprimands her defiance. *Nooran* symbolically represents the predicament of Muslims in India during partition about their property, business and honor. Uncertainty rules in their sudden demise of belongingness. *Nooran's* love and honor in her submission to *Jugga* symbolizes the age old attachment and assimilation which Muslim brethren fostered in the political, social, economic and cultural fabric of the land. *Nooran's* reluctance to depart doesn't merely simply thicken the love plot, but alludes to every true Indian Muslim's identification with Indian spirit: an undilemmatic rejection of sectarian prejudices. *Nooran's* resistance is subdued by her father, a dilemmatic, insecure Muslim cleric despondent of state's failure to assure the safety of Muslims willing to remain in India. Pervasive feeling about a separate new land designated to Muslims strengthened the notion of out of place status for Indian Muslims in India. In *Dilli ki Bipta*, Ahmed Dehlavi laments on the ruined fate of Indian Muslims who were forced to leave

India and the return of their hope when riots in Delhi subsided. They wrote to their people who fled to Pakistan "There is peace now, and no danger of riots... You should come back" (147, 180). This explains Indian Muslims' bondage with the land unflinched by the duress induced migration as the cord of relation remained intact. *Hukum Chand* wonders: "I suppose they will come back when all this blows over?" 'Maybe,' the sub inspector answered. 'There is not much for them to come back to. Their homes have been burned or occupied. And if anyone did come back, his or her life would not be worth the tiniest shell in the sea'. *Hukum Chand* with a false note of hope in his voice says: "It will not last forever. You see how things change. Within a week they will be back in *Chundunnugger* and the Sikhs and Muslims will be drinking water out of the same pitcher." (165) But the false note of hope could have been true for many who fled from India, but many Muslims couldn't foster the same hope. Sardar Vallabhai Patel stated: "whatever the definition may be, you can rest assured that the Hindus and Sikhs of Pakistan cannot be considered as aliens in India⁹." Pandey explains the statement as "the Hindu and Sikh communities were *natural* citizens of India, wherever they might live and whatever the constitutional definitions of citizenship might turn out to be in the two new nation-states" and observes: "If Hindus and Sikhs were 'naturally' ours, and Muslims 'naturally' theirs, as in the circumstances of Partition they were commonly declared to be, the hostile conditions [...] The poignant history of abducted women (read people) caught on the wrong side of the new international border illustrates some of the tragic consequences of this curious collapsing of religious community into natural nation (164). Not much is discussed about *Jugga's* bond with *Nooran* in the initial sections of the novel, but as the story unfolds, his passion for the girl strongly evident in his rage against *Mallis'* derogation of *Nooran* and *Jugga* relation. Equally, the driver of the horse coach is scorned by *Jugga* for the former's derogation of *Nooran* (73). *Jugga-Nooran's* separation is the symbolic of division of Indian sub continent where the division of the country represents the absurdity of fate. The unreasonable circumstances that separated the

couple altogether victimizing them for reasons unknown.

8. Socio-Communal Discontentment: Outcome of Partition

The spite of a youth of *Mano Majra* towards the Muslims is neutralized the resolve of the village community to save its Muslim dwellers (131-33) which times with the rumors of violence. This medley of opinions reflected the prevalent volatility which some pressure groups had capitalized. In the unanimity to protect Muslims, some sporadic despise is palpable against Muslim presence in *Mano Majra*. This ambivalence marks that Muslims were neither completely abhorred nor favored. This mosaic of opinions led to massacre on both side while contrarily, humanism broke the ill-will when one community offered shelter and protection to the other in the maelstrom of violence. But Sikh-Muslim antagonism was not exclusively religion centered: the economic loss that ensued with the partition plan and the economic crises¹⁰ it is bound to inflict India. Brass quotes his interview with Master *Tara Singh* whom he interviewed expressed his opinion to level the ground of economic imbalance caused by partition. Brass infers from the words of *Tara Singh* that he meant to "attack violently Muslim population in East Punjab to force them to migrate west so that the entire Sikh population in west Punjab would be able to migrate east to replace them and take their lands and property in exchange for what they lost in the west¹¹ (77). Siddiqui mentions of the 77% of land that India received after partition with an addition burden of 82% of population (270). But, such political decisions neither had the accord of every Hindu-Sikh on Indian side nor that of every Muslim in Pakistan. Restraint in the hearts of people like *Meet Singh* tries to forestall the sabotage plans. This restraint emanates from the perspicacity in understanding religious truth. *Meet Singh* says: "What bravery is there in killing unarmed innocent people? As for women, you know that the last *Guru, Gobind Singh*, made it a part of a baptismal oath that no Sikh was to touch the person of a Muslim woman. And God alone knows how he suffered at the hands of the Mussulmans! They killed all his four sons" (157).

9. Disruption from Within

Gangster *Malli* with his accomplices support the cause of the juvenile boy and says: "My life is at your disposal" which implies his intention to regain the prestige lost in the hands of *Jugga* (159). Dehlavi's laments that violence spared none except "for those who were carried away by a religious madness and, one might add, those who were carried away by the desire for loot and property, and political advancement, too" (146). The author postulates that communalism alienates people, but cannot cloud their consciousness for the plight of people of other faiths and also the author hints at the economic aspect of their relations. The *Sikh* officer, evacuates the Muslim of *Mano Majra* and when the former protest about their belongings the officer says, "It is all settled, I have arranged that these people from the next village will look after the cattle, carts, and houses till it is over. I will have a list made and sent over to you" (144). The officer's colleague understands and smiles sardonically. The usurpation of the Muslim's houses and the loot perpetrated by *Malli* and his accomplices record the heinous and avaricious exploitation of the situation. Pandey censures the valorisation of violence and forced eviction with similar stories of segregation of "us" against "them" which he compiles from the narratives of village communities with general proposition of 'peacefulness' and 'harmony' from which Muslims were largely, if not entirely driven out in 1947. He is little sceptical about similar reprisal on the 'western' causing the exodus of refugees (196). Violence was devoid of full conviction and was not remorseless concerning people on either side. When the boy spoke, the author registers the response of the people as: The villagers felt very uncomfortable. The harangue had made them angry and they wanted to prove their manliness (158). At the same time *Meet Singh's* presence made them uneasy and they felt they were being disloyal to him. *Meet Singh* represented the rationality and humanness inherent in every one. This humanness was snubbed by an instinctive provocation to even the odds and this slowly aggravates. This is evident from the interviews of the people of the older generations who abhor to reminiscence the ghastly violence. It is the battle a

huge mass of Indians waged against themselves. Pandey views that the saga of revenge and aggression raise questions about the constitution and reconstitution of 'us' and 'them'. He says that if the violence that erupted is not short of a state of war, where the 'enemy' has in many instances been completely annihilated. But the annihilation of the enemy brings not only a note of celebration, but of apology and shame as well. He says: This shame too is related in part to the effort to reconstitute community – to rethink the 'us' of the story in the fragile moment when a new idea of community collides with the breakdown of earlier senses. Statements of *revenge* are already statements of *defensiveness*; and the idea of revenge depends on that of 'betrayal' – and hence of 'community' (197).

10. Peace Bought with Bloodshed: Gandhi-Jugga Parallel

The novel ends with the death of *Jugga* and the character consummates with his sacrifice. *Jugga's* death signifies the bond between the *Sikh* and Muslim sections as asserted by Khushwant Singh. If *Train to Pakistan* has to be a history based fictitious document, authorial intention is evident in the design of the climax. The train of refugees leaves unharmed. *Jugga's* redemption is through his death and the author makes him a martyr. In history, one person to who was the only beacon of hope as the redeemer of this scourge, it was Gandhi. This ray of hope did all it could to enlighten the fanatics. His death petrified the nation and dramatically ended all the pervading violence. Baldevi says that the death of Gandhi suddenly doused the fire of sectarian strife that raged for months and died down as if such strife never occurred. Overnight, such calm was established, such a peace that no one could dreamed of a few days earlier. The Muslims of Delhi felt secure now and returned to their normal occupations and routines" (119). When *Jugga* the one who never visited the *Gurudwara*, approaches *Meet Singh* for some soothing words from religion and *Meet Singh* says: "What have you to do with meaning? It is just the *Guru's* word. If you are going to do something good, the *Guru* will help you; if you are going to do something bad, the *Guru* will stand in your way (183). Gandhi's response to the assassinate him has a stoical resignation of a great

soul: "The man who exploded the bomb obviously thinks that he has been sent by God to destroy me... He had taken it for granted that I am an enemy of Hinduism. When he says he was doing the bidding of God he is only making God an accomplice in a wicked deed" (279-81). A parallel can be drawn between the above two contexts as *Jugga* emerges as the savior of Muslims and with his death, the story ended with a note of peace. Khushwant Singh hints at peace after the martyrdom of *Jugga* and analogizes it with peace after Gandhi's death. Gandhi and *Jugga* who refused the fanatical frenzy sent their message of peace that God helps only the benignity in human beings and shall not assist in their wicked deeds.

11. New Historicist Appreciation of the Novel: Validation

Bakhtin observes the entanglement of the novels object in "someone else's discourse" about it and heteroglot perception conceptualizes and evaluates the object of dispute which the novelist presents this "already qualified world" in an internally dialogize heteroglot language. Historical dimension of the novel is inseparable of the object and language (330). When Khushwant Singh wrote this book quite much time has passed after partition and violence. There were divergent views on this issue and it would be unacceptable to believe that the author is insulated of these opinions. The novel pronounces all the possible voices in that period as the author maneuvers the story to bring up the facts masked as narrative. The novel bears a few instances that do not allude to historical reality and appreciating *Train to Pakistan* distancing oneself from historicist approach undermines the efforts of the author-witness who witnessed the holocaust both from the perspectives of a journalist and an individual. World acclaims Khushwant Singh as a staunch supporter of secularism bitterly vehement of the ruinous communal forces that offend Indian secularism.

12. A Portal to Khuswant's Secularism

Stephen Greenblatt explains the application of New Historicism where "methodological self-consciousness is one of the distinguishing marks of the new historicism in cultural studies as opposed to a historicism based upon faith in the transparency of

signs and interpretative procedures-but it must be supplemented by an understanding that the work of art is not itself a pure flame that lies at the source of our speculations¹²". Greenblatt defines work of art as "product of a set of manipulations, some of them our own most striking in the case of works that were not originally conceived as "art" at all but rather as something else-votive objects, propaganda, prayer, and so on". He rates work of art as a product of negotiation between 'creator' and 'class of creators' equipped with 'a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society'. To negotiate, "artists need to create a currency that is valid for a meaningful, mutually profitable exchange" this involves the "not simply appropriation but exchange, since the existence of art always implies a return, a return normally measured in pleasure and interest". Greenblatt clarifies that "I should add that the society's dominant currencies, money and prestige, are invariably involved, but I am here using the term...currency" metaphorically to designate the systematic adjustment, symbolizations and lines of credit necessary to enable an exchange to take place. The terms "currency" and "negotiation" are the signs of our manipulation and adjustment of the relative systems" (12). Greenblatt's convictions appear pertinent in Somini Sen Gupta's narration of author's recollection of the ghastly experience he had in August 1947 when in the outskirts of Delhi, he encountered a jeep full of armed Sikhs who boasted of slain a village full of Muslims. This incident put off all his hopes of returning to his homeland and refers to 'a chilling echo of what he had heard on the other side of the soon-to-be border, except that there Sikhs and Hindus were the victims'. Palpable serenity in the opening pages of *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh endorses the autobiographical element and a nostalgic reminiscent of the idyllic tranquility in the erstwhile undivided Indian subcontinent. Singh's words echoes the yearning for the same that partition has removed. In *Truth, love and a Little Malice: An Autobiography*, Khushwanth Singh narrates his visit to his native village and the rapturous welcome he received with garlands of silver and gold tassels, the burst of joy in fireworks and the shower of rose

petals. Khushwant censures, "Who was the author of the perfidious lie that Muslims and Sikhs were sworn enemies? No animosity had soured relations between the Muslims and Sikhs of *Hadali*. Muslims had left the *Hindu-Sikh Dharamsal* untouched because it had been a place of worship of their departed cousins" (10). Sadia Dahlvi recollects Khushwant Singh's confession that once in his childhood days Singh bore some prejudice towards Muslims but his friendship with Lahore's Manzoor Quadir "cleansed him of all his biases". Dahlvi claims that the symbols of Islam in Khushwant Singh's house testify his tributes to his closest friends (125). In *Malicious Gossip* Khushwant Singh envisages to organize India on through secular lines with the common economic interests – farmers, weavers and factory workers as basis and that would end the canker of communalism in one stroke and bring fruits of development to the people (110). The same note continues in *Absolute Khushwant* to "openly challenge and take on the men who are creating trouble and destroying the country" and musters his hope in the present generation to "totally reject communal and fascist policies" (133).

13. Conclusion

Train to Pakistan is not a mere effusion of Khushwant Singh's musings. Simplistic, it would be to consider author's passionate response to incidents after a decade of their occurrence as aesthetic dramatization of partition when one overlooks the authorial response to the direst moments of the nation's history. The author descends beyond the 'already qualified world' to ensure authorial objectivity. *Mano Majra* an epitome of border villages, though non-descript, it represents the Indian spirit of unity in diversity. The story alerts any dispassionate reader about the imminent danger to Indian secularism, the binding spirit that emanates from classic ethos of solidarity 'Sarva dharma sambav'¹³: a pronouncement of tolerance from vedic antiquity; a bedrock principle of Indian societal harmony. Decades after its publication and after courting both acclamation and repugnance from many platforms, *Train to Pakistan* undoubtedly bear the threads to darn the tattered Indian secular fabric. Khushwant's premonitory addresses everyone for as the following Githa

Hariharan's quote of Reverend Martin Niemoller from *In Times of Siege* echoes his anxiety to dispel the public impertinence and complacency induced by false sense of security.

In Germany, They first came for the communists, and I did not speak up because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the homosexuals, and I did not speak up because I was not a homosexual.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me ... but by that time there was no one left to speak up (27).

Notes:

1. Khushwant Singh's words at "Guest of Honor Talk." The Australian Broadcasting Commission's Guest of Honor Programme. Broadcast on 5th April, 1964. Gyanendra Pandey quotes Sikh histories written three and a half decades later continue this glorification. "In March 1947, writes one historian, "The sledge hammer of Muslim violence fell most disastrously on the Sikhs in Rawalpindi division. In the rural areas, where they were severely outnumbered, they faced total annihilation. Frenzied Muslim mobs would assemble from all over, beating drums and shouting their religious war cries. They would trap the scanty Sikh populations in their villages and start making short work of them. Sikhs were not hunted down in their homes, in gurdwaras and in the shelters offered by friendly local Muslims ... woman nor child was spared. The holocausts Sikhs had suffered in the eighteenth century were thrown into the shade by this organized butchery." [Remembering Partition by Gyanendra Pandey, CUP, 2004, pp-82-83] Gyanendra Pandey further writes, "Indeed, the clearest statement I have found on the

'Sikh method' of attack on Muslim villages in East Punjab comes from the Bengal Muslim League leader, Husain Suhrawardy. He described the procedure in a letter to Gandhi written at the peak of the killings in Punjab and north-western India in August–September 1947. The method consisted, he wrote, in surrounding a village on three sides, leaving one side 'open', and then creating an uproar, opening up with gunfire and setting fire to the houses. When 'Muslims [*sic*] and their families and children' tried to escape towards the open side, they found themselves confronted by 'gunners ... and by a special group of young men who separate the women. These women and girls are abducted ... and the men shot dead.' [Remembering Partition by Gyanendra Pandey, CUP, 2004, pp-72], [(IOR) Mss. Eur. F200/129, Suhrawardy to Gandhi, bulletin no. 4 (Lahore, 21 September 1947)].

2. Green and Ketih explain Greenblatt saying, "Here we see the familiar historicist breaking down of the barriers between literary and non-literary discourse and between the social and the aesthetic. If the social and the aesthetic circulate together, then that which might be considered peripheral to one discourse may be foregrounded to show a particular relation or undo a text's discursive logic. If the social and the aesthetic are continually separated, their own internal logics are less likely to be questioned. That which is the 'aesthetic', however, can be read against the significance of that which would be considered the 'social'. An anecdote, a peripheral discourse element (somehow not 'serious'), can be read against the body of the aesthetic." [Ketih Green & Jill Lebian, *Critical Theory and Practice: A Course Book*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996.]
3. Arthur Lall, the former ambassador and permanent representative from India to the United Nations, politely rounds up

the language of the book. "If this novel were to be submitted today as an unpublished manuscript, I believe half-dozen publishers would readily accept it. Its intrinsic qualities as a fine novel grip the reader." Yet, certain degree of criticism is also leveled against his use of local idiom. Of such Suvir Kaul comments "That a largely mediocre novel, thin in character and event, written in an idiom that must have seemed forced even in the 1950s (and which has certainly dated rapidly since), has achieved such prominence is surprising. This success is either a tribute to the novel's simplicity of conception and narrative.... or, more likely, follows from the fact that there was so little else written in English about the partition of 1947 that interested readers did not have much to choose from (...). Notwithstanding all its problems, the novel has found a large readership, which begs the question of what it is about the power of not very compelling writing (or indeed cinema) to keep us riveted, so long as the stories told are those of Partition?" (18). [Kaul, Suvir, *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001]. Rituparna Roy takes the side of Kushwanth Singh saying, "By the strictest standards of novelistic discourse, this would be deemed a flaw, but Singh's intention here is not the individualization of characters but the foregrounding of events. This foregrounding is indeed so important a part of the narrative technique that other aspects like the individualization of characters through speech is largely ignored. Thus, all the characters in the novel – good, bad, illiterate and educated – speak in the same idiom. It is almost as if Singh is determined that nothing should come in the way to detract the attention of the reader from the main storyline"(44). [Rituparna Roy, *South Asian Partition Fiction: From Kushwanth Singh to Amitav*

- Ghosh. Ed. Paul van der velde, Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, 2010]
4. From M. Rafique Azad (ed.) *Speeches and Statements of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, 1911-34 and 1947-48*. Lahore 1966 Pages 56-62.
 5. Can be accessed from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/mar/05/india-government-policy>
 6. Chhabil Das makes the point that it is an abuse of language to call these events 'riots': ... The demobilized soldiers, pensioners (civil and military), Lumberdars or Patels, Zaildars and Jagirdars and Inamkhors, all fell prey to the vicious communal virus indiscriminately spread by the Muslim League Feudal Lords, and armed with spears, axes, tommy guns, hand grenades and incendiary bombs [they] pounced upon the peaceful populations. [Remembering Partition by Gyanendra Pandey, CUP, 2004, pp-83] [(NMML) B. S. Moonje papers, file no. 58, 'The Punjab Riots and the Lessons', from Chhabil Das, ex-life member, Servants of the People Society (Lahore, 5 May 1947)].
 7. Brass writes "What gives the genocidal massacres in the Punjab their special character is that they were not ordered by a state, but they were also not merely or even at all spontaneous. There was organization and planning that has been largely ignored in the scanty literature on a subject of such enormous violence, but there were also local acts of violence carried out for a multiplicity of reasons and motives that were not genocidal in intent: loot, capture of property, abduction of women. Moreover, much of the larger scale violence was mutual. Grimshaw has captured it well in the term, "retributive genocide"—applied also to similar actions taking place elsewhere on the subcontinent at the time.² In several of these respects, the Punjab massacres precede and anticipate contemporary forms of genocide and "ethnic cleansing," retributive and otherwise, most notably the Hutu–Tutsi killings in Rwanda and the massacres and forced migrations of peoples in ex-Yugoslavia: Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. In reviewing the terms used to attach both responsibility and blame as these events transpired, one cannot help also but think of the mortal cycle of revenge and retribution in contemporary Israel and the occupied West Bank." [Paul R. Brass "The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab 1946-47: means, methods and purposes." *Journal of Genocide Research* 5.1, 2003: pp-72]
 8. Remembering Partition by Gyanendra Pandey, CUP, 2004, pp-37-38, 79.
 9. Letter to Parmanand Trehan, 16 July 1947, in Durga Das, ed., *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945–50*, vol. V, Ahmedabad, 1973, p. 289.
 10. Ranbir Samaddar quoted Lord Mountbatten "We have given careful consideration to the position of Sikhs. The valiant community forms about an eighth of the population of Punjab, but they are so distributed that any partition of the province will inevitably divide them. All of us who have the good of Sikh community at heart are very sorry to think that the partition of Punjab which they themselves desire, cannot avoid splitting them to a greater or lesser extent". "... while this search for some sort of 'natural frontier' led by Cyril Radcliffe to chose the boundary at Ravi rather than Chenab in the west (as the Congress and Sikhs wanted) or at Sutlej in the east (as the Muslim League wanted), as the novelist Rajinder Puri commented later, the Punjabis vanished. In West Punjab they Pakistanis, in East Punjab they became Hindus and Sikhs, Akalis, Congressmen, Arya Samajists and Jan Sanghis never Punjabis. [Ranbir Samaddar. "The Undefined Acts of Partition and Dialogue". *Partition: Reshaping States and Minds*. Comp. Ranbir Samdaar, Rada Ivkovic,

- Stefano Bianchini, Sanjay Chaturvedi. New York: Frank Cass, 2005, pp- 98]
11. Ranbir Samaddar writes "The assumption of a 'normal state of geopolitical state of politics' shows the existence of two things: first, the normal is always the reflection of the regime of the normal, whereby the extraordinary, the excess, has been normalized, at least the attempts are very much on; and second, the regime of the normal is often the strategy to gloss over the fault lines in the extraordinary. To find out how the 'excess' or 'extraordinary' is sought to be normalized and yet how that strategy is never at peace with itself because of continuous contestations, it is important that we probe into the normalizing accounts of the abnormal, and the splits in the accounts of profile of the extraordinary". [Ranbir Samaddar, "The Undefined Acts of Partition and Dialogue". *Partition: Reshaping States and Minds*. Comp. Ranbir Samdaar, Rada Ivkovic, Stefano Bianchini, Sanjay Chaturvedi. New York: Frank Cass, 2005, pp- 96]
 12. Stephan Greenblatt in his introduction to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* says as follows: "Literature function within this system in three interlocking ways: as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon these codes. [...] If interpretation limits itself to the behavior of the author, it becomes literary biography in either a conventionally historical or psychoanalytic mode. And risks losing a sense of the larger networks of meaning in which both the author and his works participate. If, alternatively, literature is viewed exclusively as the expression of social rules and instructions, it risks being absorbed entirely into an ideological superstructure. Marx himself vigorously resisted this functional absorption of art, and subsequent Marxist aesthetics, for all

its power and sophistication, has never satisfactorily resolve the theoretical problems raised in the *Gundrisse* and elsewhere. Finally, if literature is seen only as a detached reflection upon the prevailing behavioral codes, a view from a safe distance, we drastically diminish our grasp of art's concrete functions in relation to individuals and to institutions, both of which shrink into an obligatory "historical background" that adds little to our understanding. We drift back toward a conception of art as addressed to a timeless, cultureless, universal human essence or, alternatively as a self-regarding, autonomous, closed system-in either case, art as opposed to social life. A literary criticism that has affinity to this practice must be conscious of its own status as interpretation and intent upon understanding literature as part of the system of signs that constitutes a given culture; its proper goal, however difficult to realize, is a *Poetics of culture*. Such approach is necessarily a balancing art – correcting each of the functional perspectives I sketched in the preceding paragraphs against the others-and necessarily impure; its central concerns prevent it from permanently sealing off one type of discourse from another or decisively separating works of art from the minds and lives of their creators and their audiences"(pp-4-5). [Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. USA: UoCP, 1980] 13. The concept can be accessed from <http://www.hinduhumanrights.info/sarva-dharma-sambhava-unity-or-confusion-of-religions/> explains *Sava Dharma Sambava* as "a common tenet of Hinduism is "Sarva Dharma Sambhava, which literally means that all Dharmas (truths) are equal to or harmonious with each other. In recent times this statement has been taken as meaning "all religions are the same" - that

all religions are merely different paths to God or the same spiritual goal.”

13. The same concept discussed in <http://veda.wikidot.com/dharma-rajya> explains *Sarva Dharma Sambava* as “Freedom of different viewpoints, different forms of worship not only outside religion but even within religion. Even certain sects who are hedonistic and consumeristic, and who do not strictly believe in the existence of God, are also taken as part of society. Accepts that there are many ways of attaining salvation. Other paths, ways, faiths or religions can therefore be taken as alternative ways of attaining one's moksha. Within religion, one should find acceptance to many other sub-religions or schools, which are in many respects dissimilar to each other but still considered part of broad nationhood. Entire human race to work for the ennoblement of every human being. To uplift and alleviate every human being to the status of a noble, cultural and civilized being; become a pure human being within and without. Wishes happiness, mercy, welfare and good for everyone.”

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