

TRAIN TO PAKISTAN: THE IRONIC PLAY OF HATRED AND LOVE

Anuradha Blanch Wilson¹, Dr. Ajeet Singh²

¹Research Scholar, Mewar University

²Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The people of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have completed six decades of independence from the British rule. Nevertheless, the celebrations of the freedom will always be tempered by the fact that "the nation" was being partitioned simultaneously. The Partition left approximately ten million refugees and claimed a million lives. Historians have many different opinions upon the issue of partition but predominantly it was a result of a deeper politics, inculcated and ingrained historically to hound the lives of the community and may be nationalities forever. The politics of South Asia of our own times carry the traits of the same consciousness and understanding that divided people into religion based ethnicities. There were many consequences of partition like large scale migration, destruction of life, and of land, of home but the worst victim of Partition who had had to endure not only the destruction of one's mentioned here, but had to undergo abduction, rape, mutilation, if survives further then, prostitution. Train to Pakistan tells the tragic tale of the Partition and of the events that followed Partition. Partition undoubtedly touched the whole subcontinent and Khuswant Singh's attempt in the novel is to see the events from the point of view of people across the border.

Keywords: Historians, predominantly, partition, violence, border

The partition of India in 1947 constituted a massive violence and cruelty against humanity. Partition is one such event which is narrated widely and extensively by the writers across the border of India and Pakistan by intellectuals and writers. The absurdity of the event was so much so that a writer like Sa'dat Hasan Manto writes about the human insensitivity through a very vivid and stark critique in Toba Tek Singh;

“Two or three years after Partition, the Governments of India and Pakistan remembered that, as in the case of ordinary prisoners, an exchange of the insane was also called for. That is, that the

Muslim lunatics who were in the lunatic asylums of should be sent to Pakistan, and the Hindu and Sikh lunatics who were in lunatic asylums in Pakistan should be handed over to India.”¹

Another instance of similar insensitivity of people against their own people, with whom they had been living for so many centuries, is presented starkly in the critique of independence by Begum Anees Qidwai in *Azadi Ki Chhaon Mein*:

“After Independence the Government of India and Pakistan came to an agreement...that any (abducted) girl (of any community)who was in the possession of a different community should be forcibly recovered and returned to her relatives and ,until such time as her relatives remain untraced, to the Government(of her country).”²

After having gone through such absurd and inhuman act of humanity against one’s own self makes it really feasible to recall the instances of Partition through the vision of a writer like Khuswant Singh who portrays the partition in its immediate making and culmination. Singh provides us the picture of a community living in harmony for many centuries. But one fine day, they (Hindus and Muslims) find themselves enemies of each other. Animosity grew and intensifies, but quite ironically, love also survives. The love happened to be among the people, though unaware largely of a stricter division of people across the communities. The beauty of the novel is its construction of a plot which converts a criminal into a saviour, it only was for love, making hatred fallacious, Hence love prevails over hatred which establishes the fact about essential human goodness.

The action of the novel took place during the days of September in 1947 in Mano Majra, a border village, with a river infringing it and a railway bridge spanning the river. Though the frontier between India and Pakistan turns into a scene of rioting and bloodshed, everything is quite and normal in Mano Majra, where, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims still live peacefully together as if they have been living there since times immemorial .Partition does not yet doesn't mean much to them .Many of them do not even know that the British have left and India is partitioned .Says sub-Inspector of police to Deputy Commissioner; No invested "I am sure no one in Mano Majra even know that the British have left and the country is divided in to Pakistan and Hindustan. Some of them know about Gandhi but I doubt if anyone has ever heard of Jinnah.”³

On the other hand Partition of India and Pakistan largely into two different religion based nationalities, namely Hindu India, and Muslim Pakistan, had its serious repercussions. Millions died in the holocaust of Partition. But Mano Majra remained bloodless. Despite the diversity of

¹Toba Tek Singh , Saadat Hasan Manto, The Pakistan Academy of Letters Of 2006.

² Begum Anees Qidwai in *Azadi Ki Chhaon Mein*, National Book Trust.

³ Khushwant Singh: *The Train to Pakistan*, Chatto and Windus, 1956.

population along communal lines there in the village, we see a kind of ideal communal harmony. Any disturbance or anxiety created locally could never matter to them. But the arrival of a corpse laden train sensitizes the atmosphere and the Muslims started to retract and considered to leave Mano Majro, but the long prevailing harmony was so as strong so, that even it worked for a safe passage of the people who could have otherwise been antagonistic to each other.

Partition and associated communal violence in this context can be seen as an event that disturbs the harmony, rather than something that makes Mano Majra feel divided. This harmony thus is the harmony that arises out of their common living. Peoples' engagement in day-do-day life barely allowed them to think of larger issues of nationalism or even of communalism. Specific community is comprised of different religion. They are least concerned with national or ideological issues that are part of history.

Lambardar says; "Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it "Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more land or more buffaloes." ⁴

Another Muslim Villager Says; "Freedom is for the education people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians-or the Pakistan." ⁵

Independence or Partition did not happen in a way that could change their domestic misery. Communities are made up of ordinary men and women. Such ordinary people have little time for ideology; they are too concerned with keeping their jobs, making ends meet for their families and living in peace. Communities presented in Mano Majro simply reflect this belief of coexistence in communal harmony rather than any engagement with history.

Communalism in India by the time of partition of country was only a few decades old. This social pathology up to some extent had its origin in class distinction. It is interpreted by some historians that the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan is a kind of solution to Hindu oppression and Hindu capitalism. Gyanendra Pandey writes;

"In the climatic years of 1946 and 1947 the league campaigned energetically against the 'bania'" 'trading money lending interest -gathering and in that sense; fundamentally un-Islamic; Congress and its bania leader "Gandhi" against a Congress which was under the thumb of Hindu capitalists and for all its protestations to the contrary-working hand -in glove with British imperialism

⁴Khushwant Singh: *The Train to Pakistan*, Chatto and Windus, 1956.

⁵ Khushwant Singh: *The Train to Pakistan*, Chatto and Windus, 1956.

;against Hindu capitalism and fascism which oppressed not only the Muslims but also untouchables and other minorities." ⁶

At this point it would be useful to look at the ideology of communalism; which is based on antagonism; Ideological communalism depends on the belief that people who follow the same religion have common secular interests; that is common political, economic, social and cultural interests. From this arises the notion of socio-political communities based on religion. Secondly communal ideology rests on the notion that in a multi religious society like India ;the secular interests that is the social ,cultural; economic and political interest of the follower of one religion are dissimilar and divergent from the interests of the followers of another religion .Finally the interests of the followers of different religions or of different communities are seen to be mutually incompatible'; antagonistic and hostile .Thus Communalists assert that Hindus and Muslims cannot have common secular interests ,that their secular interests are bound to be opposed to each other.

From this ideology of communalism springs the ideology of separate nation-state for a specific religious community propounded by extreme communalist organizations like Muslims League and Hindu Mahasabha and others. Communalism in India emerged during the years of 1940's, which functioned as a fascist system and as known to us was based on fear and hatred and had a tendency to use violence of language deed or behaviour. It was at this stage that both the Muslim and Hindu Communalists put forward the theory that Muslim and Hindu constitute separate nations whose mutual antagonism was permanent and irreconcilable. This was perhaps the structure under which Indian Communalism developed.

Gyanendra Pandey writes:

“In the history of any society; narratives of particular experiences of violence go towards making the community-and the subject of history .The discipline of history still proceeds on the assumption of a fixed subject -society ,nation ,state, community, locality ,whatever it might be and a largely predetermined course of human development or transformation". ⁷

⁶ Pandey,Gyanendra ,Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History of India .Cambridge University Press,2001.

⁷ Pandey,Gyanendra ,Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History of India .Cambridge University Press,2001.

But what happens in the process of growth of communalism that all other factors like religion, culture, language are ignored. In reality as Hindus or Muslims they did not have a separate political-economic life or interests. A Punjabi Hindu stood closer culturally to a Punjabi Muslim than to a Bengali Hindu; and of course the same was true of a Bengali Muslim in relation to a Bengali Hindu and a Punjabi Muslim.

Bipan Chandra writes:

“The unreal communal division thus obscured the real division of the Indian people into linguistic-cultural regions and social classes as well as their real emerging and growing unity into a nation.”⁸

But the objective behind the demand of partition is also the welfare of people. The Muslim League's demand for Pakistan was presented as aiming at true freedom of both the Hindus and the Muslims, the fairest deal for minorities and justice for all who were oppressed and poor.

Perhaps with this obscure demarcation of communities in mind Khuswant Singh writes *Train to Pakistan* to show the futility of partition. Hukum Chand the commissioner of police probably rightly presents Novelists views on historical constructions;

“There were processes of history to which human beings contributed willy-nilly. He believed that an individual conscious effort should be directed to immediate needs like saving life when endangered, preserving the social structure and honoring its convention. His immediate problem was to save Muslim lives.”⁹

What made partition and Independence particularly bitter was that neither of the two states turned out to be what is proponents had hoped for. Therefore the ideological construction for communal partition of country became meaningless. Objectives remained unattained. On the other hand diversity in composition of population discouraged watertight compartmentalization. The extreme exclusivist policy of partition really did not happen. Rather what we find in a partitioned India or Pakistan is existence of multi-religious societies. State also always encouraged secularism. When Mohd. Ali Jinnah articulated his conception of secular multi-religions Pakistan the proposition produced bewilderment among many of his followers.

Mano Majrans in *Train to Pakistan* pledge to protect their Muslim brethren. It is only their fear of the angry and aggrieved refugees from Pakistan that cause them to shift their Muslim brethren

⁸Bipan Chandra, et. al. Ed. *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi, Penguin, 1989. P. 400.

⁹ Khushwant Singh: *The Train to Pakistan*, Chatto and Windus, 1956.

from Mano Majra .The condition in Mano Majro deteriorates with arrival of a train from Pakistan at an unusual hour, carrying dead bodies of Sikhs and Hindus .But their hopes never vanish completely, they are still hopeful of that they would welcome their Muslim brethren;

"Not many people slept in Mano that night .They went from house -talking ,crying, swearing love and friendship ,assuring each other that this would soon be over .Life, they said, would be as it always had been"¹⁰ and finally we have Jugga the Sikh Peasant known for notorious activities, who comes up with a cause to save lives of Muslims.

To conclude in the words of Gyanendra Pandey ,"Nation -Modern political communities ,products of history that are forged in struggle-are made to a large extent ,through the actions of emergent nation -states, or their ruling classes ,which seek to nationalize different element of the social and intellectual body of the putative National Community."¹¹

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¹⁰Khushwant Singh: *The Train to Pakistan*, Chatto and Windus, 1956.

¹¹Pandey,Gyanendra ,*Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History of India* .Cambridge University Press,2001.