



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

OVERWHELMING COMMUNAL HATRED AND LOVE FORCE IN *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN* AND *A BEND IN THE GANGES*

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Article info

Article Received: 09/01/2023

Article Accepted: 07/02/2023

Published online:13/02/2023

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.11.1.97](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.11.1.97)

Abstract

Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* and Manohar Malgonkar in *A Bend in the Ganges* have laid bare horrible naked reality of world's bleakest history of Partition of 1947, besides the reality of Indian Freedom Struggle in the latter novel. Both the novelists depict aghast incidents of Partition holocausts, mass massacre, upheavals of human movements, mass exoduses, orgy of genocide, rape, mutilation and all forms of inhuman and barbaric incidents. Suffering for more than ten million people was caused by overwhelming communal hatred and fanaticism. Nonetheless, both the novels do not end up to be merely being the chronicles of historical events only, yet both literary artists attain transcendental heights with the right treatment of the theme of love against hatred. Juggut Singh in *Train to Pakistan* sacrifices his life when taking love over hatred; In *A Bend in the Ganges* Gian Talwar endangers his life for Sundri and saves her, Tek Chand prefers to embrace death with his dead wife. Debi Dayal sacrifices his life for Mumtaz and vice versa in communal riots. In all cases one truth has been expounded that hatred leads to death and destruction while love teaches us to save lives and not to get overwhelmed by communal frenzy.

Key words: Partition, love, hatred, overwhelming, sacrifice, upheavals

Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar hold prominent niche in Indian English Fiction writing; more importantly for their artistic ability to lay bare subtle human ethos during upheavals of Partition and thus having penned down motley shades of contemporary Indian socio-political history. As it is universally accepted and critically acclaimed fact that a creative literary artist is the end product of the society; it is not only the contemporary society they live in, but also the social or surreal impressions they cherish in mind. Hence, it is inevitable for a literary author to delineate life in different shades and in essence and leave a

meaningful message. In case of Anglo-Indian literature or Indian Literature in English this fact is obvious as Meenakshi Mukherjee holds such view, "Since the novelist's subject is man-in-Society, his subject matter must also be the texture of manners and conventions by which social man defines his own identity." (Mukherjee, 1974: 18) Hence, a true literary book, particularly fiction, is not only the source of artistic representation of varied facets of life, but also an authentic source of historicity.

The fictional world of Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar is peopled with human emotions such as love, violence and hatred etc., put into action against the epical events. The novels taken here for research viz. Khushwant Sing's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) are both prominent literarily rich novels in which both the novelists have let the drama of human relations and ethos enact against the backdrop of colossal events of Indian Freedom Movement and Partition holocausts. The action in *A Bend in the Ganges* spans from early period of Indian Freedom Struggle to the darkest history of the world i.e. Partition upheavals. "This novel is not just one of the most popular novels written on the Partition ,but also one of the best-known texts in the whole canon of Indian English Fiction." (Roy, 2010: 47)

It goes without saying that the bleakest history of Subcontinent Partition in 1947 was the outcome of communal disharmony and hatred between Hindus-Sikhs and the Muslims. Making of two nations and consequent partition was transitional time in the fate of more than ten million people. This was the time when violence, revenge, retaliation, communal hatred and religious fanaticism got better of ethnically maintained conventional communal harmony. Both the novels unravel this dark reality of the Indian subcontinent history in detail as millions of people had to abandon their ancestral loved homes, villages and cities for unknown destiny. Millions of innocent people were massacred, mutilated, women were brutally raped, children were killed in orgy and maimed:

The men moved up towards the bridge to see some corpses which had drifted near the bank. They stood and stared. 'Lambardara. They were not drowned. They were murdered.' An old peasant with grey beard lay flat on the water. His arms were stretched out as if he had been crucified. His mouth was wide open and showed his toothless gums, his eyes were covered with film, his hair floated about his head like a halo. He had a deep wound on his neck which slanted down from the side to the chest. A child's head butted into the old man's armpit. There was a hole in its back.

There were many other coming down the river like logs hewn on the mountain and cast into streams to be carried down to the plains. A few passed through middle of the arches and sped onward faster. Others bumped into the piers and turned over to show their wounds till the current turned them over again. Some were without limbs, some had their bellies torn open, many women's breasts were slashed. They floated down the sunlit river, bobbing up and down. Overhead hung the kites and vultures. (*Train to Pakistan*, 1956: 151)

Likewise, Malgonkar lays bare disastrous ramifications of Partition in the form of mass holocaust, mayhem, massacre and all inhuman nakedness of communal hatred and frenzy-- Muslims killing Hindus and Sikhs and vice-versa:

Tens of millions people had to flee, leaving everything behind; Muslims from India, Hindus and Sikhs from the land that was soon to become Pakistan: two great rivers of humanity flowing in opposite directions along the pitifully inadequate roads and railways, jamming clashing, colliding head-on, leaving their dead and dying littering the landscape.

As a background to this great, two-way migration, religious civil war was being waged all over the country; a war fought in every village and town and city where the two communities came upon each other. The most barbaric cruelties of primitive man prevailed over all other human attributes. The administration had collapsed, the railways had stopped functioning because the officials and technicians had themselves had joined the mass migration. Mobs ruled the streets, burning, looting, killing, dishonouring women and mutilating children; even animals sacred to the other community became the legitimate targets of reprisals. (*A Bend in the Ganges*, 1964: 282)

Equipped with adequate literary and artistic excellence Khushwant Singh touches the historical

nadir by touching the irony in context to this bleakest history of humanity i.e. Partition. Sandip Tikait & Samir Thakur point out this artistic style of Singh, "The novelist ironically brings out the fact that while trains to Pakistan were getting safe passage from India, trains from Pakistan were adding fuel to the raging fire." (Tikait & Thakur in *Understanding India*, 2010: 58)

In both the novels trains from India to Pakistan and vice-versa serve as the symbolic agents and carriers of sullenness, horror and death; in *Train to Pakistan* the hissing of engines, rumbling of metal, dark giant train at night leave the suggestion of fear, mystery, horror and death. In *A Bend in the Ganges* train has been shown to be the choicest place for frenzied attacks, massacre and death. For Hindu-Sikh duo the train, from India to Pakistan, was a nemesis for Muslims and the train, from Pakistan to India, was nemesis for Hindus and Sikhs according to Muslims.

Nevertheless, these novels should not be merely taken as the chroniclers of Indian Independence Movement and Partition historical events, yet both the novelists, having artistic acumen, have presented the historical upheavals against the backdrops of human drama of interactions, relationships, aspirations, love, jealousy, predicaments, transformations, transgressions and so on. In both the novels communal hatred overwhelms the humanity, fraternity and harmony as each community chooses to seek revenge against those who have betrayed and rampaged the people of their community. Men and women were left with choosing between humanity and communal identity, the identity based on religion. For millions, migrating and emigrating in mass exoduses, only way to save their identity and survival was possible by destroying the people of other communities and defend themselves. Srinivasa Iyengar ponders in case of *Train to Pakistan* that this novel is more than being Partition fiction, "One of the more satisfying imaginative records of Partition is Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956). The whole horror is there, but humanity and compassion are there too." (Iyengar, 1962: 324)

Both, Singh and Malgonkar being true artists, have also brought into fore the flip reality of the time, when humanity and love came to be triumphant against hatred. Juggut Singh alias Jugga, the grey character hero of the novel, is depicted as a typical rustic notorious gangster who has been in jail. He has been placed against the character of Iqbal, highly educated, thinking urban man who is a social reformist and stays at Mano Majra, the small frontier village. "Juggut Singh lay on his charpai, wrapped from head foot in a dirty white sheet and snoring lustily. He had spent two nights and a day in the jungle without food and shelter..." (Train to... 59) Jugga has illicit love affair with local Muslim girl Nooran and brutally fornicates with her as a rustic during the trysts:

She felt the dead weight of the lifeless man; the sand gritting in her hair; the breeze trespassing on her naked limbs; the censorious stare of the myriads of stars. She pushed Juggut Singh away. He lay down beside her.

'That is all you want. And you get it. You are a peasant. Always wanting to sow your seed. (15)

But this novel attains transcendental heights in the final pages of the narrative as the dexterous hands of Khushwant Singh beautifully depict that how such dalliance proves to be pure love; how a rustic badmash becomes the agent of triumph of love over hatred and fanaticism. Generally, it is illiterate folk that are not rational and fanatically take resort to the violence under the stupor of religious frenzy as it happened in Partition riots. However, it is very rustic illiterate man who saves the lives of numerous Muslims travelling in the train in which Nooran was one of them. It is power of love for Nooran that he evades the considerations of Hindus-Sikhs having been killed by Muslims; this is what a true literary artist wants to convey the message to the society that--what we need is love and it is love that saves us. Tough Jugga cuts down the girthy rope which was tied by the revenge-ridden Sikhs to stop the train and massacre the Muslim passengers. In the effort Jugga sacrifices his life for love:

The engine was only a few yards off, throwing ambers high up in the sky with each blast of the whistle. Somebody fired another shot. The man's body slid off the rope, but he clung to it with his hands and chin. He pulled himself up, caught the rope under his left armpit, and again started hacking with his right hand. The rope had been cut in shreds. Only a thin tough strand remained. He went at it with the knife, and then with his teeth. The engine was almost on him. 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. (190)

Had both the novels been chroniclers of telltale Indian Freedom Struggle and Partition history they would have ended as mere journalistic documents of socio-political history. But these novels are masterpieces since life-force and love-force have been given right treatment in them by Singh and Malgonkar. As analyzed above that how Singh has given the message of love that is need of entire humanity. In the same way, Malgonkar in *A Bend in the Ganges* captures subtle nuances, kaleidoscopic shades of life, besides events of Freedom movement and Partition. Malgonkar shows different aspects of love throughout the narrative, yet finally presents the universal truth of the power of true love. Iyengar holds:

Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* explores more fully the origin of the two-nation theory and presents in some details the sheer frenzy that possessed people in the Punjab in August 1947. Like war and revolution, civil strife of the kind that was witnessed in parts of India in 1947 was verily a bull-dozer that levelled up things, leaving an ominous calm in the wake of the precedent destructive storm. Humanity uprooted, humanity mutilated, humanity massacred—for the artistic projection of the things that happened in 1947, not even the images of Dante's *Inferno* can possibly prove adequate. (Iyengar, p. 324-25)

Gian Talwar, an unheroic hero of the novel, has not been depicted in bright colours only as Malgonkar, being wise author, depicts him having ambivalent character who is guided by the light of love in the final pages of the novel. Gian's life is epitome of vicissitudes whose journey of life spans from his being Gandhian disciple of Ahimsa, as a student, in his village who wants to avoid family feud, his being revenge-seeker who kills Vishnu Dutt, the killer of his brother. He has to be in Andaman jail where his character takes another unexpected turn as he betrays his fellows for the British; he becomes imposter and finally emerges as the hero who saves Sundri, whom he loves, from the clutches of Muslim fanatics. Sundari is a princess like heiress of rich tycoon Tek Chand of Kirwad family. Being college mate, but from poor peasant family, Gian cherishes fantasies to have Sundri in love. "He blinked at her, a statue that had come to life, a face that was a mixture of irritation and anxiety, so beautiful, so near. He wanted to put his arms around her, to pull her close to him, smother her with kisses." (A Bend... 08)

He betrays, makes hoax call, lies, contrives to take advantage of the estrangement between Sundari and Gopal Chandidhar, her husband, but finally he wins her when he appears in a new avatar to save Sundri and her family:

Gian had sprung out of the darkness, carrying the Shiva in his hands, and brought it down on Inoos' upraised arm which held the tyre-lever; then, as Inoos staggered under the blow, he had swung again at his shoulder. Inoos crumpled where he stood, at the head of the stairs, and then went rolling down a few steps in slow, thudding bumps.

'The lying bitch! - telling us there was no one else in the house!' Shafi cursed. He held the revolver at the ready, its hammer cocked, aimed at the doorway.

'Gian! Don't show yourself in the door!' Sundri shouted. 'He's got a pistol aimed at the door!'

But even as she was saying it, Gian was in the doorway, in full view, wielding the metal image of an unhappy god...(321)

Malgonkar hits on different shades of love in the novel, however, love works as a force in shaping and changing the minds and change the course of action. Debi Dayal, the heroic character and brother of Sundri, is a staunch extremist against the British. The hatred and animosity for British owe more to his emotions, the love for his mother, Radha. Radha, when Debi was mere a boy, was once unsuccessfully sexually assaulted by a white soldier which Debi witnessed. The memory of that horrific incident remains uneffaced in his mind and thus strong hatred for the British keep bulging. His extremist group Hanuman Club secretly works under the leadership of Shafi Ushman, as during the long span of Freedom Struggle Hindus and Muslims work harmoniously against the one single enemy, the British. However, at the time of independence and partition the enemy was no longer British, but each other--- for Muslims the Hindus and vice versa.

As in case of Juggut Singh in *Train to Pakistan* the love does not let originate hatred and revenge-urge against the Muslim in Debi's heart. Having been liberated from Andaman jail by the Japanese and betrayed by Shafi Ushman, Debi gets caught in the 'coils of sansar' when he gets the love of Mumtaz, the kept woman of Shafi. More than Muslim National fanaticism it is loss of love for Shafi that his first target for rampage is Debi's Kirwad family in Duriabad. Like Gian, Debi also endangers his life for the sake his love Mumtaz and travels in the train; like Juggut Singh he also sacrifices his life for love, for Mumtaz. But here is difference, Debi sacrifices his life but Mumtaz is also not saved:

That was the last thing he ever saw: the rising sun in the land of five rivers on the day of their freedom. The next second his eyes were blinded by a great flash of pain that seemed to shoot up from the centre of him, as though a bomb had exploded between his loins.

And the last thing he ever heard was his name being shouted by his wife with all her might.

'Debi! Debi, my darling! I shall never live without you! I am coming with you too... I am coming...'

He surrendered himself to the pain, not knowing what she was trying to tell him, but taking childish, pathetic consolation in the fact that she wanted to be with him wherever he was now going; go with him as she had always wanted to go wherever he went. (312-13)

As Mumtaz wants to be forever with Debi Dayal, her dying husband, Malgonkar shows another instance of 'bond of love' in case of Tek Chand, Debi's father, who disappears from the convoy to Delhi, to embrace death in communion of his dead wife, Radha. "My father is missing, Sundri told him. What's that? Hell, Miss, we can't wait all day for him! Move on, will you! he ordered Gian. We can't hold up the convoy for someone's old man!" (324)

May it be case of Juggut Singh, Gian's, Tek Chand's, Mumtaz's or others', what both the novelist have brought home the idea that love force works on human mind; one sacrifices his life for love, the love for their own loved ones or love for motherland. Whereas, revenge, fanaticism, communal hatred etc. do not make one to sacrifice their life but to take others' lives. Both the novels, thus, have come up with the truth that hatred leads to death while love teaches us the value of life.

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Brief Bio of the Author

Dr. Sonu Lohat, presently living at Dhakoli (Mohali) near Panchkula--an Associate Professor of English at RG Govt. College, Saha (Ambala), the Higher Education Haryana. He is M.A., B. Ed., M. Phil., UGC-NET and Ph. D. in the subject of English. Has more than seventeen years teaching experience at college as well as university level, teaching Under-graduate and Post-graduate classes. Has fourteen plus papers published in International refereed journals. Has delivered talks, read/presented many papers in various seminars and chaired the session. He has written blogs on a few websites/forums; his poems and articles were published in magazines. Being intellectual with pedantic approach and thinking mind Lohat has been in habit of noting down fugitive impressions and forming novel concepts on them. He has penned down a novel *Swarms of Life*, marking ironies and paradoxes that life offers, which is to be published and another novel—*Dark Ripples on White Flow*, focussing on the shades of Flood/White Revolution in India, is in the pipeline.