
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Religious Schism and the Transformed Apparition of Mano Majra: A Psychoanalytic Study of Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*

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| ABSTRACT

This paper explores the distressing consequences of religious schism and communal division in Khushwant Singh's groundbreaking novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956) through the lens of psychoanalysis. This novel depicts the phase of partition trauma and portrays the vulnerable picture of the pre-partition era at the peak of communal riots, the struggle for achieving freedom, and the exploitation of women. By scrutinizing the backdrop of the Partition of India in 1947, as shown in the novel, the study delves deep into the symbolic, psychological, and environmental transformations of the village named Mano Majra- from a tranquil, syncretic inhabitation to a tormented and fearful landscape of anxiety, death, and existential crisis. Through this novel, this study desires to reveal how a small, peaceful place turns into a battle field due to religious and racial extremism. The main source of data for conducting this research is Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, whereas secondary data have been collected from different articles, research papers, and various online sources. The content analysis method is used to analyze the data collected from different sources. By applying Freudian psychoanalysis, the exploration unearths the extent to which the entrance of viciousness and vandalism prompts the emergence of a collective psychic change by disrupting both individual's and community's psyches. This paper aims to interpret the altered apparition of the village as a direct consequence of using religion and racial fanaticism as the main weapons for intensifying unconscious rivalry and the devastating effects of the partition period. Here, Mano Majra appears to be more than a locality. All of a sudden, it converts into an apparition, a ghostly token of a lost unity that once used to be the identity and strength of its people. Clearly, some agents have worked in planting the seeds of communal suspicion and riots, which have turned into partition trauma. This eventually has snatched away the peaceful maintenance of the people. Looking into the text with a psychoanalytic lens, this study asserts that not only does the novel report historical events but also unveils a psychic disentanglement along with the socio-political constraints that reflect the traumatic pictures during the partition of two nations.

| KEYWORDS

Religious Schism, partition, Mano Majra, fanaticism, apparition, psychic disentanglement, psychoanalysis

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Partition literature plays a significant role in South Asian postcolonial literary world. It delineates not only the political turbulence of 1947 but also captures the emotional and psychological scars left on individuals and communities. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh is one of the pioneering works in this genre. This novel offers a complex representation of a small village caught in the dissolution of national coherence. It is, in many respects, an outstanding creation of Khushwant Singh. The incidents of the novel revolve around Mano Majra, a fictional village

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standing on the bank of Sutlej River and separating India from Pakistan. The village initially stands as an emblem of communal unity. Nonetheless, as the chaos of Partition breaks in, the communal harmony unties turning Mano Majra into a transformed apparition- a haunted landscape marked by fear, guilt, repression and loss. This paper examines how religious schism, instigated by political violence and intergenerational trauma, alters the emotional and psychological dimensions of both place and identity in *Train to Pakistan*. Looking into the novel through a psychoanalytic lens, this research explores Singh's portrayal of psychological fragmentation of characters such as Jugga, Ikbal and Hukum Chand. Moreover, this study also sheds light on the village itself, considering Mano Majra not merely as a setting but as a collective unconscious, a place where communal memory meets the force of historical repression.

1.1 Problem statement

Religious schism refers to a formal split in religion usually caused by doctrinal differences or disagreements. In the context of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, it means the deep and vicious division among the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs during the Partition of India in 1947. On the other hand, the transformed apparition of Mano Majra is an indication of the metamorphosis of the village—from a symbol of harmony to a ghostly, altered version of itself. In order to analyze the concepts of religious schism and how it transforms Mano Majra into an apparition, this paper will examine the communal violence that replaces the long-standing peace of Mano Majra. This paper will, at the same time, analyze the key characters of this novel with a view to finding out their participation and suffering in the communal violence and hence the transformation of Mano Majra into a ghostly land. Many researchers have conducted their researches on different issues but a psychoanalytic approach is something new in this field. So this research is essential to fulfill the gap.

2. Literature Review

In the Indian subcontinent, the Partition in 1947 stands as the most significant historical event in the construction of a nation. Partition has created disorder and dislodgment among the newly created nations and numerous factors along with fanaticism. Grayling (2002) defines that "Fanaticism arises when a person's attachment to a belief system becomes so rigid and emotionally charged that it overrides critical thinking and empathy for others" (p.72).

Singh's *Train to Pakistan* demarcates the role of 'fanaticism' in inaugurating new national orders by creating destruction and brutality. Issues of territoriality, identity crisis, migration, citizenship, domination and so on can be located as well. However, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* has been a subject of extensive scholarly reading with the exploration of innumerable facets including its portrayal of gender dynamics, partition and communal violence, identity crisis and detachment, loss of humanity, corruption, sacrifice, trauma etc. Much of the exploration of the novel emphasizes its historical significance as it shows a vivid illustration of the 1947's partition.

Alok Bhalla (2006) asserts that Singh's novel "makes the past intelligible through an ethical realism in which characters are not symbols but fractured individuals caught in history's brutality" (p.17). Characters like Ikbal and Jugga are perplexed with internal conflicts and are the most prominent scapegoats of societal brutality. However, Imam Baksh, Nooran along with Jugga's mother are also the representatives of people from the lower strata who are the victims and suffer most by the authoritative force. Their vulnerability and helplessness also echo the larger social breakdowns and fragility of any community during that time.

Menon and Bhasin (1998) denote that the literature of partition era usually focuses on the "muteness of trauma," especially when it comes to using violence across religious lines (p. 53). *Train to Pakistan* specifically employs silence, death, and multidimensional transformation evolved by the trauma of the partition tormented community. The clash among a community living with harmony gets worsen by the stern mark of trauma that brings about devastating effect for every race and gender here.

Tyagi's article, "Gender and Partition in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*"(2005) argues that Singh's representation of gender replicates the patriarchal dominion that is prevalent in Indian society at the time and also displays how the ways in which like Nooran struggle with these norms and assert their agency in the face of

violence and cataclysm. Based on Tyagi's work, Suman Bala in her scholarly writing, "Reconstructing Gender: A Study of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*" (2012), delves deeper into the gender dynamics of the novel by putting emphasis on Juggut Singh's character as a representation of altering masculinity in the post-partition era. Bala notes that Jugga's multifarious character goes beyond the traditional notion of gender role and masculinity, suggesting a more impressive revelation of gender roles along with humanity in the novel.

Susan Brownmiller (1975) addresses the intense number of rape during the war tormented era as a way of imposing domination and states "Rape becomes an unfortunate but inevitable by-product of the necessary game called war. Women, by this reasoning, are simply regrettable victims" (p. 32). Vehemence against women can also be seen as a tactic to spoil the peace and destroy the self-esteem the opponents during any war. It is also a vehicle to fuel the opponent group's eagerness to involve themselves in more offensive deeds by rousing weakness so that they become incapable to resist the crime. In Singh's abovementioned novel this exact scenario can be figured out. Urvashi Butalia (1993) gives a historical evidence and states,

Ninety Sikh women in the village of Thola Khalsa, belonging to Rawalpindi district, who committed suicide by jumping into a well; and another example of 26 women getting killed by family members or the leader of the community to protect the honour of their community by evading forced conversion, rape or marriage. These incidents were not very rare in the border villages at that time. An official estimate of 25000-29000 Sikh and Hindu women and another 12000-19000 Muslim women were subject to brutal torture, rape, forced marriage, conversion, and abduction; though the local sources claimed the numbers were a few times higher (p. 14).

Gyanendra Pandey (1994) addresses that reading Partition is not only a single event but it is a "structure of feeling" a notion which enables scholars to analyze the long duration of trauma when it gets joined with psychoanalytic theory (p. 209). This theoretical perspective lightens Singh's strategically narrated tale where violence is both evident and concealed alongside affecting numerous characters of the novel. This "structure of feeling", particularly hampers the existence of a whole nation as well. Characters like Jugga and Iqbal offer abundant ground for psychoanalytic interpretation. Jugga's self-sacrificing spirit can be traced as a "working-through of guilt" or "death drive", whereas Iqbal's fear and disinclination suggest "ego fragmentation" and "repression". The inhabitants' initial disowning of the growing communal split further demonstrates what Jacques Lacan terms the "foreclosure" of the Real, the elimination of traumatic truth that cannot be symbolized (Lacan 2001, p. 74).

Despite political aspect, gendered dimensions and ethical readings along with the aforementioned agendas of *A Train to Pakistan*, a gap persists in psychoanalytic aspect by looking at the religious schism of the novel. This study aims to conduit that gap by positioning Mano Majra as a 'psycho-symbolic space' which goes through an alteration that reflects the unconscious processes prompted by religious split and violence of partition.

2.1 Research questions

This project aims to address and provide some level of clarification for the following questions:

1. How does the novel portray religious schism as a weapon for psychic split affecting communal and individual identities?
2. To which extent does the changed apparition of Mano Majra replicate the distress of a partition affected nation?

2.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the ways in which religious schism is used as a weapon for psychic split affecting communal and individual identities in the novel.
2. To explore the changed apparition of Mano Majra as a replica the distress of a partition affected nation.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study takes on psychoanalytic approach to examine the transformation of Mano Majra and its inhabitants in *Train to Pakistan*, investigating the psychological breakdown resulting from the trauma of partition. Applying Freudian psychoanalysis, trauma theory (particularly the work of Cathy Caruth), and postcolonial psychoanalysis (Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha), this study sheds light on the novel's spatial as well as character transformations shaped by religious schism and historical violence.

➤ **Sigmund Freud: Repression, Guilt and the Uncanny**

Freud's concepts of repression, displacement and the uncanny give the basis for investigating how characters absorb and respond to trauma. The psychological defense mechanisms are noticed in characters like Hukum Chand. These characters experience guilt and moral paralysis. This can be understood as forms of repressed complicity. Once a peaceful village, Mano Majra itself becomes a site of the uncanny—a place that is both known and disturbingly alien. Repression is also evident in the villager's silence, denial and hesitation in reacting to the communal violence occurring around them.

➤ **Cathy Caruth: Trauma and the Return of the Repressed**

Cathy Caruth, in her seminal work *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), asserts that trauma is not entirely experienced in its moment of occurrence but tends to return later in fragmented, indirect forms. This idea is crucial in understanding *Train to Pakistan*, where characters and spaces bear the weight unresolved violence. The belated awareness, frozen moral judgment, disconnected memory in the novel align with Caruth's view of trauma as an "incomprehensible wound." The psychological disintegration of Mano Majra can be interpreted as a traumatized space. Haunted by violence it cannot consciously comprehend or articulate.

➤ **Frantz Fanon: Violence, Identity, and the Colonial Aftermath**

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon explores the ways in which colonialism deforms identity and perpetuates cycles of violence. His concept of internalized violence is particularly applicable to characters like Iqbal and Hukum Chand as they struggle with disrupted identity and moral incongruity. Fanon also talks about how violence reshapes the psyche, turning individuals into both victims and offenders—a dual identity that is visible in Jugga's transformation from a criminal to a self-sacrificing figure. Fanon's lens allows us to explore these characters not merely as individuals but as psychic projections of colonial and postcolonial anxieties.

3. Methodology

This paper focuses on the intensive study and the interpretation of the text itself as it is a Qualitative research. The research focuses on investigating how religion is used as a weapon to bring about a destructive form in any community by delving deep into Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. The researcher takes Khushwant Singh's novel, *Train to Pakistan* as the main source of data and makes an elaborate analysis of the relevant incidents from the texts. Secondary data are also collected from different articles, research papers, and online sources in this regards. Content analysis method is used here to analyze the data collected from different sources.

4. Findings and Discussion

In Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, religion is being used as a weapon to break down the consistent synchronization of a whole community holding diverse races and classes. The religious schism is being used to create a profound psychological disruption in the collective consciousness of 'Mano Majra' of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. The aim of this paper is to scrutinize the novel from a psychoanalytic perspective by pointing out how communal ferocity and the trauma of partition are responsible for the psychic turmoil, cultural distinctiveness as well as individual identity of the village, altering both its symbolic and actual landscape. The coherent, simple and peaceful village turns into a surface for terror, subjugation and exploitation left with disintegrated identity brought about by the Partition of 1947. Initially the village seems to be away from the attack of vandalism and Hukum Chand's queries to the sub inspector shows the condition clearly. "No communal trouble in this area?" (Singh 2016, p.20). This questioning of Hukum Chand expresses the government's desire to maintain an appearance of peace and normalcy even when tensions are rising and incidents of violence are occurring elsewhere. In response to

Hukum Chand's question, the sub inspector replies, "we have escaped it so far, sir. Convoys of Sikhs and Hindu refugees from Pakistan have come through and some Muslims have gone out, but we have no incidents." (Singh 2016, p.20). This statement somewhat reassures the magistrate that Mano Majra has remained peaceful in the midst of rising communal violence during the Partition in 1947.

The villagers lived in a harmonious manner where religious schism or racial distinction could not make them question their identity yet. Hukum Chand who later turns into the agent of indulging the poison of ferocity in the utopian landscape, once stays as one of the prominent figures for disrupting the tranquility and the sense of comradeship within the people of Mano Majra. Hukum Chand once utters words like, "If possible, get the Muslims to go out peacefully. Nobody really benefits by bloodshed. Bad characters will get all the loot and the government will blame us for the killing..." (p. 23)

Freud's concept of "The Uncanny" refers to a feeling of disorientation experienced when something familiar becomes unfamiliar or eccentric, generating a sense of trepidation or restlessness. In relation to this concept, Mano Majra, once a shelter of harmony between Sikhs and Muslims, suffers an alarming change as its native bonds are disrupted and turned into a total bizarre entity. Neighbors turn into potential enemies, and 'the train', once a vital symbol of connectivity, livelihood and mutual belongingness starts taking a ghostly face of death, carrying corpses rather than passengers. The sound of the train once used to wake them up with a new hope and positivity while religious schism was an unknown aspect to them. The train inspired both Muslims and Sikhs to start their day with unity and trust on each other. This transformation of the train into a 'ghost train' starts threatening the villagers' reality, forcing them to confront the atrocious truth of partition violence.

One morning, a train from Pakistan halted at Mano Majra railway station. At first glance, it had the look of the trains in the days of peace. No one sat on the roof. No one clung between the bogies. No one was balanced on the footboards. But somehow it was different. There was something uneasy about it. It had a ghostly quality. (Singh 2016, p. 82)

The villagers turn themselves into the envious objects affected by the trauma and ferocity of the partition, even unconsciously they become the mediators of religious schism. They start repressing their feelings of guilt and anxiety by involving themselves in revengeful behaviors and ferocious activities. This defense mechanism by Freud aims at minimizing feelings of guilt and anxiety by attempting such unpleasant acts.

For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape. Abduct two. For each home they loot, loot two. For each trainload of dead they send over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attacked, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we also play this game of killing and looting. (Singh 2016, p. 157)

These instigating words, coming out of a Sikh communal leader, reflect the cycle of retaliation and vengeful attitude of the Sikhs towards the Muslims. "Tomorrow a trainload of Muslims is to cross the bridge to Pakistan. If you are men, this train should carry as many people dead to the other side as you have received." (p. 161). A local boy's utterance of such words shows the idea of being revengeful which ultimately injects more or less everyone from the village and causes the psychic split of the people. Thus once used to stand as a community and unified identity, the apparition of Mano Majra turns into a landscape which is fragmented not only collectively but as in individualistic way also.

Moreover, the transformation of Mano Majra itself can be seen as a collective neurosis which has occurred by an irreparable wound caused by the trauma of the outcome of a war. The village's alteration from mutual understanding and unity to disbelief and violence among own selves reflects the mechanism of *regression*, where in the face of trauma, the community loses their primitive forms of identity, indiscriminate religious views and ethnic purity by abandoning the previously unified identities. The village seems to be working as a symbol of any war tormented state's psychic fragmentation during the Partition era. Cathy Caruth's view of trauma as an

"incomprehensible wound" can be marked here in the transformed apparition of the village. The psychic collapse of Mano Majra can be interpreted as a traumatized space which leads the inhabitants towards an injurious mental state that seems never to be recovered ever.

"Not many people slept in Mano Majra that night. They went from house to 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." (Singh 2016, p. 140). This remark shows the indicated traumatic state and psychological disruption of the affected people. Their regular life of peace and mutual harmony is hampered by the obstinate images of terrifying incidents that become the new normalized views for them, "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." (p. 151) Witnessing these scenes in the place of visualizing scenarios of brotherhood and mutual trust has made deepest impact on the mental disruption of the people living there.

The village was stilled in a deathly silenced. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had come from Pakistan. That evening, for the first time in the memory of Mano Majra, Imam Baksh's sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of God. (p. 88-89)

A villager in response to Iqbal's interrogation asserts: "What has been happening? Ask me what has not been happening? Trainloads of dead people came to Mano Majra. The river was flooded with corpses. Muslims were evacuated, and in their place, refugees have come from Pakistan. What more do you want to know?" (p.175). Along with the train, the rivers also stand as a powerful symbolic figure for the marginalized peoples' existence. However, here the river also turns into a ghostly shape that transforms the face of the village when it starts bringing about death in front of the habitants. "This happened over and over again until the people have lost all hope. They are disillusioned, dejected, thirsty and sweating." (p. 97)

The effects of religious schism and extreme level of violence are not only external events but also psychic disturbances that fracture both individual and communal identities. *Train to Pakistan* portrays Mano Majra not just as a village, but as an apparition, as a whole unite, an ethereal space which struggles between memory and lost identity, the sense of belongingness is killed by the attack of betrayal, the connotation of life and death is being reshaped and causes the crisis of identity as Fanon denotes. The subjugated group's identity moves towards crisis as a result of the colonial domination and violence. "These days one should be grateful for being alive. There is no peace anywhere. One trouble after another..." (p. 101). The sub inspector delivers these word which indicate a deep sense of anxiety and weariness with the condition of life and the world itself. Moreover, it clearly shows the extent to which the habitants are going through the mental trauma and are living in a space where they are even doubtful for their existence. Thus the brutal scenario of partition trauma can be located by the transformed appearance of this tiny space which shows the overall view of the trauma of Partition in a masterfully. Not only the situation of Mano Majra but the alongside village which is marginalized and goes through the same psychic dislocation and neurosis dilemma shows the same terrifying semblance as noted in the novel of Singh,

It worked. Hukum Chand stopped rubbing the corners of his eyes and asked casually, as if he was only seeking information, 'You mean to tell me there is not one Muslim family left in Chundunnugger?'
'No, sir, not one.'...
'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.' (p. 165)

The psychoanalytic reading of this novel reveals the entanglements of repression, guilt, trauma, subjugation and identity crisis that delineate this indicated transformation, offering a profound understanding of how the trauma of Partition affects identity, peace, space and psyche.

5. Conclusion

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* delineates the instances of the trauma of Partition 1947 that not only did torment the individual existence but also brought about a split in the collective harmony within their native space. By examining the novel through a psychoanalytic perspective, the existence of collective guilt, anarchy, regularized bloodshed, unconscious trauma and splintered identity can be figured out. The split in the harmonious bond among the habitants of Mano Majra is being initiated by religious schism which functions as a venom to destruct the inner peace of the village. It gradually transforms the whole scenario of the past village which used to be a symbol of armistice, staying differentiated by the rest of the war affected sights. Through the altered situation of Mano Majra, Singh renders the village's transformation, which mirrors the distress of all the partition affected nations. How a state can convert from a symbol of mutual trust and generosity to a grotesque shadowy figure is shown here by upholding the psychic breakdown of the village's inhabitants. The communal divide was political in origin, but it had deeply infected and torn apart the unity of the villagers. Religious schism can be marked as the slow poison that is responsible for rehabilitated behaviors, repressed memories, traumatic state, revengeful nature and a disturbed sense of reality along with crisis of identity of the habitants. The village, once an unblemished planetary, becomes an apparition which is haunted by the trauma of violence and betrayal. Thus Singh's narrative invites readers to confront not just the horror and trauma of Partition, but it also shows the deeper explanations which are responsible for the yawning explosion of hatred and vehemence of that time that had worked for the collective split and psychic distortion of common people of the war tormented countries.

5.1 Limitations of the research

This research finds limitations in secondary sources. Only a few research papers have been published in this field.

5.2 Suggestions for future research

This research can unveil a number of grounds. For example,

1. The effect of partition on human psyche
2. The portrayal of partition trauma in partition literature
3. The depiction of gender roles in partition literature
4. Representation of communal harmony and chaos in partition literature

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