



COMMUNAL TRAUMA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KHUSHWANT SINGH'S TRAIN TO PAKISTAN AND MANOHAR MALGONKAR'S A BEND IN THE GANGES

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Abstract: *There are several literary writers who depict the pain of society during the communal trauma of Partition in their literary works – Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Bapsi Sidhwa, Bhimas Sahni, Salman Rushdie, Manju Kapoor, Taslima Nasreen, and so many others. The present research paper is focused on the comparative analysis of Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh and A Bend in the Ganges by Manohar Malgonkar. An attempt is made to understand how both the selected texts depict the partition trauma, violence, abduction rape and murder of people, kidnapping of women and children, migration and immigration, and furthermore.*

Key words: *communalism, violence, partition, migration, colonialism.*

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The communal-trauma is made of two different words; 'communal' which is related to community, and 'trauma' which means deep injury or physical damage or violence. The communal is derived from "Latin word communalism and stands for something shared or done by all the members of the community" (Shaini 01) Which mainly focuses on a community. Bipin Chandra in his *India's Struggle for Independence* has mentioned that communalism or communal ideology consists of three basic elements or stages, one following the other. "The three steps follow to one another that are base of each community" (Chandra et. al. 398). It means the destruction of society or violence in a community which gives direction to community towards downfall; its major issues indicate to socio-political term communalism. The communalism mentions to losing of communal harmony; losing of peace in the community; sink in brotherhood; partition of communities, states, counties; the rise of nations; violence issues, abduction, kidnapping, murder, rape issues that make a totally downtrodden of people. The minorities have to suffer and subjugated by majorities. The communal trauma comes under a social term "communalism" which is closely related to three words like 'commune', 'communal' and 'community'. It is a socio-political term generated from a French word 'commune' that stands for a kind of an independent state, national government, and a confederation of such states having only limited powers. It is not at all used to denote 'community' or 'commune', but the antagonisms between people of different castes, customs, traditions, rituals, culture, communities, tribe, races, region, religion, etc. The self-motto of such kinds groups gives a negative concept and creates the problems of the downfall of society with violence incidents. The leaders of the leading group are known as fundamentalist who want to occupy society. Such leaders get the help of organizations and political groups, tribes and region, ritual and tradition, religion and culture, and cast and community. The religion is the strongest weapon to fulfill their desire and religion also presents to one's connection with one's feelings, emotions, and moral values as well as ethics values.

There are several issues which become a barrier in communal harmony, brotherhood, and furthermore. The cultural differences between communities in the same nation create the diversity that may be religions or regions; the feelings, within communities or groups of same region or religion, aroused by the two are neither mutually antagonistic nor identical in nature. They are different if their difference of cultural identity become the main basis for



political demands that the awareness of cultural –‘personal nationality’ assumes the dimension of a political doctrine. India is a land of communal organisations -The Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, Akali League, VHS, Muslim-League, which have desire dominance for religion, region, caste, community, culture, tradition, ritual, economy, and administration. The self-motto of such kinds groups gives a negative concept and creates the downfall of society which leads for violence. The leading group leaders are coming under the fundamentalisms which want occupy to society. Such leaders get the help of organizations and political groups, tribes and region, ritual and tradition, religion and culture, and cast and community. The religion is the strongest weapon to fulfill their desire and religion also presents to one’s connection with one’s feelings, emotions, and moral values as well as ethics values.

COMMUNAL TRAUMA IN INDIA

The communal-trauma is not a contemporary issue; it as ancient as the origin of life circle on the earth, not only in the human being it is in each creature’s community, but its causes and genesis remains different according to time and community. In a human community, it’s evidence can be seen since great epics St. Vedvyasha’s *The Mahabharata* and St. Valmiki’s *The Ramayana*. Indian is a secular country so that the clash and dispute are common in such a country. The origin and growth of communal trauma in the history of freedom movement is considered a huge tragic story. The Hindus and Muslims are leading the Indian community since their ancestors’ time and they prefer their community on the basis of religion:

The Hindu and Muslims are the pioneer communities in India, who played the significant role in the National struggle right from the Revolt of 1857. The Muslim Communalism was encouraged by the British Government as part of their policy of divide and rule. (Jayapalan 98)

In the pre-partition days, in modern India, we used to blame the British government’s ‘divide and rule’ policy. The Hindu communalists blamed the Muslims and they blamed to the Hindus for the communal riots.

Thus, several factors led to communalism in India. In Indian history, there had been several factual incidents that resulted in the weakening of the national movement by the end of the last century. Communalism flourished in India because the fundamentalists of Hindu and Muslim communities desired to flourish it for the sake of their community interest. The



demand for the separate electorate and the organisation of Muslim League were the practical manifestations of this line of thought. The British rule that produced the divide and rule policy, separate electorate on the basis of religion strengthened that was the basis of communalism in India. Ultimately the partition of the country had provided further an antagonistic feeling towards each other:

There are historical evidence of the riots, caused by Communalism. Hindu-Muslim 'LatBhairo' riots 1809-1811, 'HepHep' riots 1819, Hindu-Muslim 'Banaras' and 'Kanpur' riots 1931, 'Manzilgah' and 'Sukkur' riots 1940.
(Dkshamli)

COMMUNAL TRAUMA IN LITERATURE

There are several writers who depicted the pain and pleasure of society through their literary works –among them Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Bapsi Sidhwa, Bhimas Sahni, Salman Rushdie, Manju Kapoor, Taslima Nasreen, and so many others. The present, research work, comparative analysis of *Train to Pakistan* (1956) by Khushwant Singh and *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) by Manohar Malgonkar depicts the partition trauma, violence in society, abduction and murder of people, kidnapping of women and children, murder and rape of women, migration and immigration, and furthermore.

Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar begin their selected works with communal violence. Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* had depicted the situations of Indian partition in which he presenting it was a very crucial condition and there was a change in communities rather than an earlier period. He tried to mention it was a worst of time; communal riots had taken place and thousands of people were in flit between Indo-Pak during partition. However, Malgonkar also had presented same kinds situations in *A Bend in the Ganges*. He starts with the nationalist slogan of "Boycott British goods" (Malgonkar 01), in the whole country on the call of Mahatma Gandhi. The British garments are seen under burning and people are shouting slogans, "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" (01) that gives an expression to support the nationalism and freedom. The fire of goods that is burning in the heart of the Indian masses "just one of hundreds of thousands of similar fires all over the country" (11). The aggressiveness of community is rising to communal trauma and the burning British goods become the medium to show anger.



Each selected novel is written on Indo-Pak partition theme and has depicted that independence brought in its wake on of the bloodiest carnages in Indian history. The fundamentalists use the weapon of partition for their benefit. The authors have presented through violence incidents that the communal riots have broken out in Calcutta and within a few months, it effects all over India:

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. From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal. (Singh 02)

Malgonkar mentioned the communal trauma of partition in the preface of *A Bend in the Ganges*:

Freedom came to India...so did violence. Three hundred thousand were slaughtered, a hundred thousand women were raped, abducted, mutilated, twelve million people were rendered homeless.

Although Khushwant Singh being a journalist present the story of Mano Majro, which is seen free for communal violence during the partition period that later suffers in communal fire. However, Malgonkar mentioning the violence-free society in that captured the communal trauma and burn in the partition fire. The above cited statements match with Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1991) in which she also presents the communal harmony in Pir Pindo village. Through these incidents, it can be assumed that the partition not only brought independence it also baptized to communal trauma.

The violence begins in *Train to Pakistan*, moneylender, Ram Lal is murdered for the economic interests in Mano Majra. A group of the robbers in the guidance of Mali come Ram Lal's home at night. One of the robbers brings him out from under the cot; the leader slaps; scolds for his unwanted behaviour and ask for the safe's keys. Moneylender forbids for the keys. They insist for the keys, but he forbids for any almirah in the house. On the roof of his house, the dacoits beat the money lender with the butt of guns, spear handles, kicks and punches in his face. The blood starts gushing out and he is bitten by the butt of the guns and leader of the group kicks him. He sat on his haunches, crying and spitting blood. Two of his teeth were smashed, but he is not ready to hand over the keys:



One of the men tore the moneylender away from the leader and hit him full in the face with the butt of his gun...crying and spitting blood. Two of his teeth were smashed. ...Ram Lal uttered a loud yell and collapsed on the floor with blood spurting from his belly. (Singh10)

The dacoity had its evil effects on Juggat Singh, who was a resident of the village. The dacoits dropped bangles in his house and later he was arrested as the suspect in murder and dacoity. His father and grandfather were also dacoits and were hanged for murder. But they were reported not to have robbed own village-folk. The protagonist Juggat Singh is a tall, handsome, and robustly built farmer with a bad character's identity, a dubious distinction of being a "budmash number ten" (Singh 43). Meet Singh mentions Juggat had disgraced his family by his acts. Juggat Singh is suspected of the murder and arrested. Along with him is also arrested Iqbal, England-educated and Communist-inspired young man, who has been sent by the People's Party of India to preach Hindu-Muslim unity and stop the bloodshed in the villages of Punjab. Being a stranger in the village, he is suspected to be a Muslim Leaguer and is remanded to police custody.

Such as, Manohar Malgonkar depicts the communal activities and its genesis through the ordinary issues of Piploda Land –a property dispute between 'Little House' and 'Big House' families –Piploda land is only a piece of scrub and jungle and marsh in those days, untidy as a bearskin, with a sluggish, weed-chokea nullah running uselessly through one corner. There was court case for this property and the result of High Court came in favour of Hari. Vishnu Dutt left despondent by this decision. He wants back this property, so he killed Hari by his axe:

Hari lay just inside the doorway, his face downwards, his arms stretched over his head. And on his shoulder-blade, there was a deep gaping wound from which the blood had already stopped gurgling out. (Malgonkar 49)

The comparative analysis finds out that communal identity is also a tool which helped to communal trauma. The communal identity became a cruse for the minority that helped in its subjection and exploitation. Either, Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar have highlighted such issues in their selected works. In *Train to Pakistan* when Muslims are preparing for migration at night then robbers come at Imam Baksh's house for to kidnap Nooran. In her absence, one of the robbers made a caste mark by a knife to Imam Baksh. His



identity changes from Muslims to Hindu. The same events are presented in *A Bend in the Ganges* Debidyal disguises under Muslim identity returning from Lahore to Bombay as a Karim Khan and he is identified and murdered by Muslim mob:

‘He is my husband!’ Mumtaz said defiantly. ‘Karim Khan!’ The crowd already forming around him, making a circle. ‘Than can he prove that he is Muslim?’
(Malgonkar 368)

Khushwant Singh mentioned the situation of women communal-trauma of the partition period. The Sikh refugees have described the situation of women. The author prescribed that the women jumps into wells or burnt alive rather than touch by the hands of Muslims. The Hindu women are not to be unlike other women. When it is reported that the Muslim mobs have tried to molest Hindu women, they killed their own children and jumped into wells that filled to the brim with corpses, they are paraded naked through the streets, raped in public, and then murdered:

Our Hindu women are like that: so pure that they would rather commit suicide than let a stranger touches them. We Hindus never raise our hands to strike women, but these Muslims have no respect for the weaker sex. (Singh 06)

Debi Dayal, his sister Sundari and their parents, become victims of the unprecedented communal wrath. Shafi Usman wants to kidnap Sundari and he attack at Kerward family. In this communal carnage Sundari’s mother, Radha, is murdered and at the same time –“there was a bubble of pink blood on her mouth, and her moans were getting less and less audible” (Malgonkar 379). We are constantly reminded of numerous Debi Dayals and Sundaris, who were mercilessly killed in the communal trauma. “Mali’s gang and the refugees than unyoked the bullocks, looted the carts, and drove the cow and buffaloes away (Sing 145).” Mali is presented a hooligan and leader of a gang who lost people. However, Shafi is also a leader of young terrorists and believer in communist’s ideologies who murdered.

Manohar Malgonkar, however, shows the conflicts of communal- trauma through the novel in which communities that have worked in unison, linked to their aspirations, suddenly have developed inimical stances against each other:

The bomb explosion in Bombay dockyard accelerated the process of quitting...(for) the empire was ready to fall like a ripe mango...Never had



their rule been more abhorrent to the people of India; freedom was closer at hand than at any time since the Revolt of 1857. (Malgonkar 282-284)

Malgonkar refers the communal riots that started from Bombay explosion in India and defines the racial superiority which created the communal conflict of Partition. The egotistic racial pride of superiority due to Mughal rule over India had induced the Muslim League to sabotage the process of independence.

In beginning, we find that he is proud of his Indian identity but the association of communal minded friends thoroughly corrupts him. At first, he betrays his Hindu followers to the atrocities of a British policeman. At that time, he thinks that his act of betrayal was a sort of coincidence and this worried him for a long time, but even to himself, he refused to admit that it had anything to do with the visit of Hafiz, his communal minded friend. Later on, however, he throws all his ideological beliefs to the four winds and becomes a blatant communal leader seeking revenge on Hindus in general and Debi Dayal in particular. However, the interest of communal superiority and its domination by others created the cause of communalism. The author refers the Hindu Mahasabha that plays a great role in West Bengal for the genesis of communal riots. Its members wanted to add people in Hindu Mahasabha and they were trying to add people to force through the strikes. It becomes the cause of communalism.

In prescribed research both of the selected novels depicted a typical image of the communal trauma of partition. The Hindu and Sikh refugees, who sheltered in Mano Majra spread horrendous tales of communal carnage in the West Pakistan. Apart from this one's morning came the train with a "ghostly quality" (Singh 67) at the railway station of Mano Majra. There is not a single passenger on the roof, clung in the bogies, and balanced on the foot board. But somehow it was different. The train had come from Pakistan and it had carried the dead bodies of the many Hindus and Sikhs slain by the bloodthirsty Muslims:

There were women and children huddled in a corner, their eyes dilated with horror, their mouths still open as if their shrieks had just then become voiceless. (Malgonkar 90)

The train reaches Mano Majra station portraying the horror and tragic image. There are all other factors also leading to total communal estrangement in the village. The Muslim League members carrying skulls and bones in boxes for the evidence to be the Muslims



killed in India, and nocturnal visitors from other places to the Gurudwara preaching violence to the otherwise peace-loving public of the village. The communal violence has an influence on the mutual suspicions of the Sikhs and Muslims of Mano Majra. Further, the matters are complicated by the arrival of the young Sikh extremists who have actually seen the bloodshed. Therefore, everybody is thirsty for revenge. At the Gurudwara where a meeting is held, everybody decides to kill all the passengers who are going to Pakistan by next train. Apart from this, the natural disaster in Mano Majra is also in fever of the violence. It is the time of rain and Satluj river is overflowing. After the humanity massacre, the mass of the bodies of the animals and humans comes floating into the river. The mass of the dead bodies cremated outside the village. The present scenario of the partition in the text shows the division of the families, friendship endure across borders, people cooperates with the trauma, rebuilt their physical and mental lives, experiences of dislocation and trauma in their lives, and indeed the cities, towns and villages. They settled to find little reflection in writing history. Such a communal image is:

The land of the five rivers had become the land of carrion. The vultures and Jackals and crows and rats wandered about, pecking, gnawing, tearing, gluttled, staring boldly at their train. (Malgonkar 360)

The comparative study is frequent reference to antagonism between Sikhs and Muslims. Both the communities of Sikhs and Muslims go on looting, thieving, robbing and murdering each other. Both the races are at daggers drawn. The presented is a communal trauma of violence and downtrodden of communities on the basis of socio-economics and politics, religion and region, cast and community identity. The communal riot issue of dacoity at Ram Lal's home and Piploda Land, political issue of Hukam Chand to save Pakistan going train and police raid on 'Hanuman Club' Diwan Bahadur Tekchand Kerward, religious issue of Sikh mob enter into Mano Majra to encourage non-Muslim community to take revenge for abduction of people and kidnapped and raped women during migration of non-Muslim community from Pakistan and murder of Debidyal in Lahore station to Bombay, and last but not least social revenge issue of exchange full of gunny bags with abducted dead bodies.

Train to Pakistan and *A Bend in the Ganges* affirm the background of horrid communal riots. A comparative study of the novels defines the communalism and nationalism, that the causes of communalism are a fanatic interest in religion, politics, and economic concerns.



The partition on the basis of community and religion created violence and its wrath came on the innocents. The subalterns such as old men, women, children and minority people have to suffer. Khushwant Singh refers to the Muslims, Ram Lal's only Hindu family and Hindus and Sikhs before partition, after the advent of Pakistan the Muslim minority in Mano Majra face the communal problems. Malgonkar shows how Basu, Shafi, and Kerward family are also minorities who have suffered the wrath of communal violence. Communalism creates the migration problem and public starts to leave their native place. It is a very crucial condition that has tortured the communities.

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