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**Trauma and Identity in Partition Narratives: A Reading of Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*.**

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**Abstract:**

Literature always anticipates our life like the divine power and as the mirror of society is a mere reflection of humanity and a way for mutual understanding. It manifests human life and is the embodiment of human tragedies, experiences, moralities and self-conscience. Literature is a storehouse of elegance and grandeur but fiction is a necessary part and parcel of our life. Fiction being the most powerful form of literary expression has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English Literature, especially the 'Partition Narratives'. Partition Narratives deals with the historical, social, cultural, religious, economic, geographical, emotional and psychological aspects of the most horrendous, heart-wrenching and tragic event of splitting up of the Indian subcontinent into two different nations, named India and Pakistan in 1947, the chaos created in the lives of the masses due to the communal frenzy and the situation aftermath partition.

This article endeavours to highlight the Identity and Trauma associated with the People because of the Partitions, which have been narrate through the Fiction by Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* in their writings

**Key Words:** Trauma, Partition Narratives, Azadi, Train To Pakistan, Fiction.

**Introduction:**

Literature always anticipates our life like a divine power and as the mirror of society is a mere reflection of humanity and a way for mutual understanding. It manifests human life and is the embodiment of human tragedies, experiences, moralities and self-conscience. Literature is a storehouse of elegance and grandeur but fiction is a necessary part and parcel of our life. "Literature takes its revenge on reality by making it the slave of fiction," wrote the famous feminist Simone de Beauvoir. Fiction, the most powerful form of literary expression has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English Literature, especially the Partition Narratives.

Partition Narratives deals with the historical, social, cultural, religious, economic, geographical, emotional and psychological aspects of the most horrendous, heart-wrenching and tragic event of splitting up of the Indian subcontinent into two different nations, named India and Pakistan in 1947, the chaos created in the lives of the masses due to the communal frenzy and the situation aftermath partition. It has been years of partition of the two nations. Still, people trying to heal the wounds left behind. The traumatic experiences still haunt them. Many are still in search of an identity and a history left behind beyond an impenetrable boundary. "Hindustan had become free. Pakistan had become independent soon after its inception but man was still a slave in both these countries-slave of prejudice...slave of religious fanaticism...slave of barbarity and inhumanity," truly said the famous partition writer Saadat Hasan Manto.

India has a glorious history which goes back thousands of years and has witnessed many invasions, attacks, civil wars and other events that have shattered the actual ethos of India. The history of India emerges with the birth of the 'Indus Valley Civilization', i.e. Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and the arrival of the Aryans. India was annexed by many Kings, Emperors, Sovereigns and others who left their valuable legacy and precious endowment of teachings, culture, civilization, art, religion in this country and it has carried forward till ages. Gradually context of diversity, ethnicity, varied languages, multiple cultures, hundreds of castes and sub-castes, tribes big and small all played different roles throughout history. India is the birthplace of the world's major religions and thus, India is called a multi-diverse country (**Agarwal 2007**).

During the Medieval Indian History, the Mauryan Dynasty was the most influential, ruled by Chandragupta Maurya, Bindusara and The Great Ashoka and during this period renaissance of marvellous art and literature flourished. The Mughals among Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah Jafar, it was Akbar who had a vision for an ideological society embracing all religions.

After the fall of the Mughals in the latter half of the nineteenth century the Britishers became the agents of a historical process in India the process which was to change feudal India into the modern kind of industrialized capitalist state. India became a good source of raw material for Britain and also provided a market for manufactured goods. Modern technology, British Education System, Christianity etc. were brought by the Britishers. A few Indians and the Giants of the Indian independence movement from Dadabhai Naoroji, Muhammad Ali Jinnah to Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru studied abroad. Gradually limited power was given to the local people by the British to create a democratic system. In 1885, The Indian National Congress was founded to enable India to begin self-rule. In 1906, The All India Muslim League was founded to represent the Muslim minority's population. The idea of Nationalism, notions of democracy, freedom, dignity, and equality was creeping into Indian consciousness.

During the 1857 Revolt, the Hindus and the Muslims were together fighting against the British rule. Actually the strength of this revolt was the unity of Hindu-Muslims. Both the communities respected each other's religious sentiments and cooperated with each other and this power of unity played a vital role in driving the Britishers from India. So, the Britishers with cunningness started to create a rift of discrimination between the Hindu-Muslims and divide them so that their rule would last without any outward resistance of Nationalism and togetherness. Intentionally, the majority of Hindus were provided job opportunities and involved in administration and the minority Muslims were neglected. The theory of 'Divide and Rule' was applied which worked and gradually it sowed the seeds of Partition. The British rulers put themselves between the Hindus and the Muslims to create a communal triangle. They played a crucial role in segregating the two communities by helping the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League against each other. In this way, the Britishers began to encourage communalism and separatist tendencies in Indian Politics.

In tracing the history of partition, another significant root cause of Hindu-Muslim differences was the Muslim religious leaders or *Ulamas* who considered the Indian Muslims to be responsible for the decline of Muslim rule after the fall of the Mughals. *Ulamas* ignited local Muslims for *Jihad* or war in the name of the religion. They were not in favour of serving the British government as they wanted to restore Muslim reign in the Indian subcontinent. The Muslims found themselves isolated when the Hindus acquired privileged positions under the British government and slowly this created a sense of ill-will for Hindus among the Muslims.

According to Asgar Ali Engineer, "The *Ulama* had held high positions in Mughal courts and functioned as *qadis* or religious judges. These *qadis* were being replaced by British judges and highly qualified Indians who have studied law. These created strong resentment among *Ulama* and they denounced English education which was taking away everything from them" (Engineer 2009).

However a few thinkers like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan opposed *Ulamas'* ideology and promoted Modern English education among Muslims and after 1885 established the United Patriotic Association to advocate Muslims' loyalty towards the British government instead of joining the Indian National Congress. Bengal with a Muslim majority was divided during the administration of Lord Curzon in 1905 which added fuel to the fire of communalism. Partition of Bengal (1905), Shimla Dispute (1906) and Language controversy in Uttar Pradesh gave birth to the all India Muslim League in 1906. Thus Muslims were sidelined from the Indian National Movement and remained alienated from the Hindu community. The seeds of partition for a separate Muslim nation which was sowed long back took great grip and demand in the pre-independence times.

The spirit of freedom among the people was so strong and vibrant that there was a continuous urge to force the Britishers to quit India. Many movements were

led by great leaders against British rule. The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi and his ideology of a new secular national consciousness was highlighted. The 1919 reforms resulted in the joint Khilafat-non-cooperation Movement which turned out to be optimistic output of the attempts made by M.K Gandhi and M.A Jinnah. But again the communal conflict was ignited towards the mid-twenties. Gandhiji kept attempting in various ways for communal harmony but the All India Muslim League became prominent and Mohammed Ali Jinnah who once called himself “an Indian first and a Muslim second” became a strong opponent of the Congress. Lord Mountbatten proposed the idea for a united India. Congress and Akali leaders were against the partition but Jinnah wanted a separate nation. Mohammed Ali Jinnah claimed: “India has never been a nation. It only looks on the map. The cows I want to eat the Hindu stops me from killing. Every time a Hindu shakes hands with me he has to wash his hand. The only thing the Muslim has in common with the Hindu is his slavery to the British”.

Many attempts were made to resolve communal tension but failed. The various issues asserted by Jinnah, the differences in cultures, languages, art, customs, traditions, laws, morals, the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) etc. built an invisible border between the Hindus and the Muslims. Mountbatten joined the Boundary Mission, cleverly to decide the frontiers between Muslim and Non-Muslim areas of Punjab and Bengal. Leaders of Congress Azad, Gandhiji, and Jawaharlal Nehru strongly opposed the creation of Pakistan. Unfortunately, all the Indian leaders failed to control the communal fanaticism and as a result, partition was declared at the stroke of midnight on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. It becomes crystal clear that the partition of the Indian sub-continent was a kind of political tug-of-war for power in which religion and faith were used as weapons to ignite the fire of communal frenzy.

#### **Contextualisation and the methods**

Indian Writings are parts of its voice. ‘Partition Narrative’ is made up of two words ‘Partition’ and ‘Narrative’. Partition refers to the most heart-rending event of the division of the Indian subcontinent along the parochial lines into two dominions, i.e., India and Pakistan. A Narrative refers to an account of a series of related events, and experiences whether true or fictitious. Partition narratives include Novels, Short stories, Poems, Fiction and Non-fiction. Partition Novels can be categorized as political, historical or socio-political fiction i.e., the novels narrating and depicting social, and political events in some phase of history. “The Indian Novel or Fiction in English emerged gradually in the latter half of the nineteenth century and its pioneer was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who wrote his first English Novel *Rajmohan’s Wife*. The three prominent writers and old masters of Indian English Fiction are Mulk Raj Anand, R.K Narayan and Raja Rao. The second-generation writers include Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal Singh, Bhisam Sahni, Saadat Hasan Manto and many others who tried their best to capture the reality of partition and depict through their picturesque narration. The major novels which treat the partition of India as the central theme are *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal” (Butalia 1998).

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The reading of partition novels with special reference to Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* highlights the boomerang trauma and individual and multiple identity crises of the people of the Indian subcontinent. This study has been carried out using the two relevant writings of Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. It tried to through some light on reality through Fiction in Indian literature (**Singh 2007**).

**Trauma: Memory And Retrospection:**

“The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (**Caruth 1995**).

Trauma is a terrifying upshot of memory, especially those in the deepest realms of the human psyche, literature written about such memories becomes a horrid recollection of trauma. It has become a paradigm because it has turned into a catalogue of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity, memory and selfhood. It is the pain and agony in which one goes through the retrospection of the distressing past. It keeps on haunting individuals and entire nations as it ranges “from the public and historical to the private and memorial” (**Luckhurst 2008**).

The catastrophic event of the partition of India in 1947 resulted in one of the greatest disruptions in the history of mankind. Twelve million people were uprooted from their homes. Many caravans and convoys of this uprooted people were ambushed and on both sides of the border, the helpless thousands were butchered most cruelly and ruthlessly. Dead bodies were sent as ‘present’ from one country to the other over the trains. The unprecedented violence, brutality and degradation of humanity left a deep scar on the psyche of the two countries and it still haunts the people as a nightmare, generating an atmosphere of distrust and hostility between communities. The impact of trauma on the psyche of the twin nations, namely India and Pakistan highlights the evolution of generations in the backdrop of death, carnage, genocide and bloodshed that occurred during the partition which can be called the ‘bi-national trauma’ that cracked British India into two unforgiving enemies, modern India and Pakistan. Through the Partition Narratives one can realize that though the event took place long back, the scars and the wounds remain afresh in the minds of millions of people in both nations to date (**Butalia 1998**).

The trauma left by the partition of the Indian subcontinent remained a major concern. Literature after independence. The theme of violence, oppression and trauma is a common chord in the Partition Narratives that connects all literary pieces produced on this theme. Most of the writers considered independence as a false dawn as it brought nothing which would be celebrated. Other poets of different languages like Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati and Kannada all had the same notions about the Holocaust. Punjab and Bengal were directly affected by the partition hence the writers of these regions expressed their deepest anguish regarding partition. The first novel that described the trauma of partition was Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* in 1956, through which he made the people aware of the hollowness of such mass fratricide brought out the futility of bloodshed and condemned the partition of India.

Another story based on the trauma and brutality of partition is Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* which revolves around a young Parsee girl, Lenny who witnessed the horrors of partition. The most pathetic and disturbing aspect of partition is that people who lived together in peace, love and harmony as brothers for generations became enemies, thirsty for each other's blood. The people were lynching each other, bigotry gained currency and people became insane. Women remained the worst sufferers of partition. They are double-victimized and suffer all sorts of humiliation, violence, torture, barbarism and mental trauma. They were abducted, molested, raped and killed, their mutilated breasts came in trains.

Saadat Hasan Manto in his short-story *Toba Tek Singh* presents the trauma and grief of up-rootedness and forced migration. *The Return or Open It* by Manto in which a Muslim girl named Sakina is abducted and raped by a group of people ironically belonging to her own community, consider one of the most pathetic, traumatic and harrowing stories about the suffering of women during the time. Kartar Singh Duggal's *Kulsum* is a story of a helpless girl who brings out a moment of horror. Her forceful rape was an inescapable trauma for her. In both the communities of the Hindus and the Muslims, many accepted conversions to other faiths to escape bloody death and save their lives due to partition. In Bishen Sahani's *Pali* a lost Hindu child is in bewilderment and traumatized being tossed up by fate in the hands of his Hindu biological parents and Muslim foster parents.

In Attia Hosain's *After the Storm* there is the depiction of the struggle of women and children to remain alive in the hell let loose by their men folk. A small girl Bibi is led to speak about her past. Her childhood years had been robbed of her. She was unable to recall the memories of her childhood and her mind failed to fill the gap between the refugee camp and her adoption. Bibi is an orphan without a soul who is surrounded by the trauma of partition and can't recapitulate her childhood. Another story, *Where Is My Mother* by Krishna Sobti, present the terror, trauma and horrors imprinted on the mind of a little girl. Her inconsolable and anguished cry brings out the agony of the children who suffered during partition. Hence it is obvious that in the catastrophe of partition not only adults suffered but also children were traumatized and exploited. Qudrat Ullah Sahab's story *Ya Khuda*, dictates the tales of harrowing miseries and traumatic experiences to which Muslim women were subjected during partition. Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* and her poem *Aj Aakhan Wari Shah Noo* have emotionalized the people on both sides of the border to such an extent that even today people weep to recollect the trauma of partition.

The legacy of Trauma is a cyclic process of memories, retrospection and psychosocial recovery. The cycle continues across generations: first-generation survivors narrate their trauma; second-generation inherit these stories and add their negotiations with the past to their narration; and so forth. The healing takes a psychosocial dimension where it entails social participation and becomes more than the story of one. The literature on the tragic memory of partition, thus, evokes nostalgia where the "partition's meaning and memory have been constituted, and

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reconstituted” (Greenberg, et.al., 1996). In the context of the ‘Indian Partition’, the loss could be of land, identity, loved ones or a sense of a secure national belonging. Transgenerational accounts of trauma operate with both the extremes of not grieving at all and grieving for too long: in the light of the former, these work as triggers that nudge the victims to recall their sufferings as they partake in a shared remembering and retrospection process and the case of the latter, initiate a collective working through trauma via the realization of the need. Even though the tragic past can’t be forgiven, its memory can be channelized. This restores faith in human resilience and allows a psychosocial recovery from the trauma of the Indian partition through memory, remembering, reminiscence and retrospection.

**Identity: Home, Nationality And Fragmented Existence:**

If partition were a coin, it would possibly have blood marks on one side and the image of a home, belonging and identity on the other. Geographies of belonging refer to the corners that make up a home. For those people who were permanently uprooted from the place they knew as their own, home wasn’t merely a structural edifice for them. It was their linguistic, cultural and social universe, once they tried to lug along with the baggage of material belongings to their new, forced, homes - foreign countries for reasons more than just unfamiliar lines on a new map. Memory shapes and reshapes the contours of one’s identity of a lost home. A refugee in her new bearings clings to the past not only out of nostalgia but because it represents a time of peace and stability, unlike her volatile and violent present.

The status of belonging to a particular nation by birth or naturalization; identification as to national origin or a body of people sharing common descent, common identity, history, language etc. is considered as Nationality. Benedict Anderson argues that “a nation is simply an imagined community: imagined because the members of even the smallest nation are unknown and anonymous to one another.” Anderson further states that the existence of the community or nation is often imagined through language, and thus stresses the role of language in the discourse of identity formation and derivation. Since its genesis, language has transcended its primary purpose i.e, Communication. From being a storehouse and transmitter of traditions, memories, ideas, and much more, it has become closely linked in the postmodern, global world to notions of identity and home, and often engulfed in discourses of power and hegemony. Consequently, language becomes imperative in engendering and sustaining “imagined communities” (Anderson), and the sense of belonging is upheld and celebrated through it. Turning to the Indian subcontinent, Partition (1947) remains the most important historical factor in the carving of the nation. Language, in such circumstances, does not simply exist to “counter violence,” but becomes a means through which questions of identity are explored when the concept of “home” encounters transformation or denial. Contemplations on identity and memory have continued in contemporary post-colonial literature, for it was post-colonialism and its whole oeuvre of extracting and establishing native identity from the colonial ideology that initiated “writing back to the empire.” This literature emerged from a context of violence, genocide, border-

formations, and partitions which left natives traumatized and numbed as the processes of decolonization set in after years of struggle against imperial rule. There are various aspects of identity. Citizenship-Nationality is one of them. India and Pakistan came into existence as two separate nation-states in 1947. Their common identity revolves around aspects of shared history, geography, language, culture, values and traditions. However during partition, only one aspect of the identity is considered i.e., the religious identity (**Benedict 1983**).

In the Indian subcontinent, the Partition in 1947 remains the most important historical factor in the making of the nation. Partition brought about forced dislocation and displacement among many as new borders came to be drawn to divide a nation. The processes of establishing new national orders in the aftermath of the partition entailed that minorities- Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India had to negotiate their identities as rightful citizens. There were the issues of territoriality, identity, migration, citizenship, nationality etc. People were in identity limbo, among the growing number of people without nations who were unsure whether they were citizens of India or Pakistan, because of the ambiguities associated with what determined such citizenship.

The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 is an event of such a great magnitude and significance that it had political, social, cultural, religious, economic and humanitarian repercussions not only on the sub-continent and its people but also on the equations that impact global politics. Urvashi Butalia moves her readers by describing partition in the following words, “The political partition of India caused one of the greatest human convulsions of history...twelve million people moved between the new, truncated India and the two wings, East and West, of the newly created Pakistan...” (**Butalia 1998**).

Communal skirmish engendered out of the monolithic involuntary migration resulted in massacre and atrocities of various kinds. Both sides of the newly drawn geographical boundaries were filled with innumerable refugees who were rendered orphans by the storm called partition. This event propelled heinous massacres which affected no fewer than two million people. It was tragic and heart-rending because it was deliberate and not consequences of natural calamities like earthquakes or flood. The communal frenzy caused a huge exodus of population on both sides. The Partition novels realized the agony of the partition in terms of the displacement, communal discords and indignities that had to be endured by people driven to find a new home & a new identity.

Home, Nationality and Identity undergo a sudden metamorphosis; neighbours become enemies when nations break. A single political decision changes not only the geography of the motherland but also the mindscape of the people. Goodwill evaporates and hatred ensues. Murder, loots and rapes become daily activities. The imagination of a homeland, the loss or recovery of it, various disruptions and political positions within the post-colonial nation states have been



formidable diasporic conditions and Salman Rushdie's works can be taken as one site where the imagination of homelands is expressed and critiqued. His *Midnight's Children* offers a critique of the 'nation as integrated' concept through its metaphors of fragmentation. It is in a sense an interstitial text standing between the political and cultural, between the desired and the feared, questioning the choice of the imaginary national homeland the centrifugal impulses. As the refugees have to survive in an 'imaginary homeland' away from their native country, they encounter multifarious problems related to language, culture and ethnicity and so on. Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* give us a graphic description of the state of affairs in the Punjab province. In almost all the novels of Amitav Ghosh one can see the pangs of lost home and pain of separation. He has brilliantly portrayed the violent struggle of the dispossessed who wanted to create a new living and a new society (Singh 2007).

The identity of women has been stressed in partition narratives. Their identity is neither Hindu nor Muslim. Women and their body treated as the territory of one's identity. "The violation of the woman's body is constructed as a violation of the nation. The women thus remain no more just women as they incarnate the nation. During the partition of India, the bodies of unfortunate Hindu, Muslim and Sikh women were violated, branded and tattooed with religious symbols and nationalistic slogans such as "Pakistan Zindabad", "Hindustan Zindabad". By getting their bodies imprinted with lifelong trauma and humiliation, the women became the respective counties, indelibly imprinted by the Other" (Menon and Bhasin 2000).

#### **Chaman Nahal's 'Azadi'**

Chaman Nahal, also known as Chaman Nahal Azadi, stands out as a significant figure in Indian English fiction, ranking alongside luminaries like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao. His contributions to political and historical fiction are invaluable. Born in 1927 in Sialkot, India (now in Pakistan), Nahal was educated at Delhi University and the University of Nottingham in England.

One of Nahal's most notable works is 'Azadi', part of his Gandhi Quartet. This novel is a profound depiction of India's partition in 1947, an event that tore the subcontinent apart. 'Azadi' earned the Sahitya Academy Award and the Federation of Indian Publisher's Award for excellence in 1977. Drawing from his own experiences as a refugee, Nahal writes with exceptional insight and realism, detailing the tragic consequences of partition through the life of Lala Kanshi Ram, the novel's central character. The narrative showcases religion's darker aspects as an instrument of hatred and violence, and the catastrophic destruction that followed.

The novel 'Azadi' is divided into three parts: "The Lull", "The Storm", and "The Aftermath". In "The Lull", Nahal portrays the calm before the storm of partition. The second part, "The Storm," recounts the brutal killings among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs that erupted after partition was announced. "The Aftermath" covers the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and the subsequent suffering of the people. Nahal's work is autobiographical, and he describes it as "a hymn to one's land of birth" rather

than just a realistic portrayal of the partition. He transforms private experiences into a collective narrative that critically examines the past.

Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant in Sialkot, leads a contented life with his devout wife, Prabha Rani, and their children, Madhubala and Arun. Kanshi Ram, a staunch Hindu with deep respect for Vedic philosophy, becomes the mouthpiece for Nahal's exploration of the shock and dismay felt by millions uprooted by partition. Before partition, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs lived in harmony. This is exemplified by the friendship between Kanshi Ram and Chaudhari Barkat Ali, and their sons, Munir and Arun. However, the announcement of partition shatters this harmony, turning friends into enemies as communal tensions rise.

Muslims, celebrating the creation of Pakistan, begin attacking Hindus. In retaliation, Hindus burn Muslim shops. Violence escalates, and the city inspector supports the Muslim mobs, exacerbating the situation. Amidst this chaos, Lala Kanshi Ram's family is forced to move to a refugee camp. Kanshi Ram, who once admired British rule, now blames the English for the partition's devastation. The title '*Azadi*', meaning "Freedom," is steeped in irony, questioning the true cost and meaning of the freedom India gained. The novel focuses on the psychological impact of partition, portraying how it uprooted millions and turned them into refugees. Sialkot, a predominantly Muslim city, becomes a battleground, and the friendships between different communities disintegrate. The love story between Arun and Nur, Barkat Ali's daughter, is destroyed by communal hatred. Nahal juxtaposes sensible and humanistic Muslims like Barkat Ali with fanatical ones like Abdul Ghani, showing the spectrum of responses to partition.

The narrative details the first riot in Sialkot on June 24, 1947, following the Punjab Legislative Assembly's decision to partition the province. The communal violence spreads, engulfing cities like Lahore, Amritsar, and Rawalpindi. Trains are targeted by mobs, turning mass migrations into deadly journeys. Government efforts to transport minorities safely fail, leading to widespread chaos and massacres. Nahal captures the brutal reality of partition, describing how mobs killed and maimed indiscriminately. Lala Kanshi Ram's family decides to take the direct route from Sialkot to Amritsar, eventually reaching Delhi. There, they face new hardships as refugees. Instead of receiving sympathy, they are met with suspicion and mistreatment. Rehabilitation officers at Delhi station treat them with contempt. The narrative paints a heart-wrenching picture of the refugees' plight, showing their struggle to find shelter and rebuild their lives.

Lala Kanshi Ram, once a respected merchant, now struggles to start a small grocery shop amidst fierce competition. Prabha Rani, who had lived a life of dignity, is forced to take up tailoring work to make ends meet. Their dislocation and loss of identity are deeply felt. Arun, traumatized by the partition, withdraws into himself, unable to connect with others. Nahal poignantly portrays the existential loneliness

and detachment that the characters experience, highlighting the enduring psychological scars left by partition.

Partition not only brought violence and destruction but also profound isolation and identity crises. Nahal's narrative does not blame one community over another; instead, it emphasizes the need for forgiveness and humanity to heal the wounds of the past. The novel ends with the painful realization of starting life anew with nothing, underscoring the immense cost of freedom. In '*Azadi*', Chaman Nahal offers a powerful, critical examination of the partition, elevating personal experiences to a universal level. His work remains a significant contribution to Indian English fiction, providing deep insights into the human condition during one of the most turbulent periods in Indian history.

### **The unsettling terror in Khushwanth Singh's *train to pakistan***

Khushwanth Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan*, often regarded as his magnum opus, vividly portrays the horrific events on the Indo-Pakistan border during the partition in August 1947. This narrative encapsulates the tragic separation of India and Pakistan, marking one of the darkest periods in human history. The gruesome incidents of 1947 deeply shook people's faith in humanity, leading to profound disillusionment and a crisis of values for Singh. The novel serves as a scathing critique of the sinister and venomous effects of partition, capturing the indignation and disillusionment it spawned (Singh, 2007).

Originally titled *Mano Majra*, the novel employs bold and relentless realism to depict the brutal story of political hatred and violence during the turbulent days surrounding the partition of British India. Every individual was caught in the catastrophic events, with no one remaining untouched or impartial. While partition affected the entire country, Singh focuses on the perspective of Mano Majra's residents, a small village that acts as a microcosm for the broader societal upheaval. P.C. Car notes that Singh weaves a narrative around the life in this village, making it a microcosm representing a larger world. *Train to Pakistan* is divided into four sections: 'Dacoity', 'Kalyug', 'Mano Majra', and 'Karma'. 'Dacoity' recounts the murder of the moneylender Ram Lal by a gang of dacoits, introducing the main characters and providing an emotional and intellectual study of their responses to stress. The protagonist Juggut Singh, Iqbal Singh, and Hukum Chand represent the three aspects of modern India: youthful radical idealism linked with Marxist views (Iqbal), the animal passion and earthiness of ordinary India (Juggut), and corrupt officialdom (Hukum Chand). The partition brings about transformations in characters, highlighting the volatility of human nature. Characters like Juggut Singh, Nooran, Iqbal, Hukum Chand, Prem Singh, Sunder Singh, and Haseena endure immense pain and suffering due to the partition as they face their "tryst with destiny" (Harish, 1988).

'Kalyug' refers to the Hindu concept of epic time, symbolizing the end of an old order and the foundation for a new one. The peaceful routine of the village is shattered by

the partition, with the tragedy and horror of the 'ghost train' carrying corpses and the ensuing migration of Muslims vividly depicted. 'Karma' deals with the natural and human tragedy, highlighting the pain and suffering caused by the partition. The novel begins with a reference to the scorching summer of 1947, a prelude to the communal riots sparked by the proposed division of the country into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, resulting in thousands of deaths.

Mano Majra, the fictional hamlet where *Train to Pakistan* is set, is a tiny utopian village on the Indian border, with about seventy families of mainly Sikh and Muslim religions and only one Hindu family. The villagers, unaware of the partition's echoes, live uneventful and content lives. The secret affair between Juggut and the Muslim girl Nooran, the womanizing nature of District Magistrate Hukum Chand, and the brotherhood among Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims in the village are typical of a place untouched by unrest. Life in Mano Majra is regulated by trains, whose arrival and departure mark the day's routine, symbolizing an undivided India without boundaries. However, the arrival of a ghost train from Pakistan loaded with dead Sikhs transforms Mano Majra into a battlefield. The horrific experience of receiving hundreds of dead bodies and the subsequent mental anguish overwhelm the villagers. The serene village of Mano Majra is obliterated by the communal disturbances, with violence becoming a daily affair. The villagers, already dejected by the scorching summer, dreadfully await rain, but it brings only "earthworms, ladybirds and tiny frogs...myriads of moths" (Harish, 1988) and a terrible flood in the Sutlej River. This anxious wait for rain symbolizes the wait for independence, which, like the rain, brings momentary relief followed by despair, desolation, and devastation in the form of partition.

The peaceful life in Mano Majra is jolted when the moneylender Ram Lal's house is raided by Malli, a dreaded dacoit, and Ram Lal is brutally killed. Under the traumatic circumstances of partition, Juggut Singh is wrongfully charged with Ram Lal's murder and imprisoned due to Malli's evil machinations. The Muslims are forced to leave the village to save their lives, with one Muslim lamenting, "What have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers" (Harish, 1988). The trauma and pain of losing one's home forever are echoed throughout the text. The characters are profoundly affected by both the sudden loss of their homeland and the extreme violence of partition. During this traumatic event, at least ten million people were displaced, and one million were left homeless, including the author Khushwant Singh. Innumerable memories haunt the refugees on both sides of the divided nation, with the idea of fleeing from one's country never becoming permanent in the collective psyche of expatriates. Many refugees return to their home countries to fetch relatives, property, or belongings. In the text, Prem Singh returns to Lahore to retrieve his wife's jewellery, but his religious identity as a Hindu in post-independent Pakistan makes him an offender in his erstwhile nation, leading to his death at the hands of "a dozen heads with fez caps and Pathan turbans" (Harish, 1988).

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The trauma of losing something valued is reflected in Juggut Singh, who loses his love, Nooran, during the partition. Despite his assumed lack of warmth, Juggut Singh heroically decides to save the passengers of the train bound for Pakistan with Muslim refugees, hoping to reunite with Nooran. Though humiliated by other gangsters who brand him a coward, Juggut Singh redeems himself by sacrificing his life to reclaim peace in his village. Despite Khushwant Singh's abrupt ending, Juggut Singh emerges as a hero, symbolizing humanity amidst hatred and communalism. Nooran, Juggut Singh's love, represents the many women of undivided India who suffered during the 1947 partition. Pregnant with Juggut Singh's love child, Nooran is traumatized to leave her village forever for Pakistan. Her plight mirrors that of the nation, divided into two parts: her heart remains in India with Juggut Singh, while her displaced body moves to Pakistan. As victims of religious ideologies, women faced physical, mental, and emotional torment during the partition, confronting a crisis of identity. As a postcolonial text, *Train to Pakistan* concerns itself with counter-narratives that highlight how women's bodies and identities became the focus of nationalist discourse (**Kanaganayakam, 2008**).

The immensely traumatic experiences of partition lead the Sikh villagers of Mano Majra to plan an attack on a train carrying Muslims from Chandunnagar to Pakistan. Despite one villager's objections, the pain, suffering, and trauma overpower goodwill, replacing it with immense hatred and revulsion. The text also highlights other victims of their fates. The brave Sikh Sunder Singh, an army officer in Sindh, flees to India with his family, reflecting the partition's impact in breaking families and relationships. Hukum Chand, the District Magistrate, known for his emotional detachment, is moved by the sight of a train from Pakistan loaded with dead Sikhs, bringing him closer to the Muslim prostitute Haseena, developing empathy and concern for her. Iqbal, the social worker, loses his dignity and self-respect when stripped by the police to determine his religion, causing physical and mental distress. Singh illustrates, "He wished he could get out of this place where he had to prove his Sikhism to save his life" (**Harish, 1988**).

On the eve of India's independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's speech, "Long ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially" (**Harish, 1988**), marks the hope and optimism of a free India. However, the hope of freedom is overshadowed by the partition's terrifying events, offering death, trauma, pain, and displacement as by-products of the hard-fought struggle for freedom. *Train to Pakistan* poignantly portrays the invasion of pain and agony in numerous unfortunate lives through its characters' experiences.

#### **Conclusion:**

Partition resulted in one of the most horrendous holocausts in history, marked by widespread destruction fueled by communal frenzy, which disrupted the entire balance of human relationships. Chaman Nahal and Khushwant Singh delve into

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India's independence and the devastating consequences of the Partition. However, they do more than just recount historical events; they illustrate the profound impact of this national tragedy on ordinary people. In "*Azadi*", Nahal depicts the Punjabis' mourning, emphasising their loss of identity over the loss of life and property. He addresses this identity crisis more deeply than other Partition writers, who either treat it superficially or ignore it. "*Azadi*" concludes with a glimmer of hope and renewal, prompting Asha Kaushik to note that despite beginning with uncertainties about national integrity amid religious fanaticism, moral decay, and political fragmentation, it ends affirming that a nation can endure even the most catastrophic events.

The first novel published on Partition, "*Train to Pakistan*", emerges from the trauma of Partition, capturing a nation's sense of loss- loss of country, home, dignity, honour, family, love, and life. Women, as the subalterns in a violent world, both socially and communally, are often treated as property to be bought, sold, given away, taken away, and violated by men. Characters either act or react under such turmoil. While some, like Iqbal, react passively, others, like Juggut Singh, act on instinct, saving a train carrying Muslim refugees to Pakistan. Khushwant Singh, drawing from his memories, portrays the psychological trauma and turmoil of his characters within the context of Partition. Both Khushwant Singh and Nahal witnessed the atrocities against minorities following the Partition announcement. As a practicing lawyer in Lahore's High Court and a native of Sialkot, Nahal had firsthand experience of these horrors. Their novels, "*Train to Pakistan*" and "*Azadi*", can be seen as twin narratives on Partition, filled with anger, bitterness, and hatred. These novels focus on individual families to show the deep, personal impact of Partition. Singh and Nahal also explore the Gandhian theory of non-violence. While "*Train to Pakistan*" depicts Partition's brutality, it also reveals humanity and compassion. Nahal, having seen the violence up close, understands that violence is not an answer. Through Lala Kanshi Ram in "*Azadi*", he emphasizes the need for human forgiveness and the affirmation of life. Nahal offers solutions to Partition's victims, focusing on rehabilitation rather than political details.

A recurring theme in these novels is the love affair between a Hindu or Sikh boy and a Muslim girl as a fictional or idealistic solution to communal conflicts. In "*Train to Pakistan*", Juggut Singh's love for Nooran leads to a heroic act of saving a refugee train. In "*Azadi*", Arun's love for Nur symbolizes unity among militaristic communities. The novelists argue that love holds supreme value and can save the world from hatred. Another striking feature of these novels is the symbolic use of trains. Traditionally representing continuous activity and connection, trains in Partition literature symbolize destruction and death, known as ghost trains. These trains, carrying corpses across the new border, starkly contrast with their usual symbolism of hope and safety. During Partition, trains were crucial for transporting populations between the newly formed Pakistan and the remaining Indian subcontinent. This historic migration, facilitated by trains, plays a significant role in these narratives, highlighting the gruesome tragedy of Partition. The train, a

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predominant metaphor, also symbolizes industrialization and the materialistic age, leading to the destruction of humanistic values.

Unlike Singh, Nahal narrates the post-Partition hardships in his novel. Both “*Train to Pakistan*” and “*Azadi*” end on a note of humanism, depicting characters evolving towards becoming universal human beings. Through characters like Juggut Singh and Lala Kanshi Ram, these novels suggest that forgiveness, humanity, purity, and reconciliation are the solutions to communalism and its devastating effects.

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