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Symbolism in 'Train to Pakistan' by Khushwant Singh

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Abstract: ***This Research paper is a chilling literary depiction of the historical catastrophe, encapsulating the horrors of communal violence, relocation and loss. Train to Pakistan (1956) is one of the finest realistic novels of World War II Indo-Anglian fiction. It is Khushwant Singh's supreme achievement, which he unlikely to excel. This realistic masterpiece contains, among other things, a well- thought out structure, an artistically conceived plot, an absorbing narrative, and imaginatively realized characters, It has many notable features such as an unobtrusively symbolic framework, meaningful atmosphere and a powerful unvarnished naturalistic mode of expression or style.***

The Symbolism of rain is a significant aspect of the atmosphere in Train to Pakistan. Singh accurately portrays the seasonal cycle of rain India-summer rain and winter rain. The summer monsoon brings out the most pleasant fragrance from the earth, which scorched in the severe sun for months, is bathed in divine waters and blossoms as a thing of beauty. But before this final phase of joy and fulfilment there is a period of false hopes for man: it is the dust storm which brings down severe summer heat though it does not bring showers. The basic human and social tension in Train to Pakistan arises out of the interaction of the two forces of division operate in the communities of Mano Majra- a macrocosm of rural India. Train to Pakistan presents rural Punjab with its religious and caste divisions, which result in alienation, alternating with forces of union, which result in amity. Hate alternates with love; anger alternates with affection; the desire for revenge alternates with the impulse to sacrifice. Out of the interaction of these mutually conflicting forces arises the fundamental tension of the novel.

Keywords: Chilling, masterpiece, framework, impulse, interaction, forces.

I. INTRODUCTION

Khushwant Singh, born on February 2, 1915 at Hadali in West Punjab ranks among India's most distinguished men of letters. He is known as an essayist, novelist, short story writer, historian, journalist, biographer, comedy writer and editor, attaining an international reputation for his superb writings. Train to Pakistan is one of the realistic novels based on the theme of partition. The predominant quality of the Train to Pakistan is its stark realism, its absolute fidelity to the truth of life, its trenchant exposition of one of the most moving, even tragic events of contemporary Indian history- the partition. The novel exposes many inhuman events that took place during partition. The scene of Train to Pakistan is laid in India on the eve of the partition in 1947. About 10 million people-Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India – are in flight and in the large scale communal disturbances and killing nearly a million are dead. The partition of the country was not mere partition of two countries, but it badly affected the life of every Hindu and Muslim. The author presents a great historical event of partition in this novel. He raises a number of socio-moral, ethical and human questions. He focuses on one particular family but represents the whole. The novel talks about events of brutality, violence, bloodshed, mass murder and rape.

II. SYMBOLISM IN TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

Khushwant Singh portrays a symbol of rain in a significant manner. The summer monsoon brings out the most pleasant fragrance from the earth, which scorch in the severe sun for months, is bathed in divine waters and blossoms as a thing of beauty. Before the bliss and fulfilment there is a period of false hope for a man: it is the dust storm which brings down severe summer heat though it does not bring showers. The first heavy rain after the severe summer is extraordinary joyous but is followed by thunder and lightning; and as the season advances, towns and villages on the river bank are swallowed by the rivers' swelling waters. The rain, which is the principle source of life in nature and civilization, also causes death and destruction with the monsoon, the tempo of life and death increases. The rain is thus an ambivalent symbol pitch-forked between conflicting forces of life and death, of creation and destruction, of good and evil. The year 147, the time of India's partition was marked by a late monsoon and a scanty rainfall. Hukumchand saw raindrops falling in a gentle patter: "at long last the rains". Though it was late, it was welcome. The ambivalent quality of the rain is revealed in this description" It smelled good, it sounded good, it looked good, and above all, it did good. A

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thousand charred corpses sizzled and smoked, and the rain put out the fire and the smoke, the rain washed away the sins of man and his destructive deeds so that he could create a new life and a new world out of the ashes of the old.

The arrival of the train loaded with corpses is a moving symbol of Kalyug. It creates conflict and division in Mano Majra. Mano Majra was a small rural world where Sikhs and Muslims have lived together in peace for generations, but that small world has become invaded by the larger world of India Pakistan division or Sikh-Muslim conflict. The symbol of this invasion was the train carrying the dead from Pakistan to India. The machine had taken the hold of man and had succeeded in dehumanizing him. Imam Baksh was overwhelmed by their spontaneous expression of affection and fellow feeling and 'wiped a tear from his eyes' He said',' what have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers,' then he broke down, and Meet Singh embraced him and began to sob. Imam means a religious and pious person, and Meet means an affectionate friend, so that these names have an allegorical significance in the context of the tragic conflict in Train to Pakistan. The name 'Iqbal' means 'fortune, compromise or agreement 'and Iqbal Sing's role in the novel signifies these implications of actions and thought. The rigid realities of life break into the ideal world of mutual friendships and loyalties, and the Muslim decided to leave for the Chandannagar camp for safety. The Sikhs also agreed that this was the best possible course of action in the circumstances. They realised that this was the way of the world.

Muslims were preparing to leave their homes, Nooran, who was with Jugga's child, visited his mother and said that he had promised to marry her. The mother was taken aback this revelation. "Go to Pakistan! Leave my Jugga alone."Nooran knelt, clasped the old woman's legs and began to cry; When Jugga comes back just tell him I came to say 'Sat shree Akal'. The mother assured her that Jugga would bring her back to his home. Nooran felt as if she belonged to the home and the home to her. She went home and packed her few belongings, carrying with her, symbolically, 'the piece of broken mirror in her hand'. The broken mirror symbolized her fate as well as the future of Jugga's life. Against the setting of personal relations, the scene of the evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra to Pakistan in tucks brought by Pakistani soldiers symbolizes the working of the dominant, compelling, humanizing process. The Muslim officer declares: "I will give you ten minutes to settle your affairs, then he will move". Men were treatment like cattle's. The small world of personal relations is overcome by the objective, impersonal, cruel world of external forces. The Sikh and Muslim villagers who were so deeply attach to each other could not even say good bye to their neighbours. Pathan soldiers rounded up the Muslims, drove them into carts, and then took them away in trucks; the evacuation symbolized the blind forces of history and the wheels of destiny. The irony of fate as revealed in Malli becoming the custodian of the property of Muslim evacuees. His gang "unyoked the bullocks, looted the carts, and drove the cow sand buffaloes away". The processes of dacoity thus came full circle in an organised way, and the full impact of Kalyug was felt in the hearts of men. The last part 'Karma' is a kind of crescent doorthe waves of action and feelng that rise and fall in the disturbed world of Train to Pakistan. Karma is action, consequent upon fate or upon the record of the previous birth, and its ramification are delicately portrayed. Karma takes hold of a man, but man too, by virtue of his free will, fights against his destiny and tries to reclaim his lost soul. The Sutlej River swelled to great proportions, and the Lambardar and other villagers went out to watch it. They saw a "black oval object" which looked like a drum, but it was, in fact, the dead body of a cow with bloated belly. They saw the Sutlej water carrying bloated carcasses of bulls, horses, and dead bodies of children, and then came the revelation that they were not drowned, they were murdered. Near the station the soldiers carried the dead on canvas sketches, and the bulldozer was at work for the whole day burying the dead and flattering the ground.

III. CONCLUSION

The photographic and accurate representation of reality which characterizes naturalism is far removed from the qualities of the created world in Train to Pakistan. Whereas Khushwant Singh exhibits a genuine faith in the humanistic ideal, in depicting a real Jugga laying down his life for the woman he loves, naturalists seemed to be content to merely the sordid actualities of life. It is Khushwant Singh's deep and ethical humanism that governs his portrayal of the real and the actual. Train to Pakistan, therefore, is no mere realistic tract nor it's a bare record of actual events. On the contrary, it is a creative rendering of the real, and it reaffirms the novelist's faith in man and renews artistically his avowed allegiance to the humanistic ideal.

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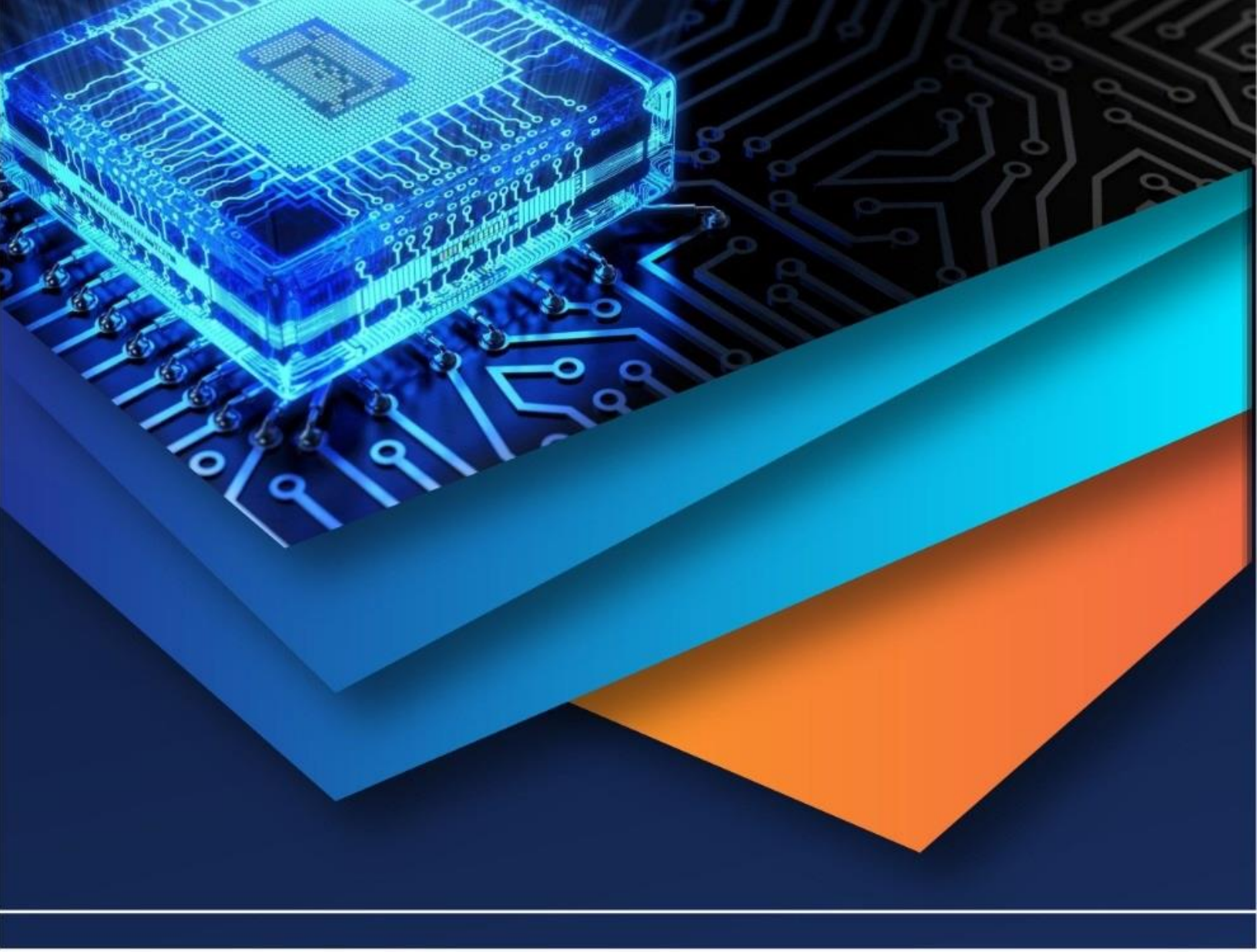

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