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Pleas For Partition In Train To Pakistan

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PLEAS FOR PARTITION IN *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*

by

Md. Abu Jafor
Master of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2014

A Thesis

Submit to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

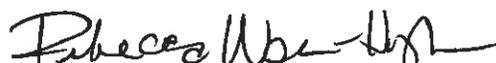
Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

August

2014

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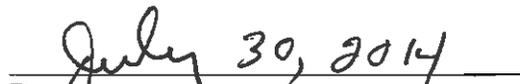

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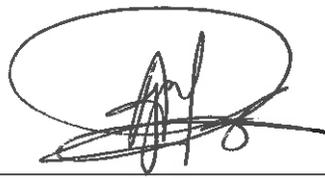
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THESIS DICTIONARY

The following terms are frequently used in the thesis:

Banian (from Hindi *banyan*)—A merchant's banker; broker; a kind of middleman (also spell 'banyan').

Bhai (Hindi *bhāi* □□□, from Sanskrit *bhrātr*)—The title of a Sikh priest. Meet Singh is the real name of the Bhai in the novel.

Dacoit (Hindi *ḍakait*, Urdu *ḍaku*)—A robber in an armed gang, a bandit.

Hukum (Hindi, from Arabic *hukm*)—Order, law, ruling of Shariah (Hukum Chand).

Imam (from Arabic, *imam*)—Worship leader in a mosque like a priest in a church.

Lambardar (from Punjabi, Urdu *lambarda*)—Originally, a landlord of a feudal system, hereditary title; in modern times a lambardar is a village head, whose main duty is tax collection. Benta Singh is the real name of lambardar in the novel.

Mano Majra—A fictional village on the Sutlej river which is one of the five rivers of the Punjab. Majra (from Arabic *mazra'a*) meaning a farm.

Sardar (Indo-Iranian word)—Leader, chief, nobleman, in the novel a military officer, used as a title like 'sir.'

Sola topee (Hindi *shola*)—Pith helmet worn particularly by westerners. Sola is an Indian swamp plant of the pea family, with stems that yield the pith that is used to make sola topis.

Tonga (Hindi & Urdu *tāṅgā*) —A light horse-drawn two-wheeled vehicle used in India.

Abstract

Pleas for Partition in *Train to Pakistan*

Most readers and critics of fictional works about the Partition of British India (that is the division of British India into India and Pakistan upon independence from the British in 1947) agree that writers tend to paint religious differences as the root cause of the communal conflict that eventually led to Partition. This tendency to blame Partition on religion is also found in critics who study Khushwant Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan*. In contrast, this thesis will demonstrate that instead of blaming communal diversity (in other words "difference of religion") as the root cause of Partition, Singh blames Partition on self-interested politicians. Singh's novel does not show any dissatisfaction among the different ethnic groups in India before Partition. Rather, it portrays communal harmony with individuals enjoying the full freedom of their religious rights.

Singh accomplishes this portrayal largely through focusing on a microcosm of India in the fictional small village of Mano Majra on the India and Pakistan borders where inhabitants of different faiths live like brothers. In fact, the citizens of the village openly resist the decision of Partition by expressing their intentions to fight against external forces to protect their neighbors if attacked in the name of religious differences. Instead, by showing communal harmony and showing violence as coming from the top down—instead of from the people—Singh's novel blames Partition on Indian politicians, who create all kinds of conflicts and contradictions among the common people of India in order to promote their self-interest.

This thesis will explore Singh's shift in blame by focusing on three aspects of his portrayal—religion, violence, and economic deprivation with forced migration—that together paint a portrait of greedy and manipulative politicians causing the violence of Partition to force migration. The first chapter on religion shows how Singh portrays religious harmony and how

his characters resisted Partition. The second chapter on violence focuses on how ethnic groups are divided and led into conflict by politicians. The final chapter on forced migration examines how Singh portrays the followers of different religions as compelled and motivated to leave all of their wealth and possessions as well as their birthplaces where they have been living for generations with the promise of wealth in the hope of being financially better off. Overall, the thesis suggests that Singh was motivated in this depiction of Partition attempt to heal the still sensitive cultural divisions in India and Pakistan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is an ultimate product of the combined support of my wonderful professors of the Department of English at the University of North Dakota. Without the help of Dr. Eric Wolfe, I would not have been able to continue my studies. Dr. David Marshall was my mentor; he helped me and guided me whenever I needed. For academic support, I always found Dr. Michael Beard very helpful; he knew what I needed. Above all, without Dr. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, my thesis would not have seen the light of success; she taught me the necessary skills of writing in detail. She never felt tired of guiding me. I am also thankful to all the consultants who helped me at the Writing Center; special thanks to Kathleen Vacek. I still remember Ms. Ursula Hovet from the English Department for her initial contributions to my educational pursuit. How can I forget Dr. Albert Bickford and Dr. John Clifton of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (UND)? They are the door openers to let me in the USA as a graduate student. The excellent learning and living experiences on campus will remain a major part of my life—many thanks to everybody at the University of North Dakota.

To
The Department of English
University of North Dakota
USA.

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION: COLONIZATION, DECOLONIZATION, AND PARTITION IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*

When Iqbal (Iqbal Singh or Mohammed Iqbal), the politician, comes from Delhi to the remote little village Mano Majra, some of the village representatives—both Muslims and Sikhs—begin to ask him questions regarding the stories they have heard about Partition. Singh presents the interaction between Iqbal and these villagers as follows:

“Well, Babuji [*Iqbal*],” began the Muslim [*tenant*]. “Tell us something. What is happening in the world? What is all this about Pakistan and Hindustan?”

“We live in this little village and know nothing,” the Lambardar [*Sikh village landlord*] put in. “Babuji, tell us, why did the English leave?” (47)

Singh chooses ambassadors from both the ethnic groups—Muslim and Sikh—and from the tenant and landlord classes to make it clear that ordinary people are not aware of what is going on in the country, of why the British left and what independence and Partition will bring to them. The facts that the villagers don't know why the decision of Partition is taken and why British India is going to be divided into Pakistan and India indicate that the common citizens find no reason for separation. Ordinary villagers—Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus—are living in the village without any conflict, but they suspect some imposing change in their lives based on their faith as shown in above conversation. The prolonged British colonization is so powerful and influential that simple folks can't imagine that the English will ever leave India. By portraying the villagers

as not knowing what is happening in Delhi, Singh presents them as not involved in politics. In other words, Singh implies and focuses here that the politicians don't represent the public. The conversation above shows the innocence of the non-politician common people and absurdities of separation of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. By showing their detachment from the politicians, Singh finds the reasons to blame the leaders, not the common citizens or their religious beliefs, for the terrible consequences of Partition. This conversation between Iqbal and the landlord occurs in the novel just after the decision of Partition, when Iqbal comes to the vital point of the refugee crossing border area of Mano Majra. He comes from Delhi, following the instructions of the People's Party leaders. He takes shelter at the Sikh temple Gurdwara where the Lambardar (village landlord) and the Muslim come for the above conversation which demonstrates that the common people, who are paying for the price of Partition, do not have any connection or relation to the public opinion of what the politicians are claiming as their representatives.

Singh's Novel in Historical Context

This thesis will read *Train to Pakistan* as a historical novel within a historical context. So, it will be useful to examine some historical facts to better understand Singh's concern about the British policy of "Divide and Rule" in India before the issue of Partition was raised and to contextualize Singh's project, since he assumes his readers are somewhat familiar with the events leading to Partition. Historically, the competition or conflict among different ethnic groups to control political power in India was very important to the British when they began colonization in the 18th century. The historians William Galant and Michael Edwardes have well demonstrated that the seed of the British influence on Indian politics was sown when the East India Company began its journey in Calcutta (India) in the name of business in 1707. This

company successfully attained indirect control after the Battle of Plessey when the Muslim ruler, Nawab Shirajuddowla, was defeated by the British soldiers when his commander-in-chief, Meer Jafar Ali, became a traitor in 1757. So, the characters in Singh's world would have seen the British rule since they were born, and to them, the sudden change in politics seems unusual and beyond expectations. Even though the common people of India were not in favor of colonial rule, Singh shows that they lacked understanding of why the country was going to be divided into two separate lands—India and Pakistan. Historians, such as William Galant and Michael Edwardes, define Partition as the historical event when the people of Southeast Asia were artificially divided into two parts India and Pakistan—currently three independent countries: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—all formerly recognized as British India until 1947 when British colonization ceased to exist. This vast area was primarily dominated by the followers of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism.

Overview of This Thesis

In the following chapters I am going to explore how the novel depicts the reasons for Partition and how both groups differ on the issues of independence and Partition together. Obviously, the common people do not have the ability to face the challenge of complicated political issues, but they still expect to communicate in order to realize the change they are going to encounter. The villagers want to know the benefits of independence and the reasons in favor of Partition. They expect that there will be no change of their distressed life, and their economic condition will remain the same. They will not gain anything out of it; in addition, they will have to face terrible consequences even life threats to comply with the decision of Partition. The leaders could have taken a different path to get solutions to the problems of the minority. They

do not adopt a peaceful way of resolution because they found no personal achievements in a united India.

An important part of Singh's project, this thesis will argue, comes from his use of the little village, Mano Majra, as a microcosm of India, which allows him to make comments on the larger Indian society by focusing on the village. Singh does this by constructing the village to include representatives of Indian citizens of all levels—casts, classes, religions, ethnicities—including politicians, such as Iqbal; government officers, such as the magistrate; law enforcing agents, such as the police Subinspector; criminals, such as Jugga; people of all ethnic groups, such as Hindus (Lala Ram), Muslims (Imam Bakhs), Sikhs (Lambardar), Christians (American missionaries) and so on. Singh skillfully gathers people of all categories to show his readers a composite India (in miniature) with a diverse ethnicity and varied professions. Portraying Mano Majra as a model India, he parallels this little place with Pakistan. We find this evidence when Singh says, "Hindus and Sikhs were fleeing from their homes in Pakistan and having to find shelter in Mano Majra" (121). Here Singh compares Mano Majra to Pakistan to have the readers look at this place as an embodiment of whole India (not British India/not India and Pakistan together). Thus, this comparison clarifies that it is his design to turn the little village into a microcosm of India. Supporting this view critic Kar also says, "Singh weaves a narrative around life in this village, making the village a microcosm representing a larger world" (91). Singh has kept the national leaders, such as Gandhi and Jinnah far away from his characters and has concentrated on how the common people—the true followers of different faiths—look at the decision of Partition and how they react to it.

This thesis will perform a close reading of Singh's novel in order to explore his message regarding Partition. After explaining how Singh brings people of all walks of life to demonstrate

the voice of a vast population in favor of unity and peaceful co-existence, I will ultimately speculate that he wrote this novel, as he did, to shift blame from religion and ethnic differences to selfish political leaders as behind Partition. People in general and readers of *Train to Pakistan* in particular still blame religious differences and ethnic intolerance for Partition. This thesis will explore Singh's explanation how religion plays the role for Partition. Singh also shows who are responsible for riots and violence. To convince the readers Singh illustrates, this thesis will show, socio-economic deprivation of the minority in British India. The conflict in this region continues till today on the issue of Kashmir, Bangladesh and so on; if ethnic differences were the cause of Partition, Muslim dominated Pakistan would not be separated as Pakistan and Bangladesh. So, Singh's blame against the politicians—not against the followers of different faiths—justified when the problem remains unresolved even after Partition.

This time of transition of Partition, in Southeast Asian history, was especially turbulent, violent, and painful. Writers, such as Salman Rushdie in his Booker Prize winning novel *Midnight's Children*, have taken Partition as their subject. Similarly, Singh's *Train to Pakistan* also takes Partition as its subject, but this thesis will argue, unlike Rushdie, Balachandra Rajan, Manohar Mulgonkar, Rabindranath Tagore, Arundhati Roy, and many others, who have blamed ethnic differences as the root cause of Partition, Singh blames the politicians, which is important to analyze because even after the Partition, there has been no peace in this region for decades.

Singh's Novel in Brief

Singh creates a story that reflects the larger drama of Partition while he shows how people were duped into tearing apart their peaceful community to face everlasting trauma in the hope of religious freedom. Set in the small village of Mano Majra, situated on the Indo-Pak

border, *Train to Pakistan* begins in August 1947 when a group of seven outsider thieves enters the village one night to kill the rich Hindu money-lender Lala Ram Lal, loots everything from his house, and implicates one of their former associates in the crime, Juggat Singh, who is out at that time with his beloved Nooran. A western educated political activist (communist) of the People's Party of India, Iqbal, who comes to Mano Majra from Delhi, is arrested with Jugga on suspicion of Lala Ram Lal's murder due to a misunderstanding of the police. Finally, the real murderers, Malli and his gang, are arrested while Iqbal and Jugga are released. However, as the people of Mano Manjra race towards the catastrophe of Partition, the novel's events move faster to a climax. Sikhs and Muslims who have lived together for centuries become fearful when they hear about the arrival of a ghost train filled with corpses from Pakistan. The Muslim villagers decide to migrate to Pakistan in fear of being killed by the Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan. At this point, Nooran finds herself pregnant by Jugga while Hindu fanatics who take over the region vow revenge upon Muslims. Hindu officers release Malli and his gang to participate in an attack with Hindu refugee fanatics. Just released from custody, Jugga learns that pregnant Nooran has been taken to the camp to migrate to Pakistan by a train and that Hindu fanatics have made a plot to blow up the train with dynamite when it passes the railroad bridge. He runs to the bridge to remove the explosives, but is shot and drops in front of the engine of the train. Thus, he is run over by the train that goes to Pakistan with all the Muslims including pregnant Nooran.

Train to Pakistan and other Historical Novels

Among the historical novels on the political conflicts and Partition of British India, novels like *The God of Small Things*, *The Vendor of Sweets* and many others, *Train to Pakistan* is unique in presenting a complex picture of communal relations and the seeds of conflict. Singh

focuses on the days of Partition when Muslims migrated to Pakistan from India, and Hindus and Sikhs left the borders of Pakistan for India. His novel shows how during the rule of the British government mistrust and misunderstanding grew among the leaders of different groups of religious followers, especially among Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs—with Hindus and Sikhs always united against Muslims. Singh's novel recognizes all of those ethnic groups, but portrays Sikhs as the majority in his imaginary village of Mano Majra to better illustrate on how Hindus used them as weapons against Muslims. The most significant difference between Singh and others in regard to fiction on Partition, as I will show, comes through his portrayal of Sikh domination. In Singh's portrayal Muslims are a minority, even though a peacefully co-existing one. Singh illustrates how the design to divide India affected the social construction of religious diversity and how common citizens began to face the everlasting consequences. He shows that while it was easy for the leaders of Hindus (like Jawaharlal Nehru), Muslims (like Mohammed Ali Jinnah), and Sikhs (like Master Tara Singh) to decide on Partition of British India, it was painful for the common citizens to comply with this decision.

Singh's Novel and Historians

To reflect the history in his novel, Singh likely works from historians as Michael Edwardes who also sees Partition as being orchestrated by the politicians. In *British India 1772-1947*, Edwardes says that the idea and plan for a new nation and country for the Muslims was brought by the Muslim politicians—not by the devoted common followers of the religion. Later, these self-interested politicians ignited the fire of violence and riots for Partition. So, in Edwardes' view Partition is not what the Indians planned at the beginning of their anti-British

movement, but the idea emerged in the course of their programs to liberate the country. Singh shares that view, showing in his novel how the common people suffer to materialize a decision that was designed to benefit politicians. These Muslim politicians such, as Jinnah, Mohammad Ali and others, found that mere independence from the British would not bring them any power without a separate country.

Critics on Singh's Novel

Prior critics analyzing *Train to Pakistan* have discussed the novel's portrayal of Partition but have missed Singh's argument of blaming the politicians—not the ideology or faiths they claim. This thesis' argument about Singh, creating a fictional world of communal harmony where politicians manipulate minor problems, contrasts with these prior critics of the novel, who have tended to mistakenly read the book's portrayal of Partition as a result of ethnic conflicts. Singh's presentation of a diverse neighborhood with brotherly relations has been interpreted by critics, such as Profulla Kar, Shahane, and others, as Singh is blaming Partition on faiths and their followers. They have based their arguments on the presence of riots among the different ethnic groups, but they have not explained Singh's portrayal of the political agents who ignite clash among the common followers. In contrast, I will argue that Singh does not blame the ordinary citizens; rather he presents the political leaders as responsible for all the sufferings and consequences after the decision of Partition. Singh portrays that Muslim leaders perceive no political prospect in independent India without Partition. These leaders have premonitions that they will be deprived as they experienced sufferings by Hindu and Sikh politicians during the colonial era. The novel creates a world of socially deprived Muslims, and this deprivation is the outcome of non-Muslim privileges given by the British after taking power from the Muslim

rulers. It may be worth mentioning here that in spite of being the members of a minority in India, Muslims ruled the country for about a thousand years.

Still other critics analyzed Singh's handling of history in fiction, but they don't focus on the causes of Partition. For example, Sudha Sundaram, in "Partition in Historical Fiction" elaborates on the advantages and disadvantages of a novelist writing fiction based on history. She says that Singh's world in an imaginative small village helps him to bring all kinds of people from different corners of both India and Pakistan to create a world, which is not possible for a historian. His freedom to choose characters from different groups has given him the opportunity to interact among them at the same place and turned the village into a microcosm of India. Moreover, Sundaram also mentions that we cannot depend on an historical novelist for historical truth because they are not creators of statistical truth but of poetic truth. I would like to build on Sundaram's work to emphasize that in Singh's novel we can find the message of the causes of Partition based on an imaginary world.¹ Again, we find similar arguments to Sundaram's in C. N. Srinath's article, "The Writer As Historical Witness: Khushwant Singh's *Train To Pakistan* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*," which discusses the relation between history and imagination in order to argue that there should be a difference between a reporter and a fiction writer although both of their works depend on history and that Singh's personal experiences help him imagine a realistic world of faith, violence, and migration, what the common Indians had to face in those days of Partition. Likewise, Prafulla C. Kar's "KHUSHWANT SINGH: *Train to Pakistan*" discusses historical context, Partition, violence and other aspects of Singh's novel by addressing the issue of the proper use of history at the hands of a good novelist, such as Singh. Although both Srinath and Kar discuss history in *Train to Pakistan*, neither specifically focuses on Singh's

¹ Other critics like Vasant A Shahane, Shudha Sundaram, C. N. Srinath, Charanjit Kaur, Dr. S. S. Prabhakar Rao and others have focused on other aspects of the novel, such as Singh's realism, style, techniques of characterization, theme, title, and structure ignoring Singh's main message—explaining the political manipulation—completely.

depiction of Partition. My work builds on these early analyses of Singh's use of history by showing how he portrays the minor issues used by the politicians to manipulate common people in favor of Partition and how those leaders ensured their selfish mission to be famous in divided India.²

New Study of This Thesis

Singh presents an argument in narrative form against the typical explanations for Partition. Instead of depicting Partition as a political action in response to the will of the people, Singh presents it as a political action resulting in the manipulation of the people. The politicians, not the people, desired Partition, and in order to force Partition, they created panic, using rumors of violence and riots among the different ethnic groups who, in fact, had peacefully lived together for centuries. I will argue that the ultimate effect of Singh's portrayal is that readers will shift blame for ethnic division, violence, and forced migration from the common people to the politicians.

This thesis will argue that Singh conveys his message of blame on the politicians by tracing three themes throughout the novel—the love for religion, the fear of violence, and the hope for better life—all universal feelings with which people were easily manipulated by the politicians because of their deep rootedness in Indian culture. These three themes correspond to the three chapters of the thesis. Singh's plot design and characterization show how the love for

² Though these critics have carefully read Singh's historical commentary, they have not discussed how Singh's novel presents Edwardes' arguments in novelized form. Instead these critics have focused on two areas of discussion—either focusing on Singh's style of writing or on his presentation of the historical context. As mentioned earlier, in the stylistic category, critic Vasant A. Shahane, for instance, in "Theme, Title and Structure in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*" analyzes the novel where he talks about the overall organization and texture of actions of the novel. In another article "Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan': A Study in Contemporary Realism" Shahane discusses the contemporary realistic view, theme and symbol of Singh's presentation, title and so on in order to explain Singh's narrative technique. Another critic, Charanjit Kaur, likewise analyzes Singh's characterization, which is just stylistic technic of writing the novel. And finally, Dr. S. S. Prabhakar Rao focuses on Singh's diction, sentence structure and his tendency to use a particular type of language with Indian words. So, no critic of this category has any discussion on the message Singh wants to convey to the readers.

religion, the hope for a better life, and fear of violence in a typical peaceful Indian community were exploited by Indian politicians and decision makers to implement their design for Partition by having his characters express love and freedom for religion, by having his characters strive for better economic opportunities, and by having his characters free from communal violence. In fact, Singh shows that, in the end, it was the threat of violence that was most effective in executing the decision of Partition. As the conversation at the beginning of this introduction illustrated unlike political activists, the common citizens of India—such as the people of Mano Majra—did not know why they needed to be separated from their fellow villagers of different religious faiths because they had not been aware of the gradual changes in the political situations leading to Partition.

Organization of This Thesis

I have organized the thesis into three chapters, each examining in more detail one of the faux causes Singh attributes to bringing about Partition at the hands of corrupt politicians. The first chapter explores how *Train to Pakistan* argues that the religious faith people had in India was not a cause of Partition. The second chapter builds on the first chapter's analysis of religion as an excuse for Partition to explain how Singh shows that violence was also used as an excuse for division. In the third chapter, I will explore how Singh depicts that the socioeconomic condition of the minority becomes one of the vital points, propelling the Partition movement. My conclusion argues that Singh presents the misleading political decisions that divide India in the hope of religious and socioeconomic independence and stability that would ensure regional peace and harmony between the two neighboring countries. I hope the critics will find Singh's focus in the novel and will change their vision and shift blaming for Partition from the common

Indians (who are divided into different ethnic groups) to the politicians. This thesis will open a new horizon of Singh's portrayal of peaceful followers of different religions and self-interested politicians who are responsible for horrific Partition.

End Note

Although Singh wrote the novel in the early nineteen fifties, immediately after Partition, his insight about the absurdities of Partition has been appreciated for decades. The border fight has not stopped even today in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Muslims on one side in Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs on the other have been fighting and killing one another on the issues of ethnicity and border line of Kashmir, Bangladesh, and many more. The Pakistani Hindu and Sikh immigrants to India and the Indian Muslim immigrants to Pakistan have been suffering with the feeling of being alien to the people of their new places. Most importantly, despite Partition and migration, a huge number of Hindus and Sikhs are still remaining in Pakistan while a great number of Muslims are still living in India. So, Partition has not successfully rooted out the issue of religious division in either of the countries. Moreover, in spite of having similar Muslim population, regional economic exploitation caused Pakistan to be divided into two parts (Pakistan and Bangladesh) only after twenty-four years in 1971. Singh wisely opposed the idea of Partition long before all of these consequences were faced by the people of both these countries.

CHAPTER – II

RELIGION IN *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*: THE BASIC WEAPON FOR PARTITION

He could be a Muslim, Iqbal Muhammad. He could be a Hindu, Iqbal Chand, or a Sikh, Iqbal Singh. It was one of the few names common to the three communities. In a Sikh village, an Iqbal Singh would no doubt get a better deal, even if his hair was shorn and his beard shaved, than an Iqbal Mohammad or an Iqbal Chand. *Train to Pakistan*, 35

When the politician, known only as ‘Iqbal,’ comes to the village, Mano Majra, and takes shelter in the Sikh temple, Gurdwara, the Sikh priest asks his name, but Iqbal’s incomplete answer does not satisfy the questioner. ‘Iqbal’ can be a name of any Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh, it is the last name with which Iqbal has to signal the religious identity. As the above epigraph suggests, Iqbal’s non-answer of the question is especially significant because the nature of interaction among the people of different faiths in India depends on religious identity. Elements of ethnic identity, including religion, as the novel reminds, play a powerful role in decision-making about the economic, social, political, and even everyday life of the people of Southeast Asia. But while he shows religion as important to Indians, Singh does not say it caused the Partition of British India.

Political Manipulation of Religious Diversity for Partition

It is true that British India has a peculiar history of ethnic diversity in regards to religious faiths, especially Hinduism’s caste system, and Singh has portrayed this diversity in the novel in relation to Partition. Yet, Singh’s novel depicts a world of harmonious relations among the ethnic groups even in remote villages where people are usually more devoted to religion. To attribute

the division of the country to religion, his novel says, is to misinterpret the situation. This chapter will explore how Partition was based on the pretext of differences of religious faiths and will argue that Singh portrays the peaceful village Mano Majra with different ethnic groups to present a harmonious India as a unique model of ethnic diversity in British India in order to argue that politicians misrepresented and exaggerated the communal conflicts that they claimed required the division of the country. In order to do this analysis, this chapter will first discuss the history of religion in this region. It will also discuss how the critics have tended to read religion in the novel. Then it will explain how Singh argues that religion is not a cause of Partition by depicting harmonious relations (social and economic bond) among different ethnic groups and by showing the people as having no knowledge of Partition. The chapter ends with an investigation of how the novel depicts resistance to Partition in order to illustrate that the people of India never longed for separation from their neighbors of differing religions.

Peaceful Diversity for Centuries: Devotion to Faith—Tool for Partition

Before discussing the novel's portrayal of religious issues, it would be useful to look further at how religions function in Indian society and how they have historically evolved and related with peaceful co-existence. No particular group of faith claimed any separate land during those centuries of ideological differences. To explain the religious background of British India, the historian Alain Daniélou says in his book *A Brief History of India*, the philosophical evolution of life commenced with some “dangerous ideas” in India.³ Four of the world's major

³ Daniélou describes the philosophical evolution of life as follows: According to the Puranas, it was toward the sixth millennium B.C.E. that the god Shiva manifested himself in India and taught men religion, philosophy, and the arts and sciences. Shaivism remained the dominant religion in India until the arrival of the Aryans, who violently attacked the Shiva cult and phallus worship in particular. Gradually, however, Shaivism—which continued to be the religion of the people—was integrated into Brahmanic religion, ... In fact, in the concepts known today as Hindu, the contribution of ancient pre-Aryan philosophy is much more important than that of the Vedic Aryans. (27-28)

religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism—emerged here. Other major faiths Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism—entered the subcontinent over the centuries. Since the pre-historic age, the civilization emerged in this region based along the banks of the river Indus, and the Dravidians are the first known civilized society. The Dravidians and later the Aryans originated a number of religious sects in the territory of India, but none of the groups had any movement for Partition for religious freedom, and it is historically proven.

The novel shows faith as being tremendously important to the people of India even when they would come across a stranger, but that phenomenon does not mean that they are in favor of the Partition of British India. In fact, they want to live as an integral part of the society, keeping their respective religious identities in a united country. Therefore, they are not ready to welcome the decision of Partition and leave their birth place for religion. Politicians of British India misinterpreted the ethnic and religious differences in Indian society; as Singh showed they use them as great weapons to motivate people to partition the country.

Here, we can refer to some of the minor ethnic issues that will clarify how Singh demonstrates politicians misinterpreting them in favor of their decision of Partition. For instance, when Iqbal, a political activist, reaches Mano Majra, he is asked to say his name with the proper ending so that his religious faith could be identified. Singh says, as I mentioned in the epigraph of this chapter, that ‘Iqbal’ is a typical Indian name. No matter what his religion is, a man can be called ‘Iqbal,’ which, again, indicates unity despite of different faiths. Communal as well as religious identity is then designated through adding the last names such as Muhammad for Muslims, Chand for Hindus, and Sikh for Sikhs. This tradition of naming argues that Indians believe both in their united cultural diversity and individual identity. Singh has indicated here how people are handled or treated, depending on the norms of their diverse religious community.

He says, as mentioned in the epigraph, “In a Sikh village, an Iqbal Singh would no doubt get a better deal...” (35). But such differences of treatment do not involve any hatred for the followers of any other religions. However, Singh also shows that Iqbal does not want to be identified as a follower of any of the groups, saying his last name in a Sikh village.

This concept of relationships among the people of different faiths in India tempts the politicians, such as Jinnah and his associates, to agitate in favor of Partition. They argue continually that with independence from British colonization, the whole nation is also in favor of Partition. These politicians claim that people of different religious groups are not ready to embrace diversity in British India although they have been living as neighbors for centuries; they have great hatred for their country fellows who are not of the same faith, and if the nation wants to settle this issue, there is no better option than to have individual lands. The Hindu politicians like Nehru, on the other hand, were not in support of Partition, but as tension between different religious groups grew intense, they embraced the idea of the two states solution. Eventually, both Muslim and Hindu leaders finally agree and advocate in favor of Partition, which does not reflect any demand made by the common people.

Following the instructions of Hindu politicians, the Hindus in authority want India free from Muslims, but, as shown in the novel, the ordinary citizens oppose this idea. When Iqbal is arrested under suspicion of being involved in robbery and killing of Hindu moneylender, Lala Ram Lal, the police Inspector says, “Why don’t you go and do your propaganda in Pakistan where you belong? ... You are a Muslim. You go to Pakistan” (72). His suggestion that Iqbal move to Pakistan has behind it, I argue, the desire to reclaim any land Iqbal might have for Hindus. These Sikh and Hindu leaders want back their land, which has been ruled by Muslim occupants and British colonizers for centuries. They want an independent India free from

Muslims, and, as they say, expect to avoid or end the conflicts prevailing among multiple ethnic groups. But as Singh demonstrates in the novel the ordinary people who had been living in the same country practicing their faiths for several hundred years did not feel any need for Partition despite occasional minor conflicts among them. After the above comments of the police Inspector, Iqbal immediately asks, “What exactly do you mean by ‘belonging to Pakistan,’ Inspector Sahib?” (72). Even Iqbal declares, “I am not a Muslim,” but the police authority ignores his claim saying, “Your name is Iqbal and you are circumcised,” (73). Thus, Iqbal is perceived as a Muslim although he denies it. Consequently, Hindu and Sikh people in authority do not want any Muslim to stay inside the Indian border. In addition, we will also have more evidence of Singh’s world of ethnic harmony while the authority forces a certain community for migration. Obviously, both British and Indian politicians used the issue of religion to divide the common citizens. The native leaders of British India, in particular, misrepresented this issue in order to divide the country into India and Pakistan once the British Raj had given up control.

Historically Religious Conflicts not Blamed for Partition

The basic form of Hinduism was introduced without any clash with any other group of faith by the Aryans (meaning “the noble ones”) in India about 1500 B.C. Historians have noticed similarities among the Greek myths and the Indian gods and goddesses introduced in Hinduism. During this development of Hinduism, in spite of differences among its various castes, they also did not have major conflicts based on faith. Daniélou says, “At the outset of the Christian Era, the populace of India belonged to one of the four religions: Brahmanism, Shaivism, Jainism, and Buddhism [Fifth Century B.C.E.]. These four religions were close together during the historical period and live in relative harmony, ...” (32). The state of peace and harmony continued until the

new religions, such as Islam, were brought to the Indian subcontinent. It is important to mention here that all foreign religions, including Islam and Christianity, had a great advantage over existing caste-based faiths in India because of the inequality among the citizens in the name of caste. As Islam and Christianity advocate in favor of equality, it was fairly smooth for the preachers to attract the lower caste Indians to their religions and convert them. Singh's narrator also refers to this phenomenon in Indian society in the novel when Iqbal and Jugga are imprisoned and treated differently. Singh's narrator says, "In a country which had accepted caste distinctions for many centuries, inequality had become an inborn mental concept. If caste was abolished by legislation, it came up in other forms of class distinction" (70). So, people of India do not typically have equal rights in the caste system of Hinduism which meant that foreign religions had a great advantage in converting the common believers, but no separate land was demanded ever.

Again, after passing several stages of indigenous (Hindu) political and cultural influence, Islamic rulers from Arabia became dominant in the seventh century C.E. in India and ruled for a thousand years. This political power of Arabian Muslims enabled the people of this vast area became familiar with Islam; people also experience typical middle-age battles which were not based on faith, but because of the motive of occupying power. Sikhism emerged in the 15th century during the Muslim rule as a combination of all other existing religions, especially Hinduism and Islam. The founder, Guru Nanak Dev, who was born in a Hindu family but liked neither Hinduism nor Islam died in 1538 at the age of seventy and left his ideas of Sikhism with a huge number of followers (Daniélou).

Customarily, conflicts and clashes among different religious followers began, mainly relating to the issue of conversion. Because of the blame and counter blame of conversion of the

respective followers and because of the inclusion of Islamic references in the Granth Sahib (Sikh scriptures), the Muslim ruler Jahangir put the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjun Mal, to death in 1606, and thus, the enmity lingered between these two religious groups—Muslims and Sikhs—for centuries. Hindus and Sikhs were always united against the followers of Islam because Muslims were initially Arabian intruders to India. As Singh’s novel *Train To Pakistan* deals mainly with the three religious groups—Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims—the focus of this thesis will remain on these groups to lay out the arguments. Singh has given the readers a sense of peaceful Christian presence throughout the novel, despite having no active Christian characters.

Before the introduction and influence of Islam and Christianity in India, both the rulers and the ruled followed the spiritual path of Hinduism and the other sects derived from it. Hindus have continually tried to regain political control of India even after the followers of Islam occupy power. At different times, they fought with Muslim invaders, such as, Sultan Mahmud, Qutb-ud-din Muhammad, Tughluq Khan, the Moghuls, and so on. Apparently, communal conflicts on the issue of conversion and controlling political power among the followers of these ethnic groups—Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity—are common and deeply rooted; but what is historically true and what Singh shows that Partition was never considered as a solution for any communal problems. The idea of Partition arises towards the end of the British colonial era. While Christian missionaries preached in India, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were against this preaching in fear of conversion as historian Michael Edwardes explained in “British India: 1772–1947: A Survey of the Nature and Effects of Alien Rule” about the interfaith battles in this British colony, but those battles were mostly ideological, not pressing the demand for a separate land. Meanwhile, the politicians of Islamic faith considered that Muslims were deprived, and they blamed the British rulers for being victims of discrimination although they were fighting

against colonialism for independence simultaneously with other groups, such as the Hindus and the Sikhs. Singh presents the idea of Partition as peculiar and unusual in the eyes of the common followers of all religions in Southeast Asia.

Critics' Wrong Reading of Singh's Novel

Critics of *Train to Pakistan*, however, have tended to argue that Singh portrays ethnic conflicts as the root cause of Partition saying that religious differences cause violence, which expedites Partition. In his article "Theme, Title and Structure in Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*," for instance, Vasant A. Shahane perceives about the novel that people of each ethnic group feel unsafe living with their neighbors of other ethnic groups; they always long for migrating to the area where people of the same ethnicity live. Shahane says:

On the eve of partition of the Indian subcontinent, millions of people from either side of the dividing boundary were on the way, seeking refuge and security. Millions of non-Muslims from Pakistan longed for a passage to India, a land of hope and peace, whereas millions of Muslims from India sought the road to Pakistan, the land of Islamic faith and promise. (68-69)

According to Shahane, the novel reflects that followers of Hinduism and Sikhism desperately try to migrate to India, and the disciples of Islamic faith are ready to leave everything behind to go to Pakistan for liberty and peaceful practice of their religion. On the contrary, Singh has not depicted Pakistan as "the land of Islamic faith and promise" as Shahane claims, and we do not find the villagers of Mano Majra eager to leave India and migrate to another place in Pakistan.

In contrast to critics like Shahane, this chapter will argue that Singh shows religion as not a cause for Partition. We can first see how he creates in his novel as argument against religion as

a cause for Partition by showing the villagers as peacefully living with their Sikh neighbors there, showing Sikhs as not suffering from the threat of Muslim attack or looking for refuge and security by going somewhere else far from Muslim presence. Both the Sikhs and the Muslims are happy to live together as neighbors in the same village with the consciousness of the differences of their faiths. Shahane's analysis of the novel does not match with the depiction of Singh's characters who are not willing to migrate. In fact, migration is considered painful to both Sikhs and Muslims. Both groups in the village feel shocked when the Muslims are forced to migrate, obeying the decision of the politicians. Thus, Singh's novel does not support Shahane's explanation that both groups are in favor of migration for religious freedom. Shahane is just an example, but there are other critics who have analyzed Singh's presentation of religious issue in the same way.

Singh Showing Religion Not a Cause of Partition

Despite the presence of minor inter-communal religious conflicts, the common people got along peacefully towards the end of the British rule. Singh illustrates in the novel that in course of independent movement politicians have argued for Partition, based on Divinity to protect religious freedom and avoid communal violence. But he demonstrates that, in reality, the attitude of the politicians of all religious faiths towards the other ethnic groups was different from that of the common followers of all religions in India before 1947. Khushwant Singh aims to mirror this historical reality, which is why, when the religious issue arises during the politician Iqbal's stay at the Sikh temple Gurdwara, he asks the Bhai (Sikh priest), Meet Singh, "Do you like their preaching Christianity in your village?" (36). Here, Iqbal [though born in a Sikh family in Jhelum, Pakistan, (166/36) claims to have no religion (63), and again claims to be a Sikh (166)]

expects that the priest will answer in the negative (because he dislikes the British vehemently—we know this when he says, “They are a race of four-twenties”) (49). But Meet Singh replies that he always welcomes the preachers of different faiths. In this one moment as in many others, Singh depicts politicians, who are Hindu and Sikh leaders, as wanting to eliminate both the Christian British rulers and the Muslim occupants in order to have their own land, Hindustan (India), back under their control even though the common people are actually content to live together.

A second way we see Singh creating an argument for religion not being a cause of Partition come through his showing of both Sikhs and Muslims standing against the idea of migration even when they suspect an attack on the Muslim population in the village, coming from Pakistani refugees. Meanwhile, Muslims in Pakistan are accused of loading a train with dead bodies and send it to India as a threat to convey the message not to kill Muslims in India. Simultaneously, some Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan take shelter in the region. Instantly, some Sikh leaders, such as the Lambardar (village landlord), become worried about their Muslim neighbors who might get killed in an act of retaliation. When the question of migration arises, the mullah (the Muslim religious leader) of the mosque, Imam Baksh, says, “What have we to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers” (126). This statement of Imam Baksh clearly shows the strong ties among the villagers and their desire to live in the same territory. So, the people of Mano Majra, which provide, as I argued in my introduction, a microcosm of India, actually do not want Partition, and Singh has not shown that migration, as part of Partition, is longed for.

Singh Showing People Having No Knowledge of Partition

Another phenomenon of Singh presenting as argument against religion as a cause of Partition is that he portrays common citizens knowing nothing about the plan, motives and policies of Partition. At the beginning of Singh's novel when Magistrate Hukum Chand comes to Mano Majra border area, he asks several questions to know about the situation of the neighborhoods. The police sub-inspector informs him:

All is well so far. The lambardar reports regularly. No refugees have come through the village yet. I am sure no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. Some of them know about Gandhi but I doubt if anyone has ever heard of Jinnah. (22)

Here, the common people are not even aware of the fact that the country is divided into two parts—one for Hindus and Sikhs, and the other for Muslims. Gandhi and Jinnah represent the Hindu and the Muslim communities respectively, but the ordinary citizens have no idea about their decision of Partition—most of the villagers do not even know those leaders who represent them. Therefore, the claim of the politicians that the decision of Partition is based on religion and the will of the people is fabricated. The fact that people don't even know what is going on in the country also indicates that the politicians do not communicate with the common people who are the true devotees of religion. As the village is a microcosm of India, Singh shows that the ordinary citizens of India do not have any interest in Partition, though, the politicians who represent them have already decided to divide the country based on faiths as they claim.

Singh Depicting Mano Majra as Harmonious with Religious Diversity

Moreover, everyday life before 1947 indicates that British India is always a place of communal harmony as portrayed in the novel. Singh has a picture of his India that there is no sign of despair or dissatisfaction because of the differences in regards to faith. People are passing their days doing routine work as usual. At the beginning of the novel, Singh explains how peaceful the village is; he shows that there is no sign of any hostility among the villagers. We find this evidence in Singh's novel in the following passage:

The mullah at the mosque knows that it is time for the morning prayer. He has a quick wash, stands facing west towards Mecca and with his fingers in his ears cries in long sonorous notes, "Allah-ho-Akbar." The priest at the Sikh temple lies in bed till the mullah has called. Then he too gets up, draws a bucket of water from the well in the temple courtyard, pours it over himself, and intones his prayers in monotonous singsong to the sound of splashing water. When the goods train steams in, . . . It is like saying goodnight. The mullah again calls the faithful to prayer by shouting at the top of his voice, "God is great." The faithful nod their amens from their rooftops. The Sikh priest murmurs the evening prayer to a semicircle of drowsy old men and women. . . . It had always been so, until the summer of 1947. (4-5)

Apart from their regular peaceful life, Muslims and Sikhs enjoy the liberty of following their religious commands every day, and there is nobody to say 'no' to them from either side. They have freedom to go for religious practice without facing any obstacle or criticism. While one group of followers is to say their prayers in congregation, the other in the village do not have risk of worshipping their gods just nearby. Naturally, they accept their religious diversity; they can accommodate their differences without any conflicts. Singh describes the life in the village free

from religious bans. In the above passage, Singh implies that the mullah is free to call the followers of Islam to come to pray in the mosque and that the Bhai also enjoys the freedom to follow his religion with the other Sikhs in the same village without any obstacles. The novel indicates that this peace and harmony of the people of the British India was interrupted in 1947 when the politicians imposed their decision of Partition on them.

Second, the novel argues against religion as a cause for Partition by showing a strong unity among the people of British India apart from their ethnic, cultural, and religious differences. They may argue over some minor religious issues, but they can be united to face any challenge when it comes against them. When the time comes, they become one community to stand against any evil forces that can be destructive to any member of the community as a whole. Singh shows how the villagers can be united under one symbol to demonstrate that in spite of their different faiths, they have common grounds to work together in any situation necessary for their protection. Singh depicts his village as bonded. He says:

There are only about seventy families in Mano Majra, and Lala Ram Lal's is the only Hindu family. The others are Sikhs or Muslims, about equal in number.

... There are a few families of sweepers whose religion is uncertain. ... But there is one object that all Mano Majrans—even Lala Ram Lal—venerate. This is a three-foot slab of sandstone that stands upright under a keekar tree beside the pond. It is a local deity, the *deo* to which all the villagers—Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or pseudo-Christian—repair secretly whenever they are in special need of blessing. (2)

Here 'three-foot slab' is symbolic of three religious faiths—Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam, and the local deity 'the *deo*' seems to represent British India. In practice, there is nothing like '*deo*' in India; suppose, Muslims are forbidden to worship any idols; '*deo*' is Singh's monumental

creation of unity of the people of every religion. He portrays this deity to emphasize the strong unity among the ethnic groups of the village and the larger nation the village symbolizes. Their differences in faiths do not force equal division among themselves. Following individual religion, Singh argues, equals taking different routes to reach the same destination. Thus, Singh portrays British India as united and peaceful in spite of the differences among people living there. This unity is Singh's wishful thinking about the functioning of a multi-religious community.

Furthermore, Singh not only dreams of harmonious interfaith relations, but he also demonstrates how people of India welcome preaching of other faiths, such as Christianity. He illustrates that nobody protests any preaching even if there is a possibility of conversion. The people of India as presented in the novel are not prejudiced towards their religions; they do not believe that followers of different faiths are their enemies. In fact, they have a very liberal attitude in this case. For example, in the novel, as I have already mentioned, when Iqbal asks Bhai Meet Singh whether the preaching of Christianity by the American padres in India bother him or not, Meet Singh immediately replies, "Everyone is welcome to his religion. Here next door is a Muslim mosque. When I pray to my Guru, Uncle Imam Baksh calls to Allah" (36). In this passage and many others as well, Singh presents a picture of India as a place without ethnic conflicts among diverse communities. The undivided India, the novel says, is always open for anyone of every religion. Even the intruders, British Christians, are allowed to preach their religious teachings in the hope of conversion in Mano Majra, but the followers of other faiths have no objection. This is why, the Sikh priest does not feel Christian preaching as a threat to their faith.

It is also worth noticing that devoted religious people in Mano Majra, whether Sikhs or Muslims, do not denounce some of the sweeper-villagers who do not belong to any particular group of faiths. Even it does not matter to both Muslims and Sikhs if the sweepers believe or not in any faith. Singh very skillfully presents this phenomenon in his narrative. At the very beginning of the novel, when Singh's narrator describes the village, we come to know how liberal the villagers are in regards to religion. Singh's narrator says:

There are few families of sweepers whose religion is uncertain. The Muslims claim them as their own, yet when American missionaries visit Mano Majra the sweepers wear khaki sola topees and join their womenfolk in singing hymns to the accompaniment of a harmonium. Sometimes they visit the Sikh temple, too.

(2)

Singh's narrator calls these sweepers 'pseudo-Christian' in his novel, but nobody reproaches them for not choosing one religion only. They are allowed to attend the ceremonies of all religious groups. It seems all the groups—Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and American missionaries—make attempts to integrate them into their own community. Obviously, this acceptance is a very liberal and positive attitude towards all faiths, as Singh demonstrates. Thus, the separation according to religious affiliation is not important to the civilians; it is only important to politicians who want to divide British India into two nations.

Third, Singh implicitly argues that the villagers do not see Partition as benefiting them, and they do not think that the native politicians will be better than the British colonizers. Many characters in the novel express the view that Partition would not bring any change to the common people. Moreover, in some cases, Singh's village characters have better experiences working with the British officers than with the natives. For instance, when the village land lord

(lambardar) talks about Partition with the politician Iqbal who is critical of the British on the first day of his visit to Mano Majra, the lambardar says, “But I was in the last war and fought in Mesopotamia and Gallipoli. We liked English officers. They were better than the Indians”(48). According to his experience, Indians do not expect a better life when they will be under control of the native politicians because the Indians would not offer them the same social and economic support as the British would. Singh may not support the lambardar’s view, but it is true that the common citizens were not confirm that independence and Partition would bring them a prosperous life all of a sudden.

Singh’s purpose in the novel is not to advocate colonialism but to cite the experiences of the common people and to focus on tranquil British India with its diverse cultures and traditions. He portrays the interaction between the politician Iqbal and the common villagers to focus how ordinary citizens feel about their native Indian leaders. We find another example in the novel when the Sikh priest tells Iqbal about the British, “...my brother who is a havildar says all sepoys are happier with English officers than with Indians. My brother’s colonel’s mem-sahib still sends my niece things from London. ...she even sent money at her wedding” (48). But politician Iqbal does not have any positive remarks about the British. He says:

They are a race of four-twenties, ...[Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code defines the offense of cheating]. ...Do not believe what they say. ...Politically they are the world’s biggest four-twenties. They would not have spread their domain all over the world if they had been honest (49).

Here, Singh highlights the differences of perceptions and experiences about the British between the common people and the native politicians, and he does not blame the colonizers for Partition. Singh’s point here is to focus that the center of the problem is the decision of Partition, not that

Partition is meant as a solution to other existing problems. People begin to suffer when they are forced to migrate. The blame for Partition always goes against the politicians who use religion as a tool to convince or force the devoted followers to submit to their policies. Ultimately, Singh never concludes that the motive of Partition is to achieve religious freedom.

People's Resistance of the Idea of Partition

Finally, Singh rejects the notion that religion is the cause for Partition by showing that the common people resist the idea of Partition instead of seeing it as a solution. When the questions of independence and Partition come up simultaneously, Singh's characters, the common people, resist it immediately, arguing that only the politicians will be the beneficiaries and that their way of life and their economy will never be changed or improved. For instance, on the first day of his visit to Mano Majra, Iqbal, the representative of Indian politicians, tries to convince the Muslim and the Sikh villagers, who come to visit him, to support the idea of independence. He explains to the Indians that being under British rule equals slavery. He says, "Why, don't you people want to be free? Do you want to remain slaves all your lives?" (48). Iqbal argues that independence of India will bring the blessings of freedom for all the people. One reason behind his thinking is the fact that he is a member of the communist party. But the villagers are conscious that this argument is baseless; they do not want to be fooled in the name of independence even if the suggestion comes from a non-religious politician. They question his plan, saying, "Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes?" (48). The villagers know that they do not have access to education, and consequently, they cannot think of having government jobs and of participating in political power. They also know that they will remain poor, and

nobody will change their way of living, and they will still have to struggle for bread and butter for their survival. The villagers, Singh shows, are conscious about their future even after independence becomes reality. They know that they will not be able to enjoy the benefits of freedom and Partition. After Iqbal's arguments in favor of freedom, the Muslim visitor also responds by saying, "Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians—or the Pakistanis" (48). The village lambardar (landlord) has the same opinion about their future after independence. Thus, religion has minimum role in Partition as Singh demonstrates.

However, instead of fueling the idea of separation, the unity of all ethnic groups in this novel illustrates that the common people are helpless to play any role in stopping political games of Indian Partition. The violent political activists do not hesitate to break the ethical rules to oppress the innocent country fellows. While religious teachings educate the followers to be kind to others, the political agents do not pay any attention to any of these moral values. Towards the end of the novel, when it becomes obvious that some arrangements have been made to help Muslims migrate to Pakistan by train, some violent non-Muslim political activists who come with refugees from Pakistan plan to attack and kill the passengers on the train. When Iqbal requests the Sikh priest, Bhai of Gurdwara, to advise people to stop violence, Meet Singh says, "These are bad times, Iqbal Singhji, very bad times. There is no faith or religion" (168). Singh indicates here that for the political purposes, no one will pay heed to religious advice. Thus, he states the irony that while religion is said to be the cause of Partition, the agents who are advocates of faith based states do not hesitate to violate religious teachings. If they had love for religion from their heart, they would not have killed people of all communities indiscriminately. Evidently, they use religion as one of the tools to materialize their political dreams. Even the

law-enforcing agencies have silent consent on such killings. After he was arrested, politician Iqbal has a conversation with the police constables on such violence. Iqbal says, “You must have many prisoners in the police stations,” and one of the constables replies, “No, not one. . . . We do not arrest any rioters. We only disperse them” (66). Clearly, rioters are not held responsible for killings, and no law and order exist to protect the common citizens against their violence. Singh shows that those groups of political activists are so well-organized that the true followers of all religions can do nothing to save their lives, let alone stop Partition.

Diverse Religions—Lame Excuse for Partition

Obviously, keeping themselves in hiding the confusion and conflicts are imposed on the people of India by the politicians, such as Jinnah—Nehru—Tara Singh, who are manipulating the common people’s simplicity and helplessness. Singh demonstrates that people’s devotion to religion is not an obstacle to work and live together in a united India. Those politicians fabricate the unrest and unhappiness to complete their mission of Partition. Singh makes his argument about Partition not being caused by religion in many ways, such as showing people having no knowledge of Partition, portraying Mano Majra as a world of religious harmony, depicting the unity among the villagers, portraying the characters saying independence will not benefit them, resisting Partition, and so on. First, Singh shows that the common people are unaware of independence and Partition—how they can be in favor of separation based of religious identities. Second, Singh presents the village of Mano Majra as a microcosm of India as an instance of harmonious relations among the different communities living throughout India. Third, the common followers of all religions resist Partition by not agreeing to migrate or attack on their fellow villagers. Next, the enmity among the different ethnic groups was primarily imported

from outside, and we do not find any severe communal conflicts among Singh's villagers. Having said that, we can conclude that there are problems in every society, even among the people of the same ethnic group, but those arguments are not valid to draw borders like India and Pakistan on religious principles to pretend to ensure peace and harmony. Some scattered incidents cannot be considered as vital problems to divide British India into two parts and turn them into enemies forever. Singh portrays in his novel how the leaders have exploited the minor problems among the groups of ethnic diversity to gain not only their personal interest but also to influence the process of nation building.

Evidently, the blame behind the cause of Partition lies with the staging of political conflicts between the Muslim leaders (Jinnah as chief—mentioned in the novel) on one side and the Hindus (Gandhi as head—indicated in the novel) and the Sikhs (the young Sikh boy as leader—cited in the novel) on the other. The acceptance of diversity in the Indian society clearly portrays the peaceful co-existence, which indicates unity among the common citizens of the country. Singh also rejects the argument of politicians that different faiths cause social anarchy. Therefore, the pleas for Partition based on religious identities are not valid and acceptable. In the next chapter, I am going to discuss how politicians ignite conflicts and misinterpret religious differences to inflame violence all over the country. I will explore how Singh shows violence as a top-down phenomenon.

CHAPTER – III

VIOLENCE IN *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*: THE GREATEST WEAPON FOR PARTITION

Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. 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. (*Train to Pakistan* 1)

In the above lines taken out of context from the opening page of *Train to Pakistan*, the narrator explains how both Hindus and Muslims blamed each other for the riots and violence among different ethnic groups during the Partitioning of British India. This chapter will, like the last, examine how Singh portrays a world where such blame of communal riots based on religious identities was used by shrewd and selfish politicians as a weapon to force and expedite Partition. In *Train to Pakistan*, this chapter will argue, Singh indicates how violence was a political tool, which is how both ethnic groups (based on faith) were manipulated by some political agents and religious fanatics into blaming each other to escalate violence all over the country. However, Singh also shows, I will argue, that none of these manipulative political groups represents the larger community, but instead represents a powerful but small faction that influenced the development of both India and Pakistan.

While the last chapter examined how religion is presented in the novel, and how Singh portrays manipulation of religious faith as a tool to force Partition on a peaceful public, this chapter will scrutinize how Singh shows these same political leaders using violence as a similar tool. The politicians desperately tried to impose their decision ignoring whether the common

citizens accept it or not. This chapter will argue that Singh begins his book with this blame and counter blame of attack to demonstrate that the political agents are responsible for the violence, riots, and rumors of horrible killing, which, as argued in the last chapter, counters the prevailing historical account. In the novel, all modes of violence are part of the Indian politicians' plan to carve new boundaries, which means that Partition was not a naturally occurring event coming from the people but was imposed from above. The motive of blame for the spreading of tales of horror all over the Indian territory, I will show, supports my ongoing thesis that it was not the ethnic differences of the greater people that inspired them. I will argue that *Train to Pakistan* shows that ambitious politicians use rumors of violence to force the British government to divide the subcontinent into two nations—one primarily for the Muslims and the other mainly for the Hindus and the Sikhs. In order to make this argument, this chapter will first look at historical documents mainly between 1906 and 1947 from government and non-government sources to compare them to events and characters in Singh's novel and to trace his reading of history. Next, I will show how my reading of the novel's violence is different from other critics' evaluation. Then, I will discuss the interplay between violence and rumors that finally forced the common people to accept migration.

Historical Accounts of Violence and Partition

Singh argues against the common perception of the movement for Partition as coming from the people, and the historical facts clearly indicate that the causes of the riots, as Singh says, were not religious differences but were simply part of politics. The demand for a separate land for Indian Muslims was an issue since early thirties (initiated by a group of politicians), but when Partition was actually accomplished, the policy resulted in a level of violence not

anticipated by the moderate political leaders. Historians, such as M. A. Karandikar, in his *Islam in India's Transition to Modernity* speculate that after a division among the Muslim politicians the nature of the Partition movement abruptly and unexpectedly changed into a violent mode. Karandikar opines that violence for Partition (ethnic-cleansing) was noticed when a section of Muslim politicians in 1945 separated from the parent organization (the Muslim League) to form a group to take up the cause of Pakistan to gear up the movement adopting their aggressive way. As *Train to Pakistan* offers its interpretation of Indian history, we encounter episodes of threats and violence that reach even remote Mano Majra villagers . As a result, they are forced to leave their birth place in fear of death when they experience the horrible train with dead bodies.

In their discussions of communal violence at the time, historians of Indian Partition have divided communal violence into two parts—traditional (such as, the killing of Lala Ram Lal in the novel) and Partition-related (such as, the train with dead bodies in the novel). Singh's narrative is embedded on the transitional period of Partition; hence he emphasizes on Partition violence. However, he also shows how a social crime can be manipulated to enforce migration, but he does not portray any traditional violence, which the historians have identified. This categorization may be helpful to understand how Singh's blame on the politicians for spreading violence in the name of religion in the novel. For instance, Jan Talbot and Gurharpal Singh's *The Partition of India* provides the details of the communal riots that were used as one of the tools to divide the united British India and categorizes the nature of violence among the different ethnic groups. Traditional violence, the authors say, was committed occasionally because of dispute over common places for religious rituals, but the motive for the politically instigated Partition riots was to eliminate the minority completely from the region by killing them. Talbot and Singh say that the transition from traditional to Partition violence can be dated earlier to the time of the

Great Calcutta Killing of August 1946, which was the beginning of what have become known as the Partition riots (65). The violence for Partition broke out when Muslims planned to observe Direct Action Day (August 16, 1946) in demand of a separate land under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah of the Muslim League while the Hindu dominated political party, the Indian National Congress, was opposing the idea. However, the nature of traditional communal violence, according to Talbot and Singh, is different from Partition violence. Later, when the politicians of an ethnic majority region got involved in religious issues, the political agents intended to eliminate the whole minority ethnic community from their respective regions. Talbot and Singh say, “The violence from August 1946 onwards differed from earlier episodes in that it contained dimensions of ‘ethnic cleansing’” (67). They also say, “Most importantly the [*Partition*] violence was occasioned not by spontaneous religious passions, as in the past, but by political parties who carefully planned the assaults” (68-69). Like Singh, these authors argue that the common Indians of either ethnic group never got involved in such communal violence in order to divide the country in the hope of religious freedom but that the politicians ignited a horrific situation to materialize their dreams of Partition by manipulating minor issues among the different ethnic groups.

Furthermore, other historians, such as William Golant in *The Long Afternoon*, also argue that the nature of the independence movement suddenly changed into riots manipulated by the politicians. Rumors were great weapons to tempt the common people to get involved in such heinous activities. Golant says:

Rumors and atrocity stories spread through the country... Violence between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs brought the province near to civil war... As the time for the departure of British authorities drew near, incidents of violent crime were

daily events in the larger cities, while in the countryside such displays of communal war were obscured by their remoteness. (250-251)

According to Galant, the conflicts among the different ethnic groups turned fierce, following the rumors spread by the regional ethnic majority politicians when the question of Independence and Partition came together. The political groups aimed to build their separate states so that they could earn fame for new nations. Likewise, Michael Edwardes in *British India: 1772–1947* argues that politicians played a key role to begin violence. Evidently, in the hope of political prospect these leaders and local elites who were educated in Europe made a road to Partition that caused the whole Indian nation tremendous suffering from riots and forced displacements. Singh is obviously aware of the historical facts, and he arranges the episodes to convince that the common people are not responsible for the tragedy of violence and migration. Historians help us to rethink the traditional concept that Partition was the consequence of religious differences. Singh characterizes the common people to show them as innocent and devoted to their respective religions as well as tolerant to their fellow countrymen's faith. Ordinary citizens never caused any violence or riots on the issue of religious differences.

Prior Criticism of the Novel on Violence

Despite this trend in historical analyses of Partition, prior critics of Singh's argument have tended to read his novel as blaming religious differences and communal violence for Partition. In contrast to historians, critics of *Train to Pakistan*, such as Prafulla C. Kar, Vasant A. Shahane and others, have commented on his depiction of violence based on ethnicity, but their readings did not argue for Singh's depiction of riots mostly as staged. For example, Prafulla Kar in his article, "Khushwant Singh: *Train to Pakistan*" discusses communal violence in India as if

Singh blamed the common people.⁴ Finding *Train to Pakistan* as a document of political unrest, Kar focuses on the use of arms in Singh's presentation of India supposing Singh's villagers involved in violence as a common trend of the diverse people of the country, losing their religious character as a world of peace and harmony.

Likewise, Vasant Shahane in "Theme, Title and Structure in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*," explains Singh's novel as a picture of communal riots and genocide by arguing that Singh shows brutal hostility and bitter relations among the ethnic groups, which results in killing thousands of religious people of different faiths in India. Similarly, in "The Writer As Historical Witness: Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*," C. N. Srinath blames the communal violence on different faiths, concluding that Singh presents a vivid picture of a violent battle field where there is no sign of mercy, and ethnic groups are intolerant to one another. But obviously, I would argue, Srinath has missed the point of political violence thriving in the name of religious and ethnic differences in Singh's novel.

Most of these critics also miss the importance of the coming of the train of dead bodies from somewhere unknown and how the train is an example of violence begetting violence. Shahane, for instance, misreads Singh's focus in the novel, commenting on the train and its dead bodies as evidence of violence among devoted followers of religion. On the contrary, Singh portrays what a tremendous shock it is to the devoted religious people of Mano Majra to face such an unacceptable inhumane act of violence on the issue of Partition. The lambardar and Meet Singh are not only against any counter attack on their fellow Muslim villagers, they are also worried about the security of their neighbors and ready to protect them from any attack by

⁴ Kar says, "As Mano Majra changes its character and takes part in the communal violence and joins the mainstream of history, the author reflects on the nature of human destiny and responds to the event by a philosophy of indifference, a response, which he seems to think, results from the utter brutality of the situation (93)."

outsiders. Likewise, Srinath has not focused on the implication of the rumors of violence; rather he has read rumors presented in the novel as real clashes among the ethnic groups, and he has counted serious ethnic conflicts existing in Mano Majra where nothing happened by the villagers.

Singh's Story of Partition Violence

In contrast to how critics typically read his novel, Singh depicts a very peaceful British India without any communal violence (social crime—killing of Lala Ram Lal—is not a part of communal violence, as he indicates), and he shows the riots as instigated by manipulators to materialize the design of Partition, not as organically growing out of the people's wishes. As argued in my introduction and first chapter, Singh created a world of peaceful villagers who live in harmony in spite of having differences in faiths. It can also be worth mentioning here that historically some of the Muslim leaders, such as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, and others were against Partition, but Singh did not include any of them in the novel. These Muslim leaders are still denounced as collaborators of Hindus and Sikhs at the critical time of building a new nation—Pakistan.

However, Singh avoids that part of the history as he wants to concentrate on Partition. Instead, his novel shows that the Partition riots were very different from previous conflicts because Partition violence and crimes were top-down and because the people felt forced to get involved in them. Before the idea of Partition, for instance, Singh clearly shows that the denizens of his imaginary village were not hostile to their neighbors based on their ethnic identity; rather, they are trustworthy and helpful to one another. For instance, when Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs begin to migrate after the decision of Partition, and the political fanatics of those ethnic groups began to take the advantage to attack, the magistrate Hukum Chand comes to Mano Majra to

supervise the overall situation, and he asks the Inspector, “No communal trouble in this area?” (19). The Inspector honestly replies, “We have escaped it so far, sir. Convoys of Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan have come through and some Muslims have gone out, but we have had no incidents” (19). Here, the magistrate defines “communal trouble” as Partition-riots because his visit is not a regular monitoring of crimes but something instructional from the higher authority or political leaders from the capital Delhi. The Inspector in his reply also makes it clear that the riots occurred when the refugees of different ethnic groups moved from one side of the boundary to another. It is not that people who are fighting and killing in their own neighborhoods to eliminate their enemies—in fact, they do not consider their neighbors as enemies. The political agents are taking advantages of this psychological environment to create panic among the mass population to force migration and accept Partition against the will of the common citizens.

Because, as I argued in my thesis introduction, Singh creates Mano Majra as a microcosm of India to illustrate the pre-partition country as free from communal violence, people of this little village represent the whole nation. It is the rumors of atrocities and hostilities that destabilize the tranquility of Mano Majra, which represents India in the novel. The villagers are not at all enthusiastic to prepare for counter attack; rather they are concerned to save their village from any outside trouble. Singh’s common villagers are far away from enmity against their fellow villagers who have different faith. He shows that violence is always coming from outside, and the villagers are not responsible for any riots.

In order to highlight how Singh shows violence is used as a tool of politicians, I will read some key scenes portraying violence. I will first read the scene of bodies appearing on a train, for which the novel was named, which shows that the mob is not identified, although the victims are visible and their location is traced. Then I will read the scene of robbery and killing of Lala Ram

Lal to show how traditional violence is used as tool to ignite communal riots. Next, I will read the scene of the attempt to kill the innocent Muslim refugees who are going to Pakistan to save their lives, and the shooting at Jugga and his self-sacrifice contribute to escalating the violence. I will end the chapter by showing how violence is used as a tool to impose political decisions on a mass population.

Prior to the discussion of the scenes of violence, it is important to mention here that initially the violence in the novel is more of rumors than realities. These kinds of communal riots are staged among the groups of people who are politically tempted to be involved in chaos and confusion. Then, minor clashes are used as an epidemic to spread violence like a civil war among the common people in the region. For instance, Singh's character Jugga mentions two incidents which he heard from Meet Singh—four Sikh Sardars killed some Muslim refugees on the street, and a truckful of Baluch soldiers (Muslims) stuck bayonets into Sikhs on the road (67). Singh focuses on how political agents, both Muslims and Hindus, blame each other to ignite violence among the peace-loving citizens. When the minor conflicts travel from city centers, such as Delhi, to the remote areas, such as Mano Majra, where devoted religious common people live, these minor incidents turn into terrible riots. In fact, this violence turns out to be more rumors than reality. Mysteriously, Singh does not portray any fight, confrontation, or injury in his narrative—he shows no confrontation of communal violence (other than killing of Lala Ram Lal, the train with corpses, and Jugga's self-sacrifice, which I will discuss momentarily) anywhere from the beginning to the end. None of his characters of the novel are killed in communal riots except Jugga. Singh's narrator and his characters only talk about violence, but no one gets involved in any occurrence. Thus, Singh demonstrates a peaceful community with diverse faiths and beliefs.

Instead, rumors of violence, Singh shows, become the greatest tool to create panic among the common people of all ethnic groups to accept Partition, and politicians of all religions successfully convince their agents and musclemen to conduct united efforts in their mission of dividing the country. The ordinary citizens are terrified with the rumor of riots, and some of them even get involved in such activities although most of them try to move themselves and their family members to a considerably safer place. For instance, when the politician, Iqbal, is talking with the villagers after his arrival in Mano Majra, the Lambardar explains the political situation of the country as follows: “The winds of destruction are blowing across the land. All we hear is kill, kill. The only ones who enjoy freedom are thieves, robbers and cutthroats” (49). Here Singh wants to indicate that rumors have spread so far that even the people of a peaceful remote area, such as Mano Majra, are in discomfort and fear of being attacked and destabilized of their peaceful life by recognized miscreants of the society.

In fact, Singh has not presented any violence in his novel except a train with corpses where the violence occurred elsewhere; mostly what he portrays are gossips and rumors that work powerfully among the common people, so that they feel forced to migrate. For instance, when the decision is final that all Muslims of Mano Majra have to leave the village for Pakistan, Imam Baksh comes back home asks his daughter Nooran to pack everything to get ready. Nooran says, “I will not go to Pakistan,” and his father comments, “You may not want to go, but they will throw you out. All Muslims are leaving for the camp tomorrow.” Nooran is still desperate to stay and says, “Who will throw us out? This is our village. Are the police and the government dead?” Nooran does not know that the police and the government want them to go to Pakistan. So, Imam Baksh says, “Don’t be silly, girl. Do as you are told. Hundreds of thousands of people are going to Pakistan and as many coming out. Those who stay behind are killed.

Hurry up and pack. I have to go and tell the others that they must get ready” (128). Thus, the Muslims are compelled to leave their home for an uncertain destination to save their lives. They find no other option to continue living in their houses. Singh shows the harsh truth of the situation that goes against the common citizens who find their life unsafe and social atmosphere beyond their control.

The Robbery and Killing of Lala Ram Lal

Apart from political turmoil and riots Singh gives us an example of traditional violence which is common even in a civil society, but that single social crime, he shows, is even manipulated as a tool of Partition riot. He highlights how people of authority stage violence to grow hatred among the ethnic groups to get them engaged in accomplishing their mission of segregating the diverse population. The robbery and killing of the money-lender Lala Ram Lal provides a vivid instance of a pre-partition, typical social crime or act of violence. But Singh shows here that the trouble-makers are again outsiders who come to Mano Majra, a peaceful village, and create problems for the innocent villagers. Because this episode of violence occurs immediately after description of the peaceful normal life of the villagers, its significance and symbolism are highlighted. As Singh’s narrator describes the event:

One heavy night in August of that year, five men emerged from a keekar grove not far from Mano Majra, and moved silently towards the river. They were decoits, or professional robbers, and all but one of them were armed. Two of the armed men carried spears. The others had carbines slung over their shoulders. The fifth man carried a chromium-plated electric torch. (6)

It is noticeable here that the Partition was scheduled in August 15, 1947, and Singh portrays the robbery in the same month. These five unknown robbers are coming from nowhere, and Singh implies here that violence is imposed on the common people by some outsiders, who do not know who are responsible for this. The people of Singh's imaginary village Mano Majra face problems coming from outsiders, such as these five robbers; except Jugga all the villagers—both Muslims and non-Muslims—are presented as peace-loving and they do not contribute to any violence.

Singh also shows how traditional violence, such as the robbery, is misinterpreted and misused in favor of Partition and migration. He also shows how the people in power, such as the law enforcing agencies, bring allegations against the innocent people (such as, Iqbal and Jugga) who are not responsible for the crime. Finally, when the policemen arrest the real robbers, they do not punish them; rather they set them free. When the magistrate Hukum Chand wants to know about the murderers of Ram Lal, the subinspector tells him the real story. The subinspector says about the robbers:

They are men who were at one time in his own gang: Malli and four others from village Kapura two miles down the river. But Jugga was not with them. ... We were wrong about both Jugga and the other fellow. ... I told you about Jugga's liaison with a Muslim weaver's girl. That kept him busy most nights. Malli threw bangles into Jugga's courtyard after the decoity. (98)

After informing the magistrate about the truth of the robbery and murder at Lal Ram's house, the subinspector is in favor of releasing Jugga and Iqbal. The subinspector says, "If your honor agrees, we might release Jugga and Iqbal after we have got Malli and his companions" (99). But Hukum Chand wants to play a political game with all these arrested people so that it becomes

easy to send the Muslims to Pakistan. He designs a plan to banish all Muslims from India. He suggests, “Let Malli and his gang off without making any entry anywhere. But keep an eye on their movements. We will arrest them when we want to ... And do not release the budmash or the other chap yet. We many need them” (99). In spite of the report that Malli and his gang are criminals, Hukum Chand does not want to arrest them, and he also does not want to release the innocent Iqbal and Jugga. Singh’s narrator says, “Even in Chundunnager, a few yards from the police station, there had been killing. Iqbal had seen the pink glow of fire and heard people yelling, but the police had made no arrests” (105). Singh elaborates all these to show how the authorities manipulated violence in the name of religious conflicts. By being indifferent to stopping social criminals like the killers Lala Ram Lal, the authority let them loose to play a political game. Here the magistrate wants Malli and his gang to contribute to violence to banish Muslims from Mano Majra. He wants to clarify that violence was staged and imposed on people to accept Partition and forces them to migrate from their native place.

To elaborate his point, Singh shows how traditional violence becomes a tool for the people in authority to exploit the common people who are not willing to migrate following the decision of Partition. Hukum Chand wants Mano Majra free from Muslims, and he uses violence as a tool. According to his plan, he sends a message to the police authority of Pakistan to take the Muslims away from Mano Majra. He suggests to the subinspector, “After you have done the needful, send word to the commander of the Muslim refugee camp asking for trucks to evacuate Mano Majra Muslims” (99). Having necessary instructions, the subinspector begins his operation. He instructs the head constable to set Mali and his men free near the temple at Mano Majra, and intentionally ask the villagers about Sultana and his gang (Muslims) who migrated to Pakistan even before the robbery. Singh’s narrator says:

The head constable unlocked the handcuffs of the prisoners in front of the villagers. They were made to put their thumb impressions on pieces of paper and told to report to the police station twice a week. The villagers looked on sullenly. They know that Jugga budmash and the stranger had nothing to do with the dacoity. They were equally certain that arresting Malli's gang the police were on the right track. (118)

The villagers are confused why Malli's gang is set free at the crime spot, not at their village Kapura, two miles away from Mano Majra. It is clear to them that Jugga and Iqbal have no involvement with the robbery at Lala Ram's house. The villagers have every reason to think that arresting Malli's gang the police can easily find the criminals. They do not suspect that the authority is playing a game related to Partition using this social crime.

Afterwards, it becomes obvious that violence is used to force relocation of minority Muslims from Mano Majra. Hukum Chand and the policemen make all possible arrangement to drive Muslims to migrate to Pakistan. Outwardly they say that they want to save Muslims from the possible attack by the non-Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan, but inwardly they do not want the Muslims to stay in India. Because the Sikhs of Mano Majra vow to protect their Muslim villagers, because Malli and his companions are Sikhs, and because Iqbal is not a member of the Muslim League, the magistrate Hukum Chand says to himself, "It would have been more convenient if they had been Mussulman. The knowledge of that and the agitator fellow being a Leaguer would have persuaded Mano Majra Sikhs to let their Muslims go" (99). So, the authority tries to find excuses to banish Muslims from India, and Muslims also feel threatened to continue living in their own village. When the decision is finally made that all Muslims of Mano Majra have to leave the village and go to Pakistan, Imam Baksh asks his daughter Nooran to get

ready for migration as mentioned earlier. But Nooran says, “I will not go to Pakistan” while his father says, “You may not want to go, but they will throw you out” (128). Nooran is not convinced and says, “Who will throw us out? This is our village. Are the police and the government dead?” and her father replies, “Don’t be silly, girl. Do as you are told. ... Those who stay behind are killed” (128). Singh clearly indicates here that Partition is not what the common followers of all religions wanted; it is violence and life-threats that compel them to hasten to leave their birthplace. Even the people of authority have two faces—they pretend to save the lives of the citizens, but they are determined to force the decision of Partition.

The Corpse Train

The novel’s most horrible scenario of brutal violence is portrayed the eponymous train loaded with dead bodies arriving at the Mano Majra station from Pakistan. Before I begin to explore Singh’s portrayal of violence, I would like to highlight that the novel has all of the violence happen off screen, which means that we don’t know who committed it or who played the key role in involving their agents in indiscriminate killing. But Singh makes it clear that the villagers who represent the common citizens are not at all responsible for any kind of violence. In fact, all devoted religious followers in the novel are peace-loving people living in the same village for generations without any conflicts on the issue of faith. All the trouble makers are unknown outsiders.

The tension arises among the Muslims and non-Muslims when the train loaded with corpses arrives in Mano Majra. Singh shows how this train brought havoc from outside of the village. An unknown fear of life threat pervades in the heart of everyone. The age long security

suddenly turns to be very fragile, and the villagers cease to depend on their fellow neighbors. At the beginning of the section “Mano Majra” in the novel Singh’s narrator says:

When it was discovered that the train had brought a full load of corpses, a heavy brooding silence descended on the village. People barricaded their doors and many stayed up all night talking in whispers. Everyone felt his neighbour’s hand against him, and thought of finding friends and allies. (117)

As the narrator explains, it was the train loaded with corpses that caused mistrust and doubt among the villagers who had been living in the same neighborhoods for generations. The security of their lives became the main concern while they learnt about the train, their social bond of coexistence and unquestionable trust for one another began to shake. So, the problem was imposed on the villagers who were leading their life in a diverse society in harmony.

Further, Singh shows why and how the villagers were forced to feel insecure in fear for their lives. He explains that the Sikhs of Mano Majra felt worried for their Muslim neighbors when the non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan (unknown outsiders) took shelter near the temple of the village. Although the Sikhs did not have problems with their fellow Muslim villagers, they grew suspicious about the refugee non-Muslims. Singh explains this situation when the village leader, the lambardar, is talking with his fellow Sikh villagers after the arrival of the corpse train.

The village lambardar says:

Nobody here wants to kill anyone. But who knows the intentions of other people? Today we have forty or fifty refugees, who by the grace of the Guru are a peaceful lot and they lonely talk. Tomorrow we may get others who may have lost their mothers or sisters. Are we going to tell them: ‘do not come to this village’? And if they do come, will we let them wreak vengeance on our tenants?” (124)

Here Singh shows that the villagers felt suspicious about the non-Muslim refugees who took shelter in the village coming from Pakistan and especially who were about to come as well. They would not be able to protect their Muslim neighbors even if they wanted to. Obviously the common people would be at a loss to face such a brutal situation, and the Muslim villagers might become the victims of the outside manipulators whom they did not know. Singh indicates here that violence begets violence, and ordinary citizens suffer for no reason. Mysteriously the trouble makers were able to hide themselves while they imposed such unavoidable violent atmosphere among the common citizens.

To explain the gravity of the violence, the narrator elaborates Hukum Chand's reaction at the end of the day to taking care of the corpses. In spite of being a hard-hearted person, Hukum Chand feels restless after coming back from the cremation ground and seemed terrified thinking of those horrible massacres. Again, the omniscient narrator describes:

The sight of so many dead had at first produced a cold numbness. Within a couple of hours, all his emotions were dead, and he watched corpses of men and women and children being dragged out, with as little interest as if they had been trunks or bedding. But by evening, he began to feel forlorn and sorry for himself. (85)

Although Singh portrays Hukum Chand as an iron man who knows the challenges of an administrator and who has experiences of many terrible incidents, still at the intensity of the brutal mass killing of human beings, at the horrible sight of the corpses of innocent men, women and children of all ages, he becomes numb and feels sad for himself. When he comes back at night feeling helpless and upset, he cannot forget those tortured faces of the dead bodies, and immediately discovers himself deserted and lonely at his temporary housing with servants. The

narrator continues the description of the wounded dead bodies which were disturbing to Hukum Chand:

Within the dark chambers of his closed eyes, scenes of the day started coming back in panoramic succession. He tried to squash them by pressing his fingers into his eyes. The images only went blacker and redder and then came back. There was a man holding his intestines, with an expression in his eyes which said: "Look what I have got!" 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. Some of them did not have a scratch on their bodies. There were bodies crammed against the far end wall of the compartment, looking in terror at the empty windows through which must have come shots, spears and spikes. There were lavatories jammed with corpses of young men who had muscled their way to comparative safety. (85)

The horrible vision of the dead bodies with wounds does not need any explanation how brutally they are killed. Hukum Chand can realize the nature of the heartless killing by viewing the corpses. The old man holding his intestine, the fearful expression of women and children, and the muscling of young men clearly tell Hukum Chand how desperately they tried to save their lives, but consequently they became the victims at the hands of the attackers. It seems that there was no mercy for any one regardless of their age or sex. This description clarifies why the atmosphere of Mano Majra dramatically changed after the arrival of the train.

Singh portrays the train with dead bodies in this way to emphasize that the common people were forced to accept the decision of Partition because they felt that a second massacre is unavoidable. There remains no choice whether Muslims of Mano Majra are willing to migrate to

Pakistan or not. People do not have any time to think about anything other than running away to save their lives. Obviously the dead bodies are non-Muslims (possibly both Hindus and Sikhs) living in Pakistan. To describe how people suffered during those days, Singh portrays another heart-breaking view, which Hukum Chand recalls, again from the perspective of how innocent people became victims of violence manipulated for Partition:

The most vivid picture was that of an old peasant with a long white beard; he did not look dead at all. He sat jammed between rolls of bedding on the upper rack meant for luggage, looking pensively at the scene below him. A thin crimson line of coagulated blood ran from his ear onto his beard. Hukum Chand had shaken him by the shoulder, saying, “Baba, Baba!” believing he was alive. He was alive. His cold hand stretched itself grotesquely and gripped the magistrate’s right foot. ...The hand moved up slowly from the ankles to the calf, from the calf to the knee, gripping its way all along. ...The hand kept moving upwards. As it touched the fleshy part of his thigh, its grip loosened. (85-86)

Here Singh explains the severity of the violence and explains how people suffered because of the indiscriminate killing. Describing as an old man with white beard Singh may indicate that this man might not be involved in any fight or political game, but he lost his life. In all these horrific description Singh never identifies the people who actually operate this kind of attack on the mass people. But it is obvious that this train with dead bodies is sent to Mano Majra to force people accept Partition and migration. Creating horror by unknown outsiders determines that common people—both Muslims and non-Muslims—are not willing to leave their birth place and migrate to anywhere else from either Pakistan or India. Violence and riots were meant to panic the opposite denomination to obey the political decision. It was not that people were killed, but they

were killed in a horrible manner, and the dead bodies were then sent to be witnessed for a note as killing was not just violence, it was a notorious weapon to force Partition. So, violence was the only way to displace the minority, such as Muslims in Mano Majra, and force them accept Partition.

When enemies fight with opponents even in a war, they do not care about the dead bodies after killing. That the people of Pakistan sent corpses to India by a train after killing shows that the violence was meant as a message and a tool, not just retaliation. In a real war, there is usually some respect for the casualties, but here the fact that the corpses are treated so badly says something about all the rules and codes being broken mercilessly. Obviously, Singh uses the train image to convey his ideas in a poetic way to attract his readers. His way of presentation helps him to show that violence is used as a tool of manipulation in the name of devotion to religion. The episode of the train of corpses is so outrageous that one would almost have to be involved using it as a tactic to tempt violence. The vivid picture of the wounded, horrifying dead bodies easily startle people of the same faith to find excuses to attack people of killers' faith—no matter who is responsible for such killing.

Violence against Muslim Refugees and Jugga

The attempted killing of the innocent Muslims going to Pakistan by train and the shooting at Jugga who sacrifices his life to cut the thick rope to save the train may be mentioned here as final examples of brutal violence. Singh says that a group of four strangers (Sikhs in appearance) reach Mano Majra by a jeep like the one which is used by the army during the day (which indicates people of authority involved in violence, not the devotees to religion) and tempt the remaining non-Muslim Mano Majra villagers and non-Muslim refugees sheltered in the same

village to attack the train scheduled to go to Pakistan with Muslim refugees. The political manipulators take control over the common people step by step. They became successful in convincing or forcing the non-Muslims to leave India. Then they planned to kill them when they were on the way to Pakistan. They utilized social criminal Malli and his gang to kill innocent refugees going to Pakistan. Everything is directed to ignite violence and riots, and force migration.

The plan to attack the train going to Pakistan is the final episode of violence in the novel, and it is a united effort of the non-Muslims to reply to the brutality of the corpse train. Singh says about the four strangers, “All were Sikhs. They wore khaki uniforms and had rifles slung on their shoulders” (147). The military dress indicates how it was people of authority involving the common people in communal riots, not believers of faith. To them being a part of violent group is more important than being a believer in Sikhism. Rumor is used to convince people to get involved in violence. The leader of this group says:

What sort of Sikhs are you? ...Potent or impotent? ...Do you know how many trainloads of dead Sikhs and Hindus have come over? Do you know of the massacres in Rawalpindi and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura? What are you doing about it? You just eat and sleep and you call yourselves Sikhs—the brave Sikhs! The martial class! (148)

This young man makes claims about massacres all over the country, but Singh does not show any evidence of such violence by Muslims. Again, if criminals kill someone at some places, people cannot take revenge at other places in name of communal hatred. Because the common people are not convinced, the village leader—the lambardar—tries to convince them saying, “What can we do, Sardarji? ...If our government goes to war against Pakistan, we will fight.

What can we do sitting in Mano Majra?” (148). The young man argues, “Do the Mussulmans in Pakistan apply for permission from their government when they rape your sisters? Do they apply for permission when they stop trains and kill everyone, old, young, women and children?” (149). The innocent villagers do not have the wit for counter argument. They simply become speechless at the aggressive reporting of the group leader.

So, they surrender to the young man who prescribes the villagers to begin violence against the Muslims. Obviously, there is confusion on the issue of attacking innocent people who are Muslims. Singh shows how violence begets violence and innocent followers of Islam become the victims of emotional faith lovers. At last the young man (who represents himself as a government official with his military dress) declares his policy of attack. He says:

For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussalmans. 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. (149)

Singh clearly indicates here how violence spread all over India as ordinary people got involved in terrible riots. Communal leaders ignited the fire of killing in the name of religious identity, and they used simple villagers as their tools to fulfil their design of Partition. The true religious people are always against such brutal acts. Meet Singh says, “What have the Muslims here done to us for us to kill them in revenge for what Muslims in Pakistan are doing? Only people who have committed crimes should be punished. ... What bravery is there in killing unarmed innocent people?” (149-50). But the violent citizens do not listen to any morals or principles. The young

man insulted Meet Singh for his positive attitude, and finally stopped the Sikh priest from preaching against violence.

Ignoring all the arguments of the village leaders against violence the young leader announces the design of killing the Muslims who are supposed to travel to Pakistan by a train the next day. He declares, “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” (151). Meet Singh reminds the young leader that the Muslims of Mano Majra will also travel by this train, but the leader ignores him and passes humiliating comments. He expresses his firm decision and says, “I don’t know who the Muslims on the train are; I do not care. It is enough for me to know that they are Muslims. They will not cross this river alive” (151). Singh clearly shows here how violence is well-planned by the people who are outsiders that the problems are created from above, and how the political agents accomplish their operation. The young leader says at the end, “You need not bother about the military or the police. No one will interfere. We will see to that” (151). This is a clear indication that the administration has a secret hand in such violence. The law enforcing agencies become a part of violence; and instead of saving the citizens, they take a side and support killing innocent people who deserve their protection.

The Sikh young leader becomes successful of forming a group of more than fifty volunteers to attack the train, including the pre-arranged Malli with his four gang members, many refugees (who are now in Mano Majra coming from Pakistan), and some villagers who weep at the departure of their Muslim friends during the day, only to become the members of the operation group at night. When he finds the volunteers determined to attack, he explains the map:

We will have six or seven rifles, and probably a couple of sten guns as well. Bring your swords and spears. They will be more useful than guns. . . . The plan is this. Tomorrow after sunset, when it is dark, we will stretch a rope across the first span of the bridge. It will be a foot above the height of the funnel of the engine. When the train passes under it, it will sweep off all the people sitting on the roof of the train. That will account for at least four to five hundred. (153)

The Sikh boy explains the operation plan in such a way that demonstrates that he is well-informed about the movement of the Muslims—further showing how it is the administration that ignites the violence. Instead of helping citizens live in peace, these people in authority spread riots all over the country. The boy explains further:

The train is due to leave Chundannager after mid-night. It will have no lights, not even on the engine. We will post people with flashlights along the track every hundred yards. Each one will give the signal to the next person as the train passes him. In any case, you will be able to hear it. People with swords and spears will be right at the bridge to deal with those that fall off the roof of the train. They will have to be killed and thrown into the river.

Then the young man instructs how the gunmen will react when the train arrives. He has complete arrangement of the battlefield. He plans to kill the innocent people—all the people going to Pakistan by the train—with all possible means. He says:

Men with guns will be a few yards up the track and will shoot at the windows.

There will be no danger of fire being returned. There are only a dozen of Pakistani soldiers on the train. In the dark, they will not know where to shoot. They will not

have time to load their guns. If they stop the train, we will take care of them and kill many more into the bargains. (155)

The young Sikh boy is almost certain that it will be a safe operation as the ordinary people who are passengers of the train will have no weapons or any other means for counter attack on them. A few Pakistani soldiers who will be escorting those refugees will not be able to save them. Here, Singh shows how innocent common people are victimized at the hand of armed mobs.

Moreover, Singh portrays that the common non-Muslims are against such an attack on Muslims. Both the lambardar and Meet Singh try to dissuade the boy and suggest not operating such an attack. Singh says, “The lambardar took two of the villagers with him and left for the police station at Chundannagar” to report about the plan of attack (154). Even the common people who take shelter in Gurdwara leave for safer places. Singh says, “Many villagers had gone away to their homes lest they get implicated in the crime by being present at the temple when the conspiracy was being hatched” (154). By leaving and fearing implication, the peaceful common villagers convey the message that they are against any kind of violence, which Singh shows again and again in the novel. Only political agents operate all violence in the name of religion, but their motive is to occupy the power and rule innocent citizens.

Fear of Violence—More of Rumors than Realities

When the agents of the politicians begin to terrify the common Indians, they stage violence and spread out the rumor of indiscriminate killing. After the introduction of such a violent nature of killing, there is no central control to stop the massacre among ordinary citizens. The irresponsible nature of the violence is also noticed among the law-enforcing agencies of the government, for Singh shows how ethnic riots are contaminated even by the people working in

responsible positions of the government. For instance, I can cite the experience of Bhola, the tonga (horse carriage) driver in the novel. Having been arrested in Mano Majra, Jugga and Iqbal, including the police constables, are on the way to the police station at Chundunnagar by Bhola's tonga. Jugga says, "Bholeya, how is business these days? ...Don't you make money off these refugees who are wanting to go to Pakistan?" and the driver Bhola says:

And lose my life for money? No, thank you, brother, you keep your advice to yourself. When the mobs attack they do not wait to find out who you are, Hindu or Muslim; they kill. The other days four Sikh Sardars in a jeep drove alongside a mile-long column of Muslim refugees walking on the road. Without warning they opened fire with their sten guns. Four sten guns! God alone knows how many they killed. What would happen if a mob got hold of my tonga full of Muslims? They would kill me first and ask afterwards. (68)

Here, although the tonga driver describes an incident, he does not clarify how he knows it; it can be a rumor, too. But his fear of illogical reprisal defines the nature of violence as one of the tools to materialize the dream of Partition of the politicians. Again, it is noticeable that the attackers are not ordinary citizens, but they are political instruments—Sikh Sardars. Such indiscriminate killing ignites riots among the common people who do not have any disputes among themselves even if this is a true story. On the way to the police station, Jugga also shares a similar incident, which he claims to hear from Meet Singh. He says when he is talking with the tonga driver:

The Bhai told me of a truckful of Baluch soldiers who were going from Amritsar to Lahore. When they were getting near the Pakistan border, the soldiers began to stick bayonets into Sikhs going along the road. The driver would slow down near a cyclist or a pedestrian, the soldiers on the footboard would stab him in the back

and then the driver would accelerate away fast. They killed many people like this and were feeling happier and happier as they got nearer to Pakistan. (67)

This behavior is, again, another example of the nature of violence and how it spreads out like a contagious disease. It is the design of politicians to tempt the ordinary citizens to get involved in riots. The Baluch soldiers mentioned above follow the orders of the politicians, and without their consent they cannot shoot a single bullet. However, nobody has seen such an incident of killing; the Bhai mentions no reliable source to tell this episode—this story itself may be a rumor. If it is taken for granted as reality, it shows how the common people of India become the victims of such indiscriminate shooting and killing. They never begin any violence just because they want to divide the country, based on faiths. Killing and hurting fellow citizens because of religious differences are not portrayed in Singh's imaginary village Mano Majra. Only people in authority and political agents are involved. Singh does not show any ordinary citizen involved in any destructive activity, demanding a separate land for religious freedom. On the contrary, Singh shows that the faithful Muslims in Mano Majra suffer tremendously because they believe in the same faith of the political agents who supposedly killed non-Muslims in Pakistan. The common people do not belong to any political party or support any group of people involved in violence, but they become the victims of the shrewd politicians, their agents, and religious fanatics, and they are forced to migrate. Singh remains in favor of those innocent sufferers in his novel.

Politicians and Government Officials Fuel Violence and Migration

All of the Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in the novel feel forced to comply with the decision of Partition to create two new nations. Hindu and Sikh leaders want to set India free from Muslim participation in leadership; and most of the Muslim politicians, such as Mohammad

Ali Jinnah, also want a separate land to enjoy their sovereign power, creating a new country Pakistan. Both groups of politicians want to be the sole authority after the fall of the British regime. It has already been mentioned that in the novel when politician Iqbal is arrested and taken to the police station, the Inspector says, “You are a Muslim. You go to Pakistan.” There is no reason to push Iqbal to Pakistan other than supposing that he is a Muslim although he emphasizes that he is neither a Muslim nor a Muslim Leaguer.

The politicians want to rule the ethnic identity-based two nations without compromising on any issue of the ruling principles while Singh finds the common people living happily together without Partition. Both the Muslim and the Hindu leaders (with their Sikh associates) have the concept of cleansing their territory—India or Pakistan—from the community to which they do not belong according to their concept. So, violence does not have the nature of overpowering the other ethnic group as it has been before, but it is to create a horrific situation so that migration and Partition are accepted and granted by force. When people are terribly worried about their security because of the rumors of riot, Singh says about the situation, “Hindus and Sikhs were fleeing from their homes in Pakistan and having to find shelter in Mano Majra” (121). Hence, migration is not voluntarily operated, rather British Indians feel forced to obey the decision of the politicians. When the situation is tense and the security of the Muslims of Mano Majra is at stake, the Lambardar (Sikh village landlord) says, “All Muslims of the neighboring village have been evacuated and taken to the refugee camp near Chundunnager. Some have already gone to Pakistan. Others have been sent to the bigger camp at Jullundur” (124). Singh illustrates here that the village Muslims are forcefully taken to the refugee camps for migration to Pakistan by the non-Muslim armed and civil authorities. The common people do not have any option to raise their voice against the decision as we see in Singh’s *Mano Majra*. For the purpose

of Partition, the politicians and their agents ignite the violence and spread rumors primarily among the different ethnic groups, but in practice they do not hesitate to kill anybody they encounter regardless of their ethnic and religious identity.

Singh shows that brutal violence is used as a tool of Partition by the politicians and even by the government officials. The evidence in the novel shows that it is the people of authority who are responsible for violence; the common people are far away from such thoughts of violence for Partition. The authorities pretend to be neutral, but behind the curtain, they divide the citizens as they want. For example, when the magistrate Hukum Chand (Hindu) arrives at Chundannugger, the Inspector (Hindu) says about killing Muslims, “I believe our R.S.S. boys [*Hindus*] beat up Muslim gangs in all the cities. The Sikhs are not doing their share. They have lost their manliness. They just talk big. Here we are on the border with Muslims living in Sikh villages as if nothing has happened” (20). Here, the inspector is not happy because the Sikhs are not killing their Muslim neighbors in Mano Majra. He wants the Sikh villagers to attack their Muslim neighbors. Thus, the common people of India become the victims of their political game.

Moreover, Singh also shows how politicians are making money out of violence and riots. In fact, personal interest is the main goal of Partition, violence, and migration. On the same occasion mentioned above, while talking with magistrate Hukum Chand, the Inspector comments on the politicians, saying “...all these Gandhi disciples are minting money. They are as good as saints as the crane. They shut their eyes piously and stand on one leg like a yogi doing penance; as soon as a fish comes near—hurrup” (20). Here, Singh points at the hypocrisy of the politicians whose purpose is to make money out of exploiting the political cause of independence. It also illustrates the struggle between the rival political formations. He says that outwardly the politicians seem very innocent and free from corruption, but behind the screen, they are the most

corrupt people who exploit the innocent citizens and who ignite violence to possess the wealth of the ordinary folks. Thousands of people die because of political and government manipulation—not because they want freedom from the other religious groups. The magistrate, Hukum Chand, advises the inspector, saying, “Your principle should see everything and say nothing” (20). This attitude of the civil officer to the uniformed police inspector reflects how they manipulate and find opportunities for personal benefit in the guise of true patriots and devotees to faiths.

Obviously, the common villagers, Singh shows, are not involved in any kind of violence, and they do not have any part in dividing the country. Instead of their innocence, they suffer, losing their lives and properties as Singh portrays. They become refugees in their own country, trying to avoid violence and saving their lives. Using violence and riots the politicians are successful in terrifying people into a forced migration. Hukum Chand says about the Muslim refugees, “Let them get out, but be careful they do not take too much with them” (21). Hukum Chand does not want the Muslim villagers to take their own properties when they are migrating. Thus, the common people are even deprived of their properties, and both politicians and government officers become the beneficiaries. The violence plays the role of a monster, and the activists do not have any sense of knowing the identity of the victims—they kill people just to panic them to agree on the decision of Partition so that they can own the land and the properties of innocent common citizens.

Violence and Migration Caused Never Ending Sufferings

Obviously Singh’s novel shows that violence is authorized by the politicians to fulfill their design of Partition. The common people become the victims of the game in the name of ethnic conflicts that tempt them to be involved in terrific riots. The interaction among the

different true religious groups in the novel has minimal proof of intolerance and conflicts. They lead a very sound life together without any enmity. Singh has depicted an India that does not need any Partition in the name of bitter relations among Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus. Common followers do not want to be separated. The reason of Partition is the conflict of sharing power and exercise authority to enjoy the pleasure of ruling the common people, which is why they choose violence and riot as means of creating and injecting bitter relations among the people of different ethnic groups. Historian Kavita Daiya observes the same phenomena in India during the transition of Partition. Daiya says, “After August 6, 1946, ethnic riots involving Hindus and Sikhs against Muslims escalated all over the subcontinent” (5). Similarly, in the novel, the united British India is divided, and people are compelled to migrate out of riot-fear from their birth places where they have been living for one generation after another. This migration caused sabotage of life, properties, and tremendous sufferings for all the ethnic groups. They feel cut off from their roots, and it becomes a traumatic problem in their lives; they cherish their memories of their past forever. The next chapter will explain how the ethnic groups are forced to migrate and how it feels to be refugees in their own country.

CHAPTER – IV

LIFE THREAT AND MINORITY DEPRIVATION IN *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN*:

FORCED MOTIVATION FOR MIGRATION AND PARTITION

“Well, Babuji,” began the Muslim. “Tell us something. What is happening in the world? What is all about Pakistan and Hindustan?”

“We live in this little village and know nothing,” the lambarder put in. “Babuji, tell us, why did the English leave?”

Iqbal did not know how to answer simple questions like these. Independence meant little or nothing to these people. They did not even realize it was a step forward and that all they needed to do was to take the next step and turn the make-believe political freedom into a real economic one. *(Train to Pakistan 47)*

The above epigraph, from a conversation among some common villagers after the arrival of Iqbal at Mano Majra in the novel, depicts politicians in *Train to Pakistan*, such as Iqbal, conceptualizing independence in terms of financial improvement advocating for Partition as part of independence to convince the common people to materialize long-held dreams of social and economic opportunities. Here, by showing conversation between an urban politician (Iqbal from the capital of Delhi) and ordinary village people (a rural devout Muslim as well as a Sikh from the village Mano Majra), Singh highlights the distance between these two groups of people. Singh does this to show clearly how politicians attempted to motivate the public with the hope of sound and sustained economic opportunities after Partition. Iqbal believes that economic inequalities will never be resolved—especially, the minorities like Muslims and Sikhs will continue to be deprived—unless British India becomes independent. Moreover, independence will bring political freedom, but the ultimate goal is to achieve the liberation from slavery on financial issues, which are the keys to leading a peaceful life.

The above epigraph is an example of how politicians exploit ordinary people fabricating the disillusion of their economic dreams in the name of independence and Partition. It demonstrates the differences between the demand for Partition for which the leaders argue, and the sentiment of the citizens whom they represent. To speak in particular, the gap in communication does not indicate that the political leaders truly represent the mass population. Again, the epigraph is Singh's depiction of the innocent people of all minority ethnic groups who are compelled to follow the Western-educated, shrewd, political leaders who offer them a vague call for economic salvation after independence and Partition to achieve absolute leadership. Other evidence in the novel shows that the policies and the steps of the politicians, as Iqbal mentions in the epigraph, manipulate the existing social disadvantages people face in their lives. Iqbal focuses on the main motive of Partition; as a communist party member, he firmly believes that the hope of a greater economy is very effective in molding public opinion. In this epigraph, Singh brings an urban politician from Delhi to connect the ordinary rural people who are not even aware of what is going on to change their future. They do not have any foresight to realize the politicians' tricks or motivation in favor of Partition. But still, they have a premonition that something is going on, and politicians are playing with them in the name of independence and Partition.

Chapter Forecast—Fake Political Promise to exploit Common People

In this chapter I will elaborate that political leaders think that if the sharing of financial decisions with diverse religious denominations continues, conflicts and contradictions will never end. Leaders of the same group will always oppose the other groups on financial issues, and the

minorities—especially the Muslims—will always suffer. I am also going to discuss the politicians’ proposed financial opportunities after the independence. Singh indicates the politicians’ motivation of economic disparity that works in depth behind migration. The politicians perceive that it is the deprivation of socioeconomic opportunities by the majority groups that pervade the hearts of minorities, and they can easily exploit it in favor of Partition. Singh significantly argues that if there is any reason that people, politicians in particular, feel frustrated being members of a minority ethnic group, such as the Muslims in Mano Majra, it is because of the class distinction in regards to financial and social life opportunities, which are determined by their ethnic identity. Singh is concerned that the leaders could have tried other options to solve all disparities among different ethnic groups following peaceful means, but Partition can never be a solution; rather, it brings tremendous personal, familial, social, and administrative havoc that prevails all over the country and remains unresolved. This chapter will discuss that Singh highlights the problems of social class—the rulers including the feudal lords and the ruled—and he indicates how the minority population suffers, having been deprived of social privileges for centuries. In the following sections, I am going to mention some of the minority problems, such as poverty, social relations, forced choices of disgraceful and mean professions, class distinctions, and many others. Later in the chapter, I will confirm that Singh shows that the mass population does not believe in any political promise. Although people have been deprived of financial opportunities, they do not think that their lives will be better after Partition. Singh presents this picture of India as a whole at the very beginning of his novel to tell the readers how the politicians misguided and victimized the common people on the issue of Partition. Obviously, after the declaration of Partition, Hindus and Sikhs were bound to cross the border of “Muslim Pakistan” to go to “Hindu India” while Muslims needed to run away to

Pakistan, crossing the borders between India and Pakistan (Singh 1). In this chapter, I will argue that along with religion and violence, the novel also gives evidence that social class and economic opportunities are reasons, which the politicians exploited to force migration.

Singh illustrates his arguments by portraying minorities in Indian society, by explaining the class division they face, and by laying out the continuous hidden conflicts they have with their fellow countrymen. Singh, on the one hand, does not agree with the politicians and their activists on the issues of religious or ethnic differences as shown in chapter I; he also observes that violence makes minority life difficult as explained in chapter II. On the other hand, he finds other reasons why representatives of the minority groups have a convincing attitude to solve communal problems for their peaceful living. This chapter will illustrate that the ethnic groups have different types of ownership of wealth, access to education and honorable professions, rights to participate in politics, and other issues. The strict class boundary does not allow for any social or religious crossing. The conflicts are many, but I will focus on mistrust, hatred, and mutual blame which are the excuses in disguise to suppress minority Muslims and deprive them of economic privileges. Singh's portrayal does not ignore the issue of Muslim problems while living with their Hindu and Sikh neighbors; however, it does not support the claims of the political leaders who exploited those problems for their personal interest and also misinterpreted and exaggerated them.

Economic Disparity—Basic Minority Problem

The first and foremost concern of class distinction in British India is that minority Muslims do not have any ownership to the land they live for centuries. At the very beginning of the novel, Singh portrays the social privilege of the Hindu money lender, Lala Ram Lal. As

Hindus are close to the British rulers, they enjoy all the wealth that India offers to them as a country as we perceive in Singh's portrayal. They even have far better positions than the minority Sikhs who are their associates against Muslims. Obviously, Singh presents Mano Majra as a Sikh dominated region through his characters, such as Banta Singh (Lambardar), Meet Singh (Sikh priest), Juggut Singh, Malli and his four companions and so on. As the young boy (leader) of four Sikh Sardars, says, for instance, "Is this a Sikh village?", the Lambardar replies, "Yes, sir," (148). Although there are some Muslims in the village, they are not even recognized because they are just tenants. Singh introduces only one Hindu family and a list of their wealth in the novel, the Lala Ram Lal family, just to show how privileged this ethnic group is even where they are a minority in a particular region, such as Mano Majra. The novel's narrator describes near the beginning of the novel, "Mano Majra is a tiny place. It has only three brick buildings, one of which is the home of the money lender Lala Ram Lal. The other two are the Sikh temple and the mosque. ... There are only about seventy families in Mano Majra, and Lala Ram Lal is the only Hindu family" (2). Singh focuses on the wealth of this Hindu Lala Ram in the following way—on the day when the robbers come to Lala's house at night, the older woman proclaims, "In the name of God, take what we have, all our jewelry, everything" (8). Then, Singh's narrator informs, "She held out a handful of gold and silver bracelets, anklets and earrings" (8). When the robbers are asking for the keys to the safe, Lala responds, "You can take all—jewelry, cash, account books. Don't kill anyone" (9). This listing of wealth is how Singh remarks on how the only Hindu in the village possesses a large amount of wealth. As an individual Lala Ram Lal can afford to build a brick building while two ethnic groups—Sikhs and Muslims—can only build their common houses for prayers—Gurdwara and Mosque. Singh's portrayal indirectly implies

this truth of economic privileges of Hindus. The government has ensured all possible ways to become wealthy for Hindus, all of the privileges that India as a regime can offer.

Minorities Considered as Tenants and Lower Class

Singh also presents the Sikhs and the Muslims, in order to show that the dominant Sikhs are also class concerned, not treating Muslim villagers as their equal fellow partners in society from their heart, since Muslims are just below-status tenants to them. Although I have argued in my earlier chapters that everyone gets along well in the village regardless of their religion, Singh does not present it as a haven for the minority Muslims. As the class difference remains in the society for generations, the Muslim sufferers have lost any thought of resisting it. Singh shows this class distinction, which has a huge impact on economic privileges, to focus the problems that minorities suffered in British India. At the very beginning of the novel when Singh's narrator describes the villagers of Mano Majra, he says, "The Sikhs own all the land around the village; the Muslims are tenants and share the tilling with the owners" (2). Muslims do not have the ownership of any land due to the state recognition of feudal system which is the main problem of the Muslims that Singh illustrates in the novel; the minority Muslims suffer because they do not have any right to the land.

We find another example of Singh's stressing of class differences when the Muslims of Mano Majra are about to leave for Pakistan. All the Sikh villagers are sleeping at night. Suddenly, a jeep enters the village, and some four Sikh outsiders come with weapons to learn about the villagers. They eventually meet the lambardar (the village landlord) and the Bhai (Sikh priest—Meet Singh), and inquire whether it is a Sikh village or not. Immediately, the lambardar and Meet Singh comment about their Muslim neighbors and call them as "tenants" as if they do not have any right to the land or equal relation with them. The lambardar says, "We had Muslim

tenants but they have gone” (148). This comment reflects their attitude towards their Muslim neighbors who have been with them for generations, which is that Muslims are rootless even if they have been living with them for centuries. In this way, Singh portrays Muslims as a deprived community, as just rootless tenants to the rich Sikhs who do not treat them as their equal partners in social ranking. This nature of Muslim relations with the Sikhs has a deep meaning, which is very much related to Partition. Singh discloses here the secret of the basic problem people suffer in British India. The social class is so important that it pervades all other identity of a citizen there. Singh has skillfully portrayed this class crisis in India, denouncing the politicians who exploit the ordinary people in the name of religion and violence to manipulate Partition.

From the beginning to the end of the novel, Singh shows the Muslim ethnic group as the lowest class status of the society except the sweepers whose religion is uncertain. The top positions are occupied by the Hindus; the Sikhs are their close associates—second class. Obviously, the Muslims are the labor class, satisfying the needs of both the Hindus and the Sikhs. They are always under the dominant influence of the majority. Their lives depend at the mercy of the Sikh land lord who is their fellow villager. For example, when the communal issue arises and Sikhs are discussing how they will deal with their Muslims “tenants” of their village, Imam Baksh (Muslim leader) asks, “Well, brothers, what is your decision about us?” (125). Muslims have no scope to take their own decision as Singh indicates here. When the Sikhs clarify the situation with their decision, Imam Baksh does not have any say other than following it. Imam Baksh “solemnly” says, “All right, ...if we have to go, we better pack up our bedding and belongings. It will take us more than one night to clear out of homes it has taken our fathers and grandfathers hundreds of years to make” (127). Throughout the novel, Singh shows how Muslims are far below in regards to the social ranking and financial solvency of everyone else in

Mano Majra. They do not have access to any life opportunities—neither in money making nor in social responsibilities. They do not have any prestigious business or trade, any right to the land, and no prestigious professions, which show the pain of the poor Muslims. They suffer living with Hindus and Sikhs all over British India. For example, in the novel, when the Magistrate Hukum Chand comes on a visit to the region, he wants to know about the Muslims and asks, “Any of the Muslims in this area well-to-do?” The Subinspector replies, “Not many, sir. Most of them are weavers or potters” (20). Here lies the reason why Muslims are mentally unhappy and financially unsafe in British India because weavers and potters are not considered “well-to-do” citizens according to the tone of this conversation. As members of a minority, they are deprived of equal social and economic privileges. So, the political leaders try to convince them to claim a separate land for their own and involve some of them in violence and riots, with the promise of an independent Muslim Pakistan where they will be economically prosperous, instead of negotiating for any other peaceful better solutions.

No Prestigious Job Opportunities for Minority

In addition to showing social distinctions through economic exploitation, Singh highlights economic differences by observing how the Muslims were forced to accept humiliating and low income occupations because of poverty. For example, Muslim females were forced to become prostitutes, and other Muslims were compelled to take low income jobs such as pottery and weaving. It has already been mentioned that Hindus were in reality and in Singh’s novel the supreme privileged community, while the Sikhs are the second category and associates of Hindus against the Muslims—the most neglected and deprived members of the society. The class distinctions Singh reveals among these ethnic groups can be most clearly seen in the

episode of Singer Haseena, with her forced profession contrary to her faith, and her nature of relations with the magistrate. Haseena symbolizes one of the Muslims who is forced to be a prostitute at a young age because of poverty. She becomes one of the tools to satisfy the needs of pleasure of the Hindu officer Hukum Chand, who exercises power as Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner of the District on behalf of the British government. Singh says, “She wanted his money, and he...well. When all was said and done she was a prostitute and looked it” (28). Singh describes Haseena, saying, “She was only a child and not very pretty, just young and unexploited. Her breasts barely filled her bodice. They could not have known the touch of a male hand” (28). Through Haseena Singh shows an example of social torture of the Muslims and how they had to sell their dignity for want of food. Not only Haseena but also her grandma represent helpless, destitute, and deprived Muslims. Her grandma is forced to teach Haseena how to sing and earn money, pleasing the rich and dominant people of authority, even though contrary to her faith as a Muslim. Certainly, being a prostitute (no religion accepts) or a female singer (some religion encourages) is completely contradictory to Haseena and her community’s faith--Islam, but they have to survive and satisfy their hunger for food.

Owning Minority Properties by Corruption and Manipulation

Singh shows how the Hindu officials deprive the minority Muslim community of their own properties even when they are migrating to Pakistan. Thus, he indicates how Partition plays a negative role and government officers exploit the common people during the transition of relocation. Singh shows that minority Muslims face hard time even with the law enforcing agencies. Coming to the border area the magistrate Hukum Chand talks with the Police Subinspector about the Muslim migration, advises him, saying, “Let them get out, but be careful

they do not take too much with them” (21). By this statement, Singh shows that the people in charge had the goal of financial gain from the population shift. Singh not only blames the Hindu magistrate, but he also claims against the Muslim magistrates in Pakistan being equally corrupt. Singh clarifies the corruption of the Pakistani magistrates when Hukum Chand says, “Hindus from Pakistan were stripped of all their belongings before they were allowed to leave. Pakistani magistrates have become millionaires overnight. Some on our side have not done too badly either” (21-22). This statement is a claim of the Hindu magistrate, but Singh never shows any incident of corruption by Muslims in his novel. His main point here is that the common people suffer while the politicians claim that Partition is for the better life of the common citizens. Singh clarifies that it was not the difference of faiths, but it was economic interest (of the people in authority including politicians) that took different ethnic groups apart from one another. The leaders of the dominant group did not want to share the economic opportunities by living with other ethnic groups. Sometimes, they tried to deprive them of the rights to their own properties. The elites always looked for the opportunities for exploiting the ordinary Muslims. As Singh focuses on Muslim migration to Pakistan, he emphasizes how the non-Muslims in authority deprived the migrating Muslims; it may be the same scenario in Pakistan when non-Muslims are migrating to India. This is Singh’s reading of the issue of deprivation, and his reading denies the claim of the politicians who were in favor of Partition in the name of economic freedom.

Minority Exploited to Satisfy Majority Pleasures

In this way, Singh not only portrays the manipulation of the politicians to convince the devoted religious people of India but also shows the exploitation of the minority by the majority. On the first night of his visit to the Mano Majra area, the Magistrate Hukum Chand asks the

Inspector, "...have you made any arrangements for the evening?" (23). He indicates the arrangements for his entertainment at night. Immediately the inspector replies, "Is it possible for me to have overlooked that? If she does not please you, you can have me dismissed from service. I will tell the driver where to go and collect the party" (23). Here the inspector refers to Haseena, a Muslim singer and prostitute. The inspector knows that the poor Muslim girl Haseena will have to please the Hindu officer at night by singing, dancing, and sleeping with him. but when there is a discussion with the same inspector about riots, rapes and casualties, the same magistrate evaluates Hindu females saying, "Our Hindu women are like that: so pure that they would rather commit suicide than let a stranger touch them" (21). Yet when he thinks about his personal entertainment, the same magistrate asks for a female for him at night. Haseena and her ancestors, Singh shows, do not have any property to survive and uphold their social position and dignity. When the magistrate asks Haseena, "How long have you been in this profession?" Haseena replies, "What a silly question to ask! Why, ever since I was born. My mother was a singer and her mother was a singer till as long back as we know" (102). The magistrate asks again, "I do not mean singing. Other things?" Again, the magistrate asks Haseena, "You are Muslim?" and here he means that no one but poor Muslims have to accept such a disgraceful profession. Immediately, Haseena replies, "Yes, I am Muslim. What else could Haseena Begum be?" (103). Here, Singh also shows how the feeling of pain pervades the hearts of the deprived Muslim minority. Haseena and her ancestors are professionals in this field of music and entertainment to earn their livelihood, and she clearly admits her poverty to Hukum Chand to be benign and obedient. When she says, "What else could Haseena Begum be?" she means that being a Muslim she cannot have a better profession. Singh portrays the Haseena-episode to convince the readers

that Muslims face severe financial hardship in British India, for Haseena represents the Muslim community and their sufferings at the hands of non-Muslims in power.

Minority Deprived of Government Jobs

Again, Singh identifies all the people in authority as elite non-Muslims to show how minority Muslims are deprived of most government jobs, which are lucrative because of financial security till the end of life. Although Sikhs and Muslims are outwardly happy living in the same village like their brothers and sisters, Hindus and Sikhs never offer the Muslims any share of economic opportunities, even in government jobs. It has already been explained that Singh portrays a state where elite non-Muslims are in leading positions in all secured financial sectors, such as civil officials, law enforcing agencies, and all others, and Muslims are obedient laborers to them. Singh gives us a picture of the sad plight of the Muslims and explains how the majority groups—Hindus and Sikhs—deprive of the minority Muslims. Singh does not address minority issues (Hindus and Sikhs) in Pakistan, and he does not take any advantage in this novel to show how minority Hindus and Sikhs are suffering in a Muslim majority neighborhood in Pakistan. But the train with the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs, coming from the other side of the border, has a suggestion that the minorities also suffer there in all possible ways. Singh's concern with financial issues clarifies why Muslim politicians like Jinnah find pleas to demand a separate land. He shows the true facts and focuses on the economic hardship that common Muslims face in their everyday life. Those politicians designed violent movement for Partition instead of seeking a peaceful solution of financial deprivation.

No Political Right Acknowledged for Minority Muslims

Similarly, the minority Muslims were deprived of political rights to represent their community and claim their share as citizens of the country. Singh makes it clear that Muslims cannot be members of the ethnic political party called the “Muslim League” in British India, and they cannot demand the policy that will pave the way for economic salvation of the Muslims. When the political activist Iqbal is arrested, the police authority declares him a member of the “Muslim League,” identifying him as someone illegal so that torturing him becomes permitted. But from the beginning, Iqbal never introduces himself as a member of the “Muslim League.” Moreover, he claims at the police station that he does not have any religion, let alone being a Muslim. When he arrives at Mano Majra, Bhai (Sikh Priest) Meet Singh of Gurdwara asks him, “What is your business in Mano Majra, Iqbal Singhji?”; he replies, “I am a social worker, Bhaiji. There is much to be done in our villages. Now with this partition there is so much bloodshed going on someone must do something to stop it. My party has sent me here, since this place is a vital point for refugee movements. Trouble here would be disastrous” (35). Here, Iqbal does not mention the name of his party, but he is not introducing himself either as a Muslim or a member of the Muslim League. Again, when the police Subinspector finishes checking whether Iqbal is circumcised or not, he asks, “You can put on your clothes. You say you are a social worker. What was your business in Mano Majra?” and Iqbal answers the same, “I was sent by my party.” But the Subinspector is not satisfied and asks, “What party?” Iqbal clearly replies, “The People’s Party of India.” When the inspector asks him again, “You are sure it was not the Muslim League?” In response to this question, Iqbal asks a counter question, “No, why should I be a member of the Muslim League?” (64). After all this conversation, the Subinspector is not convinced, and he reports his investigation to the magistrate who orders Iqbal to be imprisoned,

saying, “Fill in the warrant of arrest correctly. Name: Mohammed Iqbal, son of Mohammed Something-or-other, or just father unknown. Caste: Mussulman. Occupation: Muslim League worker” (65). The magistrate indicates that Iqbal’s name itself and his circumcision help to identify him as a Muslim and a worker of the Muslim League. This passage suggests that the people in authority impose membership of an ethnic political party to people though they do not belong to any such organization. Singh focuses on how the non-Muslim authority blocks all the ways to have any rights to socioeconomic development. If there is no representation and participation of the Muslim politicians in planning or any other projects of the government, the Hindus and the Sikhs can handle the Muslims the way they want. So, they want to blame and torture Muslims politicians as Singh shows through his character Iqbal.

Again, from a feeling of being competitors non-Muslims have a sense of hatred and dislike for Muslims—even if Muslims are honorable politicians. We find an example when Singh presents Iqbal at the hands of policemen who are tremendously curious to identify him as a Muslim. As already noted, to confirm that Iqbal is a Muslim, the Police Subinspector does not hesitate to strip him at the police station to check whether he is circumcised or not. Although Iqbal says, “I am not a Muslim”, the Subinspector claims him to be a Muslim and says, “Your name is Iqbal and you are circumcised. I have examined you myself” (73). Again, the Subinspector indicates that they do not allow any political activities for the Muslims. He says, “We cannot allow political agitators in border areas. ... Why don’t you go and do your propaganda in Pakistan where you belong? ... You are a Muslim. You go to Pakistan” (72). So, the option that was given to the British Indians—both Muslims and non-Muslims—is that they could choose to live on either side of the border after the Partition, but this order is not followed by the non-Muslim officials, who never want Muslims to enjoy the equal rights. Non-Muslims

know that if any Muslims remain in India, they will continue to demand in sharing economic opportunities while they are in the position of a policy maker—politician.

No Social Bond with Lower Class Minority Muslims

As well as the deprivation of government jobs and political rights, Singh portrays how minority Muslims are unable to build familial relations with the rich Sikh community (let alone with the Hindus) because of the Muslims' socioeconomic status due to their different religious identity. When Jugga (Sikh) is in jail and his beloved Nooran (Muslim) is unable to contact him at the time of her forced migration to Pakistan, the problem of inter-communal family relations becomes obvious. Singh shows how Jugga's mother (Sikh) rejects Nooran (Muslim) as her son's prospective daughter-in-law. Introducing herself, Nooran appeals again and again, telling about her love affair with Jugga and his promise to marry her, but his mother (Beybey) is not at all convinced to accept her. When Nooran humbly says, "Jugga has promised to marry me," Jugga's mother terribly reacts, saying, "Get out, you bitch! You, a Muslim weaver's daughter, marry a Sikh peasant! ...Go to Pakistan! Leave my Jugga alone!" (130). Here, Jugga's mother mentions two unacceptable features—one is that Nooran is a Muslim (lower class than Sikh), and the other is that she is a weaver's daughter (disgraceful occupation—poor). This humiliating remark is an instance that Singh mentions as an indication of how Muslims are treated socially in *Mano Majra*. Obviously, he says that both the Sikhs and the Muslims do not have any apparent enmity among them. But he focuses the pain of the minority Muslim community as they suffer at the hand of their superior Sikh neighbors. Here, Singh describes a social problem, but not any communal enmity. By Partition the leaders became the beneficiaries, but the community members were forced to begin a never-ending terrible life in exile in their own country India,

such as Nooran with her family. In this way, Singh opposes the idea of Partition and shows the suffering of Muslims even building in social and familial relations, such as Nooran, because of degraded financial and social position in the society.

Maltreated Minorities Suspicious to Majority Oppressors

Furthermore, as Singh shows, because of Muslims being financially deprived for centuries, there is a deep mistrust among the Muslims and non-Muslims co-workers with significant responsibilities and opportunities at government offices. Mistrust prevails as a serious issue, as Singh points out, when different groups exist as a team on the same land although there is no apparent conflicts. This issue becomes obvious when, because of Partition and independence, government forces consisting of all ethno-religious groups, get divided into Muslims and non-Muslims (Hindus and Sikhs) and fail to work together to solve the national problems. When Jugga and Iqbal are arrested and taken to Chandannagar on the way by tonga, for instance, the policemen have a conversation with them on this issue. Jugga comments, “You must have a lot of work to do with this Hindustan-Pakistan business going on, ...” and indicating to the sacking of Muslim policemen, the constable replies, “Yes. There is all this killing and the police force has been reduced to less than half.” Jugga inquires, “Why, have they [Muslim policemen] joined up with Pakistan?” (66). Then the constable honestly responds:

We do not know whether they have joined up on the other side—they kept protesting that they did not want to go at all. On the day of independence, the Superintendent Sahib disarmed all Muslim policemen and they fled. Their intentions were evil. Muslims are like that. You can never trust them. (66)

Singh indicates here that Muslim policemen who are not willing to give up their jobs and leave India are still forced to submit their arms and, thus, become jobless and set apart from the law enforcing agencies. Here, Singh again shows resistance to Partition from the Muslim policemen who refuse to leave, but the non-Muslim officials do not have any trust that the Muslims are faithful in discharging their duties at this critical time for the nation. Singh thus shows that mental separation of ethnic groups is hidden in the hearts of non-Muslims who feel a secret threat from the Muslims. Singh wants to pin point how minority Muslims are deprived, and because of this attitude, non-Muslims always have doubt about how long will Muslims be silent and tolerant, leading to mistrust.

Always a Hard Time for Minorities

Moreover, Singh shows how the promise of economic opportunity was used to fuel Partition by showing how non-Muslims found excuses to deprive Muslims from peaceful life and to plunge them into difficulties. Because the non-Muslims in authority lodge all blame for any crime or violence on Muslims—without regard to who actually committed the crime—non-Muslims can easily block job opportunities by creating criminal records. For instance, the Magistrate Hukum Chand wants all the Muslims of Mano Majra to go to Pakistan, leaving the Indian border. He tries his best to prove that Iqbal was an activist of the Muslim League in order to imprison and torture him. Hukum Chand likewise, Singh shows, wishes that the killers of Lal Ram are Muslims so that he can blame and accuse them as being trouble makers in India. When he asks the Subinspector, “What have you done about Ram Lal’s murder? Have you had any further arrests?”; the Subinspector replies, “Yes, sir, Jugga budmash gave us names yesterday. They are men who were at one time in his own gang: Malli and four others from village Kapura

two miles down the river. But Jugga was not with them. I have sent some constables to arrest them this morning. ... We were wrong about both Jugga and the other fellow [Iqbal]" (98). Immediately, Hukum Chand asks, "Who are Malli and his companions, Sikh or Muslim?" and receives the reply, "All Sikhs" and he continues to talk to himself, saying, "It would have been more convenient if they had been Mussulman. The knowledge of that and the agitator fellow being a Leaguer would have persuaded Mano Majra Sikhs to let the Muslims go" (99). This episode implies that minority Muslims are victimized, and the non-Muslim officials do not want any Muslim in Indian border. Muslims have always had a hard time living with the majority Hindu and Sikh officials.

Fake Political Promise to Exploit Common Citizens

Singh shows that the common villagers of Mano Majra—such as, the Muslim visitor to Iqbal, Meet Singh, and the lambardar—are not convinced that they will be beneficiaries of independence and Partition after the English colonizers leave. Iqbal explains how economic freedom simmers below the surface of independence. While talking with Iqbal, the villagers share their sweet experiences with the British people, but Iqbal feels offended. He says, "Why don't you people want to be free? Do you want to remain slaves all your lives?" The villagers do not agree with Iqbal. The lambardar says, "Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes?"; the Muslim adds, "Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians—or the Pakistanis" (48). However, Iqbal affirms the promises of independence, such as debt free

sound economy, but what Singh seems to suggest that those promises are just convincing tools to get the common citizens participate in Partition. Iqbal says:

If you want freedom to mean something for you—the peasants and workers—you have to get together and fight. Get the banian Congress government out. Get rid of the princes and the landlords and freedom will mean for you just what you think it should. More land, more buffaloes, no debts. (48)

So, for the meaningful liberty the economic system—feudalism—has to be abolished, and the working class can do it by organizing and making a revolution possible against the bourgeois (idea of communism). Singh advocates in favor of such a movement, not Partition. But the common people know that these are just impossible promises.

Sometimes, Singh's view of independence and the Partition of British India is expressed through the politician Iqbal. There are economic disparities among the people based on religious identity, and Singh does not disagree on this issue, but he does not recommend Partition as a solution for this problem. He suggests proletarian revolution over the bourgeoisie. He believes that the political leaders are on the wrong track by re-bordering geo-boundaries. Singh suggests addressing the financial issues instead of pressing Partition through violence. Singh says about his thoughts:

Iqbal lay down once more and gazed at the stars. The wail of the engine in the still vast plain made him feel lonely and depressed. What could he—one little man—do in this enormous impersonal land of four hundred million? Could he stop the killing? Obviously not. Everyone—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Congressite, Leaguer, Akali, or Communist—was deep in it. It was fatuous to suggest that the bourgeois revolution could be turned into a proletarian one. The stage had not arrived. The

proletariat was indifferent to political freedom for Hindustan or Pakistan, except when it could be given an economic significance like grabbing land by killing an owner who was of a different religious denomination. All that could be done was to divert the kill-and grab instinct from communal channels and turn it against the propertied class. That was the proletarian revolution the easy way. But his party bosses would not see it. (50)

So, Singh is always in favor of removing class distinction to solve economic disparities to ensure peaceful co-existence of the religious groups. He points out that the dissatisfaction lies on injustice in distributing financial opportunities—not religious or ethnic differences. If the politicians could have convinced the policy makers to ensure equal and proportionate social benefits for all the groups, the whole society could have been very peaceful.

Not Religion but Economic Issues Worked Behind Partition

However, as I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter Singh's portrayal acknowledges some of the issues Muslims face to live with their Hindu and Sikh neighbors, but he recommends finding solutions in a peaceful way other than violence and Partition. He also blames the political leaders who misinterpreted and exaggerated those problems for their personal interest of political career. Singh's novel describes the problems in depth and indicates the failure of the politicians to solve them, keeping India united. When the claim of Partition was raised, both Hindus and Sikhs had a feeling of losing something. Non-Muslims had control over both land and human resources of the Muslims during the British rule, but after the claim of Partition they feared to lose them all. While the common Muslims did not want to break the

relations to their birth place and migrate, the leaders dreamed of ruling over them in the name of their freedom of religious, economic, and social stability.

Again, Singh portrays the deprivation of the Muslims in regards to property ownership, job opportunities, and other social facilities that a state can offer for its citizens. He also shows some of the problems in living together, such as mistrust, hatred, no cross cultural boundaries, and so on. He suggests that the politicians could have negotiated on those issues to find proper solutions, but Partition was not a wise decision to end conflict among them. In fact, social disparity could be noticed in any community even if they are of the same ethnicity. Today, it can be clearly noticed in Pakistan how immigrant Muslims suffer living with their Muslim neighbors. So, in a society with diversity, Partition can never be a solution to stop social problems.

Finally, Singh focuses on the wrong decision of the politicians, and he shows how their policy turns the life of the common people into a total massacre forever. The commoners became victims at the hands of both the other ethnic groups and their fellow faith followers. Communal violence, conflicts, riots, and other social problems exist in both India and Pakistan today. Still millions of Hindus live in Pakistan with Muslims, and the same situation is in India—millions of Muslims are still living there with Hindus and other ethnic groups. The problems, which the politicians showed in favor of Partition, still remain there; those selfish leaders died, but the trauma of Partition continues. Once upon a time, the people of British India were together, but after Partition they have become everlasting enemies, divided as India, Pakistan, and later Bangladesh. They continue fighting even on simple issues though it has been a few decades one land is divided into India and Pakistan on the issue of religion, later Pakistan and Bangladesh on financial disparity. As Singh portrays in *Train to Pakistan*, Partition can never be a solution of

any social problems, and politicians divided British India and plunged a great number of common citizens into a deep ditch from where the recovery is apparently impossible.

CHAPTER – V

CONCLUSION: VIEWING PARTITION AS TRAUMA FOR BRITISH INDIANS

Train to Pakistan blames the political leaders of different groups based on religion, who fought together for independence, but for the wrong decision of Partition. He shows common citizens reacting against the idea of drawing borders in their dearest India. It is a presentation which takes the side of the common people and indicates that they were never in favor of dividing the country in the name of religious freedom. *Train to Pakistan* was published in 1956 after a few years of Partition in 1947, but he shows foresight of some terrible consequences of this insane political decision which would follow 1956. If we evaluate the aftermath of the new borders, it is obvious that they are people who have been suffering for decades because of a single decision of Partition. Nobody knows where is the end of conflicts and contradictions, which began in mid-20th century in this region of the globe, but it is clear that Partition based on religious identity, as described in *Train to Pakistan*, was a very wrong decision.

In spite of being aware of the differences of faith in British India, Singh never shows religion as a barrier of progress and prosperity in a diverse community. Singh has been misread and misunderstood for decades; his critics and common readers have failed to perceive the vital message of his project. The ordinary citizens follow their respective religion without inference, but they live in peace, as Singh portrays them. During the transition of decolonization some leaders (such as, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Chowdhury Rahmat Ali and so on) in reality, as in the novel, manipulated religion as an issue to exploit the ordinary people to

materialize their personal dreams. Although Singh portrayed this selfish political design after a few years of decolonization, it has been observed throughout the decades that the new nation achieved no significant economic, educational, cultural or technological progress that would ensure a better life as promised before Partition. The social and economic life of ordinary folks is the same as it was before Partition in regards to religious issue.

Partition contributes suffering for common citizens who have been paying the price of the decision of the politicians both after and before Partition. To materialize the ambitious dreams of the leaders like Jinnah, people (such as Imam Box, Jugga, and many unidentified Muslim and non-Muslim characters mentioned in the novel) lost their properties, lives, sweet homes, and birth places where they had been for generations. Singh highlights the consequences of the selfish political steps to convince the readers to be in favor of innocent civilians who achieved nothing out of Partition. The promise for a land of religious freedom and economic prosperity was a tool to exploit the uneducated and simple minded public.

As Singh himself experienced the transition of decolonization and the transition of independence and Partition, his portrayal is not only able to reach the depth of grass-root citizens, but it has also become authentic to support his view of exploitation. This thesis has already explained that in spite of his personal involvement Singh is not biased to take a side to impose his personal view in his narrative. He focuses on the common citizens and their sad plight from an impartial point of view. But it is not an exaggeration that his personal experience being a member of that society encourages him to mirror the reality of sufferings which he perceives from his point of view. He belongs to Sikh community but he never stops to highlight the miscreant political agents who are Sikhs. Singh clearly states the problems the minority Muslims suffer in a Sikh community. Although he finds the diverse villagers living in peace

without any communal conflicts, he shows how Muslims (such as Imam Box, Nooran) are deprived of ownership of the land where they live and work. Thus Singh becomes acceptable to the readers for his true representation.

Again, blaming religious differences was an easy task for the political leaders because all social activities were operated based on faith in British India, as Singh shows. Although people were fighting for the independence and decolonization, they had different platforms of the same movement. It is true that all of them were against the British rule except some opportunists who worked for the British government as high officials and who were feudal lords, but they were not united under one body of leadership. The Hindus, the Sikhs, the Muslims and other groups of faith had individual organization to follow their own way of movement against colonization. Singh mentions the Muslim League, the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh—“National Patriotic Organization”)—Hindu nationalist group—and others to show how people of British India were already divided even against the British based on their religious beliefs. The leaders found in them a great advantage to manipulate religion to materialize their political dreams. But Singh clarifies to the readers that the common citizens were living in peace in their diverse society.

Today we know that there are still conflicts and contradictions on the issue of Partition. Politicians have not been able to turn Pakistan into a pure a Muslim country and India a Hindu and Sikh state. The sort of people described in the novel are considered refugees in the regions where they migrated. Moreover, they have been fighting for their equal rights in their own country just because they are considered immigrants/refugees. For example, the refugee Muslims in Pakistan formed their own political party called “Muhajir Qaumi Movement” to press their rights in the country. These Muslims were promised religious freedom as a part of the new

nation Pakistan, but now they need to fight for their basic human rights. So, Singh's portrayal of the resistance of Partition is meaningful continued to be relevant.

After Partition all the people in authority were from West Pakistan (now Pakistan), and they deprived the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in spite of being the member of the same faith—Islam. Just after two decades in 1971 there was a war between East Pakistan and West Pakistan, and new country Bangladesh was born. This is a clear indication that financial issue remains even if all the citizens of a country belongs to the same faith.

It is hoped that this new research and unfolding of Singh's purpose in his fictional treatment of Partition will remove misreading, misunderstanding and misinterpreting of the common readers as well as the critics of the novel. The time may come when everyone will realize the heart breaking consequences of the wrong decision of Partition.

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