

**Double Victimization in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*:
A Postcolonial Feministic Reading**

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Abstract:

In the present scenario, women's role has become complicated that they, being a vital part of a family, are considered most negligible. Whereas in society, though they ascend to their opposite gender in all fields, they face various trials and tribulations. Women are given an unequal position in society. Colonization has a substantial impact on the life of Indians even after multiple decades, and when it happens to Indian Women, it is the victimization of the victimized. Women, who are under the clutches of men and society, have to face the colonization's brutishness. This Double Victimization is represented through women characters in works of feminist writers. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* unveils women's position in society and the hardships that the Colonization and Partition brought. Though rapes and sexual abuse kill women every day, partition has given a chance for the brutal massacre of innocent people and cruel abduction and rape for being in other religion. This paper illuminates the pain and hardships taken by the women characters in the novel.

Keywords: Double Victimization, Women, Struggle, Race, Religion and Colonization.

Introduction:

Victimization can be traced from many different perspectives including economic, social, political, religious and legal. The victimizations affect psychological perceptiveness as well. Often collapses the individual and the people around him. The reality of individual break down is that each person is different and the reaction too. Writers across the realms approach and try to explore the nuances of victimizations through their literary productions. In society, individuals even face double victimizations, a victim among the victimized. The marginalized and the women- 'the other' suffer largely because of this phenomenon. Apart from gender-based violence, women are also subjected to other means of humiliations and restrictions.

Literature always remains a place of solace for the suffering section to find peace and identify. Writers use it either to voice in support of the voiceless or to bring out the suffering and struggles they face. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh portrays the double victimization of women throughout the novel. Women are ill-treated in the name of race, religion and colour. The use of language in this novel is applaudable as it expresses women's position in society and their sufferings sundry. The paper traces various instances where the exploitation of women has occurred in Post-Colonial India. For centuries, an idea about 'Home Makers' remains the same and irrespective of the sacrifices they make and their responsibilities, they are branded as imbeciles who know nothing, doing only the household chores without getting any acknowledgement from family. Mano Majra, the village where people of different religions like Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and Christianity live in harmony before the partition, is no exception to that treatment. Men are highly respected, but women at all levels are humiliated.

Women's Plight

The men hold the highest position in the society like Farmer, Moneylender, Priest and Mulla, and women are lovers, wives, mothers, prostitutes and nothing else. Most shockingly, most of the women are convinced and content with their roles in family and society. As mentioned here, 'Women rub clarified butter into each other's hair, pick lice from their children's heads, and discuss births, marriages and deaths.' (5) When the looters attack the money lenders house, the women say, 'I tell you Lalaji is not in. He has taken the keys with them. We have nothing in the house.' (8) It brings out the emptiness in them, as they don't even have the keys to their house, and all the abusive words used in the novel are derogatory and attack only women in all forms. For them, women are human machines that give pleasure and a note on a physical relationship connected with women in all circumstances.

'Term like Sala, wife's brother ('I would like to sleep with your sister'), and Susra, father-in-law ('I would like to sleep with your daughter') were as often term of affection for one's friends and relatives as expressions of anger to insult one's enemies. Conversation of any topic – politics, philosophy, sport- soon come down to sex, which everyone enjoyed with a lot of giggling and hand-slapping.'(113)

They use physical abuse to threaten or to give assurance like 'Come!' they yelled. 'Come out, if you have the courage! Come out, if you want your mothers and sisters raped! Come out, brave men!' (11) and 'Yes, added another warmly, we first, then you. If anyone raises his eyebrows at you, we will rape his mother.' 'Mother, sister and daughter,' added the others. (133) they abuse women

irrespective of their age. Their comment about young and small girls makes men's intention and approach towards women the Post-Colonial society.

'Aho, 'the spearman said. 'Nooran. Did you see her at the spring fair? Did you see that tight shirt showing off her breasts and the bells tinkling in her plaits and the swish-swish of silk? Hai! ... During the day, she looks so innocent you would think she had not shed her milk teeth.' He sighed. 'But at night, she puts black antimony in her eyes.' (7)

Suppression and Rejection

Women face rejection and suppression in Post-Colonial India. Colonization has created an attraction towards the white skin, and prioritizing white is reflected in men's attitude living in Mano Majra. This could also be one reason why Juggut Singh, being a peasant, loves a fair Muslim girl from Weaver's family. He expresses the view as 'Wah, Babuji.... The memsahibs are like houris from paradise – white and soft, like silk. All we have here are black buffaloes.' (113) He wants his love for his physical activity in all problematic situations and manages to cheat her father and meet him. He is not bothered about the looting and firing of Ram Lal and continues to have pleasure. In the climax, the sacrifice of life is for the lover and the child she has been carrying in her womb.

'That is all you want. And you get it. You are just a peasant. Always wanting to sow your seed. Even if the world were going to hell you would want to do that. Even when guns are being fired in the village. Wouldn't you?' (15)

The customs and tradition of the family bound women in all possible ways. People find that following those and satisfying men as primary aims, and many fails to think about their identity. They are content with what they are in society, and they won't come forward to represent their needs. Wearing Bangles or Henna are attributed to women for fragile nature, and men consider women as shame. Mali is not a woman with henna on his palms or bangles on his wrists.' (171). They teach their girls the same and bring them up so that they will follow all customs and traditions to satisfy their partner. There is no way for being a 'Life Partner' or a "Better Half". To abuse a man, his family women are targeted. This happens in all Colonized Countries, and women were raped and killed in public to create fear or attack.

'Do not take any of the lacquer bangles off. It brings bad luck,' her girlfriends had said to her. Let him break them when he makes love to you and mauls you.... They held him by the arms and legs and one man cut off his penis and gave it to her. The mob made love to her. She did not have to take off any of her bangles. They were all

smashed as she lay in the road, being taken by one man and another and another.
That should have brought her a lot of good luck!' (187)

When men face some troubles, it affects women to a more considerable extent. Even in the United States, women's rights were given only in the 18th century, and husbands and wives are considered one life. It is mentioned in American Colonial Law as follows.

'by marriage, the husband and wife are one person in the law. The very being and legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated into that of her husband under whose wing and protection she performs everything.' (313)

Religion- an unwilling politician

This is no exception to India. Religion is another factor that is interwoven with the lives of people, and that separates them. Even in this century, Religion has become an ill-willed politicians' tool to divide people and rule. Mano Majrans have been living in Harmony until they know that men are raping Hindu women and people are being massacred in Pakistan. This creates a sense of retaliation in some Mano Majrans, though many realized that they are their neighbours and wanted them to reach a safer place. On the other hand, some brutal people are prepared to take revenge by killing their own village people. They say,

'One should never touch another's property; one should never look at another's woman. One should just let others take one's goods and sleep with one's sisters. The only way people like you will understand anything is by being sent over to Pakistan: have your sisters and mothers raped in front of you, have your clothes taken off, and be sent back with a kick and spit on your behinds.' (143)

They firmly believe that women who belonged to their religion will not give men opportunities to rape and die rather than being a victim. If it happens, they will punish the girl.

'And Muslims were never ones to respect women. Sikh refugees had told of women jumping into wells and burning themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Those who did not commit suicide were paraded naked in the streets, raped in public, and then murdered.' (128)

Sikh Priest, Meet Singh, reiterates that they are innocent and denounces them to accept their plan to kill them. He questions as 'What have they done to you? Have they ousted you from your

lands or occupied your houses? Have they seduced your womenfolk? Tell me, what have they done?' (131). But religion affects the life of people, especially women. When Nooran pleads with Jugga's mother to save her, she abuses her for loving her son. It happens as, 'I can't leave. Jugga has promised to marry me.' Jugga's mother immediately replied: 'Get out, you bitch! 'You a Muslim weaver's daughter, marry a Sikh peasant!....' (138). Only after knowing that Juggut Singh impregnates her, she speaks with concern. Though she accepts her, the mother does not collect the strength to fight against their neighbours or hide her. She promises her, saying that her son will come for her.

Self-abuse and objectification

Women are being self-abusive and objectifying themselves for the sake of love, survival or money. It is my lot to weep. My Kismet,' she added, slapping her forehead, 'it is all written there. (12) They blame their fate for their condition of being suppressed to husbands, sons, brothers, or neighbours but fail to realize that their acts bring disaster to their lives. They did not gather the courage to perform or think against their customs and traditions, which bind them under men. Men hold a high principle in selecting women. They just want a virgin woman, even as a prostitute. To live or accept a fallen woman is like so mean for them. It reveals the attitude of men towards women in society.

'Bholeya, I hear a lot of women are being abducted and sold cheap. You could find a wife for yourself...Why, Sardara, if you can find a Mussulmanni without paying for her, am I impotent that I should have to buy an abducted woman?' replied Bhola. (73)

Corruption in the ruling class is also pictured well in the novel. The magistrate Hukum Chand misguides the people from the beginning and arrests Juggut Singh and Iqbal for looting Ram Lal's House, knowing the real culprits. He enjoys the company of a virgin prostate and fails to take up his responsibilities as a magistrate. He affirms that the company of Hazeena will keep him happy in this massacre, and women becoming victimized by women also happen here. Hazeena, a young girl is brought to him and forced to take up the path. He ignores his responsibilities for a girl.

'Go to the Government,' pleaded the old woman. The girl turned round obediently and went to the magistrate. Hukum Chand put his arm around her waist. You sing well...The Government is talking to you. Why don't you answer him?' scolded the old woman. 'Government, the girl is young and very shy. She will learn,' she exclaimed. (31)

Misusing the power is the sole reason for the cause of partition as well as the massacre. To make India a religious nation rather than secular, the politicians take the lives of innocent people. To show the range of vigour and revenge, they cut women's breast and rape innocent women. In any riot, women's respect and lives are the stakes that show the level of cruelty. The corrupt Sub-Inspector plans to kill all the Muslims departing from Mano Majra Muslim Camps with a group of criminals. He insists the mob to rape Muslim women before killing them. They plunder the wealth of Muslim people and send them out of the country with minimum things.

'Do the Mussalmans in Pakistan apply for permission from their government when they rape your sisters? Do they apply for permission from their government when they stop trains and kill everyone, old, young, women and children? You want the government to do something! That is great! Shabash! Brave!' (156)

The novel realistically portrays Postcolonial Feminism. It does not fabricate anything rather than presenting the actual situation. Mano Majra stands in the novel as the reflection of society, and Khushwant Singh takes the readers to the Postcolonial village, which is caught under the clutches of Partition. The novel's language is highly realistic so that it arouses all women when they read. The abusive words and the treatment of women given in the novel bring men's Cold-Blooded attitude towards women.

When people in power are religious rather than being secular, the country faces disaster. Mano Majra is an instance of this. Officer instigates to kill innocent Muslims. 'For each Hindu or Sikh, they kill, kill two Mussalmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two.' (157). The last love left in the heart of a rugged person, saves thousands of lives. V. A. Sahane comments as, "Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan pictures the brutal, realistic story of political hatred and of mass passions during the tragic days that preceded and followed the partition of India." V. A. Sahane applauds Khushwant Singh as "It is Khushwant Singh's supreme achievement, which is unlikely to excel. This realistic masterpiece contains, among other things, a well thought out structure, an artistically conceived plot, an absorbing narrative, and imaginatively realized characters."

Conclusion

The portrayal of women is realistic and informs their position in society. This novel is one more lesson to women concerning the patriarchy in society. Women face Double Victimization when they live in a Patriarchal and politically imbalanced society. Khushwant Singh's *Train to*

Pakistan stands as a masterpiece that sounds the struggle and exploitation of women in all forms. It traces the position of women in Postcolonial India.

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