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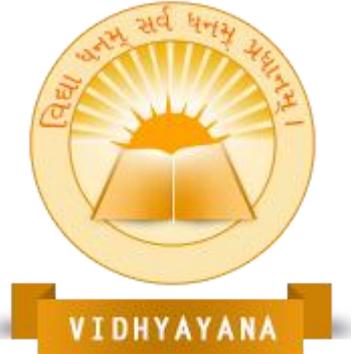
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**A Reception of Partition in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*.**

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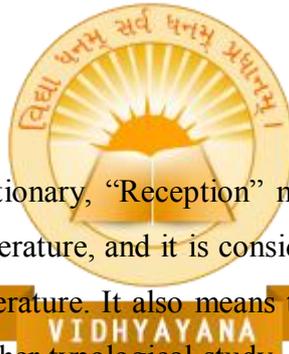
## A Reception of Partition in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*.

### Introduction:

The Partition of India is considered as the major historical and pathetic event not only in the history of India, but also of the entire human race. The Partition is significant not only as a political occurrence which gave birth to two nations but as the most disaster occasion for those people who lost their lives, dear ones, lands and who migrated from one place to another. The most lethal incident in the history of India left an indelible mark on the psyche of every Indian and particularly on those Indians who have been the victim of this most dreadful event. Indian writers could not remain untouched from this catastrophic event and used the medium of creative writing especially the novel form. To understand Partition, the researcher has applied Reception theory in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*.

### What is Reception Study?

According to Oxford Learner Dictionary, "Reception" means 'a reaction to something.' The word 'Reception' reflects a paradigm shift in literature, and it is considered "a reaction to social, intellectual, and literary developments in the history of literature. It also means the study of the relation between two texts which is concerned with direct contact rather typological study. How a writer's work is received in another country is the area of study. Reception works dialogically, through a process of a 'Question and Answer', at each point in time. It is totally different to influence. Influence denotes the relation between finished literary products, while reception might serve to designate a wider range of subjects, namely, the reception between their works and their ambience, including authors, readers, reviewers, publishers and surrounding milieu. The study of literary reception, accordingly, points in the direction of literary sociology or psychology.



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### The Receptivity to Partition in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*:

Khushwant Singh is a significant post-colonial writer in the English language, Khushwant Singh is known for his clear-cut secularism, wit and a deep passion for poetry. A regular contributor to various national dailies, Singh is also famous for his novel 'Train to Pakistan' penned in the year 1956. Khushwant Singh is a great historical novelist. He was born in Pakistan and living in India, so he was deeply concerned with the history and culture of both the countries. Among Khushwant Singh's novels, *Train to Pakistan* has a special place. The novel narrates one of the most brutal episodes in the world's history, in which a million men, women and children were killed and ten million were displaced from their homes and deprived of their belongings. The novel is a narrative of the tragic events that followed the Partition of British India into India and Pakistan. This novel contains many themes like love, history, politics, shame, religion and patriotism. But the main and important theme of this novel is history and the lessons that one derive from historic tragedies.

Partition really affected the mind of Khushwant Singh who was over thirty years old at the time. Khushwant Singh has received Partition as a most lethal incident in his novel *Train to Pakistan*. He has received real situation after the independence of India. He has described the agony, pain, sufferings and fear of the people of India while the Partition was in progress. He was the first Indian English writer who has received Partition in *Train to Pakistan* as a brilliant and realistic story of political hatred, violence and of mass Partition during those turbulent and hateful days that preceded and followed the Partition of the British India. Khushwant Singh was witness of Partition and he has experienced Partition that is why *Train to Pakistan* portrays the trauma of Partition that gave birth to two political boundaries-India and Pakistan. On the eve of Partition, thousands fled from both sides of the border seeking refuge and security. The natives were uprooted and it was certainly a horrible experience for them to give up their belongings and rush to a land which was not theirs. Partition touched the whole country and Singh's objective in this novel is to see the events from the point of view of the people of Mano Majra, a small village, which is situated at the border between India and Pakistan. Khushwant Singh wanted to change the society after Partition so his present novel originally is entitled *Mano Majra* which suggests static, while present title, *Train to Pakistan* implies change.

The individuality in Khushwant Singh's writings is on account of his anger and disenchantment with the Partition of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan in August 1947. The novelist brings to the centre stage the subsequent violence on both sides of the border manifested in ruthless mass destruction as



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well as the evil impact of Partition on the peace-loving Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of ManoMajra. The holocaust that followed in the wake of the Partition of the country is considered one of the bloodiest upheavals of history that claimed innumerable innocent lives and loss of property. The Partition of India and the violence it generated disillusioned Khushwant Singh enough to conceive the idea of writing a novel to express his mental agony and inner conflict. Singh focuses mainly on the Partition, on the events before it, the holocaust caused by it and its aftermath. His aim in this novel is to show and explore the world around him and to present it in all its naturalistic setting. He builds a powerful series of episodes with the background of Indian landscape, Indian sights and sounds; Indian manners and gestures as only a keenly observant and sensitive novelist can depict them. He has examined Partition to make chief protagonist to village ManoMajra itself. The action of the novel centers around a tiny village in Punjab called ManoMajra.

Khushwant Singh has tried to discover the true Indian response by juxtaposing the people, their views and also their actions. During the Partition of India, people had migrated by train from one place to another. Many people were killed and women were raped in train. So Khushwant Singh has shown the same incident in his present novel. Khushwant Singh was afflicted by Partition so he has taken the year of 1947 in his novel in which Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs were in flight. Within few months almost a million of them were dead. On the event of Partition of India, millions of people are seeking shelter and security from either side of the dividing boundary. Millions of non-Muslims from Pakistan longed for 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. Khushwant Singh has taken all influential factors which had been affected by Partition like political, historical, economical, communal, religious etc.

Khushwant Singh has used political figure like Hukumchand who had known that during the riots, bad characters would get all the loot and the government is blamed. He has examined that during the Partition how political leader had become helpless and unable to stop the communal violence that had erupted in the wake of Partition. He has become sentimental and vehemently attacks on the Prime Minister manipulating sarcastically the word 'tryst'. The Partition has been taken as a horrible incident in present work and Khushwant Singh has explained the scenario of Partition with the example of one night in which the river's looking like a sheet of paper, symbolized the bleak deeds of violence. The cries of human voices, calling for help, seemed to arise from the water. The corpses floating on the water made the scene horrible. The ghastly murder of these innocent people told the tale of woe caused by the Partition.



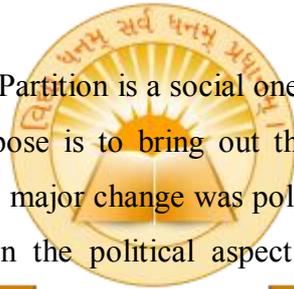
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Khushwant Singh has shown a sense of humanity with the example of his novel's character Jugga who is concerned mainly with the welfare of Nooran. It is Jugga who combats the forces of darkness and sacrifices himself selflessly to save innocent lives threatened by the planned ManoMajra massacre. Khushwant Singh has invested the common man of the soil with tragic grandeur to show the dignity of man for all his helpless littleness in the face of the universe, for all his nullity under the blotting hand of time. He believed that it was time he exploded this myth of the innate goodness in man. There is innate evil in man. And so he just wrote about it, and he created one character that he stuffed with the so called innate goodness of man, and he is the only character which is entirely fiction. *Train to Pakistan* may remain the most comprehensive description of the tragic suffering affected by the Partition. The author's depiction of the elements that guided and impelled the people of India provides not only an understanding of their view of life and their place in it, but also elicits a profound sympathy with their hopes, their aspirations, and their failures.



VIDHYAYANA

Khushwant Singh's version of the Partition is a social one and he does not describe the politics of the Partition in much detail, because his purpose is to bring out the individual, human element and provide a social understanding. In the Partition, the major change was political; Britain's splitting of India into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. He has taken the political aspect of the Partition for granted, as all that his villagers are concerned with is that 'it is Mahatma Gandhi's government in Delhi' and that 'people sing his praise in the four corners of the earth'. The effect of the change, however, was significant and as Singh has shown, frighteningly, social, as religious groups rearranged and clashed violently. He did not focus on the political realities and the predicament of the victims of the Partition in the form of loot, arson, rape, abduction, mutations, murders and displacement. Rather, he has chosen to narrate the disturbing and agonizing impact that this event has on those who have not been the direct victims of the Partition and yet been affected deep at the psychological and social levels. He has made it clear that many people played a part in this chaos and everyone was equally worthy of blame, all the while integrating examples of the sheer moral confusion which arises from trying to make sense of an event as momentous as the Partition.

Khushwant Singh has illustrated the tragedy of Partition and indirectly suggests the shortsightedness of Indian leadership who failed to foresee the consequences of division and to handle the situation ever after Churchill's forecast of blood-bath. Communal discord was not a future of Indian rural scene but it was engineered first by the British Government under the policy of divide and rule and then by the nationalist



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leaders, with attitude tinge, though unintentionally. Khushwant Singh believes in the stark and naked realism of life. Like the socialist realists, Khushwant Singh's approach is positive-not negative-in as much as he views the socialist order as an independent entity. Unlike a critical realist, his approach is definitely concrete, since he looks at the society from the inside, not from the outside. His Jugga Singh is a man endowed with formidable will power and individuality. The theme of the novel with all its emphasis on Partition does not become a political propaganda.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is one of the finest and realistic novels to emerge out of the trauma of Partition. It examines with clinical intensity the harsh facts of inhuman bestialities of life and shows how human love can transcend all man-made barriers and boundaries to confront and overcome such catastrophes. Khushwant Singh has designed the novel to explore and expose the brutal and hypocritical image of man and simultaneously present his faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity. The value of love is the essence of his novel, *Train to Pakistan*, in spite of its portrayal of dark, rigid realities and grim horror. Even in the midst of such inhuman violence there are people who boldly encounter the cruel games of destiny with fortitude. Jugga, a confirmed ruffian, conquers the mighty forces of the wickedness and savagery by sacrificing himself for love.

If Partition brings out the brutality, inhumanity and madness of mankind, it also brings to light the acts of kindness and decency, courage and selflessness. There are many instances in the novel which are free from racial and religious prejudices. India's freedom is celebrated with mass murder and bestiality. Partition has brought about utter chaos and confusion, the savage massacres known on the history of India. In fact, the harrowing and spine-chilling events had shaken the faith of the people in the innatenobility of human beings. The author's objectivity in the treatment of theme and event, his skill and insight in the delineation of character, and his vision of humanity-the power and glory, the weakness and the defeat-all align him with the finest novelists in the English Language.

Khushwant Singh has received Partition to show horrors of crime committed at that time. Although the description of Partition is written with imagination. Yet these types of incidents took place in the history of India after 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. Khushwant Singh has not talked only the story of love between Jugga and Nooran but also a story that has depicted the brutalities, suffered by the people, generated as a result of Partition.