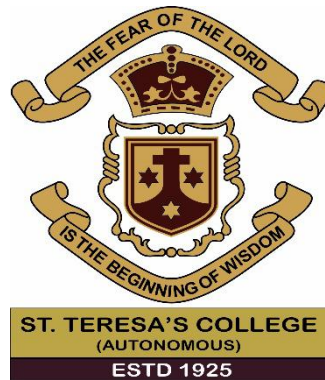


**A CULTURAL MATERIALIST READING OF  
KHUSHWANT SINGH'S *TRAIN TO PAKISTAN***



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and Literature*

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that the project entitled **A Cultural Materialist Reading of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*** is a work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Tania Mary Vivera, Department of English.

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## Acknowledgement

I thank Dr.Sr.Vinitha, Director, St.Teresa's College, for her support. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Sajimol Augustine M., Principal, St.Teresa's College, for her help and support.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Ms. Tania Mary Vivera, Department of English, St.Teresa's College, without whose guidance and encouragement this project would never have been completed.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Beena Job, Head of the Department of English, and all the faculty members for their encouragement and support.

Sethulakshmi. V. S.

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## Introduction

Khushwant Singh is a famous Indian writer, historian, columnist and social critic known for his profound knowledge about contemporary Indian society.

Khushwant Singh's illustrious career has contributed immensely to the literary heritage of India. He is widely admired as a significant post-colonial writer whose novels are deeply rooted in the historical and the political situation of India. In addition to novels, he has written a number of non-fiction books on Sikh religion and culture as well as on the important issues of his time.

*Train to Pakistan*, his first novel was published in 1956. It revolves around the central theme of partition and won him international acclaim. *Train to Pakistan* is set in a fictional border village named Mano Majra located between India and Pakistan in 1947 which highly resembled Singh's native village, Hadali in the pre-partitioned Punjab. The British left India in chaos by dividing the subcontinent into two dominions on communal lines and violence was blazing across North India. Singh speaks about that dry and arid summer in a small village near the mighty Indus when the once peaceful village turned into a ball of burning rage of hatred and suspicion.

His famous works include *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*(1961) that narrates the story of a prosperous Sikh family in the 1940s. In the novel, Singh juxtaposes the religious and political tension during freedom struggle with family strife. The best-selling novel *Delhi*(1990) is an attempt to travel through time, space and history of India's most loved city. He has also written the well researched and scholarly classic *A History of Sikhs*. He had deep passion for poetry and translated many Urdu poetry into English including the works of Iqbal(1981). He also translated the Urdu novel *Umrao Jan Ada*. He is credited with introducing the Sikh poet Amrita Pritam to larger audience. His autobiography, *Truth, Love and a Little Malice*, was

published in 2002. During his lifetime, Singh has written many controversial essays including his essays on India's emergency.

Khushwant Singh was an agnostic who vigorously supported secularism. He wrote boldly on the controversial religious and political subjects combining his flair for humour and satire. His novels were taut and modest but skillfully constructed and carried his unrestrained social commentary. Singh delves deep into the social reality through his poignant portrayal of human emotions and by accommodating multiple perspectives. In most of his novels, Khushwant Singh uses realism to capture the problems of the contemporary Indian society. Singh presents the ordinary life of Indian society in a straight forward manner. His novels are known for the accurate representation of the rural and urban life. Through his novels, Singh captures the awakening of the individual and the community, protests, corruption, hunger, poverty, sexual escapade, violence and many other facets of human life. By situating human actions in their social context, Singh presents a humanistic vision as a cure for inequality, violence and communalism.

The objective of this project is to do a cultural materialist analysis of *Train to Pakistan*. The term 'cultural materialism' was first coined by Raymond Williams. The cultural materialists claim that a complete analysis of the text requires it to be analyzed along with other relevant historical documents of the time. In other words, a cultural materialist study explores the historical context and the political connotations of the text. They identify the dominant positions in the text and look for possibilities for the subversion of that position by the less powerful entities.

This project is divided into four chapters. The first chapter attempts to give a brief overview of the novel. The second chapter explores the theory of cultural materialism, its growth and importance, in addition to criticism and application. The

third chapter attempts to analyze Singh's *Train to Pakistan* in accordance with the theory of cultural materialism. The final chapter deals with the current relevance of the study of a classic novel like *Train to Pakistan*.



## Chapter 1

### *Train to Pakistan: An Overview*

*Train to Pakistan* (1956) is one of the most remarkable books written on partition and the insanity of communal violence. *Train to Pakistan* is set in the backdrop of six terrible weeks of violent murder, assaults and rapes that shook Northern India in the dry and dusty summer of 1947, after the end of the two hundred years of exploitative British rule in the Indian subcontinent. *Train to Pakistan* is Kushwant Singh's first novel. It was initially published with the title *Mano Majra*. *Mano Majra* is the name of the fictional border village between Pakistan and India where the events in the novel take place. The partition of India and the horrible massacres that accompanied it is the theme of his most famous work.

Khushwant Singh is among India's best novelists. In a career spanning almost five decades, he has taken up multiple roles. Apart from being a novelist, he was also a translator, historian, journalist, popular humorist, travel writer, editor, and a newspaper columnist. He was born in Hadali, British India in 1915, in the present-day Khushab district of Punjab, Pakistan. He is also the founder-editor of the developmental monthly, *Yojana* and has served as the Member of Parliament from 1980 to 1986. His autobiography, *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* was published in 2002. Khushwant Singh grew up in a secular environment in the pre-partitioned India. The rapid escalation of the extreme communal differences after the mid-30s, that resulted in the partition of the British India into two dominions was heart wrenching for Singh. He immediately converted his anguish into his writing.

Singh is not concerned about the political transformation. He focuses on the human element of partition. He tries to describe it from as many perspectives as possible. In this short novel, he gives a realistic description of many characters in

detail. His work serves as a social criticism of the age. He shows profound understanding about the political, economic and social aspects of the time and space in which the story is set. Apart from the religious aspects, he touches upon the corruption, the problems of the new 'bania' government in the New Delhi, the unjust rule that results in the perpetuation of a vicious cycle and the criminalisation of people, and the growth of communalism. The common people were confused about their future in the newly Independent India while the educated people moved across the villages trying to educate the masses but failed to accomplish their tasks.

Mano Majra represents an Indian village of pre-partitioned India, a neglected tiny place that was only disturbed by the occasional passing of the trains. Despite the extreme change that was lurking on the doors of the Indian subcontinent, the villagers of Mano Majra lived unaware of the new freedom and the violence and the loss of identity that would change their lives forever. The people of Mano Majra lived in a pre-communal society. There were seventy families. The Sikhs owned all the land. The Muslims were tenants. There was only one Hindu family; the head of the family was a rich moneylender. There were people who belonged to an uncertain religion. They were sweepers. There were two Sikh temples and a mosque. But everyone venerated "the three-foot slab of sandstone that stand upright" under the keekar tree as the local deity (Singh 2). Even the first stage of communal ideology had not found its root in the village. As Bipan Chandra points out in *India's Struggle for Independence* (1987), the people in the village did not think that the people who followed the same religion had "common secular interests, that is, common political, economic, social and cultural interests" (Chandra 398). They used to think as a village. "Everyone in the village was a relation" (Singh 44). Soon, this unity would be shaken if not destroyed. All of a sudden, their interests would appear diverging and conflicting. At

least some joined the terrible plan made by the Sikh fanatics to murder their own villagers.

The action in the novel begins with a terrible dacoity. Malli and his gang murdered the moneylender and looted his wealth. Juggut Singh, the six-foot tall, strong and ferocious villager, was a dacoit. His father Alam Singh and his grandfather were also hanged for the same. Hence, he was on the police register for his bad character. But just like his forefathers he would never hurt anyone in his own village . This time he was innocent. But when the police and the villagers suspected the involvement of Jugga in the dacoity, he absconded. Iqbal, the educated social worker, understood the village communities very well. He had his own views about the morality, colonial rule and corruption. Unlike the villagers, he was an ambitious person and represented the middle class youth of the time very much sensitive to the changing times and the lovely dawn of freedom.

But there was another set of middle class youth, who were more than happy with the colonial rule. Their sustenance depended on the presence of their colonial masters. These government officials who had great powers bred communalism, corruption and nepotism. Hukum Chand, the Magistrate and the Deputy Commissioner, and the subinspector did not hide their communal feelings. Hukum Chand got promotions and reached the highest position because he pleased the Sahibs. He too had utmost loyalty to his kin and friends and got things done for them. The policemen arrested Iqbal and Jugga in the case of dacoity. They had proof for the arrest.

Mano Majra changed forever in that October when a train full of corpses arrived in the railway station. It fell into a deathly silence. Refugees started to flow into Mano Majra by crossing the river. Hukum Chand schemed to drive Muslims out

of Mano Majra. If Malli and his gang who were also arrested for the murder of Ram Lal were Muslims, it would have been easy to instill fear and drive out Muslims of Mano Majra. The policemen were asked to release Malli and his gang in front of the villagers, and to purposefully spread the rumour that Sultana and his gang, the Muslims from a neighbouring village, who left for Pakistan after the dacoity, were the real murderers of the moneylender.

Hukum Chand thought that his immediate responsibility was to save the Muslims. In fact his only concern was to ensure that he would not be blamed for the communal violence. His efforts became successful. The only thing that he did after hearing the news about the attack planned on the train was to release Jugga and Iqbal. He asked the subinspector to send messages to every police station and ask for help. "We must be able to prove that we did our best to stop them" (Singh 163). The subinspector spoke about how the number of policemen was heavily outnumbered by the number of armed village mobs. Also none of these policemen would shoot a Sikh. The only solution Hukum Chand had to solve the issue was to release Jugga and Iqbal, who now became 'Iqbal Singh' instead of 'Iqbal Mohammad', the alleged Muslim leaguer. The policemen were government in the eyes of poor people and they considered themselves the subjects of the policemen. People like Hukum Chand and subinspector could play any cards on the poor. Even the educated people like Iqbal were vulnerable to their schemes. Thus, Juggut Singh, the village goon and the dacoit, who was released from the prison, saved the train to Pakistan by giving away his life while the people who had the responsibility to maintain the law and order were trying to prove that they did the best they could.

The objective of the cultural materialist study of *Train to Pakistan* is directed towards understanding how the individuals and their actions in the novel are shaped

by all the possible cultural, economic and political influences of the time. It examines the determining role played by the authority and at the same time explores the ways in which the individuals subvert the authority. The colonial rule and partition continue to play a major role in our social and political life. The foreign policy of our country to the security of our territories are directly linked to the past. The aim is to undertake a complete historical analysis of the novel which can not only help us to have a wider grasp of one of the most happening periods in our history but at the same time can help us to have a scientific view of our present society and its problems.

## Chapter 2

### Cultural Materialism

The theory of cultural materialism gained currency in the 1980s in Britain as a response to the dominance of deconstruction or poststructuralism. As Wilfred L. Guerin et al. writes in the fifth edition of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, the left oriented cultural materialism was “critical of the aestheticism, formalism, antihistoricism and apoliticism common among the dominant postwar methods of academic literary criticism” (281). The cultural materialists focus on reading a literary text to understand the essence of the significant historical moments of the time in which the text was written. The cultural materialists place a literary text in a larger socio-political or historical context and analyses the repressive or the dominant ideologies that has shaped the production of the text. The individuals are in constant relation with their socio-economic environment. They are the products of their past and present experiences. Hence, the art and the literature produced by these individuals are influenced by the society in which they live. The society is in turn influenced by these art and literature.

The term ‘Cultural Materialism’ was coined by Raymond Williams, a British critic of Marxist orientation in his book *Marxism and Literature*. According to Jonathan Dollimore, Williams’ works *Culture and Society* (1961), *The Long Revolution* (1965), *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980) contributed greatly to the development of the theoretical framework of cultural materialism. The literary conferences at Essex university on Sociology of literature held between 1976 and 1984 and the Journal of *History and literature* (1984) promoted and developed the theory further. It was popularised by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield in 1985 as the subtitle of their collection of essays called *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in*

*Cultural Materialism*. The new theory challenged all the existing discourses in the popular culture and literature. For cultural materialists, issues of gender, class, race and sexuality were of prime importance. This resulted in the wider acceptance of cultural materialism in the field of cultural studies. Cultural materialism opened up new ways of representing and understanding a section of people whose role in shaping history were suppressed in the interest of the dominant class and their grand narratives.

In the third edition of *Beginning Theory*, Peter Barry mentions the British critic, Graham Holderness' description of cultural materialism as "a politicised form of historiography" (175). In his essay *Is Shakespeare a Political Writer?*, Zdenko Lešić cites Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, according to whom cultural materialism analyses the literary text in the context of "the new and challenging discourses of Marxism, feminism, structuralism, psychoanalysis and poststructuralism". These discourses "have raised profound questions about the status of literary texts, both as linguistic entities and as ideological forces in our society" (219).

The birth of Cultural materialism can be attributed to F.R Leavis in the 1950s. Leavis who was influenced by Mathew Arnold's analyses of bourgeois culture used the educational system to widely distribute works of Shakespeare and Milton. This was to increase the "moral sensibilities" of the readers of the time. Hence, Leavis saw the mass culture as a threat. This was contrary to the analysis of culture put forward by the Raymond Williams. He and other British theorists, who were influenced by Karl Marx, Theodore Adorno, Georg Lukacs, Louis Althusser, Mikhail Bakhtin and Antonio Gramsci were interested in "the problems of cultural hegemony and domination related to the literature" (Guerin et al. 281). For Williams the hegemony

was "a sense of reality for most people". It was "very difficult for most members of society to move" beyond it (281). But people often tried to resist the hegemony thereby, the society evolved.

The politicised framework of cultural materialism was the result of the opposition to Thatcherism, a rightist policy that supported market society in the 1980s. The labour governments' proposal to create a welfare state in the post-war period was sidelined. This was the political context in which cultural materialists developed their theory and reinterpreted Shakespeare, Webster, Wordsworth, Dickens, Tennyson, among many others. These fresh interpretations were based on the view that literary texts have a historical role. According to Lešić, the texts are controlled either by the dominant discourse of the time or it represents the "subversive or dissident expression"(222). The cultural materialists study the ways by which "the power or authority establishes and maintains domination over the social, political, and cultural spheres". In other words, on "how the dominant discourse controls subversive and dissident discourses" and how the subversive discourses challenge their suppression by the powerful elements (223). Cultural materialists hence focuses on "the alternative interpretation of cultural values, of the dissident reading of works integrated into the discourse of Power, of the political significance of poetry, even of political Shakespeare"( Lešić 222). Williams also developed the concept of "structure of feeling". The "structure of feeling" are the "meanings and values as they are lived and felt" by people, which are antagonistic to the dominant ideologies in the society (Barry 177).

Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore in their book, *Political Shakespeare* (1980) points out the two ways in which the term 'culture' in cultural materialism can be used. Firstly, the analytical way, that describes "the whole system of significations



by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relations with the world” (Lešić 221). It includes the practices, beliefs, values, social customs and political aspirations of the people. The second is the evaluative use of the term, common in arts and literature which associate ‘culture’ with ‘superior values’ and a ‘refined sensibility’ to appreciate good literature and art, as proposed by Leavis. But cultural materialism adopts the analytical way. Hence, it is interested in the criticism of the “sub-culture of the marginalized social groups” and the “popular culture” as much as the “high culture”. Here, the high culture is simply treated as “one of the discourses”. It is not the “centre” by which other discourses are treated as inferior or subordinate (221). According to D.I. McRitchie, Raymond Williams viewed culture as “essentially a whole way of life” which consists of all “the known meanings and directions” in which the members of the society “are trained” as well as “the new observations and meanings which are offered and tested” (7). Williams further goes on to state that “culture is ordinary”. Each society has its own unique beliefs, values and aspirations. These beliefs and values of the society are reflected in its institutions, art and literature (8).

The term “Materialism” confronts the idealism of liberal humanists like Leavis. According to a materialist, the culture “cannot transcend the material forces of relation and production” (Barry 177). Materialism values objects, products and people. The public institutions, the arts and religion are founded upon materialism. Williams too upheld the materiality of culture. He criticised both humanist and marxist view on culture and developed his own theory of culture “as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. The analysis of culture is the attempt to discover the nature of the organisation which is the complex of these relationships”(McRitchie 8).

According to Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, cultural materialism combined four characteristics. Firstly, it focused on the historical context of the text. The “transcendent” significance, accorded to the text by liberal humanist approach, was questioned (Barry 176). This was also a response to the supporters of the New Criticism who completely ignored the historical origins of the text. Unlike the traditional literary historians, who were focussed on finding out how the “social, economic, political, and cultural lives of a certain period” were reflected within a text, the cultural materialists believed that, the “text reflected historical life as much as it participated in it”(Lešić 220). So, according to Barry, the primary aim of cultural materialists is to discover the silences in the texts and to “recover its histories” (176). Secondly, cultural materialism follows a distinct theoretical method. Thus it accepts the principles of structuralism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis and many other new theories of the time indicating a divergence from liberal humanism. Thirdly, the literary text is read in a “politicized framework”. The political commitment is evident since cultural materialists foregrounds the Marxist and feminist perspectives. Finally, there is a focus on the textual analysis. The theory is proved only when it is supported by the beliefs and values conveyed by the text itself. The cultural materialists are mainly interested in studying the canonical texts, like that of Shakespeare’s works, which have received significant public attention, and continue to be relevant as “prominent national and cultural icons”(177).

The New Historicism in America is seen as a counterpart of British cultural materialism. Both theories subscribe to the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts for historical analysis. Raman Selden et al., in the fifth edition of *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, points out that both adopted Michel Foucault’s view of discourses “as rooted in social institutions and as playing a

key role in relations of power”(182). But both are different in their approach and emphases. The difference between both is that cultural materialism is “ a more politically radical type of historicism”(184). Apart from that, while cultural materialists are optimistic in their approach the new historicists are pessimistic . The cultural materialists are optimistic that the existing hierarchies would be questioned by the subversive elements and the society would change. British Cultural Materialism, in contrast to the New Historicism has also opened up the “post-war British popular culture and society” for analysis (Selden et al. 187). In *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943), the historicist E.M.W Tillyard argues that the “literature of the period expressed the spirit of the age”. He tried to connect the literature to the “general culture of the time”(181). But Raymond Williams, the cultural materialist, viewed it not as “a single spirit of the age” but a “ dynamic model of culture” that , includes both its “subversive and marginalized elements.” Williams distinguishes between the “residual”, “dominant” and the “emergent” aspects of the culture (184).

The Cultural Materialists have produced a significant body of work on the Renaissance drama, Shakespeare and Romanticism. Cultural materialists interpret the renaissance tragedies to explain how they articulate subversive ideologies even under the dominant ideology of Providentialism . The reinterpretation of Shakespeare’s works was particularly important for cultural materialists because he still has a huge influence across the World. Cultural materialists emphasizes the functioning of the institutions through which Shakespeare is available to us even today, from the Royal Shakespeare Company to the film industry, the critics who writes essays on him, the publishers and the makers of the new text books. Contrary to the approach of liberal humanists, who consider Shakespeare as a writer “for all times” and is in an effort to

modernise him, the cultural materialists “interpret him as a participant in the development” of the historical context in which his works were written (Lešić 228). So, Sinfield interprets the witches in *Macbeth* only as witches, because the play was written during a time when the Orthodox Britain believed in the existence of witches and burned them. He mocks at the attempt to read witches as metaphors of evil or as the projection of Macbeth’s mind. He calls the process of ignoring the “cultural difference” between Shakespeare’s and our time and presenting him as a contemporary, as “appropriation” (228). Cultural materialists are against these appropriation. For them to understand the past does not mean to appropriate a different culture rather it means to acknowledge the past culture as the “other”. Cultural materialists are also interested in the reasons for the overt representation of murders of kings and heirs, corruption, ambition and lack of morality in the plays of Shakespeare performed before the Royal members. “Elizabethan theatre”, according to cultural materialists, is “the best evidence that the dominant discourse, the discourse of Power, can be confronted with the dissident discourse, which poses a latent, but at times serious threat to the functioning of the former discourse” (229).

In *Hamlet*, cultural materialists focuses on the marginalized characters like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

The two are distinctly plot-driven: empty of personality, sycophantic in a sniveling way, eager to curry favor with power even if it means spying on their erstwhile friend. Weakly they admit, without much skill at denial, that they "were sent for". Even less successfully they try to play on Hamlet's metaphorical "pipe," to know his "stops," when they are forced to admit that they could not even handle the literal musical instrument that Hamlet shows them. Still later these nonentities meet

their destined "non-beingness," as it were, when Hamlet, who can play the pipe so much more efficiently, substitutes their names in the death warrant intended for him. (Guerin et al. 307)

Hamlet's mere suspicion of them decides their fate and they are given an immediate death sentence. Thus, the two characters came to an end. The implications for power lies in the fact that Hamlet and Claudius are the "mighty opposites" while these two characters are of the "baser nature". They are merely pawns in the hands of Claudius and Hamlet (Guerin et al. 309). Hamlet is a prince. He is not seen as a murderer, he is seen as a person correcting the moral order while Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have no other motive than pleasing the king. Cultural materialists foreground "the lesser persons caught up in the massive oppositions" between the mighty kings and princes (310).

Many children's books with colonial flavour are also subjected to "historically-informed" analysis to understand the colonial and racist underpinnings in them. Such books produce a "colonial-based socialization" in the children of the colonized by which they move away from their ethnic traditions. They feel that they are more "respected" if they take up the Western practices and beliefs (MacCann 186,187). The colonialist fiction, hence, has a certain pattern:

One finds a repudiation of non-Anglo religions, sciences, art forms, and customs ---a rejection of the realities evolving from non-European histories and priorities. The novels analyzed here follow a formula that extracts one Other from his/her traditional community, acculturates that character in Anglo ways, and implies that cultural "hybridization" has been achieved. In the narrative details, it is largely non-Westerners who are associated with glaring failures. Their societies are brimming

with violence, graft, irrational belief systems, an inferior use of language, dangerous medical practices, tyrannical governments, and dysfunctional “tribalism”. (187)

For example, Anton Ferreira’s *Zulu Dog* (2002) goes beyond the theme of friendship. From making overt racist statements to commenting on the political aspects like formal education, it “builds the case for conflict and white supremacy by maligning traditional African culture and self-rule”(189). While many of the problems in the new government like its inadequacy to provide education to the remote villages was a result of the “longstanding practice of White bureaucratic privilege”, Ferreira projects it as the weakness of the Black government(190). Rather than helping the Black child to be an “active, choosing being”, *Zulu Dog* “reinforces the colonial propaganda” that the Blacks are passive. Here, the “dominant” Whites take decisions insisting that it is in the best interest of the “dependent” Blacks (191,192). In Julia Holland’s *Nothing to Remember* (1998), Indians are stereotyped as “filthy”, “corrupt” and “superstitious”(197). Holland who dedicatedly speaks about the male chauvinism, corruption and the garbages in the gutters of the dirty streets of India is silent about the history of India and the role of the British colonial administration in India. Such colonialist authors who know less but surmises more about India, fails to unlearn their biased study of India and comprehend the cultural practices of India as the product of its unique economic, social and political challenges(MacCann 199). The cultural materialists fill the silences created by these authors and recover the lost histories. Hence, Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, and some other pre-imperialist novels are often expanded to include a new dimension which was absant before. “We must not say that since *Mansfield Park* is a novel, its affiliations with a sordid history are irrelevant or transcended”, writes Edward .W. Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

According to him, the novel “opens up a broad expanse of domestic imperialist culture without which Britain’s subsequent acquisition of territory would not have been possible” (95). The Bertrams belonged to the class of people whose “power and prestige” depended on “the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class” (Said 94).

*Wuthering Heights*, published in 1847 was also written during a time when the new found materialism and the subsequent rise of the middle class created a radically different social system. Heathcliff’s rise is similar to the rise of the Borgeois. His obsession with taking revenge on his enemies is similar to the betrayal of the working class by the middle class. He becomes deeply rooted in the materialist system. He marries Linta for money and ascends the social scale. *Wuthering Heights* emphasizes the materialistic value of education. It is considered to be an important tool for overcoming social and economic difficulties. Heathcliff could own the property of Hareton because he was literate. Though Cathy teases Hareton for being illiterate, she helps Hareton to read and write. There is a promise of equality over oppression towards the end. This results in an optimistic end which is of utmost importance for cultural materialists. Thus the theory of cultural materialism foregrounds the intellectual, cultural and political life of the time to discover new dimensions in a literary work.

### Chapter 3

#### A Cultural Materialist Reading of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*

The cultural materialist analysis of Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is concerned with the individuals' power to shape their culture in spite of their historical circumstances. It aims to analyse the oppressive authority and their influence on the major events in the novel. It also analyses the subversive elements within the powerful authority. Hence, the aim is to provide a deeper understanding of all the important socio-political, economical and historical events of the time through the cultural materialist reading of the text.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* was published in 1956 when India was a newly Independent country haunted by the memory of the violent partition. The author Khushwant Singh himself was affected by the partition. In the year 2002, Singh confessed during an interview to *The Hindu*:

Partition was a traumatic experience for me. I had gone to Lahore expecting to live there, to become a lawyer or a judge; then to be brutally torn out and never really being able to go back. That was what put me to writing. I wrote *Train to Pakistan*.

As a person who grew up in a peaceful non-communal Punjabi village, Singh never anticipated the terrible mania that would swallow his Punjab in the eve of Independence. Though Singh depicts the anger, sorrow, pain and the loss of identity during partition through his novel, he does not blame any one person for the partition. At times, his characters even support the colonial rule over the new 'bania' rule. The detached perspective on partition could be the result of the ten years that had gone by, which allowed him to retrospect on various events that has taken place and put them in place. It could also be an attempt to reconcile with the terrible past and to



contribute to the development of the young India. Interestingly, Singh chose to write the novel in English language over the Indian languages. Hence, for years to come, his account of partition was accessible only to the English educated elites in the country.

Nevertheless, *Train to Pakistan* provides a realistic account of partition. It touches upon many events that happened in 1947 and the people who played an integral role in it, from a fictionalized 'Badmash' to the Magistrate and the real and important personalities of the time like Nehru, Gandhi and Jinnah. The book immortalizes the horrors of partition in the minds of people. It backgrounds the causes and complexities of partition while emphasizing the emotions of people involved in it. However, a proper understanding of partition requires it to be contextualized in the larger sphere of socio-economic and cultural aspects. Hence, the cultural materialist analysis of the text is relevant. It portrays the gradual dehumanization of people over the time, due to the lack of materialist benefits. A young man in the novel says to Meet Singh that the Muslims in their village "have been eating our salt for generations" despite the fact that the Mano Majra Muslims have not done any harm towards the fellow villagers (Singh 130). This is not merely an emotional statement made due to the ongoing slaughter of Hindus by Muslims in Pakistan. Rather, it is a reflection of the mind of a young man who has begun to think that his economic well being has been challenged by the presence of the Muslims in the village over the years. While the older members like Meet Singh are horrified by the armed Sikhs, many young people joined them to kill the Muslims. The social unity of the villagers shatter overnight. But the fact was that the unity in these villages was illusory. Over the years, the economic development under the oppressive colonial rule has divided the masses of the country in new lines apart from the religion and caste. Munmun Giri

says in the article, “Class consciousness in Indian Partition Fiction” that a “growing class consciousness or class conflict” has played a huge role in dividing the country under the guise of communalism (400). *Train to Pakistan* obviously begins on a pessimistic note that speaks about the various ways in which the oppressive ideologies of religion, the ruling class and the caste influence the various circumstances and suppress the ordinary masses.

*Train to Pakistan* is a polyphonic novel. According to Andrew Robinson, Michael Bakhtin’s concept of polyphony means the presence of “different voices” within the novel, which are “unmerged into a single perspective, and not subordinated to the voice of the author”. Singh’s characters like Juggut Singh, Hukum Chand, Meet Singh, Iqbal and the sub-inspector have their unique perspectives on society. The educated and secular urban dweller Iqbal becomes the vehicle of Singh’s own perspective on partition and society. But his voice is not central. The author allows the characters in the novel “to shock and subvert” even his own voice (Robinson). Hence, there is a glimmer of hope for subversive elements to rise against the oppressive authority. Iqbal has a great understanding of the society. He has great ideas. But he is ambitious and yearns for power and respect. There is a lack of earnestness in his mission in Mano Majra. Similar to Singh, he could speak about the partition and criticize the society, but he is not relevant as far as the action in the novel is concerned. Both were mere spectators. So it was necessary that Iqbal’s views and actions are subverted by the people, who were the real actors affected by the decision to divide British India, and to break the monopoly of author’s views. While Iqbal blames the police system “which, instead of safeguarding the citizen, maltreats him and lives on corruption and bribery” (Singh 40). Hukum Chand, the Magistrate, also

makes an equally valid point on the abuse of power by the people above him. He declares,

Where was the power? What were the people in Delhi doing? Making fine speeches in the assembly! Loudspeakers magnifying their egos; lovely-looking foreign women in the visitor's galleries in breathless admiration. He is a great man, this Mr Nehru of yours. I do think he is the greatest man in the world today. Wasn't that a wonderful thing to say? Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially. Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, you made your tryst. So did many others. (185)

Hence, the reader of the novel “does not see a single reality presented by the author, but rather, how reality appears to each character”. Here, “the role of the author is fundamentally changed, because the author can no longer monopolize the ‘power to mean’”. The author's views are subverted by the other characters (Robinson).

Each character in the novel shows subversiveness towards the authority through their actions and speech and at the same time a marked indifference to people who are weak and below them. Jugga is not entirely submissive to the authority. But Jugga is indifferent to his own villagers and the women in his life. Jugga acts violently with Nooran. She cannot escape his “brute force”(Singh 15). His mother is entirely dependent on him for a living and he behaves badly with her. She slaps her forehead and blames herself for her “kismet”(12). While Hukum Chand speaks against the powerful people in Delhi, he is indifferent towards the people below him. As a magistrate, he had the duty to maintain the law and order in the region along with the subinspector. But both do not hide their communal feelings. “I believe our

RSS boys beat up Muslim gangs in all the cities”. The Sikhs “have lost their manliness” (21). The subinspector does not like “Muslims living in Sikh villages as if nothing had happened”. While Hukum Chand asks the subinspector to learn to keep silent even if he has strong opinions, he also asks the subinspector to let the Muslims go out peacefully. He also warns: “but be careful they do not take too much with them” (23). These words again indicate that the communalism has reached its ‘second stage’ where the Hindu middle class of India has begun to see Muslims as their competitors having secular interests divergent from their own. The religion was soon developed into a powerful and oppressive modern political tool with greater control over the masses. The development of communal politics can be attributed to purely economic reasons. The historian Bipan Chandra attributed communalism to the “colonial underdevelopment” which resulted in,

...intense competition among individuals for government jobs, in professions like law and medicine, and in business for customers and markets. In an attempt to get a larger share of existing economic opportunities, middle class individuals freely used all the means at their disposal --- educational qualifications, personal merit as also nepotism, bribery, and so on. At the same time, to give their struggle a wider base, they also used other group identities such as caste, province and religion to enhance their capacity to compete. (403)

The British officials encouraged this rivalry between Hindus and Muslims. As Ramachandra Guha points out in his book *India after Gandhi* (2007),

In March 1925, by which time the anti-colonial struggle had assumed a genuinely popular dimension, the secretary of state for India wrote to the viceroy: ‘I have always placed my highest and most permanent

hopes upon the eternity of the Communal Situation.’ Within England the growth of liberal values placed a premium on the sovereignty of the individual; but in the colonies the individual was always seen as subordinate to the community. This was evident in government employment, where care was taken to balance numbers of Muslim and Hindu staff, and in, politics, where the British introduced communal electorates...(27)

Hukum Chand was a product of this time. He pleased the European Sahibs and became an official. At the same time, “he is true to his friends and always get things done for them”(Singh 45).

The villagers were simply pawns in the hands of these police officials who were the vehicles of communalism. The policemen were quick to arrest Iqbal and Jugga in the case of dacoity. They knew they were committing a great mistake. Jugga was a bad character and Iqbal was an unfamiliar face in the village. Apart from this, there were no other proof for the arrest. The police filled up the warrant only before Iqbal. The corrupt officials only needed a scapegoat to cover up the errors in the investigation. Iqbal is renamed as Iqbal Mohammad only because he was circumcised. He was considered to be a member of the Muslim League. The subinspector has conveniently forgotten the fact that he saw Iqbal arrive in the village on the same train he had come, the day after the dacoity. When the subinspector’s visits to the prison to extract evidence from Jugga failed, he thought of only changing his “tactics”(Singh 80). But he would never admit his own mistake.

Hukum Chand schemed to drive Muslims out of Mano Majra. If Malli and his gang who were also arrested for the murder of Ram Lal were Muslims, it could have been easy to instill fear and drive out Muslims of Mano Majra. The policemen were ,

therefore, asked to release Malli and his gang in front of the villagers, and to purposefully spread the rumour that Sultana and his gang, the Muslims from a neighbouring village, who left for Pakistan after the dacoity were the real murderers of the moneylender. This is not merely an example of how the people in authority, who are responsible for the prevention of crimes and maintaining the law and order abuse their power but the dangerous methods through which they carry out their interests. India's peculiar way of social development was such that in many parts of the country "the religious distinctions coincided with social and class distinctions" (Chandra 406). Hindus were moneylenders or zamindars while the Muslims were tenants. The communalists and the colonial administrators twisted the real facts to project the communal as against the class aspects of exploitation. This communal form was often not given by the participants but the observers, journalists or the officials who provided "a post-facto communal explanation for the conflict because of their own conscious or unconscious outlook"(406). Thus Hukum Chand decided to release the real culprits and gave a communal colour to the social tension. Soon after the head constable executed Hukum Chand's plan, terror struck the Muslims of Mano Majra. As Singh describes,

Muslims sat and moped in their houses. Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala, which they had heard and dismissed, came back to their minds...Quite suddenly, every Sikh in Mano Majra became a stranger with an evil intent. His long hair and beard appeared barbarous, his kirpan menacingly anti-Muslim. For the first time, the name Pakistan came to mean something to them—a refuge where there were no Sikhs.

(129,130)

The Sikhs of Mano Majra now suspected the Muslims. “The last guru had warned that Muslims had no loyalties” (Singh 130). They thought he was right. They revised the history and counted the atrocities committed by the Muslims against the Sikhs.

And what had they done to the Sikhs? Executed two of their Gurus, assassinated another and butchered his infant children; hundreds of thousands had been put to the sword for no other offence than refusing to accept Islam...(130)

They linked the remote histories to the present. The murder of Ram Lal, now they believed, was done by Sultana and his gang who were Muslims. Thereby, Hukum Chand’s plan became successful. The village was soon divided into “two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter”(129).

The role of the police administration in the novel in inducing disturbances in the peaceful village is reflective of the communal feelings among the powerful middle class government officials as well as the inability of the police to fit into the changing political scenario, as they are now no longer under a foreign administration. For the ordinary people, the police during the colonial rule, was a nightmare like the dacoits. They were “a scourge to people” according to a British official who thought that the police oppressed, looted and tortured the ordinary people(Chandra 42). As Jugga says,

Subinspectors and policemen were people in khaki who frequently arrested him, always abused him, and sometimes beat him. Since they abused and beat him without anger or hate, they were not human beings with names. They were only denominations one tried to get the better of. If one failed, it was just bad luck.(169)

This was because in British India, police was merely an instrument to serve the colonial interests, especially the economic aspects. Even during the time of partition,

the colonial interest of “self-preservation” was prioritized than the need to control the riots. When the partition happened the English officials were the most guarded people in the country. The demand for more troops to control the riots was put down for ensuring the safety of the officials (Guha 33). The subinspector complained to Hukum Chand about the lack of enough policemen to patrol the riverside. There were only fifty policemen in Mano Majra, against the “mobs of twenty to thirty thousand armed villagers thirsting for blood” (Singh 166). This throws light on why the riots in Punjab escalated to an irreversible level of damage during the period.

Malli and his gang were dacoits like Jugga. But Singh makes distinctions between them. Jugga is the most powerful man in the village. He is true to his own people. He swears his innocence in the murder of Ram Lal. Finally, he saves the Muslims in the train to Pakistan by sacrificing his own life. Thus, he becomes a universal figure for love, compassion and sacrifice. While Jugga is the hero of the novel, Malli and his gang only receives a meagre mention in the novel. Malli and his gang could not challenge Jugga’s dominance. Jugga’s change of mind after his rendezvous with Imam Baksh’s daughter Nooran has caused the fall out between them. Though Jugga is not true to his friend Malli here, Singh justifies him for what he believes as a good change since dacoity is considered bad and terrible. People tend to overlook the factors that encourages people to take up dacoity as a means of living. Singh gives an expression to these factors through the words of Iqbal who supports Jugga by saying that “criminals are not born. They are made by hunger, want and injustice” (Singh 45).

Colonialism aggravated the situation. The colonial era replaced zamindars and farmers with the rich moneylenders like Ram Lal. When Ram Lal was attacked by the dacoits, he produced a wad of notes from his pocket and cried, “All is yours” (10).



The wealth was unequally distributed. Moneylenders like Ram Lal amassed huge wealth and turned out to be the biggest beneficiaries of colonial era. The Zamindars, scholars and artisans lost their prestige and property due to the economic conditions under colonialism. The dacoity or social banditry were the only alternative to “starvation and social degradation” under the foreign rule due to the lack of industries and large scale unemployment (Chandra 36). Each section of the people guarded their unique interests against the collective interests. Here, the colonial officials, the police, the dacoits, the moneylenders, the communalists and the educated middle classes were on the same line. Jugga has killed many in the neighbouring villages for money. While Jugga’s act of saving the people in the train to Pakistan was undoubtedly heroic, perhaps he was motivated only by the desire to save Nooran. But Jugga is elevated to the status of a universal figure who becomes the light at the darkest times. Malli and his gang do not receive the attention that Jugga receives. In a novel that otherwise blurs the line between the good and bad, Jugga and Malli appears to represent these binaries. Malli and his gang are the instruments used by the author to foreground the virtues of Jugga. They are caricatured as murderers, prisoners and looters. Though they defy Jugga, they are afraid of his superior power. For Malli and his men, Jugga is more fearsome and challenging than even the policemen. They tried to subvert his authority. The best way to do this was to limit Jugga’s freedom, loot his villagers and insult him. The reasons for their participation in the riots were also purely economic rather than religious, as they were falsely convinced of a better economic condition in the absence of the Muslims.

In a novel that provides as many voices and perspectives to partition, the women though the most affected by the partition, are terribly silenced. Nooran and Haseena are the only female characters as against many male characters. The women

in Singh's novel have no individuality. They do the daily chores. "Women rub clarified butter into each other's hair, pick lice from their children's heads, and discuss births, marriages and deaths"(5). They are irrelevant and passive. But the novel indirectly brings forth the patriarchal mentality deeply entrenched in the society as well as the author himself. The dialogues and the abuses by the male and the minor female characters, the lifestyle of the people, the beliefs and values of the villagers and the experiences narrated by men speaks amply about the prevalent patriarchal attitudes that lay huge restrictions on the women.

Though *Train to Pakistan* begins in a pessimistic note with the dacoity and the subsequent change in the routine life and the arrival of the train full of corpses, Singh makes sure that there is still hope for the future. The lambardar, Meet Singh and most of the villagers continued to show their utmost reverence and kindness towards the Muslims. Partition was not their choice. The metabolic rift in the village was the result of an external storm. The ideal of fraternity is still alive in the minds of ordinary people. Though dominant power influences every aspect of the life, Jugga, Meet Singh and the lambardar stop themselves being prey to the dominant ideology and shows the individual's power to influence the situation. Even though Iqbal Singh was fast asleep the night when Jugga saved the train, and his intellectualism failed to spring any actions, he too instills a new hope with his knowledge and his wish to help the villagers out of misery. Jugga's final sacrifice and his love for Nooran unites the two communities. Hence, *Train to Pakistan* is optimistic about the future and it values the individual's power to make a difference.

In conclusion, Singh's novel is an attempt to capture the events of partition in a realistic way. It allows various perspectives on partition. The novel displays the control of the oppressive authority on every event, yet it highlights the ways in which

the dominant ideologies are subverted effectively through the dialogues and actions of the subversive characters. In the novel, the authority is represented in the form of the police system, government, colonialism, class and religion. Still, subversiveness exists in every system no matter how hard the authority tries to destroy it. The subversive elements have great power to determine the course of any event and eventually it fill the readers with optimism, despite the cynical milieu of the novel.

## Chapter 4

### The Current Relevance of *Train to Pakistan*

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* continues to be very relevant as one of the most significant works written on partition. A cultural materialist analysis of *Train to Pakistan* underscores the fact that the work has prevailed even after 70 years of partition. The novel has inspired a movie with the same title, directed by Pamela Rooks and released in 1998. Apart from this, a play of the same title was staged by the theatre group called 'Aami at Lamakaan: An Open Cultural Space' in Hyderabad. A new edition of the book was published in 2006 by Roli Books to commemorate 50 years of the novel. The new book combined 66 of the Margaret Bourke-White's photographs of the insanity of the partition with the prose. The idea was to resuscitate the dreadful memories of the past and impart it to a generation of contemporary readers who are far removed from those times. But the focus of such an effort should be reconciliation and peace with the past rather than the aggravation of the violence and brutality.

The novel was first published in 1956. Though the memories of partition had not died down, the reconstruction of the state and the protection of the new-found strategic autonomy was the major priority of the time. In the prologue to *India after Gandhi* published in 2007, Ramchandra Guha alluded to how India's history ended with the Independence and the post-Independent histories were brushed aside (xxx). A complete understanding of the partition, communal violence and intolerance were not given any importance at the time. Partition was abated to mere statistics of the murders and rapes. Singh's *Train to Pakistan* was one of the first attempts that brought out the human element to partition and he underscored the fact that many groups of people were equally responsible for partition. This profound evaluation and

understanding of partition promoted the acceptance of the bygone times and created greater possibility of enduring peace. The subsequent promotion and reproduction of the partition novels should also be directed towards this necessary end.

The cultural materialist study of *Train to Pakistan* is relevant as it foregrounds the underlying political aspirations in the actions and the dialogues of the characters along with the cultural and economic aspects. While the partition is a reality and India and Pakistan are now two sovereign republics recognized by the United Nations unlikely to be merged again, much of the problems that both countries face today stems from partition. The economic, political and cultural aspects behind the innumerable incidents of communal violence that have taken place in India and Pakistan in the late twentieth or the twenty-first century appear to be far removed from the conditions of the mid-twentieth century but essentially they are the same, despite some superficial differences. Hence, the cultural materialist analysis of the text gives us greater insight into the current relationship between India and Pakistan, the nature of the hostilities they guard against each other and most importantly, it can help in the elaborate understanding of communal violence, its spread and the law enforcement within the society.

One important question is about how the history of partition is taught to the students. There is no in-depth study of partition even in the states like Bengal and Punjab which were directly affected by it. The Pakistani schools teach their students that the root of the partition was laid about thousands of years ago. For them partition was inevitable and at the same time the past is a justification for 'bleeding India to death'. It is supposed to stir nationalism and hatred against India. India was immune to such tendencies because of the humanistic vision of Tagore, Nehru and Gandhi against an arid sense of patriotism. Though Singh's novel also played a huge role in

diversifying the linear narrative of partition, the text written in the English language only catered to the English-educated elite and their children. In 1956, India's literacy rate was an alarming 18%. There was no interest in translating the book to vernacular languages and creating a large audience for it, since no one was concerned about moving forward from the evils of partition. It remained as a wound unhealed. The English language turned into a barrier against the circulation of ideas. This resulted in new hierarchies dominated by the English speaking urban elites who looked down on the rural areas as the breeding grounds of communalism and hatred. Singh's novel directly or indirectly nurtured this dominant ideology until recently when it found wider representation through theatre and film.

The animosity between India and Pakistan will continue to bleed as long as Pakistan sees India as a Hindu majoritarian country and India endorses it. While Pakistan's attempts to radicalize Indian Muslims ended in serious repercussions on itself, Indian secularism is now facing challenges from within the country. But in the prologue to *India After Gandhi* Guha highlighted that India is an "unnatural nation". It is the biggest of the "democratic experiments" that defied every sociological generalization and survived as a united country despite its incredible diversity (xxix). In fact, India survives because of its huge diversity. It is unlikely for the country to fall prey to the whims of a dominant group. Because everyone in the country in fact belongs to a minority. Hence, the divisions and violence though they occasionally disrupt the ordinary life, is not bound to survive so far as to challenge the bedrock of India which is tolerance and unity. This is not to disregard the fact that the communal problems have obstructed the social and economic advancement in many parts of the country. For example, the Gujarat riots made about two lakh people homeless. They ended up in refugee camps. But the biggest consequence of the riot was the

radicalization of the young and angry Muslim youth. What happened in Gujarat during the riots was the tragic divorce of two communities who were interlinked in many ways for centuries. Godhra became the new Mano Majra. The Muslims remained in their homeland, and were physically undivided from India, but the mental rift widened. It is easy to overlook communalism as unavoidable in a multi-religious society. But communalism is definitely not characteristic of a diverse society. In the contrary, just like in the village of Mano Majra, the causes of communal problems are often external. The government, police officials, politicians and the wealthy industrialists are all active players in it.

Communalism is a modern political tool used by the authority to maintain their own interests. Communalists cherish “the ideology of a religion-based socio-political identity” which is not real as even diverse communities have common political or economic life or interests (Chandra 413). Hence, communal interests do not and should not exist. But the projection of the communal interests as real while discrediting the actual social or economic problems is the first motive of communalists. The murder of Ram Lal in *Train to Pakistan* can be attributed to the economic problems generated during the colonial rule. So, when Hukum Chand and the sub inspector attempted to turn the dacoity into a communal problem they were hiding the ‘real’ problems for some other interests. The demolition of the ancient worship places in the name of a king whom Tagore famously considered as part of a ‘mythical parable’; the renaming of famous cities, spreading of distorted historical facts, the attempts to uphold the practices already discarded by the scientific rationalism in the name of tradition and the bluffed up patriotism are the innumerable ways in which communalists try to masquerade the genuine concerns of the population even today.

Yet another area of concern that the cultural materialist analysis of *Train to Pakistan* brings forth is the inadequacy of the law enforcement. The colonial support was the major reason why the communalism flourished in British India until it reached a breaking point during the partition. British treated Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as different communities by accepting communal demands and strengthening communal organizations through political means. British also followed a “policy of inaction” against the spreading of communal ideas while nationalist ideas were suppressed mercilessly (Chandra 409). The police was the instrument in the hands of ruling class for defending their interests. The political change that happened in 1947 after British left India could not stop the communalism even in secular India. The communalism resurged in the form of communal politics and the rise of Hindu nationalist parties during the last decade of twentieth century aggravated the issue. The effectiveness of the law enforcement system which is in the control of the ruling party came to be questioned multiple times. The incidents that took place during Gujarat riots is a testimony to the continuation of the colonial legacy of inaction. Edward Luce writes in his book *In Spite of the Gods* (2006) about the role of police in the Gujarat riots as follows,

The second-most disturbing aspect of the riots was the role of the Gujarat police, who stood by and watched the slaughter take place. In some instances they allegedly even assisted the rioters by giving them directions to the addresses of local Muslims. In others they allegedly turned fleeing Muslims back into the arms of the mob. Numerous inquiries into the riots that have been conducted by Indian and international human rights groups have produced evidence that the Gujarat police were under instructions not to interfere. (160,161)



The Muslims were killed in large scale at districts where the police joined the rioters but the districts where senior officials uphold protection witnessed only lesser deaths. Today, mob violence has cast a terrifying shadow in our country. According to a survey by *IndiaSpend*, 86 per cent of persons killed in cow-related lynching were Muslims, and 8 per cent were Dalits. So, lynching is a collective hate crime directed against people of certain identities. There is a recurring pattern in the police action too. Even when they are present, they do not act. They plead later that they were outnumbered. They are often late to reach the crime scenes and are quick to charge the victims rather than the attackers. The police has also allowed the deliberate destruction of the evidence. But the police is also a victim of the system that perpetrates violence. In the words of Jugga,

Subinspectors and policemen were people in khaki who frequently arrested him, always abused him, and sometimes beat him. Since they abused and beat him without anger or hate, they were not human beings with names. They were only denominations one tried to get the better of. (Singh 169)

The state administrators have created an enabling atmosphere for hate speech and violence. They promote communal partisanship for serving their own political or material interests and uses power to defend themselves. They are even known to condemn the victims and the survivors rather than the attackers.

The circulation of false news by the policemen was key to the beginning of the hostility in *Train to Pakistan*. The majority of the lynching cases are also motivated by the rumours of cattle slaughter or smuggling spread through social media like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp . The fake news and media distortion had also resulted in the assassination of several social activists in India. In an article named

“Peddlers of hate” in *The Hindu*, the writer K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj emphasizes how influential political parties and their members distort the public statements of the famous figures through their media channels to portray them as anti-Hindu or anti-nationalist and level public anger against them. Their major priority is to divert the attention from the secular and real problems to some other interests.

In short, the cultural materialist analysis of *Train to Pakistan* discloses a continuity of class rule in the post-Independent India which is not different from the one that existed in the British India. There are mainly two reasons for this. Firstly, India could not move away completely from its dependence on imperialism and secondly, a complete elimination of feudalism never became a reality. The dominant and traditionally rich land owning communities remained wealthy while the others continued to be exploited. The “make-believe political freedom” could not be turned into “a real economic one” (Singh 51). This was followed by the perpetuation of feudal consciousness. The widespread economic discontent, the prevalent caste and class consciousness perpetrated by the exploitative classes watered the growth of communalism and the communal forces were able to channel this discontent for attaining their political goals.

## Conclusion

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is the saga of the human tragedy of partition. It records the pain and feelings of people who witnessed partition. Singh does not blame any one group for partition. He emphasizes the need to look at partition in the correct perspective and reconcile with the loss and pain to pursue the dreams of young India. But the thoughts and actions of the different characters of Singh's novel are influenced by the unique socio-political aspects of the time. Hence, this project through cultural materialist reading of the novel attempts to reveal the ethos of the period.

The theory of cultural materialism is aimed at a historical understanding of the text. The cultural materialists focus on how the material conditions of a culture influences the art and literature. The cultural materialists point out the ways in which the texts reveal the economic and social realities of the time. It also reveals the dominant ideology, the ways in which the power is represented and the subversive elements within the society.

The first chapter of the project gave a brief overview of the novel. Beginning with an introduction to the author Khushwant Singh, the chapter introduced the setting, the major themes as well as a brief outline of the story. The second chapter elucidated the theory of cultural materialism with instances of its application in other literary works. It traced the development of the theory through the 1980s. The third chapter analyzed Singh's classic novel *Train to Pakistan* on the basis of the theory of cultural materialism. The fourth chapter focussed on the importance of the cultural materialist analysis of *Train to Pakistan*, and its relevance on the current social and political scenario.

A cultural materialist reading of *Train to Pakistan* presents the story of partition in multiple perspectives. Each character has a voice which is influenced by their peculiar social, political and economic circumstances. The impact of the colonial rule largely looms over every event in the story and is a separate character in itself, evident from the description of the police system, corruption, the unequal distribution of wealth, poverty and violence. The project emphasized on how the rise of communalism helped certain groups to hide the real problems and project the unreal ones. In India, it continues to be a political tool used by the dominant groups to establish control over the economic resources. The police administration is also scrutinized because of its tendency to be easily influenced by certain privileged groups. The project also focused on the individual's role in shaping history. Jugga and Iqbal are two individuals who are very different from each other but united by their reluctance to surrender to the whims of the authority. They subvert the authority and provide the hope of a fair and just future.

The cultural materialist analysis not only put forward the historical significance of the work but the various cultural and economic trends of the time which are no less relevant today. The attempt to delve deeply into the ways in which the characters behave in their peculiar social and economic circumstances and the clashes between their social and economic aspirations helps us to understand the different players in the partition in a new and enlightened perspective. Not just that the history makes us think. It can help us to find out the root of our present problems and at the same time it gives us valuable insights into the future. *Train to Pakistan* is, therefore a very relevant work to be read and understood in the period of such sharp polarization in our society.

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