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## Partition: A Study of Khushwant Singh & Chaman Nahal's Selected Novels

**Ms. Jayshri Ramnath Chopade**

*Research Student, Department of English, Deogiri College Aurangabad (M.S), India*

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### ABSTRACT

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The present research paper aims at a study of select partition novels, i.e. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956); Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975). These novels have been written by writers belonging to different religions, regions and cultures. They have been written in different languages i.e. English and Hindi. They have been published during different decades of post-partition times. The writer's mind-set is a product of society and his background. Thus, the said writers' ways of dealing with the theme of partition, in the said novels, are likely to be different from each other. The study of selected English novels and Hindi novels treating the same theme i.e. the theme of partition brings forth the similarities and dissimilarities in their treatment of the same theme and their way of looking at the partition trauma. Thus, it gives a comprehensive idea about the partition of Indian sub-continent as delineated by the select writers in select novels. The present research work is limited to the study of the selected English and Hindi novels

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### 1. Introduction

India is unique country in the world by various things. In that cultural, historical, geographical, political are some aspects. It is consider that India has oldest and greatest history in the world. But among that India is known to world these days because of India and Pakistan issue. Terrorism which spread in Indian subcontinent is also vital subject for world. If we think up to roots of these problems, it reaches us to pre independence period and major thing is 'the partition' which is done in 1947. In 1947 India got freedom from British empires and Pakistan become a new nation apart from India. The partition wasn't the easy subject for India and even for Pakistan. Even after 70 years of independent. Both nations are failed to recover from this event. In those days common people were suffering from such a big Pathetic incidents.

The present research synopsis is based on the theme of Partition of India and its effects on the life of common people that figures up in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal. India was under the rule of British and when it attained freedom in 1947, it was divided into India and Pakistan. The Partition had a political and strategic backdrop and historians and writers argue that the sentiments of the common people were not taken into consideration. As a result, the migration led to one of the largest ever migration on the earth. There were large numbers of killings, murders, abductions, kidnappings, rapes, fires etc. Atrocities on women and the children created a humanitarian situation. People were divided on the religious grounds and the communal harmony was completely disrupted.

Indian English literature since its inception held a mirror to the Indian society. It always shows cased the communal or patriotic issues in its rich variety. No wonder that the aftermath of the partition provided a variety of themes to the writers and thinkers. The present study deals with trauma of partition with reference to the novels of Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal. It unfolds the political, economical, cultural, sociological and communal aspects of the tragedy.

The principal object of the study is to examine the real reasons and causes of partition and look into some of the intricacies embedded therein. Hence, the protagonists here are common men. Displacement is not a recent phenomenon in human life. Since the prehistoric days, human beings had to move from one place to another due to food, shelter, natural calamities etc. Civilized people lived in small groups, clusters and towns. This led to the feeling of unity and better organization of human life. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, nationalism emerged as a reaction to British imperialism. The great revolutions thwarted the unjust rule and gave the world a new ideology of equality, fraternity and liberty. The American War of Independence, The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution furthered focused on the human welfare.

As a corollary to this, countries in the East also began to articulate their aspiration for freedom which was first turned a deaf ear by the colonial

powers. In India, for example, the intense struggle led by M. K. Gandhi and awkward situation due to the World War II forced the British to vacate India. However, it was not an easy process at all. Already, the Hindus and the Muslims had claimed their separate nations. The British spent a few years in diplomatic negotiations by deputing their learned officers, but to no avail. The partition became just indispensable. At last, two nations, India and Pakistan came into existence in August 1947. In the border regions, the situation went from bad to worse. People were butchered like animals. Huge exodus of migrating population had to face many difficulties. Children were killed, women were raped and people were stabbed on religious grounds. Literature, being a mirror of human life, reflected this immense human tragedy. Bapsi Sidhwa, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal write about various aspects of this largest even human displacement in their novels. In the context of today's state of affairs, it seems that the intensity of this problem has not subsided, its aftermath is worrying. So the problem is worth studying.

Khushwant Singh is one of the greatest authors of Indian history of literature. He is noted for his realistic vein. He was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1915 at Haldi in West Punjab, the now a part of Pakistan. He has expressed the trauma of partition from his literary work. His partition novel 'Train to Pakistan' is master piece and he received the Grove India Fiction Prize for it. He has depicted relationship of Sikh and Muslim in the novel. He has employed a large number of symbols to articulate the trauma of partition. The following of his novel have been selected in this study.

#### 1. *Train to Pakistan*

Chaman Nahal is also very prominent writer as far as the theme of partition is concerned. He was born in 1927 in Sialkot then a part of India. His master piece 'Azadi' was published in 1975. It deals with the traumatic and tragic events arising out of the division. Chaman Nahal received India's prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for 'Azadi' in year of 1977. He was also winner of Federation of Indian Publishers award in the same year. This novel focused on a Hindu family who suffered from the tragic incident of partition. His love for the Gandhian philosophy led him to write '*Gandhi Quartet*'. The present research study has selected the following novel.

#### 1. *Azadi*

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## 2 Objectives

1. To study the condition prevailing in India before and during the independence as reflected in the novels of Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal.
2. To assess the struggle of people during the years of partition in the select novels.
3. To unfold the Indian complexities of Indian politics and role of British in the novels.
4. To understand the psychology of the characters that emerges in the novels.

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## 3 Hypothesis

1. The study of this research work would be depending on the analysis method for the text.
2. It would begin with collecting data from different resources.
3. The research would be analyzed in one manner from beginning to the end.
4. In this way, finding of the research can be found.

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## 4 Methodology

Textual interpretation methodology is used for this research work. The selected work has been analyzed on perspective of Partition of India by different angles. It is a study that tries to describe the causes of partition, the historical situations, the political strategies, the religious complexity, the aftermath and the traumatic state of common folk.

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## 5 Limitations

The research work is focuses on the Indian subcontinent in the face of partition. The present study is based on selected novels of Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal.

### Khushwant Singh

1. *Train to Pakistan, New Delhi, Penguin Books, 2007.*

### Chaman Nahal

#### 1. *Azadi*

Other than this, the secondary sources like research journals, articles, blogs, interviews and critical works were studied in order to build a body of criticism regarding Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal.

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## 6 Result and Discussion

The results section is a section containing a description about the main findings of a research, whereas the discussion section interprets the results for readers and provides the significance of the findings. This section should not repeat the results section.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* clearly shows that people of Mano Majra were religion conscious but they were not the enemies of each other. They were made enemies by the officers like Hukum Chand who were interested in getting rid of Muslims from the areas. He did not want them to take much with them while migrating. Villagers were further agitated by the rioters from outside. They tried to poison the minds of innocent and ignorant villagers with the communal frenzy and political thoughts. Thus, the writer clearly points out that outsiders in the form of administrators and political activists were responsible for the massacre and bloodshed.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, considered the Pakistani government, army and police responsible for the massacre who did not try to handle the situation properly. The writer points out that India Government officers had their separate loyalties and selfishness, whereas the British troops were made passive during the chaotic days of partition. Communal frenzy and hatred for non-Muslim people were created by Muslim Leaguers in Sialkot. Further, the stories of atrocities on Muslims, carried out in India which were narrated by the refugees added fuel to the fire. Government's weakness has also been considered responsible for creating chaos leading to all types of atrocities on the refugees. Had the government officers remained neutral and had the British government attempted at controlling the situation, bloodshed and atrocities could have been avoided.

In *Train to Pakistan* common people were not aware of the partition and even the freedom. They had nothing to do with the creation of Pakistan. For them Mano Majra was the country. However, the differences were created by the officers like Hukum Chand, a magistrate who deliberately created a ditch between Muslims and Non-Muslims of the village to evacuate them from the village. They have been shown asking strange questions out of ignorance, about Hindustan and Pakistan. Further, a Muslim gives his opinion about freedom, when Iqbal asked them to be free. He was of the opinion that freedom was for educated people- uneducated people will always remain slaves. Earlier they were slaves of English and after independence they would be Indians or Pakistanis.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* reveals the fact that Partition meant destruction for the non-Muslim residents of Sialkot. Before the announcement of partition they were worried about the decision to divide the country and they wondered how would they divide the country. After the announcement they continuously lived in fear, menace and threatening feeling. Characters like Lala came to the conclusion after observing the chaos that India did not deserve freedom. They were of the opinion that British government was capable enough to control the situation. They were better and able rulers. For them Sialkot was the country and nation.

In Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Muslims can be considered victims of partition as the villages were evacuated after partition. They had to leave their property and escape to Pakistan against their wish and willingness. For the evacuation and involuntary migrations, government officers like Hukum Chand and their tricks can be considered responsible. Further, the communal agitators coming from outside were equally responsible for victimization of the villagers.

In Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, non-Muslim people became victims and they were made to migrate from Sialkot to India, though they had never wanted to do so. The reason behind their migration was the terrifying situations created by Muslims in Pakistan. Further, the Pakistani government, officers and forces were equally responsible for supporting the rioters. Thus, the Hindus were made victims in Muslim majority areas in Pakistan after the partition.

Chaman Nahal narrates the hardships and problems of newly migrated population in India. Their problems like relocation, loss of identity, loss of dignity have been dealt with in great details in *Azadi*. Any how the migrants adjusted and got settled in India, but with the impressions and stamps the partition trauma on their minds and hearts.

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## 7 Conclusions

Khushwant Singh, as a humanist describes the communal fire fanned by the then administrator and political activists and finally ends the novel with the humanist's note by the sacrifice of Jugga to save his fellow villagers of Muslim community. Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* describes the mismanagement leading to chaos along with the impact of partition and communal frenzy. However, finally it proves the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation as the solution for better future.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* does not show the post-partition conditions either in independent India or Pakistan. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* end with a note of humanism and advancement of characters towards becoming Universal Man, through the characters of Jugga and Lala in respective novels. Here forgiveness and reconciliations have been considered the solution of the communalism and its effects.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* laughs and satirizes communist ideology through the character of Iqbal. The writer shows Iqbal a timid political figure whose mind had been westernized and was not capable of doing anything during the partition chaos.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* shows Gandhi as a powerful and influential leader even in Pakistan. The writer praises Nehru and even British rule through the character of Lala. However, Nahal shows that due to the decision of partition people lost their trust from Congress and its leaders. They considered it as a betrayal as Congress always used to say with confidence that India would never be divided on communal basis.

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