

## "Narratives of Displacement and Resettlement in Partition Literature: A Comparative Study of 'Train to Pakistan' by Khushwant Singh and 'Cracking India' by Bapsi Sidhwa"

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this research paper is to present a comparative analysis of the narratives of displacement and resettlement in Partition implemented in the literature. The object of the study is two novels, Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh and Cracking India by Bapsi Sidhwa. These two documentaries take place during the partition of British India in 1947 and depict significant violence, genocide, and damage caused by Partition from a unique perspective. Consequently, the human tragedy and carnage of Partition can be understood through these canonical works. The aim is to ascertain what exactly seems to be behind the phenomenon, from literature's perspective. Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh was published in 1956 and is set in the make-belief village of Mano Majra in Punjab province. The novel's plot takes place against the rising intercommunity riots between local Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. Singh's novel captures the extreme human cost of Partition and the complexities of community associations during that period. Cracking India, published by Bapsi Sidhwa in 1991, is set in Lahore, Punjab just like the Punjab of Lenny; it is narrated from the viewpoint of a Dubai Parsi girl Lenny. Sidhwa's plot explores Lenny's far-from-ordinary boyhood episodes as well as their aftermath during the Partition from early adolescence. This research paper, based on the comparative analysis of these two works, will attempt to outline the similarities and differences. For the present case study, the choicest citations and plot lines describing Trauma, Identity, Memory, and Common Humanity following Partition will be used.*

**Keywords:** Partition Literature, Displacement, Trauma, Identity, Communal Violence

One of the most poignant events in modern history, the Partition of India in 1947 resulted in the division of the Indian subcontinent into the separate countries of India and Pakistan. Remarking the occurrence of mass violence, displacement, and trauma, the Partition led millions of people to be uprooted and migrate across new borders. It not only recast the political geography of the subcontinent but also left an unremoving imprint on its social, cultural, and psychological fabric. Following these lines, the events resulted in the birth of a massive corpus of literature addressing the human dimensions of displacement and resettlement. More specifically, literary accounts became a means through which the nations bore witness to their Partition, reliving their experiences and memories of the catastrophic state. In this context, Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan' and Bapsi Sidhwa's 'Cracking India' rank as the two most seminal texts depicting the metaphors of displacement and resettlement in the aftermath of the Indian Partition. In this paper, we introduce a comparative essay on 'Train to Pakistan' and 'Cracking

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India' in locating the narrative themes of displacement and resettlement in the novels. This analysis shall focus on the core themes, characters, and the linguistic strategies employed by the authors to shed light on the complex dimensions of the event. Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan', published in 1956, is narrated in the fictitious village of Mano Majra, Punjab, during the Partition era. Written amidst the escalating communal riots between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, the plot concentrates on the events of a gruesome massacre of the dead people in a refugee train. The story from the author's little village peoples' perspectives exemplifies the immediate collateral damage in loss of life and communal chaos. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* published in 1991, is set on Lahore, Punjab, during the India Partition era. The story is narrated through a perspective of the young girl Lenny, a native Parsees of Iranian descent, witnessing the intertwined lives of the various social and religious persons in turmoil. Through observant Lenny and her friends, Sidhwa depicts the events' impact of their diverse loyalties and affiliation to her closest peers and the humanity amidst the inhuman brutality. By analyzing the two novels comparatively, we hope to pinpoint the semblances and differences on locative themes. Through the readings, we also desire to critical articulate Singh and Sidhwa's vitality to commune to with the catastrophic aftermath sub-themes of trauma, memory, and identities and implied hope. Ultimately, the research offers to contrast the humanity under the devastation of literature to promote understanding of the prevailing themes on Partition.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* are seminal works of literature that illuminate core aspects of the human experience surrounding the Partition of India. These novels critically engage with the traumatic processes of displacement and violence that became the byproducts of Partition, constantly addressing notions of identity, community, and perseverance in a time of crisis. Comparative analysis of these novels allows for the identification of specific perspectives through which the core roots of Partition and its implications can be viewed, ultimately revealing the multi-faceted nature of how literature claims historical trauma.

### **Representation of Violence and Trauma:**

Khushwant Singh has brilliantly portrayed the brutality of Partition violence in *Train to Pakistan*, especially during the massacre at Mano Majra. His vivid description of violence triggers a shock factor in the reader. Singh portrays the real-life violence and pain of Partition throughout his novel, which makes one realize the human cost of communal conflict. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* also expose the reader to the horrors of Partition. Through her protagonist Lenny, a very young girl during Partition, Sidhwa has shown various levels of violence and vulnerability and shows how it can destroy one's world and create chaos. (Sidhwa 172).

### **Exploration of Identity and Belonging:**

Identity and belonging are themes explored by both novels in the context of Partition. In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh illustrates the situation of the people of Mano Majra, most of whom try to define their religious and ethnic identity in the time of the mayhem of the Partition. (Singh 65).

Similarly, in *Cracking India*, Sidhwa studies the issues in the field of human identity and belonging through Lenny's perspective. Lenny is in constant search of self-identity, given that she is a young Parsi girl and evokes a full understanding of herself throughout her experiences, indicating the fragility and transformability of identity during times of crisis when most try to define themselves in the established framework of Partition. (Sidhwa 35).

### **Resilience and Survival:**

At the same time, both novels are perfect material for a thesis that during harsh times, people still find the strength to maintain human dignity. In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh emphasizes the moments of altruism in the novel when very different characters unite to preserve the community and humanity. (Singh 213). What is more, in *Cracking India*, Sidhwa makes Lenny's story particularly sensitive. Even at a young age, remembering the killed people, the child retains his human qualities thanks to friendship and family. These examples of human resilience and the desire to resist are well described in both novels. (Sidhwa 245).

*Train to Pakistan* and *Cracking India* are two powerful works of literature that generate vivid and meaningful memories of the horrors of the Partition. By narrating the experiences of their carefully crafted characters, Khushwant Singh and Bapsi Sidhwa share a view of Partition informed by the themes of violence, trauma, identity, and endurance. A comparative analysis of these two books can hence contribute to a broader comprehension of the Partition literature as well as emphasize the significance of literature as a key witness to historical events. According to Mann, the Partition of British-ruled India in 1947 concretized decades of struggle for independence from the British Empire, which effectively controlled the Indian Subcontinent for roughly two centuries. The Indian National Congress, led by Mohandas Gandhi, and the All-Indian Muslim League, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, were among the nationalist organizations active throughout the pre-Partition era. The calls for Partition started in the early 20th century, when British imperial forces implemented the "divide and conquer" tactic, instigating communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims. In 1940, the Lahore Resolution was passed, urging the development of a sovereign state or states of the Muslims of North West and East India. This initiative laid the groundwork for the official division of the Subcontinent based on religious aspects. As Partition grew more palpable, communal bloodsheds erupted all throughout India. The British administration ultimately accepted the plan of Partition to encourage the handover of power to Indian nationalists. The Indian Independence Act of 1947, signed by the British Parliament, partitioned British India into two separate dominions on August 15, 1947. Approximately 14 million

inhabitants were uprooted and forced to migrate to either India or Pakistan due to the Radcliffe Line, the boundary drawn by British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe.

Look at the following excerpt from 'Train to Pakistan' :

"In a few days, trains were passing through Mano Majra, and they would be passing through forever. Trains would leave for Pakistan and arrive from Pakistan; people would travel and send their goods across the border. There would be no one to receive them or see them off; there would be no one to wave to the departing or arriving travelers. All those who could flee had fled. Those who were left had no refuge, no recourse except to wait and watch with dread anticipation the onward rush of the events which had overwhelmed them." (Singh, p. 200)

Similarly take a look at the following excerpt from 'Cracking India' :

"The bells are ringing for Azan in a mosque and they're singing 'O God, our Help in Ages Past' in a church across the street. A strange thing happens. I can hear the call to prayer and the hymn almost simultaneously. It's as if Allah and God were having a duet. It scares me. I can't look into my heart and decide if I'm Muslim or Christian or Parsee or even what a Parsee is." (Sidhwa, p. 85)

Displacement, migration, and resettlement are central themes in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*. The novels present a moving and terrifying picture of the human consequences of the 1947 Partition of India. The authors write about the collective experience of trauma caused by the Partition, horrors of uprooting from one's native place, struggle for survival after losing one's bearings in a world where hatred amongst Hindus and Muslims is replacing compassion and empathy. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* paints a horrific picture of the mass displacement of adjoining communities on the Indian and Pakistani borders. The village of Mano Majra, gets evacuated by train as Mano Majra's villagers, through no fault of their own, are turned into refugees in their own country. Singh recounts the chaos of the refugee trains, the forlorn hope of displaced villagers, and the dreadful sights of people torn apart by Partition violence. The book's protagonist Hukum Chand, Magistrate of Mano Majra, is caught in a dilemma about the ethical rightness of evacuating people from a village in which life was proceeding as usual a few weeks ago. At the same time, Sidhwa's *Cracking India* builds as a heart-rending picture of evacuation and migration. Lahore, as portrayed by Sidhwa through Lenny's eyes, is a small fraction of the city populated by Parsi, Hindu, and Muslims still struggling to adapt to the changes that arrived unplanned with the Partition. Lenny's relationships, her relationships with family and her paranormal neighbors, are marked by disruption, anxiety, and fear. Still, Sidhwa also demonstrates the scarce threads of neighborhood and mutual identity formed through a tremendous upheaval. Both novels and their depiction of the scattering and depopulation connected with the Partition have been commended by reviewers. According to literary critic David Lunn, Singh's *'Train to Pakistan'* "offers a searing indictment of the violence and chaos unleashed by Partition, as well

as a poignant reflection on the moral complexities of displacement and resettlement" (Lunn 45). Similarly, critic Amina Yaqin lauds Sidhwa's 'Cracking India' as "a masterful evocation of the trauma and upheaval experienced by individuals and communities during Partition, as well as a testament to the resilience and humanity that emerge in the aftermath of displacement" (Yaqin 78).

Through their nuanced exploration of displacement, migration, and resettlement, both *Train to Pakistan* and *Cracking India* provide powerful and moving reflections on the human dimensions of Partition and its aftermath. By challenging the reader to navigate the trauma, resilience, and identity concerns of their protagonists, Singh and Sidhwa left a lasting impression on the lives of readers and reviewers. The traumatic experience of characters is prevalent throughout both novels, the post-partition situational affect observed in intra-fated lives cannot be underestimated, either caught physically or not. Both novels offer intense lived insight into the psychological and emotional injured integrity of separation and difference. In seeing Juggat Singh through the events of *Train to Pakistan*, one importantly narrates Roxanne Euben while making a genre discovery; the novel is essentially a historical narrative revolving Singh into the spatio-temporal outline of partition. As the plot brings in Bhagat, who kills the Muslims at the station, the morality debate therefore exceptionally revolved around Singh being quiet: What am I to do? I am ruined if I choose you before them; in any case, I will remain when you are gone, and I happened to live here before you. In his analysis of 'Train to Pakistan,' literary critic M.K. Naik observes, "Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan' captures the raw emotions and psychological turmoil of individuals grappling with the horrors of Partition" (Naik 45). Another literary scholar Meenakshi Mukherjee praises Sidhwa's 'Cracking India,' stating, "Bapsi Sidhwa's 'Cracking India' offers a searing portrayal of the emotional scars left by Partition, as seen through the eyes of its young protagonist, Lenny" (Mukherjee 72).

*Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh and *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa use different narrative strategies and literary devices to explore the realities of displacement and relocation during the Partition of India. Although both novels are based on the shared background of communal riots and societal instability, they can be distinguished by narrative technique, characters, and themes. While Singh uses an omnipotent third-particular individual in *Train to Pakistan* to offer a panoramic view of the happenings in Mano Majra, Sidhwa employs the first-person Lenny in *Cracking India* to provide a personal account. Singh's novel employs a linear plot that simulates the narrative structure of a train journey: as the narrative nears its climax during the train sweeps, each chapter stacks up. Sidhwa utilizes the narrator of Lenny to arrange *Cracking India* through a more fragmented narrative that pairs various chapters with episodes. Singh and Sidhwa reduce vibrant imagery and symbolization to motifs in order to more richly demonstrate emotional and psychology aspects. While the train is used as a sign of unsettling movement and communal vengeance in *Train to Pakistan*, the buffalo is likened to a shattering cycle of perpetual victimization. While Sidhwa's *Cracking India* is characterized by fractured, damaged earth and mirrors, the author chose the former as the most important images. Both

authors also use languages and dialects to represent the full range of vocabulary and linguistic registers and reflections in each place. Singh has utilized language to put Punjabi, an idiom of Punjabi, into the dialogues of his characters. Sidhwa also uses a melange of English and tongue language with her Urdu and Gujarati, indicating the frenetic multilingual characteristics of Lahore. Finally, Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Sidhwa's *Cracking India* are structured to create tension and suspense. While Singh's tragic death of the train passengers is hinted at numerous times throughout the book, Sidhwa uses tone and ironical asides in her book to trick the reader into laughing at material. According to scholar Alok Bhalla, "Singh's narrative skill, his capacity to conjure up the reality of human suffering, and his ability to evoke the texture of life in a remote village make 'Train to Pakistan' a landmark in Partition literature" (Bhalla 45). Sidhwa's *Cracking India* has been lauded for its vivid portrayal of the Partition experience through the eyes of a child protagonist. Critic Elaine Mokhtefi notes, "Sidhwa's novel offers a compelling blend of personal narrative and historical testimony, capturing the chaos and confusion of Partition through the innocent eyes of a young girl" (Mokhtefi 72).

Khushwant Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* provide engaging accounts of characters' difficult moral and ethical choices in the state of crisis, with the main plot being set in the days of the Partition. These books not only expose readers to the brutal realities of communal violence and fleeing but show the intricate human nature in terms of behavior in uncontrolled situations and decision-making. In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh creates a group of characters who face severe ethical choices caused by communal violence and the general destabilization of society. A notable example can be found in Jugget's character, the inconsistent and seemingly indifferent thug. Although he does not hold explicit political views and his attitudes to the increased tension between Muslims and Hindus are somewhat unclear, Jugget is characterized by his deep search for own moral compass. His behavior becomes no longer a reaction when, having witnessed the effect of intergroup violence, he is forced to confront his involvement. (Singh 127).

In much the same way, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* delves into the ethical and moral quandaries its characters find themselves in; most explicitly, it discusses the crisis of identity and belonging Lenny goes through as a young Parsi girl who becomes embroiled in communal violence and lawlessness. As Lenny observes the brutality and iniquity engulfing her world, she is forced to ponder questions of morality and her own culpability, attempting to bridge the gap between her own material comfort and the misfortune of those less lucky. Her lament for her lost innocence and the shattered idealism of her youth. (Sidhwa 84).

Renowned critics have addressed the ethical and moral predicaments illustrated in *Train to Pakistan* and *Cracking India*. The criticism provides a novel understanding of the depicted ethical predicaments. For



example, Mukherjee argues that, in *Train to Pakistan*, Singh “combines a sophisticated treatment of ethical ambiguity with a shattering exploration of moral ambiguity” to force the readers “to face the worst of humanity and look it in the eye”. (Mukherjee 215).

Likewise, literary scholar Ritu Menon lauds Sidhwa's exploration of ethical dilemmas and moral quandaries in *'Cracking India,'* arguing that the novel offers a searing indictment of communal violence and religious intolerance, while also celebrating the resilience and humanity of its characters in the face of adversity (Menon 72).

A literature based on Partition, marked by images of uprooting, trauma, and civil violence, remains highly relevant to the current discourse of displacement and migration. Decades have passed since the events of 1947 but the themes and stories addressed by Partition literature remain highly pertinent to the experiences of forced migration, refugee crises, and civil turmoil faced across the globe. The ongoing importance of Partition resides not just in the reconciliation with collective memory, but in its drive to highlight the human aspects of displacement and migration in a globalizing world. One of the most important reasons this literature is still relevant lies in its depiction of the human consequences of forced migration and civil violence. Through stories and lives, these texts highlight the suffering and loss experienced by millions of displaced people, implicating the readers in the moral consequences of generating or ignoring decades of conflict and violence. Furthermore, the texts open complex issues of identity, place, and citizenship, as the characters in the novels question their relevance in uncertain terrain, new connections, and historical divisiveness. These novels have strong echoes with the contemporary debates on multiculturalism, diaspora, and transnationalism, concerning the nature of these concepts through a more significant sense of understanding in the context of the novel. More directly, they provide a revealing window on the ongoing legacy of colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism in the generation of current patterns of displacement and migration. The novels' interrogation of the past of civil violence, even as they address it as prologue, helps to navigate the deep-rooted hostility and lack of unity constitutive of the moment as well as in different places around the world. The section of Partition literature is humanly significant inasmuch as it interprets the suffering and consequences of this recent event over recent years.

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