

Narrative Technique used by Khushwant Singh in Train to Pakistan

The narrative of the novel pertains to the inhabitants of Mano Majra, a little village dependent on trains for its daily necessities. Similar to neighbouring communities, the inhabitants of this community remain indifferent to the alarming reports of violence and displacement. The village comprises Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and quasi-Christians, and has thrived in this cooperative condition for centuries. Due to the heterogeneous population, the hamlet operates on mutual cooperation rather than conflict and religious or political division. The inhabitants rely on each other for existence, and this interdependence fosters a deceptive sense of security.

The people of Mano Majra experience a startling transformation with the arrival of the first ghost train. The villagers are astonished at the death toll and the silent train traversing the tracks. Individuals cease their labor to observe from roofs as the train passes. Upon the arrival of the second ghost train in the village, the villagers' lives are further transformed as they are compelled to assist in interring the deceased passengers prior to the onset of the monsoon season. The directive to assist in burying the passengers presents a startling development for the townspeople, but the situation becomes profoundly tangible and unreal when the Muslim residents are commanded to flee the area without delay. Echoing the death trains of the Holocaust during World War II, Muslims are divested of their belongings and permitted to retain only what they can transport.

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The remaining villagers, comprising Sikhs and Hindus, are then informed of an impending assault on the forthcoming train to Pakistan, and that they will participate in the attack. The troops will initiate the assault with gunfire, followed by the villagers concluding with clubs and spears. The villagers come to the grim realization that the forthcoming train to Pakistan will transport the Muslims from their community, including their former friends and neighbors. Train to Pakistan becomes increasingly personal as Jugga, a Sikh pickpocket, realizes that his betrothed, a Muslim, is among the train's passengers. This crisis of faith and belief prompts the narrative to examine the heart's capacity in confronting love, loss, and terror. The ethnic cleansing did not commence with the arrival of the initial trains in Mano Majra. Jugga, despite being a thief and complicit in the murders, must now determine whether to continue this unfounded violence, which the villagers have come to accept, or to rise above this prevailing mindset and denounce the brutality.