

Defamiliarization of A Historical Event in *Train to Pakistan*

Ms. Tripti Tripathi

Literature gives us a picture of life not the picture that is actually (historically) true but a picture that has its own kind of truth a 'truth' that includes important elements that science from its very nature, is forced to leave out. The truth of literature takes the form, not of abstract statement, but of a concrete and dramatic presentation which may allow us to experience imaginatively the "lives" meaning of a piece of life. (1964; 16)

There are close relations between history and literature. Literature many a time deals with history. Literature provides all sorts of charm and also deals with history unfold the past, before the readers as well. It acquaints their readers with what happened in the past. It appeals to its readers and gives a unique form of knowledge. The knowledge and truth that literature present, are different from the knowledge and truth, which are provided by history. Literature presents no abstract statements. But a concrete presentation is given by it, which is dramatic in value, which attracts its readers. It also enables the readers to have an imaginative experience of life that creates aesthetic pleasure in the hearts of readers. That aesthetic pleasure differentiates literature from history. As Stopford Brooke quoted:

Writing is not literature unless it gives to the readers a pleasure which arises not only from the things said, but from the way in which they are said; and that pleasure is only given when the words are carefully or curiously or beautifully put together into sentences. (2007; 3)

So literature is a written work which has artistic value and beautiful expression. History has the true account of past events, but in the consequences of lacking of imaginative artistic values, it is not counted as a literature. Novels, short stories, poems, dramas and so on are very important. They reveal the awareness of the writers of the things, which is happening around him. They revive and sustain the interest of readers.

Modern Indian writers richly present the historical events and incidents in their works. And Khushwant Singh is one of them. The incident of partition on 1947 appealed him and enforced him to form a novel entitled 'Train to Pakistan'. Through this novel fact is presented in the way of fancy. It has the background of communal riots at the time of partition, 1947, of which he himself was a witness. The novel 'Train to Pakistan' gives a most graphic, vivid and a realistic account of communal riots, which took place at the time of partition of India on 1947. Such qualities have made this novel a literature and not as the part of history.

The known is made unknown by certain devices and these devices are used to defamiliarize the familiar. Thus defamiliarization takes readers from the known to the unknown. By using it, literature becomes effective and its impact on the readers is more because of its sound psychological principles. It maintains the interest of readers in spite of being familiar with the event. For instance, known historical elements, are presented in an attractive and appealing way by Khushwant Singh through 'Train to Pakistan'. In context of partition most of people know what partition is and what happens during that period. In fact, it has been repeated over and over again that it needs no introduction. But, 'Train to Pakistan' describes

it in a different way which makes the very event new and unfamiliar. Such literariness defamiliarizes the event by presenting a text artistically. A history book gives the raw material i.e. what happened during a particular time period is shaped artistically and it turns out to be where readers feel to be unfamiliar. A historian gives information and by reading it people feel boredom, where as a novelist presents same information in such a way that stimulates reader's interest and try to sustain the attention of theirs. A novelist gives almost life to description. He uses his pen of imagination on the canvas of Indian History. A novelist expresses history in such a humanistic way that touches the reader's emotion. Dr. Vikas Sharma expresses his views about it ingeniously

The novelist doesn't confine himself only to starting the 'cold truth' of a historian. He concentrates on depicting the 'hot truth' of an artist. The artist takes care to maintain the delicate balance between the artistic content and history and politics. It enables him to produce authentic articles. Indian writers looked to history as the storehouse of untapped stories. (2007; 4)

Thus through the quality of defamiliarisation, (as rusion formadism) a novelist presents known thing in a fanciful way and that known thing being modified, provides newness to its readers. This is the beauty of literature that increases the number of readers which a Historian can't gain. Khushwant Singh also has done the same that's why he has become so popular. Khushwant Singh created a symbolic place named Mano Majra, a small place situated about half a mile away from the great river in Punjab 'sutlaj'. There were only three bricks buildings in the whole village. One of which was a house of

money-lender and the other two were Hindu temple and Mosque. The rest of the houses were flat-roofed and made up of mud with low-walled courtyard. Seventy families were living in this village. Out of which only Ram Lal the money-lender was Hindu and rest were Sikhs and Muslims. Sikhs were the owner of the land and Muslims were living on the rent. Sweepers never belonged to any religion but Muslims claimed them as their own people. When American visitors used to come in the village these sweepers wore Khaki sola topes to entertain them. Thus Khushwant Singh created a clean picture of a well-managed village which had been untouched by violence. For the novelist, it is important and a challenging task to set the readers' mind on the background of situation so that readers can develop their charm to reading the novel. His fictional village also has a railway station. And the life of villagers was fixed with the timing of the trains. The explanation of the village is very foundation of the novel which makes the novelist successful to fix the mood of readers. Though the imagination power of novelist is very high throughout the novel, even he remains true to the history till the end. Mano Majra the place was once very calm and harmonious but never remained the same till the end. Gradually the communal harmony was replaced by communal disharmony. How great is the creativity of novelist that he maintained his honesty in explaining the reality. It could be seen in following cited example which a historian V. P. Kanitkar remarks:

...Forty-eight hours over 5000 people died in Calcutta. These communal riots later spread to Nokhali, Bihar and Punjab. (1987; 10)

Here the idea is given that how communal riot spread gradually one place to another. The

same information is given by Khushwant Singh in his novel in a very decorative way.

From Calcutta, the riots spread North and East and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar where Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullah roamed the Punjab and frontier province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. (T;1)

Any historian has not created such atmosphere which goes ahead and adds the elements of imagination to event without leaving whole and Sole of the event. But Khushwant Singh has infused life to the incident with his wit. So it is clearly understood that a historical account gives just a fact but a literature expresses the same in a decorative language where a reader feels pleasure. So both descriptions concoct a clear image of a same event in two different scenarios.

This is known to all that at the time of partition, the train became like 'moving graveyard'. The train used to bring and carry back dead bodies from Pakistan to India and India to Pakistan. Khushwant Singh presented the same scene in different way. As he used the word *Ghost*, the symbol of darkness, the novelist gave a pictorial description of the train which took dead bodies across the borders. He also used some phrases metaphorically such as 'Red tongue of Flame', 'A Faint Acrid Smell of Searing flush'. The red tongue of flame leaped into the black sky. Such scene had been interpreted by Vasant Shahane beautifully:

The Red tongue of Flame symbolizes the poisonous and aggressive nature of the snake and show how, in the heat of destructive lunacy men turn into poisonous reptiles. The distant fires

brought “a joint acrid smell of searing flesh”, which caused a sense of horror among the village When the red tongue of flam leaped in the black sky everyone knows the horrible reality of the massacre. (1972, 71)

Besides, Khushwant Singh draws the picture of some pathetic scene which creates the clear idea about the incident, where readers feel that they are the eye witness of the moment.

There were women and children huddled in the corner, their eyes delighted with horror, their mouth still open as if their shrieks had just then become violence. Some of them did not have a scratch on their bodies and wall of compartment looking in terror at the empty windows through which must have come shots spears and spikes. There were lavatories jammed with corpses of young man who had muscled their was to comparative safety. And all the nauseating smells of purifying flash, faces and urine the very thought made vomit... and partition brought nothing but fortune fears and tragedy. (T; 85)

The acrimonious battle taken place between India and Pakistan, the erstwhile brothers, after independence, could be best understood only by reading of historical books, related historical literatures and the concerned people who faced the unpleasant event of partition. This knowledge of history also paves the way for world peace as one would eventually understand that world peace can not be achieved without mutual cooperation. Unfortunately, these earstwhile brothers did not show their mutual cooperation and fought against each other. But as a matter of fact, people of contemporary India were not

ready to have India divided. They showed the feeling of brotherhood. They were not ready to leave their native place only for the sake of community. Khushvant Singh writes:

What have we to do with Pakistan?
We were born here so were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers. Imam Baksh broke down. Meet Singh clasped him in his arms and began to sob. Several of people started crying quietly and blowing their noses. (T; 126)

The Lambardar spoke, “yes you are our brothers. As far as we are concerned, you and your children and your grandchildren can live here as long as you like. If any one speaks rudely to you, your wives or your children, it will be us first and our wives and children before your single hair of your head is touched. (T; 126)

Here the clear distinction performed in terms of language, can be seen by these expression. In- fact the literature gives the sensitive beauty to the expression. Such pictorial description attracts the readers and takes them to unknown, what is already known. The word formation had been described conventionally, so that readers find newness in it. Meanwhile, the very text also talks about love and romance. Khushwant Sing here does not ignore the very charm of novel. It is the beauty of novel that two paradoxical scenes go on simultaneously. Communal riots between Hindu and Muslim and Sikh were on its zenith, on the other side a love story of Muslim girl and Hindu boy was moving vis- a vis. This aspect gives life to the otherwise dry historical accounts of the partition of India. This artistic quality makes khushwant Singh different from Historians and makes his work history cum a

literature. Moreover, the story doesn't deal with only love and romance, but also sacrifice. A lover, from different community, sacrifices his life for his beloved who belongs to a different religious community. The train which goes Pakistan bearing Muslims, are living in India, is to be attacked by a couple of selfish so called Hindus. The train was also bearing Nooran. Juggat Singh Comes to know the plot and goes immediately to spoil the entire plan and he could succeed in his deed. But he has to sacrifice his life. The immolation of his life has nothing to do with establishing non- violence. On the contrary, it only for saving the life of his Beloved, who is pregnant. Whatever the reason is, he save many a life. His sacrifice has been described in the novel:

... only a thin tough strand remained. He went at it with the knife, and then with his teeth. The engine was almost on him. There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan.

Thus Khushwant Singh makes his readers emotional by showing the death of Juggat Singh. The combination of a tragic love story and the pathetic fact of 1947 with its artistic description makes the novel a memorable piece of Literature and this Defamiliarization, as Russian Formalism, has been used as the tool in terms of the presentation of language, By using this tool the writer brings readers known to unknown. And at the end, It can be said that khushwant singh , the most significant novelist, short stories writer, a brilliant historian and journalist, had taken pains to keep his imagination well within the course of facts and formed the very famous book Train to Pakistan. At the end, this paper ends with lines

of Vasant A. Shahane for the novel Train to Pakistan:

Train to Pakistan, therefore, is no mere realistic tract, nor is it a bare record of actual events. On the contrary, it is a creative rendering of the real, and it reaffirms the novelist's faith in man and renews artistically his avowed allegiance to the humanistic ideal. (1972; 104)

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**Asst. Professor of English
DDE, JVBI, Ladnun (Raj)**