

# Train To Pakistan - A review

Via [Samagra Sharma](#) by SAMAGRA SHARMA • Aug 28, 2022



Train to Pakistan is the first book that has moved me enough to write a review about it. I was in tears at the end of the book, my stomach churned with melancholy, and there was rage and sadness and only one question, Why? The book is set against the backdrop of partition in a village called Mano Majra, located along the Indo-Pak border. So, in essence, it's a partition tale.

I wanted to read this after I saw Ms. Marvel. There were a lot of references to the horrors of partition in the show and a particular emphasis on the train journey that Kamala's great grandparents take to Pakistan. These train journeys were the most horrifying elements of partition, as they often reached their destination as ghost trains. Not a single person alive, the bogies compressed with dead bodies, some shot, some stabbed, some raped, and some peed upon. Doctor Who, one of the most popular British sci-fi shows, has also dedicated a couple of episodes to partition. These shows going into so much detail made me realise how little I knew of partition, and then I asked a few bibliophiles for recommendations, and this one book stood out.

Partition is painted in our history books just as a historical event, analysed only at the macro level - millions died - that's all the history books say. But Khushwant Singh paints all the gory details in this book. It's a classic journey where the reader falls in love in the first half and has to see their love brutally murdered in the second. The book starts calmly. Khushwant Singh makes you live the beauty of rustic India. You begin to feel at home and feel the freedom of living in the Indian countryside.

You fall in love with the weaver's dusky daughter, and you start to feel like Mano Majra is your village and that dacoit Juggat Singh (Jugga Daku) is your overprotective elder brother. You start getting an urge to visit the place, and you feel that when you visit, you will see many familiar faces and that they will greet and talk to you as if they are your own.

Khushwant's merit is in the details. He paints the hospitality that rural India is famous for. He elaborates how Sahib Raj in India replaced British Raj and that freedom meant almost nothing to these village folks. He brings out the purity of a rustic romance. I think I was more turned on by the little romantic scenes in Mano Majra than the entire BDSM drama in 50 shades of grey.

Khushwant Singh gets you into the routines of the people of Mano Majra and then, as you were about to get cozy, jerks you into the horrors of partition. Train to Pakistan highlights how each person faced a unique dilemma - on one side, you had your religion, and on the other, you had your neighbor aunt who took care of you when your parents were away - on one side, there is love and on the other, duty.

The scenes of violence painted to their last detail bring out an unearthly gore. The nonchalant tone while describing the brutal gangrapes and the indifferent stabbings will give you a stomachache. The book makes you realise that our current liberty was earned in exchange for a million horrors. I recommend this book to every Indian as it is a tale of a painful forgotten past, and it is up to us to make their sacrifices worthwhile.

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