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1947 Partition and 1948 Integration: Comparative Study of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel*

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Abstract:

The Partition of India in 1947 and the Integration of Hyderabad in 1948 were historic events marred by violence, relocation, and sociopolitical upheaval, leaving indelible marks on the nation's collective memory. This study compares Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* with Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel*, examining the depiction of historical trauma, regional identity, and moral quandaries. While the former uses Mano Majra as a microcosm to universalize the human tragedy of the Partition, the latter tells a localized story about Hyderabad's cultural complications amid political integration. The study uses postcolonial and trauma theories to investigate how communal violence disrupts individual and collective identities, the role of regional and cultural specificities in crafting narratives, and the protagonists' navigation of moral quandaries in the face of chaos. The approach reveals theme

parallels, such as loss of harmony and resilience, while emphasizing regional variances, providing a comprehensive view of literature's response to historical crises.

Keywords: 1947 Partition, 1948 Police Action, Hyderabad, Integration, Operation Polo, Postcolonial, trauma, memory.

Objectives:

1. To contrast the novels' depictions of the sociopolitical circumstances of the 1947 Partition and the 1948 Integration.
2. To examine how communal violence, identity, and morality are portrayed, comparing and contrasting thematically.
3. To investigate how the stories are shaped by regional and cultural uniqueness.
4. To analyze how the novels' portrayal of historical events relates to postcolonial and trauma theories.
5. To address gaps in the comparative literary analyses of these two significant historical occurrences.

Research Questions:

1. What effects does communal violence have on individual and social identities, as shown in the novels?
2. How do cultural and geographic distinctiveness influence the stories?
3. how do the novels' characters resolve their moral quandaries in sociopolitical turmoil?
4. How do postcolonial and trauma theories improve our comprehension of the books?
5. What thematic similarities and differences exist across the novels?

Introduction:

Two significant historical moments—the 1947 Partition of India and the 1948 Integration of Hyderabad—represent intricate sociopolitical shifts with enduring effects. The Partition represented the split of British India into the independent states of India and Pakistan, while the Hyderabad Integration signified the strengthening of India's territorial unity. Despite being a year apart, both incidents highlight the difficult process of nation-building and the human cost involved.

When the Partition was officially declared on August 15, 1947, around 14 million people were displaced, resulting in the greatest mass movement in human history. (Talbot and Singh, 2009, 2) Masses were not the only things displaced during the Partition; land was also divided, and borders between culturally similar regions were drawn. It was a "batwara" of geographical boundaries, possessions, and properties, and it was undoubtedly a division of hearts. (Arora & Dhawan, 2010:10). Religious divisions tore apart centuries-old communities, resulting in unprecedented levels of communal bloodshed. Roughly two million people were killed during this time due to rapes, massacres, kidnappings, and forced conversions (Butalia, 1998). Refugee camps grew with people experiencing homelessness and traumatized, trains turned into mobile slaughter sites, and entire communities were destroyed. The fundamental national, cultural, and religious identity concept was brutally reshaped amid this turmoil.

On the other hand, the Hyderabad Integration 1948 "ekeekaran" took place in a princely state that opposed joining the Indian Union. Under the leadership of Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, Hyderabad aimed to maintain its independence by using its resources and armed forces. However, communal tensions were made worse by the emergence of the Razakar force, a paramilitary organization that supported the Nizam. The region became even more unstable as a result of the Razakars' violent attacks against Hindus and political dissidents led by Qasim

Razvi (Sherwani, 1967). In September 1948, the Indian government began Operation Polo because it was worried about the possibility of instability in the region. This military action quickly routed Nizam's army, which allowed Hyderabad to join the Indian Union. Despite being formally referred to as a "Police Action," the operation resulted in extensive violence, particularly targeting the Muslim community, which caused property damage and fatalities (Noorani, 2011). Post-operation resulted in widespread violence along communal lines. (Thomson, Mike, 2013) In a report not made public until 2013, the Sunderlal Committee, which Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru constituted, concluded that the state had seen between 30,000 and 40,000 deaths overall. (Noorani 2014) Some responsible observers estimated the death toll to reach 200,000 or higher. (Smith 1950, 46) These two catastrophes consequently influenced the sociopolitical environment of post-Partition India. India's national boundaries were redrawn by the Partition, but its territorial integrity was strengthened by the Hyderabad Integration. However, both incidents exposed profound societal divisions fuelled by political, cultural, and religious differences. The scars from these upheavals still have an impact on current debates over citizenship, identity, and civil harmony.

This study compares both events with the emphasis on themes of violence, relocation, and fragmented identities of the select novels by Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* which offers a striking depiction of the human cost of the Partition. *The Eighteenth Parallel*, by Ashokamitran, on the other hand, illuminates a lesser-known but no less important period of Indian history by examining the nuances of regional and cultural identities during the Integration of Hyderabad. Despite their different historical settings, both novels explore moral quandaries, community violence, and the enduring impacts of past tragedies. However, a limited literary comparison examines these two significant moments from a fictional perspective.

This study aims to bridge the gap in literary scholarship on these two historical events by analyzing these novels from a comparative perspective. By focussing on how historical trauma, regional identity, and moral complexity are portrayed, the analysis will draw attention to how literature depicts the human condition during periods of sociopolitical upheaval. Using this comparative lens, the study will also highlight how cultural and regional differences influence narratives, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between literature and history.

Train to Pakistan offers a microcosmic perspective on Partition, emphasizing its immediate effects on a single village, Mano Majra. In contrast, *The Eighteenth Parallel* by Ashokamitran examines this turbulent age from a semi-autobiographical point of view, following the hardships of a young Tamil man in Hyderabad as he negotiates the complex sociopolitical landscape of the era. The novel presents a more individualized and culturally unique account of Hyderabad's integration. Historical trauma and resiliency are topics covered in both novels, although they are approached from different political, cultural, and regional perspectives. The main characters in each novel struggle with their ideas of justice and identity while facing moral conundrums and social conventions.

1) Portrayal of Communal Violence and Its Impact on Individual and Collective Identities

The authors of *Train to Pakistan* and *The Eighteenth Parallel* both use communal violence as a lens through which to examine the fragility of human relationships and the upheaval of social harmony. The graphic depictions of violence by Khushwant Singh and Ashokamitran highlight its devastating impact on both individual psyches and collective identities. The long-term effects of intercommunal strife are also shown by these portrayals, which notably detail the atrocities of Partition and the Hyderabad Integration.

In *Train to Pakistan*

Singh uses the fictional village of Mano Majra as a microcosm to explore the ramifications of Partition, with communal violence at the center of his narration. The novel highlights the harmony and cohabitation of the Sikh and Muslim inhabitants of Mano Majra, portraying it as a peaceful town immune to the chaos outside. This peace is broken, though, when a train arrives bearing the bodies of Pakistani refugees who have been slaughtered, exposing the locals to the atrocities of inter-communal violence (Singh, 1956, p. 72).

As tensions between communities rise, Jugga, a local Sikh criminal, experiences a moral awakening. The growing hostility within the community is directly at odds with his love for Nooran, a Muslim girl. Jugga, who had previously shown no concern, shows how interpersonal relationships can bridge societal gaps by giving his life to save a train carrying Muslim refugees. "The rope snapped under his weight. The train went over him, and went on. Jugga lay still, with his face buried in the dust" (Singh, 1956, p. 182). This self-sacrificing deed highlights Jugga's rise from outlaw to martyr and symbolizes the resilience and power of humanity and love in the face of communal hatred. His choice to put love over communal allegiance subverts the binary narratives of victim-perpetrator. His metamorphosis demonstrates how collective violence compels people to face their moral quandaries.

Iqbal, a Western-educated intellectual, represents the urban elite, an outsider with political consciousness, initially treats the peasants with contempt, believing them to be naïve and complacent. However, when the violence intensifies, he is paralyzed by fear and hesitation, signifying the intellectual elite's inability to take decisive action during emergencies. "People in the city can afford to be brave; they do not have to live with the consequences of their bravery" (Singh, 1956, p. 158).

The violence weakens the ties that had bound the people of Mano Majra together. Singh illustrates how suspicion and terror permeate society, transforming neighbors into adversaries. According to Singh, this change reflects the wider breakdown of common cultural and religious identities during Partition. (1956, p. 105)

The train imagery that appears often in the novel represents the dual nature of Partition – both as a means of displacement and a harbinger of death. People become anonymous victims of communal violence, and the train full of dead serves as a somber reminder of this. “The arrival of the ghost train changed the village. Fear gripped the hearts of everyone” (Singh, 1956, p. 103). The metaphor of the “ghost train” symbolizes the pervasive impact of violence on collective identity, transforming a harmonious village into a site of paranoia and animosity.

In The Eighteenth Parallel

Ashokamitran depicts communal violence more subtly but no less impactfully, emphasizing its emotional and psychological ramifications rather than graphic details. Set against the backdrop of Hyderabad's forceful integration into India in 1948 through military intervention, the novel emphasizes the underlying tensions between communities in a city experiencing political turmoil. Hyderabad is being sharply split along communal lines. The Razakars' atrocious acts and the Hindu organizations' retaliatory violence demonstrate how political events exacerbate existing tensions and cause trust and solidarity to erode. (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 135).

Chandru observes the social gap between Muslims and Hindus as a young Tamil man residing in Hyderabad becomes acutely aware of his outsider status. "No one cared who you were in this city, but now everyone wanted to know where you belonged" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 78). This shift reflects how communal violence forces individuals to confront their identities, often leading to feelings of isolation and insecurity. He feels helpless and alienated after experiencing communal violence, such as the merciless acts of the Razakars and the suffering of Muslim

families. Chandru's increasing recognition of his marginalized status within the larger socio-political context reflects people's difficulties when torn between conflicting communal allegiances (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 95).

Ashokamitran also discusses the gendered aspects of violence in communities. The interplay of gender and communal tensions is exemplified by the Muslim girl who volunteers to defend her family, demonstrating how women are rendered symbolic battlefields in disputes over identity and honor. While escaping from the attacks, Chandru barges into a hut dwelled by the minority refugees crouching in fear. They assumed him to be a rioter, and to protect her family, a young girl offered herself to him in panic and begged him not to harm her family members. (135)

Ashokamitran laments the loss of Hyderabad's cultural diversity when groups are forced to take sides during the unification process. "The bazaars were no longer places of joy; they became spaces where everyone looked over their shoulders, fearing the other" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 142). This breakdown of shared cultural identity highlights the long-term effects of communal violence on collective memory and legacy. It exposes the fragility of its multicultural identity: "The city, once bustling with shared laughter and stories, now echoed with silences and whispers of mistrust" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 135). This transformation mirrors the broader disintegration of cultural pluralism in post-independence India.

Comparative Insights

Both novels show how communal violence destroys individual lives and fractures identities. Human suffering during socio-political upheavals is universal, as demonstrated by the characters' endeavors to overcome these obstacles. While Ashokamitran takes a contemplative stance, stressing the psychological and emotional wounds caused by inter-communal conflicts, Singh's story is immediate and visceral, concentrating on the concrete consequences of

violence. The national anguish of Partition is shown in Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, while Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* offers a regional viewpoint on Hyderabad's integration. Singh employs graphic depictions and moral quandaries to elicit empathy, while Ashokamitran uses subtle, reflective prose to capture the insidious effects of violence.

2) The Role of Regional and Cultural Specificity in Shaping the Narratives

The narratives in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* are significantly shaped by regional and cultural distinctiveness. Deeply ingrained locales that capture the distinct sociopolitical, artistic, and historical contexts of their different locales are the source of both works' potency. These local settings actively participate in the narratives, influencing themes, people, and events rather than just serving as backdrops.

In *Train to Pakistan*

Mano Majra, a fictional village on the Indian-Pakistani border, is the setting for Khushwant Singh's book. The unique characteristics of this location perfectly capture the intricate dynamics of Partition in rural Punjab, where economic interconnectedness and shared histories frequently took precedence over communal identities. Mano Majra, which is located at the border, represents the liminal space ensnared between two emerging countries. The village is more susceptible to greater geopolitical unrest because of its closeness to the new Pakistan. "The river Sutlej, which separates Mano Majra from Pakistan, has always been a source of life. Now it becomes a frontier, a divide" (Singh, 1956, p. 21). The disruption brought about by Partition is reflected in this line of a natural boundary into a political one. The shared cultural practices of Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus are highlighted by the village's everyday life, which is controlled by the arrival of trains and the bells of the temple and mosque. "In Mano Majra, it does not matter whether one is a Muslim or a Sikh. The only identity that counts is being a

villager" (Singh, 1956, p. 12). These behaviors demonstrate how external factors can destroy a peaceful relationship. The setting of Mano Majra adds depth to the interfaith romance between Sikh Jugga and Muslim Nooran. "They were villagers first, lovers second, and their religion came last in their thoughts—until Partition made it otherwise" (Singh, 1956, p. 89). The regional uniqueness heightens the emotional stakes of their relationship, reflecting the broader societal divisions caused by Partition.

In The Eighteenth Parallel

The novel by Ashokamitran takes place in Hyderabad in 1948 amid the city's turbulent accession to the Indian Union. The book examines themes of identity, displacement, and resilience through the lens of Hyderabad's unique political, cultural, and linguistic environment. During the Nizam's reign, Hyderabad was a linguistic, religious, and cultural melting pot. The narrative vividly depicts bazaars, festivals, and everyday life to convey this diversity: "In the narrow lanes of Hyderabad, the smell of biryani mixed with the chants of temple bells and the call of the muezzin" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 34). When intercommunal conflicts diminish the city's rich legacy, this pluralism becomes a casualty of political instability. Hyderabad's linguistic diversity is evident in the story's use of Tamil, Urdu, Telugu, and Kannada. The difficulties Chandru has while navigating this multilingual setting serve as a reminder of the cultural barriers that outsiders must overcome. "Language was a barrier, but it also became a way to learn, adapt, and survive" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 52).

The story gives a localized viewpoint on the Razakars, a paramilitary militia that supports the Nizam. Their activities foster an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, impacting the lives of individuals like Chandru and his pals: "The Razakars roamed the streets, their presence a reminder of the city's fractured soul" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 78). The specificity of this political group underscores the unique challenges faced by Hyderabad during its integration.

Chandru, a Tamil youngster in Hyderabad, embodies the perspective of a regional outsider. His experiences demonstrate how cultural and geographical identities impact individuals' responses to sociopolitical upheaval: "Hyderabad was not my home, but it shaped me in ways I could never have imagined" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 112).

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* effectively utilize their regional settings to ground their stories in historical truths. Singh's *Train to Pakistan* depicts the imaginary village of Mano Majra as a representation of the wider effects of the Partition. The village's cultural and geographical seclusion enables Singh to make the trauma of Partition universally relatable, framing it as a shared human tragedy. As Singh states, "Mano Majra was a tiny village. But what happened in Mano Majra was happening everywhere in India" (Singh, 1956, p. 2). By focusing on this small community, Singh effectively depicts the widespread violence and displacement that accompanied Partition.

On the other hand, Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* offers a nuanced, localized view of Hyderabad's assimilation into India. The narrative heavily relies on the area's specific cultural and political elements, highlighting Hyderabad's unique identity as a princely state. The experiences of Chandru, a Tamil youth in a culturally diverse city, underscore the intricacies of Hyderabad's multilingual and multiethnic community: "The city was a mosaic of languages—Urdu, Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil—and each seemed to hold its history, its tensions" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 45). Both novels illustrate how regional settings can act as impactful narrative tools to depict historical trauma universally or emphasize its localized aspects.

3) Novels' Protagonists Navigating through Their Moral Quandaries During Times of Socio-Political Upheaval

In *Train to Pakistan* and *The Eighteenth Parallel*, the main characters, Jugga and Chandru, face significant moral challenges in turbulent socio-political circumstances. Their experiences

highlight the conflict between their values and the expectations of society, illustrating how people confront ethical questions during times of crisis. Jugga's moral journey is focused on themes of love and redemption amid violence from the Partition. In contrast, Chandru's conflicts arise from his struggle to balance his individual goals with the societal changes occurring in Hyderabad.

Jugga in *Train to Pakistan*: Redemption Through Sacrifice

Jugga Singh, a Sikh villager in Mano Majra, is initially depicted as a rogue. However, throughout the narrative, his character evolves, reflecting the moral complexities of the Partition. He faces significant moral quandaries, particularly in his relationship with Nooran, a Muslim woman. Ultimately, Jugga makes a sacrifice for the greater good. His devotion to Nooran stands in stark contrast to the animosity that infects the community of Mano Majra. While the town becomes a microcosm of the violence stemming from Partition, Jugga's ideals clash with the prevailing hostility around him. Khushwant Singh writes, "He was a badmash, but he loved Nooran more than he cared for his own life. He would defy the world for her" (Singh, 1956, p. 121). Jugga's unwavering love for Nooran highlights his moral courage in the face of communal pressure. His ultimate act of heroism—sacrificing his life to save a trainload of Muslims, including Nooran—serves as his moral redemption. Singh narrates Jugga's final moments in touching detail: "With one final heave, he cut the rope. The train hurtled past, carrying its passengers to safety, while Jugga hung motionless, his task complete" (Singh, 1956, p. 181). His actions underscore the novel's central theme: individual morality can transcend collective hatred, even in the darkest times.

Chandru in *The Eighteenth Parallel*: Negotiating Identity and Ethics

His status as a Tamil outsider in Hyderabad during its integration into India shapes Chandru's moral quandaries in *The Eighteenth Parallel*. His challenges center on identifying his

personality and goals while navigating sociopolitical shifts. Being an outsider makes it more difficult for Chandru to interact with the sociopolitical environment. He frequently struggles with issues of accountability and belonging. According to Ashokamitran: "Hyderabad was not my home, yet its pain felt personal. Was it my place to act, or to retreat into my world?" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 72). This internal conflict highlights his moral indecision, reflecting the complexities of being an observer and participant in history. Chandru's moral quandaries are present in both his personal and professional spheres. For instance, his choice to put his personal goals ahead of making a political statement reflects the difficulties people face throughout historical changes. His reflections reveal the weight of inaction: "I did nothing, and that haunted me more than any action might have" (Ashokamitran, 1993, p. 143). More than heroic deeds, Chandru's moral path focuses on the silent, frequently agonizing discussions of individual and group responsibility. Chandru's flight from the devastating scene left him terrified and traumatized. While stripping off her garments, in the process, the refugee girl is also stripping him of 'his dignity as well as humanity, for she communicates to him through her gesture that he is not human to her anymore. She implies that in objectifying her, he, too, becomes an object devoid of humanity and empathy. By surrendering her humanity, she also confiscates his, reminding him of what he risks becoming. Because of this realization, Chandru flees, terrified that he could merit such a reaction from these destitute and desperate people.' (Nazia Akhtar, 2022)

Comparative Insights: Navigating Moral Quandaries

The main characters of *Train to Pakistan* and *The Eighteenth Parallel* demonstrate differing responses to ethical challenges, influenced by their socio-political environments. Jugga's narrative leads to a selfless act of heroism, depicting morality as a form of resistance against systemic brutality. In contrast, Chandru embodies individuals' moral ambiguity when engaging

with historical transformations without evident paths to take. While Jugga's ethical choices are deeply personal—focused on his affection for Nooran—Chandru's conflicts are connected to his wider identity as an outsider dealing with Hyderabad's integration. The local and cultural nuances of Mano Majra and Hyderabad shape each protagonist's moral challenges. Jugga's choices are grounded in the communal context of Punjab, while Chandru's decisions reflect the multicultural intricacies of Hyderabad.

The moral challenges encountered by Jugga and Chandru emphasize the human ability to endure and reflect during periods of socio-political turmoil. Jugga's evolution from a rogue to a selfless hero presents a redemptive story that opposes the communal animosity surrounding Partition. In contrast, Chandru's intricate and reflective journey highlights the ethical difficulties of dealing with identity and responsibility in a fractured society. These main characters offer complementary viewpoints on how individuals address morality in the face of historical trauma.

4) Postcolonial and Trauma Theories enhance the understanding of the novels.

To better comprehend how *Train to Pakistan* and *The Eighteenth Parallel* depict the experiences of historical upheaval, cultural displacement, and personal identity, Postcolonial, and Trauma theories offer insightful frameworks for analysis. With an emphasis on themes of resistance, identity, and hybridity, postcolonial theory investigates the effects of colonialism. The transitions from colonial authority to independence and the ensuing rifts in identity and culture are captured in both works, which examine the sociopolitical impact of colonialism. In *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, the Partition of 1947 is shown as a direct result of colonial practices, including the British divide-and-rule approach, which intensified tensions amongst communities. Initially resisting these distinctions, the village of Mano Majra, a microcosm of rural India, has a hybrid identity in which Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus live side

by side. But this peace is upset by the imposition of national borders and communal ideologies, which reflects Homi Bhabha's idea of the "unhomely," where formerly stable identities are broken apart (Bhabha, 1994). Singh challenges the colonial legacy by highlighting how external forces undermine local solidarity.

The *Eighteenth Parallel* by Ashokamitran highlights Hyderabad's regional identity, which fends off the homogenizing forces of the postcolonial nation-state and colonial subjugation. The protagonist's Tamil identity highlights the difficulties of belonging in a cosmopolitan but divided society when contrasted with Hyderabad's diversified cultural environment. The marginalized voices of Hyderabad's citizens, particularly minorities, fight to establish their agency amid political turmoil, consistent with Gayatri Spivak's concept of subalternity (Spivak, 1988).

Trauma Theory: Representing Historical Catastrophe

Trauma theory examines how literature reflects the psychological and communal suffering caused by catastrophic events. Both works use storytelling strategies to show the long-term impacts of communal violence and displacement. *Collective Trauma in Train to Pakistan*: Through vivid descriptions of violence and relocation, Singh effectively conveys the collective trauma of Partition. The trainloads of murdered migrants that arrive in Mano Majra serve as a potent metaphor for the rupture in human connections. Characters such as Iqbal and Jugga find it difficult to express the horror they see, which resonates with Cathy Caruth's theory that trauma is an "unclaimed experience" (Caruth, 1996). The novel's fragmented narrative structure reflects the characters' and communities' psychological disorientation.

As the protagonist navigates the sociopolitical turmoil of Hyderabad, Ashokamitran delves into his trauma. The protagonist's internal monologue, which embodies Dominick LaCapra's idea of "acting out" and "working through" trauma, exposes his feelings of alienation, anxiety, and

moral quandaries (LaCapra, 2001). The cultural uniqueness of Hyderabad underscores the deep significance of this pain, highlighting the bond between individual and regional histories.

Bridging the Theories

Postcolonial and trauma theories are integrated to show how the novels deal with the interdependence of personal and historical narratives. *The Eighteenth Parallel* explores national integration's regional ramifications and political change's human cost. At the same time, *Train to Pakistan* highlights the colonial causes of communal conflict and its horrific aftermath. Collectively, they unveil the multi-layered realities of postcolonial South Asia, where the experience of traumatic memories shapes resistance and identity.

Using these theoretical frameworks, readers can understand how Ashokamitran and Singh use their stories to record the often-silenced, unheard, and marginalized experiences of integration and partition. Both authors ensure that these pivotal historical episodes are neither forgotten nor sanitized by forcing readers to face the lasting effects of historical violence on the human psyche and social fabric.

5) Thematic Overlaps and Divergences Between *Train to Pakistan* and *The Eighteenth Parallel*

Two of the most turbulent periods in Indian history are vividly portrayed in Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. The novels' examination of communal violence, displacement, identity, and moral quandaries shows thematic commonalities even though they portray different historical events—Partition in 1947 and the Integration of Hyderabad in 1948. The differences, however, are seen in their historical locations, narrative styles, and cultural contexts.

Thematic Overlaps:

1. The Impact of Communal Violence

Both novels depict the destructive force of communal violence and its ability to upend societal harmony. In *Train to Pakistan*, the inter-communal violence of Partition shatters the peaceful coexistence of Sikhs and Muslims in the fictional village of Mano Majra. The town descends into a battlefield of mistrust and terror after a train arrives from Pakistan carrying slaughtered Muslims (Singh, 2009). Similarly, *The Eighteenth Parallel* portrays the communal turmoil in Hyderabad during its annexation, as ordinary lives are consumed by violence and fear. The protagonist's observations of the unrest reflect long-standing conflicts exacerbated by political instability (Ashokamitran, 2010). Both novels emphasize the indiscriminate nature of violence, affecting people regardless of their beliefs or actions. They underscore how political events take on a deeply human dimension, posing existential threats to individuals and communities alike.

2. Displacement and Loss in Times of Crisis

In both novels, displacement depicts a rupture of the body and the emotions. *Train to Pakistan* most strikingly represents the cost of Partition through the widespread migration across the newly drawn borders, which witnesses the loss of belongings, uprooted families, and altered lives permanently. The train's symbolic function as a harbinger of death underscores the trauma of displacement. In *The Eighteenth Parallel*, the Tamil protagonist navigates a city undergoing integration, making displacement feel more intimate. His sense of isolation reflects the broader upheaval that minorities face when Hyderabad joins the Indian Union. The protagonist struggles to reconcile his identity with the rapidly changing sociopolitical landscape, the novel's central theme.

3. Moral Quandaries and Human Resilience

Both works address their protagonists' moral quandaries amid periods of turmoil. In *Train to Pakistan*, the local rogue, Jugga, evolves into an unlikely hero by sacrificing himself to save a trainload of Muslim refugees. His moral redemption starkly contrasts the apathy of educated characters such as Iqbal, who fails to act despite his principles. In *The Eighteenth Parallel*, the protagonist struggles with the ethical ramifications of his decisions amidst the political upheaval in Hyderabad. His reflections on the injustices he encounters highlight the moral ambiguity of survival in times of conflict. Both novels illustrate human tenacity and courage, even in the darkest times.

Thematic Divergences

1. Exploring Historical and Regional Contexts

The fundamental difference between the two novels lies in their historical settings. *Train to Pakistan* is set in rural Punjab and offers a panoramic view of Partition's nationwide bloodshed. Its depiction of mass displacement and communal violence provides a broad perspective on the human cost of nation-building. In contrast, *The Eighteenth Parallel* presents a more localized perspective on Hyderabad's annexation, focusing on its personal and cultural ramifications, particularly the interplay between regional identity and national politics. The novel is shaped by Hyderabad's unique cultural context, characterized by its linguistic diversity and historical significance, contrasting with the broader cultural representation in *Train to Pakistan*.

2. Role of Narrative Tone and Style

In *Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh adopts a journalistic, almost dispassionate tone, depicting the tragedies of Partition through vivid language and striking imagery. The novel's

episodic structure mirrors the fragmentation of lives during that period. In contrast, Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel* employs a reflective and introspective tone. This semi-autobiographical novel draws readers into the protagonist's inner world, offering a nuanced exploration of his experiences. This contrast in narrative style underscores the authors' distinct approaches to portraying historical trauma.

3. The Focus on Identity and Belonging

While both novels explore identity, their emphasis differs. *Train to Pakistan* examines communal identity, particularly how religious affiliations became markers of inclusion or exclusion during Partition. The breakdown of trust between communities highlights the fragility of human connections under duress. In *The Eighteenth Parallel*, the theme of identity is examined through the protagonist's personal and cultural perspectives. In *The Eighteenth Parallel*, the theme of identity is examined through the protagonist's personal and cultural perspectives. His Tamil roots, combined with the diverse fabric of Hyderabad, add another layer of complexity to his experiences. The novel analyzes the Indian nation-state's homogenizing tendencies, focusing on the challenges faced by linguistic and cultural minorities.

Conclusion

A comparison of *Train to Pakistan* and *The Eighteenth Parallel* reveals how regional and cultural differences shape the portrayal of historical trauma, identity, and moral quandaries due to the 1947 Partition and 1948 Hyderabad Integration. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* presents a microcosmic yet universal portrayal of Partition, illustrating how communal unity disintegrates during political unrest. In contrast, Ashokamitran's *The Eighteenth Parallel*, which focuses on Hyderabad's integration, offers a more regionally specific but equally

poignant exploration of identity, displacement, and cultural negotiations. Both books illustrate how historical events shape individual and collective identities amidst sociopolitical unrest, compelling people to confront complex moral quandaries. While *Train to Pakistan* depicts the fate of the people of Mano Majra to highlight the devastating effects of Partition, *The Eighteenth Parallel* offers a more nuanced exploration of the challenges of belonging in a rapidly changing political landscape. Together, these works deepen our understanding of resilience, historical memory, and the human cost of forced migration in postcolonial South Asia.

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