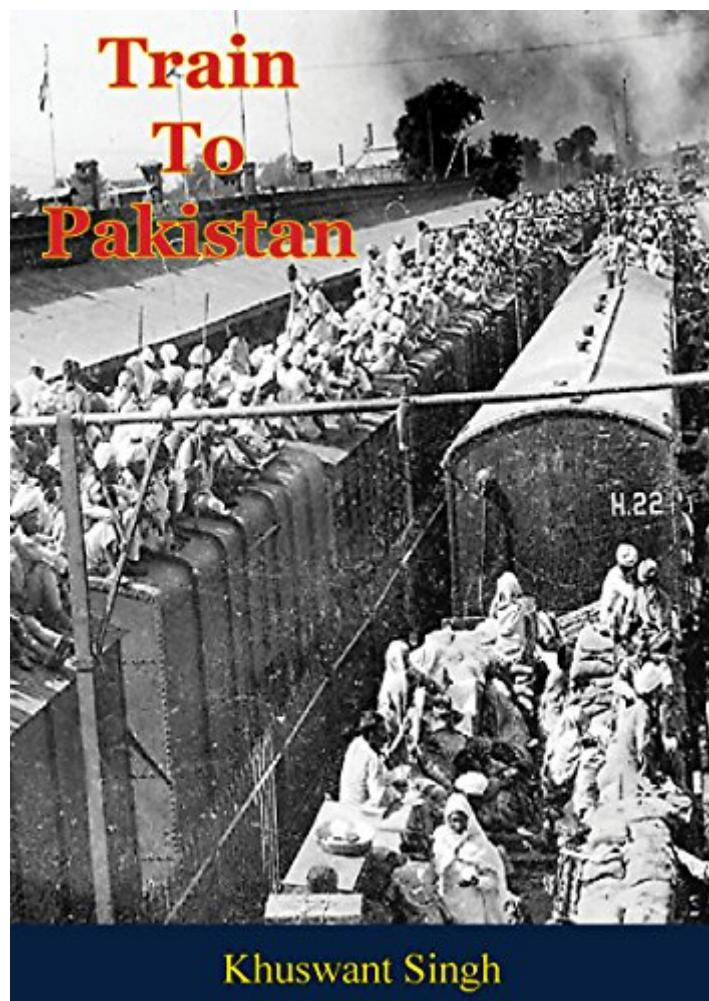


The book was found

Train To Pakistan



Synopsis

In the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced, ten million people—Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs—were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding. The only remaining oases of peace were a scatter of little villages lost in the remote reaches of the frontier. One of these villages was Mano Majra. It is a place, Khushwant Singh goes on to tell us at the beginning of this classic novel, where Sikhs and Muslims have lived together in peace for hundreds of years. Then one day, at the end of the summer, the ghost train arrives, a silent, incredible funeral train loaded with the bodies of thousands of refugees, bringing the village its first taste of the horrors of the civil war. Train to Pakistan is the story of this isolated village that is plunged into the abyss of religious hate. It is also the story of a Sikh boy and a Muslim girl whose love endures and transcends the ravages of war.

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Customer Reviews

The summer of the Partition of India in 1947 marked a season of bloodshed that stunned and horrified those living through the nightmare. Entire families were forced to abandon their land for resettlement to Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India. Once that fateful line was drawn in the sand, the threat of destruction became a reality of stunning proportions. Travelers clogged the roads on carts,

on foot, but mostly on trains, where they perched precariously on the roofs, clung to the sides, wherever grasping fingers could find purchase. Muslim turned against Hindu, Hindu against Muslim, in their frantic effort to escape the encroaching massacre. But the violence followed the refugees. The farther from the cities they ran, the more the indiscriminate killing infected the countryside, only to collide again and again in a futile attempt to reach safety. Almost ten million people were assigned for relocation and by the end of this bloody chapter, nearly a million were slain. A particular brutality overtook the frenzied mobs, driven frantic by rage and fear. Women were raped before the anguished eyes of their husbands, entire families robbed, dismembered, murdered and thrown aside like garbage until the streets were cluttered with human carnage. The trains kept running. For many remote villages the supply trains were part of the clockwork of daily life, until even those over-burdened trains, off-schedule, pulled into the stations, silent, no lights or signs of humanity, their fateful cargo quiet as the grave. At first the villagers of tiny Mano Majra were unconcerned, complacent in their cooperative lifestyle, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and quasi-Christian.

Ethnic conflict has been a staple of cross-cultural contact for as long as more than one race and religion have tried to co-exist. In the border between Pakistan and India, the theme of revenge killing calling for ever more revenge killing has found a clear voice in TRAIN TO PAKISTAN by Khushwant Singh. Nearly everyone in the novel is flawed to some degree with the effects and aftereffects of ethnic cleansing. There is no clear cut hero although a criminal named Jugga comes closest. Jugga is a Sikh thief who happens to take a Moslem woman as a lover. Their illicit relation is a microcosm of all that is terribly wrong when the cut of a person's beard counts more than the content of his soul. Jugga is far from an angel, but he slowly grows in stature from the baseness of his profession to one who is forced to contemplate the consequences of his own role in the ongoing cycle of killing between Sikh and Moslem. He is used as a pawn in the Sikh's killing of innocent Moslems, and his choice is the same that all men of revived conscience have had to face in similar such times: should he participate willingly even eagerly in the proposed slaughter of a train of deported Moslems shipped unceremoniously to Pakistan or should he speak out against the insanity that is insane only to him? The various flaws of all the characters of the novel--their vicious caste system, their willingness to demonize other races, their unwillingness to question even the most fundamental elements of their dogma--all stem from the cycle of killing that did not begin with the trainload of Sikh corpses that entered the sleepy town of Mano Majra in India.

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