

## Train to Pakistan Symbols

### Trains (Symbol)

From the title alone, it's clear that trains play a key role in *Train to Pakistan*. A form of quick public transportation, trains connect Mano Majra to the rest of the world. The two trains that regularly stop serve as a type of clock for the largely illiterate Mano Majra villagers. As the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore, this signals to the village that it's time to get up and start the day. And when the final goods train comes in at night, everyone knows it's time for bed. Thus, from early on, the train symbolizes technology, order, and structure.

This changes drastically when the first train of dead Sikhs rolls into Mano Majra. Until then, the chaos affecting the rest of the country were only rumors. It's fitting that a train makes the distant tales of violence a harsh reality in Mano Majra. Sadly, these death trains are not anomalies, but semi-regular occurrences. Even Hukum Chand recounts a story he heard about Sunder Singh, a colleague who fled Pakistan via train with his family. The conditions on the train were so horrific that Sunder ended up executing his family to spare them from continued suffering. Suddenly, trains become symbolic of the horrors of religious persecution, government instability, and mob violence. Rather than being a vehicle that brings fleeing Sikhs and Muslims to safety, trains are a death trap.

### Bangles (Symbol)

Typically worn by young women, bangles make an early appearance in the novel. Malli and his dacoit gang throw a package of bangles into Jugga's yard to taunt him after they murder Lala Ram Lal. Jugga's mother finds the bangles before Jugga does, and attempts to use them to clear his name of Lal's murder, but to no avail. Later on in the novel, when Sundari is raped by a Muslim mob four days after her marriage, she is wearing red lacquer bangles. Her friend has told Sundari that taking off the bangles would bring bad luck, and that it's good luck for her husband to break them as he makes love to her. All the bangles break when the mob rapes her. The narrator ironically points out that this should have brought her tons of luck, which is the contrary of what happens. Rather, the broken bangles symbolize Sundari's loss of sexual autonomy and the sexualized nature of the violence meted out during the Partition of India. Women were raped, and men were

circumcised by having their entire penises cut off. Something that typically represents young womanhood and the possibilities of marriage comes to represent death and sexual violence.

### **Railway Bridge (Symbol)**

About a mile from Mano Majra is a railway bridge that spans the Sutlej River. The trains in and out of Mano Majra must cross this bridge, so it has an integral function. Similar to the trains, it connects Mano Majra to the outside world, and facilitates the movement of people and goods to, from, and through the tiny town. In the later stages of the book, the bridge becomes the rallying point of the Muslim murder plot. There's a rope tied across the bridge that's designed to kill the Muslim refugees sitting on top of the train. Once that happens, the mob stationed around the bridge are to begin attacking the Muslims inside of the train. At this point, the bridge is no longer a symbol of connectivity and a means of possible salvation for the fleeing Muslims, but a symbol of impending doom. Thankfully, Jugga climbs the bridge and cuts the rope, effectively sabotaging the mob's plot. Tragically, Jugga is shot and falls to his death in the process of saving his Muslim neighbors and the other refugees. Thus, the bridge becomes symbolic of him, his bravery, and his sacrifice.

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