TREATMENT OF HISTORY IN THE WORKS OF KHUSHWANT SINGH

THESIS

Submitted to

CHHATRAPATI SHAHU JI MAHARAJ UNIVERSITY, KANPUR

For the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ENGLISH

2010

By

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the thesis entitled ***Treatment of History in the Works of Khushwant Singh*** submitted by Lalima Bajpai (Reg. No. 051726) for the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in English to Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj University, Kanpur embodies the original work carried out by her under my supervision and this work has not been submitted elsewhere for any degree.

Lalima Bajpai has put in the attendance, more than two hundred days, required under the ordinance of the University.

Place: Kanpur **(Dr. Supriya Shukla)**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a privilege to be able to record my gratitude to all those who assisted me in the preparation of my thesis. My gratitude goes in the first place to my supervisor Dr. Supriya Shukla. My supervisor's guidance, consistent support and encouragement helped me a lot in my work. My supervisor always gave me valuable advice and took keen interest in my work to make it better. It is my pleasant duty to express my warm regards to my father Shri Prakash Bajpai and my mother Smt. Kusum Bajpai for their blessings which made me confident of completing my work successfully. My parents never let me deviate my attention from the work and always motivated me to make sincere efforts in completing the work. I extend my gratitude to my sister Mrs. Purnima Trivedi who rendered her assistance by constantly encouraging me during the work. I am thankful to my friend, Mrs. Anjali Srivastava for her suggestions and assistance in accomplishing my work. My sincere thanks are due to the librarian of Kelkar Library, IIT Kanpur who provided me with the required books for the work. Last but not the least, there are many I owe a great deal to for the valuable help they rendered to me in the development of this work in various ways.

Dated: **Lalima Bajpai**

PREFACE

History, being a creative fiction, casts a spell over many an Indo-English novelist. Writers affected by the freedom movement, generally throw light upon the freedom struggle with a critical attitude revealing the macabre aspects of the struggle. This kind of an attitude on the writers' part reflects their spirit of nationalism. There are a good number of writers who have chosen partition as the plot for their writing. Khushwant Singh is one of those who took up the partition theme. *Train to Pakistan* is the first Indo-English novel on partition with its realistic portrayal of the upheaval.

The thesis is an attempt to study how the novelist makes use of his past experiences and compels the reader to draw his own conclusions. Through his portrayal of history Singh tries to warn readers of the horrendous consequences of linking religion with politics. Beginning with *Train to Pakistan* to *Delhi* religion is an issue, which has always been exploited by politicians for their vested interests. The purpose of the thesis is to comprehend the pastpolitics and to analyze Khushwant Singh's treatment of historical issues in his novels. In writing this thesis I have strictly followed *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers,* Sixth Edition.

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CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

The novel creates a world, which for all practical purposes is complete by itself. It is a world inhabited by people and it constructs itself on ideas and knowledge. Life is seen in the context of history in a novel. The historical novel is an imaginative portrayal of history, that is, of past states of affairs which affect human experience. Like the historian, the historical novelist is a recoverer of what actually happened. R.G. Collingwood, who was keenly aware of the semblance between the historian and the novelist observes:

> "Each of them makes it his business to construct a picture which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibition of motives, analysis of characters. Each aims at making his picture a coherent whole, where every character and every situation is so bound up with the rest that this character in this situation cannot but act in this way, and we cannot imagine him as acting otherwise. The novel and the history must both of them make sense; nothing is admissible in either except what is necessary, and the judge of this necessity is in both cases the imagination.[1]

Collingwood defines the historian's role as the mental activity which is called imaginative sympathy. The historical novelist has a claim to historical truth, on the strength of his habitual exercise of imaginative sympathy, his personalisation of history so that it becomes not a mere movement of forces or sequence of events but the thoughts and feelings of men. The correspondence of the historian's facts is not different from the novelist's 'coherent picture.' Collingwood has maintained that “the historian’s imagination is precisely the same thing as the novelist’s imagination.”[2] Both the novelist and the historian, however, fill the gaps in the received data with imaginative 'threads.' The historical novel may be considered a kind of poetry — as Aristotle opines. It engages the universal and may therefore make the philosophic claims of poetry. Historical novels address a specific past situation often with more domestic detail than a tragic or epic poet would employ. The historical novelist uses the universals of literature — such categories interpret esthetic experience as romance and satire and tragedy and comedy. The tragic or comic, romantic or satiric modes of portraying human experience in fictional situations have the same universalising function when applied to historical situations.

The historical novel portrays those specific moments of history which reveal the character of those historical periods. In doing so it is both a dramatic and a social fiction. The individuals selected by the

novelist for heroic status are not likely to be world-historical figures. The typical man of an age is one whose life is shaped by the world-historical figures and other influences going forward in the society as a whole.

> The relation of the representative hero to the society of his time is not one of statistically-determinable typicality but that of symbolic universality. The heroes of historical fiction represent not only the Renaissance man or Edwardian man but man in general, conceived as a historical being who is subject to the forces of one historical age or another. The ultimate subject of the historical novel is man in history, or human life conceived as historical life. In several of its greatest examples, the historical novel attains the status of a modern epic in its view of the tragic limits and comic possibilities of man's historical life.[3]

In colonial and postcolonial societies, the nationalist aspiration of liberation and active resistance to colonialism is closely linked, in one way or another, to the socio-political movement of decolonisation. As it grew stronger, it demanded a relocation of power. Postcolonial literatures are an articulation of this process of replacing structures/myths of power reshaping dominant meanings. In this effort, they have produced a whole counter-narrative. As Edward Said rightly observes, literature has contributed massively "as the shaper, creator, agent of illumination within

the realm of the colonized" and played a crucial role in the "re-establishment of national cultural heritage in the re-instatement of native idiom in the re-imagining and re-figuring of local histories, geographies, communities."[4]

As a part of the process of decolonization, postcolonial literatures dismantled historical and textual monoliths and demonstrated the possibilities of alternative text and perspectives. The single-voiced authority of colonialism and colonial writing was challenged by postcolonial writings that are marked by multiplicity, plurality and plentitude. In the first phase of postcolonial literatures, articulation of national/regional/racial consciousness occupied centrality. The narrative texts of liberation that formed part of resistance process in the colonized societies, emerged as a contingent need to realize the "truths of the nation."[5] Infact, the development of national literatures became fundamental to the whole enterprise of postcolonial studies. It is the beginning of what Wole Soyinka calls the process of "self-apprehension."[6] However, he was the one creative writer who did see the dangers of untutored nationalism and made it the main theme of his play, *A Dance of the Forests,* written in 1960 on the eve of celebrations of Nigerian Independence.

> The celebration of national independence forms the theme of such diverse novels as *Kanthapura* (1989) and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat;* the theme of influence of a foreign culture on the life of contemporary postcolonial societies is evidenced in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin.*[7]

In the second stage, postcolonial writers engaged themselves with the poetics of subversion; they closely examined the imagery of dominance by questioning the bases of European, British worldview. Writers like Wilson Harris, George Lamming, Patrick White, Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence and Jean Rhys interrogated the philosophical assumptions of the metropolitan centre. They developed possibilities of a new language and new way of seeing the world. G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr (1948),* Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children(1980)* and the novels of Wilson Harris deliberately give explanations to disrupt received notions of history and the ordering of time. As an alternative to the monolithic construct of colonial perspective, these writers promoted hybridity which acted as the source of literary and cultural redefinition. They interspersed their texts with a lot of extraneous things; the practice of past, present and future intersecting in their narratives became all too common.

In postcolonial societies, translations of regional literatures fill the enervating void left by creative writing in English. These translations represent the forces and concepts of the once-colonized countries to challenge the canonical and the hegemonic. Infact, the interplay between the categories of the oppressor/oppressed, colonizer/colonized, canonical/ subversive has been dealt by the writers in regional languages in a much better way than those writing in English. This is particularly true of the Indian writers as Mahashweta Devi, Ismat Chughtai etc. They have immensely contributed to this poetics of resistance.

Among other Indian fiction writers, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Salman Rushdie, have endeavoured to recover the precolonial Indian traditions and ceremonies in that the reader's perspective is assimilated into Hindu mythology in *Kanthapura* or implicated in the manifold native experiences as in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Again, *The Satanic Verses(1988)* demonstrates a displacement of an "Indian translated into English-medium."[8] The novel evokes questions of selfhood. The lack of a sense of history is a consequence of having been bred in a cultural vacuum and not being allowed to have access to a major portion of one's history.

In Raja Rao's *Kanthapura,* the British economic incursion is opposed by Indian metaphysics, and thereby, the controlling master-

narrative is decimated throughout the novel that forges together remnants of the past with the present and dissolves the present in memories of the past. Many of the indigenous fictional forms employed resist the European master-narrative and remould history through a fiction that struggles to break out from the ideological encirclement formed by the dominant educational apparatuses. The narrator's psyche in *The Serpent and the Rope(1968)* shows us a modern expatriate Indian struggling to define himself, incorporating the fragments of modern 'provincial' pluralities into his persona despite his resistance towards cultural alienation by an uncompromising self-image based on monolithic tradition.

Critiques of imperialism and imperialist ideologies concomitant with the homogenization of histories produce an epistemological critique of Western modernism and Eastern identity and find an agreement with the binary oppositions of colonizer and colonized. Bhabani Bhattacharya in *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1955) describes the social and religious hypocrisy resulting from the Bengal famine in the post-Independence India. The novelist describes people, belief in the Yogis and Mothers. Orvelle Prescott says: "Mr. Bhattacharya deplores the suffering caused by blind acceptance of the caste system, and yet pities the blind believer."[9]

Whether it is the caste system or hunger or superstition, Bhattacharya exposes the binary attitude concerning religion in the Postcolonial India.

Indo-Anglian prose fiction was asserted by the nationalist movement that gained great potency after World War I - to which could be added the social revolutionary tendencies that became urgent between 1920 and 1940. Both M.R. Anand and Raja Rao found their themes, and a social justification for their art, in India during the Gandhian revolt which led to freedom in 1946. But both writers, perhaps Anand more particularly, are indebted to European and American novelists of the post-World War I period and later the nineteen thirties. For Anand, D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster, with a superstructure of Marxism, populism and Gandhian nationalism, Dickens and the Russian writers from Tolstoy and Dostoievsky to the 'socialist realists' of the U.S.S.R., provide a kind of model for his novels of social protest and somewhat superficial, political and psychological analysis. Anand's novels were accepted in western Left-wing circles as useful for anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist propaganda, constitute a breakthrough in Indo-Anglian literature by indicating the wealth of material in the life of India's 'downtrodden masses' and in the drama of revolutionary nationalism available to novelists capable of combining social realism with fervent didacticism.

Another great impact on Indo-Anglian fiction was the traumas of the Second World War and the independence and partition that followed its end. Much more violent and explosive in their truthfulness about the events of the Second World War and the partition crisis were the novels of Khushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya and Manohar Malgaonkar.

The Great Economic Depression of the 1930 and the Indian National Movement became the cause for the rise of social realism in Indian fiction in English. The Great Depression of the 1930s brought enormous social and economic changes in society. Ben-Zion Shek rightly says that a number of novels of social realism "are set in the pre-Second World War period; particularly in the years of the Great Depression."[10] His observation is true not only with regard to French-Canadian novel but also to the Indian Novel in English.

The creative artists in English in India felt the need to portray the problems of Indian society. Some of the basic economic and social changes formed the background to their fictional works. They described the real Indian life in a foreign language. In their novels they portrayed the lives of the middle class people. Their themes are the product of objective situations based on experience and observation and not on deep thinking.

The emergence of the social realistic novel in Indian fiction in English is due to the rise of Nationalist Movement. They made the common man politically conscious as is seen in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura.* Realism shows real life. It depicts everything that is ugly or painful, and idealizes nothing. The term 'realism' means a theory of writing in which the familiar ordinary aspects of life are depicted in a matter of fact manner designed to present life as it actually is. The treatment of subject-matter is done in a way that describes everyday life carefully, often the lives of so-called middle or lower-middle classes. Realism refers to both the content and technique of literary creation in literature that has been evident from its very beginning. Realistic fiction is quite opposed to romantic fiction. M.H. Abrams in this connection writes: "Realistic fiction is often opposed to romantic fiction; the *romance* is said to present life as we would have it be, more picturesque, more adventurous, more heroic than the actual, realism, to present an accurate imitation of life as it is."[11]

Realism is a general term but social realism refers to the events in contemporary society. Social realism means the accurate depiction of social reality in literature as it is; the society depicted in literature should resemble the actual society but there should also be point in this resemblance. Social realism means the depiction of social reality not as it

is but as it should be, idealised. In a novel of social realism usually contemporary events or problems are presented and sometimes solutions to those problems are suggested as can be found in *Untouchable (1935).* Mulk Raj Anand, Manohar Malgaonkar and Khushwant Singh are the most representative novelists in the treatment of social realism in their works but each novelist differs in his own way in the treatment. Manohar Malgaonkar tries to project the true picture of the Indian historical figures. Anand's early and best novels expose the distress of the lower castes and classes of India; they are undisguised in their plea for social change, and are motivated by intense anger and pity.

Another twentieth century innovator in the field of Indo-Anglian fiction was R.K. Narayan. Narayan's novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), deals directly with Gandhi's *Satyagraha* and his assassination in 1947. Nowhere is Narayan's touch more gentle than in dealing with his youthful hero's involvement with Gandhi's Political activities during World War II.

Some of the younger novelists have deliberately sought out the themes of violence, bloodshed and massacre of the Second World War and the partition which followed Independence. R.K. Narayan's novels projected a comic vision of India, one which exhibited a mature and objective attitude towards the country. In contrast to Narayan's gentle

satirical humour, Govind Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* was a comic novel relying for its effect on outrageous and fantastic farce.

Kamala Markandaya's novels, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), etc. are based on the themes of tragic waste, the despair of unfulfilled or ruined love, the agony of artistic ambition, the quest for self-realization and truth by the young, all themes popular with European and American novelists of recent decades. To these themes she has brought the extra dimension of India, a contemporary India racked by confusion, violence, convulsive social and political changes.

There are more imaginative power and variety of characters and scene-painting in the novels of Dr. Bhabani Bhattacharya, whose portrayal of India has parallels with the thematic interests of S.N. Ghose, Raja Rao and Govind Desani. *So Many Hungers* (1947) paints a vivid picture of the Bengal famine during World War Second. The war, the imprisonment of the nationalist leaders, the cupidity of profiteers — political violence and nature's ferocity, combine to produce a tragedy only paralleled by the anarchy which was to follow partition.

The British departure from India, produced a shock to the Indian sub-continent. Almost overnight Indians found themselves totally responsible for every aspect of their national life and destiny. The

partition of the country between India and Pakistan led to enormous bloodshed, the disruption of millions of their peoples and vast refugee problems. Both great events had the effect of highlighting certain problems of Indian existence that have always interested Indo-Anglian poets and novelists. One was the relationship between India and Britain and Britain's part in fashioning the Indian national character directly through her laws, government and Army, and indirectly through Christianity, education and the availability of English books including the great works of her literature. When the British left, the Indians were forced to inspect the relationship that had once existed. This is essentially the theme of Kamala Markandaya's *Possession(1963)* and Manohar Malgaonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges(1964)*, and it has its place even in the fantastic comedy of Govind Desani. Another problem was more general: the old East-West conflict that had been examined imaginatively by E.M. Forster. *A Passage to India (1929)* inspired novelists as diverse as Anand and Raja Rao and more recently Markandaya's S*ome Inner Fury (1955)* and the novels of B. Rajan and Santha Rama Rau.

Khushwant Singh is one of the most significant authors in the field of contemporary Indian English novel. The author is among the first Indian writer who put Indo-Anglian literature on the international literary map. Khushwant Singh was born in 1915 at Hadali that is located about

seven miles west of the river Jhelum and about forty miles south of the Khewra Salt mine range now in Pakistan. Both Indian and Western traditions shaped Khushwant Singh's mind. Though deeply attached to the soil and his own culture, he was moulded by the Western education that he received in India and in England. "I am, the product of both the East and the West", he declares. I am, if I may coin the word, an Orio-Occidental."[12] There is a happy blending of scientific rationalism and liberal humanism in his writings.

The historical novelist's life is indeed influenced by several factors, the most important of these is his association with the world of journalism. From the first journalistic assignment — a series of articles on the 1965 war for The *New York Times* — to full time journalism as Editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* was a long step. Apart from this weekly, he has successfully contributed to the growth of three major publications in India, namely *Yojna, New Delhi*, and *The Hindustan Times.* The author's journalistic writings and his two weekly columns, "With Malice towards One and All" and "Gossip Sweet and Sour" have contributed towards his immense popularity.

Khushwant Singh's parents, Lady and Sir Sobha Singh migrated to Delhi taking Khushwant Singh's elder brother with them. The young Khushwant Singh was left behind in Hadali in the care of his paternal

grandmother. Hadali had a profound influence upon him. It was a small village with barely 300 families living there, most of them being Muslim. He has given an emotional account of the present day Hadali in his travelogue, "Pakistan: Sweet and Sour." Hadali also forms the backdrop of a couple of chapters in his magnum opus *Delhi(1990)***.**

The writer has travelled extensively all over the world on invitations to give lectures. This has resulted in several travelogues like: "Australia: Lone Land of Magnificent Distances," "Southern Safari", "In Japan without Money or Passport", and numerous others. "What makes Khushwant's travelogues special is his total lack of inhibition. He tells it all as he saw it, missing out nothing whether it was a rebuffed pass at a girl, a joke at his expense or a lecherous intention that came to nothing."[13]

The novelist was much close to his grandmother. He has written a poignant short story about her entitled, "The Portrait of a Lady." She would constantly be engaged in reciting the holy scripture, *The Granth Sahib* and *Sukhmani*, the psalm of peace. This greatly influenced the author and he showed his interest in religion.

When Khushwant Singh was five years old, his parents sent for him and his grandmother. His parents had rented a small shack near where his father had taken contracts for the building of a new capital of India, New Delhi. The life of a contractor as the writer saw his father lead

has been presented in meticulous detail in the chapter, "The Builders" of his novel *Delhi*. The diplomatic attitude adopted by Sir Sobha Singh and by the other Indians in their dealings with the British Officers has been depicted by Khushwant Singh in his Second Novel, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale (1956)***.**

In Delhi the writer attended the Modern School for nine years. It was a nationalist school; leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru and Sarojini Naidu were invited to address the students. The emphasis in Modern School was on patriotism. Students were made to feel proud of their own culture and tradition. Singh has admitted that these were the worst years of his life. This was due to the fact that he was neither good at studies nor at games. Singh passed his matriculation in 1930. Thereafter came eight years of college, which were the most carefree years of his life. He first joined St. Stephen's College in Delhi which was run by the Cambridge Mission and was regarded as the best in northern India. The writer spent two years at college more in playing mediocre hockey and tennis than in studying. He was probably instigated towards his literary aspirations during this time. Singh attended the Bible classes regularly which interested Singh immensely. This because the writer began to love the language of the Old and the New Testament. His favourite reading was the Old Testament, not for the teachings but for the

"sonorous language."[14] Singh also participated in the annual college debate and found that he managed to hold the complete attention of the audience. This laid the foundation of Singh's witty style of writing.

The Government College in Lahore was known for its excellence in sports. The Indian Olympic hockey team always had four to five players from the college. Singh's interest in hockey and other sports in St. Stephen's and in Government College led him to later write the short story, "Man How the Government of India Run!" This story focuses upon a volleyball match. There were several literary influences on the novelist also. Like Ahmed Shah Bokhari, a member of the staff, who was one of the best after dinner speakers in English that he heard till date; and he was also a writer of extremely witty Urdu prose. There were also a couple of Urdu writers, Tahseer and Imtiaz Ali Taj. They translated the English classics, *Figaro* and Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* into Urdu. Their enaction on Lahore stage was one of the best that the author has ever seen. There was Faiz Ahmed Faiz whose poems were widely published and highly acclaimed by the critics. Other contemporaries at college who made a name for themselves later were: actors Balraj Sahni and Dev Anand , actress Kamini Kaushal, and directors Chetan Anand and B.R. Chopra. In this way, college was a rich, and creative experience

for Khushwant Singh. He later wrote an essay, "Chetan Anand" in his book entitled, *Women* and *Men in My Life (1995)*.

Of all the London Colleges where the author could be admitted, he chose King's College. He planned to qualify for the Bar. Accordingly he set off for England in 1934. His first sea voyage was aboard the Italian ship, Conte Rosso. He recreated the ambience later as a backdrop in his story "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia". In England Khushwant Singh's association with a retired professor F.S. Marvin, who had written several books attracted him towards the literary world. His love for nature developed during this time. His regular walks in the woods with the profusely flowering azaleas and rhododendrons and resounding with the melody of bird song cast a spell over him. The novelist imbued his fiction with various natural phenomena when describing flora, fauna, and the seasons. This is seen in his description of the monsoons in his first novel, *Train to Pakistan (1956)*. His kind feelings for animals is evident in the short story, "The Fawn" and also in the first chapter of his second novel, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*. He has also written a book entitled, *Nature Watch (1990).*

Khushwant Singh returned home in 1939 with the simultaneous outbreak of the Second World War. In Lahore he was accepted everywhere due to his well to do status. Socially he was invited to the

homes of judges, ministers and eminent lawyers but this did not help in making progress in his career. In spite of social relationship with the British, Singh remained true to his Indian roots and was contemptuous of the westernized oriental gentlemen. This is revealed in his various stories like "Karma" and "A Bride for the Sahib." As Vasant A. Shahane rightly points out:

> Khushwant Singh's art and mind are permeated by a genuine Punjabi consciousness. His art is deeply rooted in the soil deriving vitality from the vigorous energy that characterizes a Punjabi. Unlike the work of some other Indo-Anglian writers, his writing has grown out of the grass roots of the social milieu. His Mano Majra is a novel centering on a Punjab village and his real experiences provide him with the necessary setting and understanding of men and situations in rural India.[15]

The writer was not successful in the profession of law. For the first few months he did not get a single case to handle. During the period of desperation, Singh took on part time teaching at the Law College and got himself enlisted on the panel of the defense lawyers at the High Court. Since Singh was something of a Marxist, he defended the cases of communists free of charge. As a result, his earnings never crossed more than a thousand rupees a month. But Singh continued to practice law for

seven years, but the experiences during this period were bitter for him. The writer explained why he disliked Law as a profession:

> I had a clerk and the usual paraphernalia that lawyers have such as a black coat and gown. But there were no clients! They didn't walk in. In Lahore at that time, the entire legal profession — and I think particularly the criminal side — was in the hands of touts. They picked up clients at railway stations and bus stops and went to the villages and brought them. And they took a big cut from the fees you got ofcourse, this is strictly immoral and not allowed in the legal profession, but just about everyone had to do it. And then it dawned on me that one had to live. And to make your livelihood on other people's quarrels was something wrong…. But I did feel a sense of frustration following a profession that did not give me fulfillment.[16]

Khushwant Singh's opinion of lawyers and of the judicial system in India, remained with him for a long time. He got himself into trouble for having expressed his opinion on the Corruption in the judiciary in an article that had appeared in *The Hindustan Times*.

Due to his aversion for law, the author took to reading English classics and poetry which he had ignored during his college days. Thus subconsciously he was laying the foundation for his literary career.

Singh had not thought of becoming a writer. He was actually trained to be a lawyer. However, since not many cases came his way, Singh had plenty of time to read. The first few cases that came his way as counsel appointed by the court were to defend those people on trial for murder who could not afford lawyers. Singh visited sites where the murder had taken place, interviewed the person arrested and talked to his friends and relatives. All this gave him an insight into the lives of the Punjab peasantry. He would relate his experiences to his companions and he also observed that he was able to hold the attention of his listeners. However, the author's poor academic record discouraged him from taking up writing as a career. It took him several years to overcome this feeling of inferiority. The author was able to do so only after he heard stories read out by men with great academic distinctions, and read Indian novelists who had become successful, like: Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan. And finally he gained confidence to venture into the field of writing. The opportunity came to him after the independence of India and the Partition.

The British had decided to pull out, but after the division of India. Lahore was to become a part of Pakistan. Violence had broken out in 1946. Hindus and Sikhs were being massacred brutally in northwestern Punjab, Lahore and Amritsar. By the middle of 1947 it was evident that

Hindus and Sikhs would have to leave Pakistan. Khushwant Singh was reluctant to leave, but the mutual hatred between the two communities had risen to a great extent, Singh decided to shift from Lahore. Embittered by the experience and filled with hatred, many of them became anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan. But the author got no hold of anti-Muslim feeling and said that blood was split on both sides. He felt that some kind of mad frenzy had taken hold of all the communities. Forced to abandon his home in Lahore and a successful law practice, Singh too became a refugee. Manzur-Qadir, a prominent lawyer in Lahore who went on to become Pakistan's Foreign Minister, was the writer's closest friend in Lahore. This is one of the main reasons the writer, despite the trauma of Partition, remains fundamentally pro-Muslim and an ardent proponent of close Indo-Pak relations. After partition, the Qadirs moved into Singh's house in Lahore to prevent vandals from looting or damaging the place.

The deeply moving, and award winning novel, *Train to Pakistan* is based on the events just prior to the Partition. Singh's internationally acclaimed novel, *Train to Pakistan* won him the "Grove Press Award". In German it was entitled *Dia Brucke am Satledesh*. In 1998, this novel was made into a brilliant film by Pamela Rooks. Khushwant Singh also received the "Mondellow Award" of Italy for the Italian translation of

Train to Pakistan. Sixty-six of Bourke-White's photographs of the partition violence were included in a 2006 reissue of Khushwant Singh's 1956 novel *Train to Pakistan*. According to Somini Sengupta, the writer of an arts section of the *New York Times,* the photojournalist also was one of the most effective chroniclers of the violence that erupted at the independence and partition of India and Pakistan. The photographer recorded streets littered with corpses, dead victims with open eyes, and refugees with vacant eyes. Sengupta wrote, "Bourke-White's photographs seem to scream on the page".

Singh has achieved success in his literary career through backbreaking hardwork and firm determination. The Partition of India gave him the excuse to leave law and join the foreign office. It was during his posting at Ottawa that he began his foray in the world of fiction. His stories were first published in Harper's *Canadian Forum* and *Saturday Night*. Next came his collection of short stories entitled, *The Mark of Vishnu (1950)***.** This received good reviews everywhere. Thereafter, he decided to take up writing as a full-time career. For this Singh gave up a secure and privileged diplomatic career. The author decided to specialize in a particular subject and he chose Sikhism. He first translated the Sikh morning prayer *Japji (1959)* and then wrote a book, *The Sikhs (1953)***.** It was only after the Princeton and the Oxford University Presses Published

his *A History of the Sikhs (1977)* in two volumes that he was regarded as an authority on the Sikhs. The Spalding Trust of Oxford invited him to deliver a series of lectures on Sikhism. Singh was asked by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to write their items on Sikhs and Sikh history. Khushwant Singh was also commissioned by the *New York Times* and the *Observer* (London) to write for them. This gave him an entry into the world of serious journalism. While at Swarthmore, he was offered the editorship of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. Under Khushwant Singh, the circulation of the *Weekly* increased dramatically. However, the changing political compulsions of the day cost him his editorship. Subsequently, the author became the editor of the *National Herald*. Singh did not find the proposal considerable and soon resigned. He then became the editor of the fortnightly magazine, *New Delhi*. This too did not do well.

In 1980 he became a member of the parliament and also the editor of the largest circulating newspaper of Delhi *The Hindustan Times*. His six years in parliament coincided with an important phase in the history of modern India. This was the time when trouble in Punjab erupted. The novelist speaks from the point of view of the common man. He does not bother to protect his personal interest in doing so. Khushwant Singh being a nominated member was not expected to speak against the government on controversial issues. But he spoke against the army storming the

Golden Temple and the massacre of the Sikhs following the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi. His vociferous disapproval in the parliament and in his articles and columns against Operation Blue Star, and, the anti-Sikh riots, cost him dearly. His three year contract with *The Hindustan Times* was not renewed, nor did he get a second term to the Rajya Sabha.

By now the author had also written widely appreciated books such as: *Religion of the Sikhs (1968), Guru Gobind Singh - The Saviour (1977), My Bleeding Punjab (1992), Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar and After with Kuldip Nayar (1984), Shri Ram: A Biography with Arun Joshi (1968), The Many Faces of Communalism with Bipin Chandra (1985), Indira Gandhi Returns (1979)***,** and others.

Since 1990, Singh has pursued diverse kinds of writing: an historical survey, as *India: An Introduction* (1990); a book of essays, as in *Need for a New Religion in India and Other Essays (1991);* a memoir, such as *Women and Men in My Life* (1995); an ecological book, *Nature Watch* (1997) and a cautionary pamphlet, *The End of India* (2003).

Khushwant Singh had been the consulting editor of Penguin**.** He also translated books like: *Umrao Jaan Ada: Courtesan of Lucknow* by Mirza Mohammad Hadi Ruswa (1970), *I Take This Woman* by Rajinder Singh Bedi (1967), *The Skeleton and Other Writings* and *Selected Poems* by Amrita *Pritam (1970), Shiqwa* and *Jawab–i-Shikawa– Complaint and*

Answer, Iqbal's Dialogue with Allah by Muhammad Iqbal (1981) and several others. He has also been the editor of several books like: *Land of Five Rivers(1965); Stories from the Punjab (1974), Gurus, Godmen, and Good People (1979), Sunset of the Sikh Empire (1967),* and some others. *The Best of Khushwant Singh* was published in 1993. The foreword to this book was written by one of the brightest stars of the Indian literary firmament, Vikram Seth. The author has also written articles on politics and on famous political personalities such as: "Khalistan", "My Years in Parliament", "Giani Zail Singh" and "M. Hidayatullah" in his book, *Sex, Scotch* and *Scholarship (1992).*

Today, Khushwant Singh is the author of over 80 books. In the field of fiction he has written thirty-four short stories and four novels. His short stories are outstanding due to their taut, simple style and their all-pervasive humour. Khushwant Singh is one of few Indian writers who has used humour with great dexterity. His short stories are the finest examples of humorous writings in Indian English literature. A unique quality of Khushwant Singh's earlier three novels is that all three are completely different from each other. Whereas *Train to Pakistan* is haunting due to its poignant rendering of the trauma of the partition, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* is lighthearted with its look at the goings on in a typical Sikh household. His mega novel, *Delhi* on the other hand is extremely different, since it tells the story of the city of Delhi during

different eras. It is a blend of personal memories and history. However, in all the novels the emphasis is on Punjab and Sikhs.

Singh's fiction can be searched from the point of view of the development of various themes in them. He primarily writes about religion, politics, interpersonal relationships and nature. We find credibility in Khushwant Singh's writings because he writes only about those topics with which he has had a close acquaintance. Thus, Singh is autobiographical in his works.

It was with the publication of his first novel *Train to Pakistan* that the critics declared the 'arrival of Khuswant Singh' on the contemporary literary scene. At the time of Partition; the novelist was greatly moved by the harrowing events during those turbulent days. His outlook towards life underwent a drastic change. He felt thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary situation, and his faith in the intrinsic nobility of mankind was completely shaken. In order to give vent to his feelings, he took to writing and hence *Train to Pakistan*.

Mano Majra, a tiny village in the Punjab, serves as the fictional setting of *Train to Pakistan*. In the novel the village is portrayed as epitome of India; it has Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus living in harmony and amity. Partition does not yet mean much to them. The tragic love story of a Sikh boy and a Muslim girl, woven together with a catastrophic event, seeks to bridge the wide gulf of communal hatred. Jugga's love is indeed a positive and dynamic force of the novel. The love affair between the

vagabond Sikh and the pretty Muslim girl goes beyond the religious barriers.

Khushwant Singh's second novel, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* again has a historical backdrop. The action of the novel takes place during the war years, from April 1942 to April 1943. In terms of Indian history, it is about five years before the country's attainment of freedom. The success of the Japanese in South-East Asia in the early forties had stunned the British government. And now with the Japanese at the gate of India, the British faced the imminent collapse of the Indian Empire. Meanwhile the Indian patriots, sensing the end of the raj, desired freedom from the slavery of the British through revolutionary means.

The writer's third novel *Delhi* was hailed as a great piece of history-fiction. Some critics considered it as a bold expression of love and sex. A significant feature of the novel was the portrayal of a *hijra* as the central character. Khushwant Singh quotes Ghalib, the well known Urdu poet, in the epigraph of the novel:

> I asked my soul: What is Delhi?
>
> She replied: The world is the body and Delhi its soul.[17]

The couplet sets the tone and temper of the novel. The novel makes use of history as its raw material. It celebrates the past of Delhi, the city with a long history with various changes. The central character of the novel is Bhagmati, a *hijra,* who represents the city Delhi. She can be seen

as a metaphor for Delhi and history at the same time. While the narrator is a mask for the author, the *hijra* is a multiple symbol of Delhi, of Indian society and culture. For *hijra* represents Indian society in some ways trampled under foot repeatedly by invaders, but it represents the Indian tradition of the universal love. She represents the certain basic characteristics of Indian society and politics.

A recurring theme of Singh's fiction is love and sex. He dealt with the emotions of love and passion in his novels. His emphasis is on the spiritual love, but the writer observes that physical love is no less important. His latest novel *The Company of Women (1999)* is centered on the individual's search for the truth of existence within society. Mohan Kumar, a successful businessman, is overcome by the boredom of Delhi and begins to do experiment with short-time companions for he is of the view that lust is true foundation of man-woman relationship. The novel highlights the modernized, westernized urban men and women. The writer presents a protagonist for whom body is more important than the spirit.

After a short period at Princeton and Hawaii, Khushwant Singh began to teach Indian religions and contemporary Indian Politics at Swarthmore College. These lectures were later published under the title, *Vision of India(1974)*. It was here that the novelist developed his

legendary respect for time. Khushwant Singh is completely opposed to his image as a merry Sardar who is a drunkard and womanizer.

One must consider Khushwant Singh's ideas on fiction regarding his ideas about the art of novel writing. The novelist gives the example of painting, saying that writing a novel is similar to doing a large painting, which needs a large canvas and is better done in oils than in water colours. A short story on the other hand, is like a miniature, which is better done on ivory or parchment, and in stone colours, with its lines drawn with the absolute precision of a hair brush. "Personally, I would fix 3500 words as the outside limit for a short story."[18]

In order to prepare for his lectures, Khushwant Singh read a lot about India and in this way learnt a great deal about his own country. He studied and learnt about the major religions of the world, like: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Having known about the various religions, he developed his own personal religion. This has been outlined in his article, “Need for a New Religion in India”. Khushwant Singh did not become arrogant: "I had no illusions about my being a good teacher or a great writer. But I always managed to raise a laugh whenever I spoke. I am a born jester. And whatever rubbish I wrote, got published.”[19]

While Singh was at Swarthmore he was invited to take over as the editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India.* In 1969 he reached Bombay to join *The Illustrated Weekly***.** The author realized that he had not known much about India prior to his job at Swarthmore. So he started a series on the different sub communities of India like: Lingayats, Jats, Aiyers, Chitpavans, Aiyengars, Vokkalingas, Gujars, Memons, Khojas, Bohras and the like. Each issue was a sellout. Khushwant Singh is an agnostic and boldly wrote against the unnecessary religious practices. It was the nine famous or infamous years with the *Weekly* that gave him his "unsavoury reputation."[20] He became the most widely-read journalist. In 1975 he was honored with the "Padma Bhushan" by the Punjab Government for a distinguished contribution to literature and journalism.

Khushwant Singh's literary career also reached great height in the context of Punjabi literature. Vasant Shahane believes that Khushwant Singh as a writer of fiction, has been influenced by Indo-Anglian writing as well as Punjabi creative writing. The healthy, virile, realistic spirit and tradition of Punjabi and Urdu works seem to have inspired him. His roots have also influenced his style of writing. His use of language is down-to-earth, realistic and often an exact translation of the Hindi or the Punjabi dialect. His language can be termed as Indian-English or Indianism. Shahane opines that Khushwant Singh specializes in the use of

Indianisms which aptly depict the gestures, attitudes and the vernacular of Punjabi villages.

> For Khushwant: An Acrostic Sonnet King of the Columnists and prince of hosts, hero of cats (twenty at least) who feed under your aegis, trencherman of toasts – scotch, naturally, not French – God knows we need humour and courage, tolerance and wit when hope is scarce and murder's blessed by prayer, and every bully, oaf, and hypocrite nurtures his flock on hatred and hot air. Threats to your life have not made you less bold. Sexecess can't spoil you. May you scatter your words inimitably on for decades more— no less amused and generous than your old Grandmother, standing by the courtyard door. Halting her prayers to feed and chide the birds.[21]

The writer has a specific point of view about the Indian culture. This is proved by his *History of Sikhs*, a massive work in the field of Sikh history and biography. He accumulated a lot of material on the Sikhs at the India Office Library. He wrote a biography of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, as well as a book on the ten years of turmoil that followed his death. The two volumes of *History of Sikhs* gave him a sense of satisfaction. He believed that at last he had justified his existence. He

ended the volume with the Latin *Opus Exegii* which meant that his life's work is done.

Khushwant Singh's parents were traditional Sikhs. All religious rituals were observed in their home. As a child of five, he was initiated into reading the scriptures and at seventeen, he underwent a baptismal ceremony which symbolized that he had joined the Khalsa fraternity. When he was working on the translations of the Sikh scriptures he found so many references to the Vedas, Upanishads and the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Thus, he became fully acquainted with various religions and does not consider religions significant that encourage fanaticism.

The communal violence during the partition distressed Khushwant Singh greatly. His travelogue "Pakistan Sweet and Sour" is similarly emotional and he has a sentimental attachment for Pakistan; more so, because his birth place, Hadali is located in Pakistan. He says:

> However, despite the three blood wars we fought with them and despite the fact that our leaders spit abuse at eachother and the air is thick with rumours of a fourth war, I go to Pakistan as a Hindu goes to Varanasi, a Muslim to Mecca. It is my *teerthsthaan***.** Where I perform my *Haj and Umra*. This is where my roots are. I have nourished them with

> tears of nostalgia and sheltered them from venomous winds of hate with my bare hands.[22]

Khushwant Singh has been constantly pro-Pakistant. Whenever he goes to Pakistan, he is warmly received. His doors are always open to them, even when relations between the two countries have been at their worst. Singh made the *Illustrated Weekly* a forum for Indian Muslim opinion. Whenever there was a Hindu–Muslim riot, since most of the loss of life and property was Muslim, he adopted a pro-Muslim stance. He also felt that friendly relations with Pakistan were a must to infuse a sense of security in the minds of Indian Muslims. He did his best to put Pakistani's point of view on issues where Indian and Pakistani stands were at variance. Although in the 1971 war over Bangladesh he spoke against General Yahya Khan's Military regime and General Tikka Khan's genocide of Bengalis. *The Illustrated Weekly* was the only Indian journal to persist in pressuring the government to release the 93, 000 Pakistani prisoners of war when it was over, *The Weekly* carried a large number of articles on Islam, Islamic history and the Indian Muslims' role in the freedom movement.

The author was amongst the few Indians fortunate enough to have visited Pakistan many times. Besides the general good will towards Sikhs, whom they had once hated, educated Pakistani knew how often he had

supported them. For Jinnah's birth centenary celebrations they invited two Indians to read papers in their seminar. The other delegate could not come. Khushwant Singh was the only Indian amongst the European and American scholars on Indo-Pak affairs.

> I went on to quote Jinnah's first speech as Governor–General of Pakistan in which he assured Hindu and Sikh minorities of equal treatment and exhorted them to regard Pakistan as their motherland. We had never wanted the two-way migration of religious minorities. I stated categorically that Indians accepted the right of Pakistan to be a sovereign, independent state; what we did not, nor ever would accept, was the two-nation theory of Muslims being a nation apart from Hindus and Sikhs. My speech was applauded. But soon Pakistani delegates began to heckle me. 'If you don't accept the two-nation theory, you don't accept Pakistan', they maintained. I stood my ground, argued that we conceded Pakistan because the majority of the population of the regions concerned wanted to have independent states of their own and not because they were Muslims. If we accepted the two-nation theory what were we to do with the 90 million Muslims who remained in India? I got a second round of applause.[23]

Singh is one of the finest historians and novelist, a forthright political commentator, and an all standing observer and social critic. In July 2000, he was conferred the "Honest Man of the Year Award" by the Sulabh International Social Service Organization for his coverage and honesty in his brilliant writing. Khushwant Singh, despite his life-long unorthodoxy in religious matters bitterly opposed Bhindranwale's movement. He protested the government action by returning the Padma Bhushan. His reflections on these events as well as on the secessionist movement that continued to rage until the mid 90's appear in his journalism of the time as well as two other publications: *Punjab Tragedy: Operation Blue Star and After* (1984 with Kuldip Nayar) and *My Bleeding Punjab* (1992). On the Blue Star Operation Khushwant Singh writes:

> Despite my indifference and even hostility to religion, I had no doubt in my mind that I should re-affirm my identity with my community. I regarded Bhindranwale as a man who deserved his fate. But "Operation Blue Star" went well beyond the slaying of Bhindranwale: it was a well–calculated and deliberate slap in the face of the entire community.[24]

The novelist also decries the 1984 Delhi Pogrom against the Sikhs where his own life was in danger. Symbolic protests did not take long

coming over the event. He was also part of it. The surrender of the Padma Bhushan by him was condemned by Vinod Mehta, then editor of *The Observer*. He wrote that when it came to choosing between being an Indian or a Sikh, Singh had chosen to be a Sikh. But the author had never believed that he had to be one or the other. He was both an Indian and a Sikh and proud of being so. He further explains that Hindus do not have to prove their nationality; only Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are required to give evidence of their patriotism. Although partition took place 62 years ago and it is 25 years since thousands of Sikhs were massacred after the murder of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, Khushwant Singh's hatred of communalism and religious intolerance is as sharp as ever. Despite his aversion to religion, and his western thinking and bohemian life style, he stuck to his Sikh identity. "I continued to retain the outward emblems of the Khalsa not because of any conviction but out of a wish to remain a part of the Khalsa fraternity".[25] Khushwant Singh comes across as a secular man who gave a good coverage to Muslims in the *Illustrated Weekly*.

The author was also given the award of "Nishan-e-Khalsa" at the tercentennial celebration of the birth of the Khalsa in 1999, and an "honorary doctorate" from Guru Nanak Dev University, giving him a sense of fulfillment. His translation of *Japji (1959), Hymns of Nanak*

(1978) and *The Guru(1979)*shows his spiritual side from mind to super mind. A commentary on Bhagwat Gita, testifies the writer's secular nature. His third novel, the longest so far, *Delhi,* not only pays tribute to the city he loves, but also reflects his interest in history. The author had worked on the novel for twenty-five years diligently researching on the historical material. Singh finds place among the subcontinent's most prolific historians, critics and creative writers. For his contribution to art, literature and culture, he was presented with "Punjab Ratan Award" by the Chief Minister of Punjab on 31 August 2006. Khushwant Singh was also honoured with "Padma Vibhushan" by the government of India in 2007. Singh's shorter fiction is characterized by an accurate and mercilessly honest portrayal of the social complex and the political conduct of postcolonial India. Singh's "Editor's Page" became one of India's most widely read editorials in which he commented on social and political issues. The stories irrepressible humour keeps them sparkling. In this respect, he is closer to Henry Fielding than to George Meredith, more akin to Salman Rushdie than to R.K. Narayan.

> Whenever the intellectual history of post-colonial India comes to be written, Singh will be found, like an Arnoldian Critic – if without the latter's sweetness — to have kept the current of national debate alive, honestly trying to keep the ship of the state on an even keel, mainly through his

> journalistic prowess and relentless wit, each exercised in the interest of fairness and reason. Possessed of a fine sense of history, he has been an ever-awake watchman making rounds of the ramparts of Indian democracy.[26]

Khushwant Singh by temperament is an extremely witty man. He prefers to see the lighter side of life rather than the darker aspect of it. This makes his fiction appealing.

> But which is the real Khushwant Singh? The inspired translator of Guru Nanak's hymns or the zestful chronicler of the low life in Tokyo and New York? The erudite historian who has written some of the most enduring books on the Sikhs and Punjab, or the best selling author of full-blooded novels and short stories (many of them with "damn sexy" passages)? The sensitive observant nature watcher or the intrepid reporter on the trail of saints and sinners? The reflective introvert or the exuberant extrovert?[27]

Quintessentially, Khushwant Singh is essentially an oriental who has successfully maintained his Indian self and individuality inspite of being exposed to the ideas and attitudes of the West.

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CHAPTER-2

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is the national spirit that lies behind the search for the past glories of a country by its people. This search for the glories of the past is a sort of an endeavour for self-assertion. The historical novels in English by Indian writers also show how in the past the Indians had to yield to the foreigners for their own faults. These novels also reveal how the Indians in the past could stand unitedly against the foreign invaders, and emphasis is made on the need for unity among the Indians of different regions or religions. Some novels give expression of hatred for the rule of some foreign government in India. The purpose of these novelists is to arouse a sense of nationalism in their contemporaries, and to create in their mind an awareness of the political situation in the country in their own time and their national duty in such a situation.

Indian writers are preoccupied with things that are Indian – Indian themes, Indian characters, Indian life and manners, Indian totems and taboos and this is the reason which has made Indian English fiction unmistakably national.

> The Indian writers still saw a meaning in writing in English, the language of the rulers and of the administration. This is mainly because of two reasons. First, by writing in English

> an Indian author got readers all over India as well as in England, America and other parts of the world where English was in use. Second, by writing in English Indian writers could have communion with the British – the ruling race – regarding Indian problems and the British rule.[1]

It was natural that the Indian writers who were imbued with the spirit of nationalism during the nineteenth century wanted to express their viewpoints not only to Indians but also to the British and other peoples of the world. It was also natural that they had felt the need of giving expression to their glorious, age-long traditions and customs in English so that their rulers and others might know their distinct identity.

Besides trying to assert the self of the nation through history or historical fiction, the people of a country want "to achieve unity or self - determination"[2] and to rouse through it a "political and historical consciousness of the nation."[3] The Indo-Anglian historical fiction serves the purpose of history or historical novels and stories. In K.K. Sinha's *Sanjogita* (1903) we find the dealing of history with nationalistic purpose for the first time in the history of Indo-Anglian fiction. Sinha shows through this story the valour and heroism of Prithvi Raj of whom Indians can rightly be proud; and on the other, the mean jealously of Jay Chand which paved the way for the Muslim conquest of India. The author's purpose behind the selection of such a period of Indian history is to show

his contemporaries how the British could bring India under their rule. Sinha felt the need "to draw their attention to the direct causes of their fall" to inspire his countrymen to rise against the British for winning freedom. He laments about the disunity between the Hindus and the Muslims and emphasises a unity which can only be gained by developing a secular outlook, the Indians of his time could stand as one nation and win freedom from British rule with a consciousness of the facts of history delivered through fiction. K.K. Sinha has earned commendable success as a historical novelist with a nationalist bias.

With the formation of the India League in 1857 and of the Indian Association in 1876, Indian politics acquired a new life. These two organizations differed from the pre-Mutiny organisations in the sense that the former wanted the Indians to participate in the administration of the country along with the British with all loyalty to the British crown. The development of this movement was marked by the birth in 1885 of the Indian National Congress which decided to "oppose by all constitutional methods all official acts or measures opposed to those principles which were laid down by the British Parliament," and hoped to form by it "the germ of a native Parliament." The ultimate goal of these organisations of the later nineteenth century was good government, wider employment of Indians in higher offices in public service, and

establishment of representative institutions. Until the emergence of the Extremist group of the Congress, the highest ambition of even the Indian National Congress was only self-government within the Empire.

It is no wonder that the very distinct characteristic of the Congress in its early stage was its loyalty to the British Government. All the leaders of the Congress at this stage, viz, Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjea, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Gopal Krishna Gokhale were products of English education and they had genuine respect for British culture. Thus, in spite of their zeal for self-government for the Indians, they believed that British rule was a 'divine dispensation' which was not only desirable but also indispensable for India.

We have only two novels that reflect this mode of the Indian freedom struggle. These two novels on the political theme of this phase of the national movement are not small in their scope and objective. These two novels are *The Prince of Destiny* by Sarath Kumar Ghose and *Hindupore* by Siddha Mohan Mitra, both published in 1909.

The India of the ancient times is gone forever; and any attempt to revive those days would be futile like the attempt of Vashista. One must welcome now all that is good in England for the creation of a new India. In his novel *The Prince of Destiny,* S.K. Ghose shows the reason why

India must welcome British rule. He has done it in connection with the debate between Vashista and Barath, the main characters in the novel on the British rule in India when the rebel forces of Vashista are marching on to the capital. Barath is the anglicized form of the Indian word *Bharat* meaning India. S.K. Ghose shows in the novel that it is British arrogance that has maligned the Indians against their rule. He is realistic enough to see how the British had divested the Indians — especially the native kings — of many of their political privileges and powers quite humiliatingly. Ghose suggests in many places that this deprivation and humiliation are also at the root of the Indian agitation. The revolts of Vashista and Naren, the two militant nationalists in the novel, are only echoes of the grumblings of the Indian princes and people of the time who felt that they should rise for "self-government within the empire." The novel thus expresses very distinctly the two moods of the people of India of that time — the mood to accept the British rule as a 'divine dispensation' and the mood to struggle for 'self-government' within that dispensation. It is for this that the title of the novel — *The Prince of Destiny* — is quite justified. Siddha Mohan Mitra's *Hindupore* (1909) is also a political novel akin to S.K. Ghosh's *The Prince of Destiny* in its portraiture of the dissatisfaction of Indians under British rule.

The Congress saw in the British rule a 'divine dispensation' a new attitude which grew towards the British Government by the end of the nineteenth century. Even the older leaders gradually came to realise that India was getting poorer and poorer every day in spite of their faith in the goodness of the foreign government. Eminent moderate leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Dinshaw Wacha and Gopal Krishna Gokhale later held the British government responsible for the economic ruin of the country. The old liberal leader Naoroji's book *Poverty and the Un-British Rule in India* became a handbook for the new leaders who brought about a change of outlook.

The foremost of these new leaders were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose. They were generally known as Extremists in contrast to the old leaders who now came to be known as Moderates. Instead of the faith of the old leaders in Western culture and philosophy and in the British sense of justice, the new leaders asserted their faith in the culture, tradition and philosophy of their own country. They considered the old leaders to be artificial and blamed them for their attempt at a reproduction of Europe in India. Tilak asked the people of India to raise their voice in favour of self-reliance and self-help and dissociate themselves from the Government. This call for action and non-cooperation became the motto of the new phase of the

Indian freedom struggle. By action, however, these nationalists did not mean violent action; they meant only passive resistance, mass agitation and the will to suffer. Freedom to these Extremists meant something quite different from what it meant to others before them. By self-government *or Swaraj* they meant absolute independence or *Purna Swaraj* from the British rule. According to them, Freedom for India must bring to end all sorts of colonial relations with the British.

The phase of the freedom struggle also saw the rise of another movement for the same goal. This is commonly known as the Terrorist Movement. Though the goal of the Terrorists was the same as that of the Congress Extremists, they differed from the Congress in their method. Inspired with an ardent love for their country, these revolutionaries wanted to get freedom through violent resistance. They got themselves trained for armed action, terrorised government officials, and went occasionally to the extent of killing them. This terrorist movement was however, only an offshoot of the main Indian freedom struggle, which began under the leadership of M.K. Gandhi. Gandhi and his followers like Tilak also wanted *Purna Swaraj* or complete freedom from British rule through non-violent passive resistance. Gandhi differed from Tilak in the sense that he insisted more on moral elevation of the people of India for winning freedom than Tilak had done. Non-violence was

Gandhi's weapon for winning freedom as it was for the earlier leaders. As for non-cooperation, for Gandhi it was only a new name for suffering. He thus gave the new name *Satyagraha* to non-violent non-cooperation. Passive resistance for Gandhi was a restraint undertaken voluntarily for the good of society. *Swaraj* also meant to Gandhi something more than mere political independence from foreign rule, it was a state of being in which all people live in peace and harmony, getting rid of fear and other evils. There are a few novels and stories reflecting vividly the Indian freedom struggle under the leadership of Tilak and Gandhi which serve as a background to these novels and stories.

Another very important development of the freedom struggle which took place about this time was the establishment of the Home Rule Leagues by Tilak and Annie Besant. The objectives of these two Leagues, which acted independently but which were not opposed to each other, were to persuade the British to grant full self-government to the Indians.

Gandhi, who had lately returned from South Africa joined the Congress and looked for the first time to the economic condition of the working class and tried to heal their economic ills. Thus he soon became the doyen of the vast masses of the Indian people. Identifying the

economic interests of the peasants and the workers with the national cause, Gandhi drew them into the vortex of the national movement soon.

An event that gave the freedom struggle a jolt about this time was the Khilafat Movement of the Indian Muslims. When the Khalifa of the Islamic world lost his temporal authority, the orthodox section of the Muslims grew indignant with the British who were responsible for this state of affairs and to whom the Muslims in India were so far lending support in a very docile manner. The Indian Muslims thus organised the movement which came to be known as the Khilafat movement. Gandhi, as the leader of the Congress, supported this movement and called upon the Muslims to adopt the Congress method of non-violent non-cooperation in their *jihad* against the British. The Muslims responded to his call; and thus there was sympathetic cooperation between the two communities.

The next important event of the time was the Rowlatt Act of 1919 which authorised the British Government of India to try and punish people found guilty of offences against the state without giving them any chance for appeal. Gandhi and other Congress leaders gave a call for a country-wide *hartal,* fasting and prayer on April 6, 1919 in order to launch a movement against this act. Both the Hindus and the Muslims responded to the call and made the movement a success. But the

Government's attempt to repress the non-violent movement with violence gave a critical turn to the situation. The worst example of this was the Jallianwala Bagh incident where hundreds of unarmed, peaceful people were massacred brutally.

The Indian National Congress was then totally disillusioned with the British. Meeting at Amritsar that year, the Congress urged the British Parliament to arrange for the establishment of a responsible government in India. It had also decided to launch a non-cooperation movement throughout the country. The British government tried to repress this movement with an iron hand and declared the Congress Volunteer Organization illegal. Gandhi in his turn appealed to his people to disobey that unjust law and join the Volunteer Organization in thousands. The non-cooperation movement thus became Civil Disobedience and thousands of people courted arrest and flooded the jails.

The movement was not, however, successful as a non-violent one, according to Gandhi. Some people at Chauri Chaura turned violent against the police which Gandhi regarded as a failure of his people to understand the spirit of non-violence. He, therefore, suspended the movement at its very height and became rather unpopular with the majority of the people. The British Government took this chance to arrest him and he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

But the period of suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement also saw a Hindu-Muslim communal riot. Under the changed democratic constitution of the time, the Muslims apprehended that the Hindus would be too overwhelming a majority to give the Muslims their due rights. The Hindus, on the other hand, were against the weightage and the special safeguards to be given to the Muslims. Thus widespread communal riots broke out, and Gandhi went on his historic twenty-one day fast.

Later, there was again a nation-wide stir in the country over the Simon Commission for the review of the working of the Indian constitution. The British Government was compelled to invite opinions of Indians about the working of the constitution when a convention under the guidance of Motilal Nehru was formed. The Congress, while adhering to its earlier resolution for complete independence, accepted the constitution drawn up by the Nehru convention which sought 'Dominion Status' for India instead of complete freedom. The Congress acceptance was on the condition that the Government also must accept it within one year (before 31 December, 1929). The Government failed to do so; and the Congress session at Lahore meeting under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru demanded complete freedom and decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Gandhi launched this Civil Disobedience Movement by his historic march on foot from Sabarmati to the sea-coast village of Dandi on 12 March, 1930. His object was to prepare salt at Dandi from sea-water in defiance of the Government Salt Law. People throughout the country once again followed Gandhi and took resort to disobedience of law, non-payment of taxes, boycott of foreign goods and clothes, and strikes and demonstrations. Gandhi was arrested and imprisoned, but not before he completed his intended violation of the Salt Law.

Then came the Communal Award of August 1932. It provided separate electorates for Muslims, Europeans, Sikhs and 'Depressed Classes'. It was a great blow to the Congress aspirations and Gandhi, who had been working devotedly for the upliftment of the 'Depressed Classes', was especially piqued at this Award which sought to divide the Hindus on the basis of castes by giving a separate electorate to the 'Depressed Classes'. He went on fast against this award in the Yervada prison. Consequently, the Government had to amend the Award. Gandhi then laid more emphasis on the upliftment of the oppressed low castes of the Hindu society, especially the sweeper caste regarded by the Hindus as untouchable. He called them 'Harijans' or men of God.

Then next important episode in the history of the freedom struggle was the government decision to hold election according to the India Act

of 1935. The Congress also decided to fight the election, not to cooperate with the Government but to reject the new Act in favour of the demands raised by Gandhi at the Second Round Table Conference. In the election the Congress won in seven out of eleven provinces. The Muslim League offered to form coalition ministries with the Congress which the latter turned down. Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, then declared that Islam was in danger with the Congress ministries in several provinces of the countries.

Then fell the shadow of the Second World War over the scene of the national struggle in the country. The British Government wanted Indian cooperation; and the Congress did not agree to it. It is not that the Congress had no sympathy for the British involved in this war between Fascism and Democracy. But in order to lend support, it wanted from the British Government a clarification about its attitude to Democracy and Imperialism. The Congress had also wanted India to be declared independent before it could help the British in their war against Fascism. A difference of opinion ensued between the Congress and Subhas Chandra Bose over this issue.

Germany had begun to win major victories in the war and Britain was on the verge of ruin. Then the Congress, with its faith in Democracy, expressed its eagerness to join the British in the war if only they agreed

to form a Provisional National Government in the centre. But the British Government did not concede even that, whereupon the Congress launched once again the Civil Disobedience Movement in October 1940.

The Muslims in the meantime demanded a completely separate state for themselves; and they also decided on non-cooperation with the British unless their demand was fulfilled.

The British Government had by now many more reverses in the war and Indian help for them became essential. Therefore, the British Government sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the British cabinet, to India to bring about a compromise. But this mission also failed, the Muslim League reiterating its demand for a separate Muslim state and Congress demanding immediate end of the British rule in India with that famous resolution commonly known as the 'Quit India' resolution adopted on 14 July 1942. The Viceroy of India took a very stern view and he refused to have any discussion with the Congress on the issue.

Then in August 1942, Gandhi and all other prominent leaders of the country were arrested. The people, all leaderless, got furious and turned violent in reaction to this, cutting telegraph wires, damaging railway tracks and destroying other government property. The Government had also taken violent repressive measures, going to the extent of using machine guns etc. Subhas Chandra Bose meanwhile had escaped to Berlin with the hope of winning German help for fighting against the British.

On the Indian scene, Gandhi was released from prison in May 1944, when he wanted to come to terms with Jinnah. Jinnah was as adamant as ever in his demand for a separate Muslim state, Pakistan, which he wanted before Independence. Meanwhile, in the British General Election of 1945, the Labour Party came to power. The new labour Prime Minister Attlee was then keen on granting freedom to India. Accordingly, election to the central and provincial legislature took place for forming the Constituent body as well as for forming responsible ministries.

In March 1946, a British Mission consisting of three members of the British cabinet came to India to seek an agreement on the constitutional issue. There was the Muslim League standing for a separate Muslim state and the Congress insisting on an undivided secular India. The ultimate result of this was the partition of the country into two sovereign states on 15 August 1947 with communal riots breaking out throughout the country on its eve, with Gandhi, the 'father of the nation', treading on the solitary paths of riot-torn interior villages of the country, and Nehru making his memorable speech as the first Prime Minister of India at the Special Constituent Assembly Session in Delhi.

Indo-Anglian novelists and short-story writers of this period who were witnesses to the dramatic events of this period have depicted these

movements. The first novel to reflect an aspect of the freedom movement under the leadership of Gandhi is *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927) by K.S. Venkataramani. Manjeri Isvaran does not fail to recognise the political aspect of the novel and he writes that the novel "affords the author with ample scope for description of scenery for delineation of national types and characters, for reflections of social, political and economic problems..."[4] The pictures of life and manners in *Murugan the Tiller* expound the main theme which is the rural reconstruction of India after the ideal of Gandhi. Venkataramani also portrays in the novel an ideal man Murugan who will build the India of Gandhi's dream – a rural India where labour nourished body, mind and soul. The Gandhian idea of going 'back to the village' was very much prevalent at the time throughout the country. *Murugan, the Tiller* is thus a novel depicting the Gandhian ideas and also emphasizing the need for the traditional Indian way of living.

K.S. Venkataramani's next novel, *Kandan, the Patriot* (1932), is also a novel depicting the political aspect of the national struggle of India of the same period. In K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's words, "Murugan is an exponent of Gandhian economics as Kandan is an exponent of Gandhian politics."[5] It reflects the national movement for political freedom under the leadership of Gandhi, but Gandhi himself is not introduced here as a

character. Venkataramani wants to show how every village or town during that period had one Gandhi of its own to lead the people by staying in their midst. K.S. Venkataramani is the really successful novelist in whose writing propaganda and artistic skill attained a harmonious combination in the history of Indo-Anglian fiction.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is also a very considerable work dealing with an aspect of the Indian national movement under the leadership of Gandhi. Like *Murugan, the Tiller*, it also does not directly deal with the political aspect of the national movement. Its theme is the prejudice of Hindus against their brethren of the lowest sweeper class. M.K. Anand has dealt with this problem of Hindu society against the political background of India of the thirties of this century. The novel depicts a story of the time when the Ramsay-MacDonald Award of 1932 was announced and Gandhi went on a fast in protest against it because he, with his great sympathy for the lowly castes of Hindu society, had been working tirelessly for their upliftment, lecturing in public meetings, writing essays and editorials, collecting funds for their welfare and living often with them and sharing their sorrow and sufferings. Through the depiction of the eighteen-year old sweeper boy Bakha's bitter experiences from morning till evening of a day of his life, Anand shows very clearly and appealingly "his sympathies for this character because

of the centuries of exploitation and suffering that has been his lot"[6] as well as his "indignation at the society that so treats a fellow human being."[7] The novel deals with the Hindu social problem of untouchability against its political background of the time. It also depicts at the same time people's faith in Gandhi as their leader in the national movement and his magnetic influence on the people.

Many novelists and short-story writers have introduced Gandhi as a character; but whereas most of their novels and short stories remain simply at the documentary level, serving the purpose of portraying the superficial political scene and satisfying the craving of the readers to know more and more about this phenomenon called Gandhi.

The Sword and the Sickle by Mulk Raj Anand is another novel which reflects the Indian freedom struggle during the twenties and the thirties. The novel depicts a peasant movement, the unenlightened leaders of which are as much devoted to Gandhism as they are to Marxism. And the goal they aim at is as much freedom from foreign rule as it is from exploitation of the Indian Rajas and zamindars. Of course, the Indian Rajas and zamindars are also shown here as agents of the foreign rulers; and freedom from the oppression of these agents is considered possible when freedom from British rule is won.

Through the Peasant movement M.K. Anand highlights one important aspect of the national movement — the communist movement of the time as it gained ground in the villages. The author brings to the fore the follies of its leaders, their lack of understanding the situation, and want of proper study of the 'ism' they have followed. The great influence of the Congress on the people is also shown by the author. In the novel, the peasant leaders do not have faith in Gandhian ideology. The author has not allowed himself to be swept away by the emotional adoration for this great leader. In contrast to this, Nehru appears as an idealized character. They admire Nehru not for his ideas, which they do not understand, but because they know him as the son of Motilal Nehru, and as a revolutionary.

Those who wrote about the freedom struggle were not able to keep away from religion. Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Malgaonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow* (1973), Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) —all have strong elements of religion, or caste conflict. In Indian writing this has acquired a political connotation.

Raja Rao has also used the national struggle of the Gandhian era for his novel *Kanthapura* (1938). No novel till 1939 expressed so distinctly all the various aspects of the freedom struggle of the period

together. The novel focuses all the major political activities of the Congress during the thirties.

> The setting of the story in a village which has given the author an opportunity to show the traditional Indian religious life which supports an elaborate social structure and preserves its organic character through the ages and serves as a sure foundation for the success of the national movement in Gandhi's hands and, therefore, in the hands of his followers like young Moorthy of the novel.[8]

The historical consciousness is also a religious one in the Indian novel. The early novel in the late nineteenth century in its exploration of history and in its search for a national identity placed it within a religious context. Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* looks at the religious context. Infact no novel or assessment of Gandhi can be far removed from religion, because Gandhian philosophy was based on the Hindu sensibility, and myths and legends focus on all attitudes of life.

The romance of the early historical novel in most Indian languages yielded to realism which seemed to be the need of the hour. The novel of commitment, of political ideology, of social realism dominated the thirties and forties. A little later the problems of a nation in the making became the great concern. Realism then yielded to satire, analysis and a reviewing of the past. Realism in India allowed for several narrative

possibilities. Realism was necessary as it responded to the need for straightforward statements, to force recognition on a society of the social and economic conditions, and to induce an introspective self-analysis. There is an authorial reinforcement of the thematic thrust. Fantasy allows for a greater degree of experimentation at any level — the level of event or plot, of character, language and thought. Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* tries it at almost every level — linguistic, thought and action. Nayantara Sahgal's *Mistaken Identity* also makes use of fantasy. In this retrospective historical assessment of the thirties she brings together people from different ideological backgrounds and places them within the confines of a prison cell, Bhushan, the princling, Bhaiji, the Congressman, and Gandhi's disciple and Comrade Yusuf, the Marxist. The average Indian mind responded to intuition and the mystic, to magic and miracle rather than reason and description. Fantasy has been a strong strand in Indian writing. Fantasy is also associated with myth and religion as in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura.*

The writings of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao depict the social reality in rural and urban India. Under the impact of Gandhism, Anand sought to awaken a new consciousness in the average thinking individual. Man's inhumanity to man becomes the recurring theme in their novels. Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* (1947)

has encompassed the mercantile ethos and deterioration in moral standards to highlight man's inhumanity to man. The novel acquires an epic dimension by bringing into focus man's basic hungers — food, sex and freedom. Set against the Quit India Movement of 1942 the novel depicts the Bengal Famine in Calcutta and the impact of the Second World war on it. Bhattacharya's novel is a powerful evocation of man's inner deprivation symbolically reflected in his lust for power and money. The personal and the national issues give the novel its universal appeal. Rural India is a composite whole of religion, superstitions, myths, festivals, weddings on the one hand and physical impoverishment and natural disasters on the other. All this amply gets portrayed in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938).

The horrors of war and brutal violence have fascinated writers all over the world and Indian writers in English as well. The partition of India in 1947 and its violent aftermath was a traumatic experience for many. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Manohar Malgaonkar's *A Bend In the Ganges* (1964), Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) which effectively highlight the wound of this political upheaval. The partition trauma lingers in the consciousness of many writers. While Chaman Nahal has used "history as metaphor"[9] in *Azadi* (1975), Khushwant

Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) is a new kind of realistic fiction in the Indo-Anglian literature. He paints a vivid picture of an ideal village—Mano Majra where people of different faiths believe in the principles of love and brotherhood. Bhagwat S. Goyal has rightly observed: "*Train to Pakistan* (1956) is an intensely human novel... showing how the basic human relationships which admit of no rancor or hatred in normal times are strained to the point of a bloody holocaust..."[10]

Political history also finds a new form in Indo-Anglian literature. *The Princess* (1963) by Manohar Malgaonkar is one of the best of its kind. M.K. Naik observes that though the novel paints a vivid picture of the merger of the princely states into the Indian Union, "the serious thematic overtones... are completely smothered in a narrative of brutal violence."[11] Nayantara Sahgals' novels can also be considered political histories of modern India for in her novels, we find individual lives set against major political happenings of a free India.

The two nations, India and Pakistan, were engulfed by the most massive migration in human history due to the partition. In *Ice-Candy Man*, Bapsi Sidwa paints the picture of a hoard of Sikh looters chasing the Muslims, and forcing them to leave their homes. In *Azadi*, Nahal brings out the fact that ' many cities of the Punjab had been aflame for months'. The perpetual Hindu-Muslim conflict caused the divisive forces

and the contradictions between the Islamic and Hindu traditions. The greatest barrier in Hindu-Muslim understanding, however, is not religious but social. The Muslims often claim that Pakistan came into being not only because Muslims in India were intensely conscious of their national and cultural identity, but also because the Hindu community in India was intolerant. Muslims argued that just as caste Hindus had maintained caste–segregation against Hindu inferior castes, the Hindu community dominated by Brahmins has also regarded Muslims, who ate beef and brought with them an alien culture as *maleechas* (unclean) as shown in *Ice-Candy Man* (*Cracking India*). Further, the Hindus tightened their social structure to save themselves from the process of Islamisation. Thus despite close association for centuries, the Hindus and the Muslims remained two distinct communities among whom inter-dining and inter-marriage were prohibited. As long as Muslims were the rulers, they did not mind their social alienation from the Hindus. But when they did not become the rulers, it gave rise to fear and alienation in them from the mass of Hindu society. The role of the moneylender was almost discharged by Hindus partly because of the Quranic proscription preventing Muslims from practicing usury. The Muslim upper classes, many of whom descended from the Moghul invaders, had tended to remain landlords and soldiers.

The Muslim masses were usually landless peasants or workers in the service of Hindu employees in the city. The economic rivalry accentuated the social and religious barriers between the two communities. The imbalance between the relative positions of the Hindus and the Muslims created the communal consciousness which was the product of reactionary thinking and British tactics. There was an increase in communal consciousness which in turn resulted in the partition. This cataclysmic event stirred the irresistible creative urge of several Indian-English novelists.

Mulk Raj Anand has used the freedom motif to portray the idea of how freedom means different things to different people. Anand seems to question, how relevant is the country's struggle for independence when dignity is denied to the downtrodden of the society. The country's true liberation will come only when the society realizes its responsibility towards its weaker sections. This is the dominant theme of Anand's novel, *Untouchable* (1935), Bakha's quest for dignity in *Untouchable* and Munoo's quest for happiness in *Coolie* (1936) give to Anand's novels the Dickensian aspect of helpless child exploitation during the 19th century Victorian England. The human values of freedom to live a life of dignity and happiness that Bakha and Munoo long for elevate their character and make them universal.

From Social realism to pre and post-partition trauma, to man's quest for self; it has been a long march for Indo- Anglian fiction. Writers like Anand, Narayan, Raja Rao, Markandaya, Jhabvala, Khushwant Singh, Arun Joshi, Salman Rushdie have made Indo-Anglian fiction rich.

A marked trend of voicing personal experiences, makes novel-writing more autobiographical. In his *English August* (1986) Upamanyu Chatterjee has said, "All fiction is autobiographical. It's what you have heard, seen, felt."[12] Whether in India or an expatriate, the novelists return to India, as a concept, an actuality, a symbol, a network of cultures, myths and relationships which ensnares every author. R.K. Narayan in *The World of Nagraj* (1989) reinterprets the myth of Narada. Khushwant Singh's *Delhi* (1989) is a fictionalized history of Delhi. Vikrama Chandra ranges over the history and mythology of India and uses the narrative framework of *Mahabharta* in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995). Mukul Kesavan's *Looking Through Glass* (1995) focusses on the five years before India's independence and specifically delineates the social conditions at the time of the Quit India Movement. The Indian English novel combines Western and Indian literary traditions. Indian English literature promises the distillation of a literary history of Indian literature. The novel has proved to be the authentic voice of modern India and it also shows how well English has been assimilated into the Indian psyche.

It has become one of the Indian vernaculars, naturalized and reborn as the only agent for the necessary homogenization of Indian cultures.

The Indian novel in English mobilizes all the combinations of the visions of the writers. In Amitav Ghosh's An *Antique Land* (1992) which began as an anthropological research dissertation, colluded with imagination, history and travelogue became a highly successful novel. "Khushwant Singh's *Delhi* is partly a Guidebook, history, erotica, a critique of religion (particularly Sufism), the Indian political system and propaganda".[13]

Thus it can be perceived that the fictional world of the Indo-Anglian writers covers a gamut of themes related to the freedom struggle, partition holocaust, social evils as well as the inferior status of women in the country.

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.HAPTER-3

TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

Train to Pakistan (1956) is one of the finest realistic novels of post World War II Indo-Anglian fiction. It is Khushwant Singh's supreme achievement. The remarkable quality about the novel is its stark realism in addition to its absolute fidelity to truth. The novel exposes one of the most moving events of contemporary Indian history, the partition. As M.K. Naik rightly observes: "The impact of Partition on a small village on the Indo-Pakistan border is shown here with pitiless realism of description and the swift tempo of the narrative carries the reader along."[1] The novel is also marked by its special naturalistic mores. The novel is prophetic because it is so innately realistic. The structure of the novel in a conventional pattern may imply the process and form of development of action and character. The idea of structure includes areas of the plot, the sequence of events, the narrative and episodic arrangements. But form and structure being elastic concepts, continue to assume new dimensions. The quality of individuality in Singh's writings is on account of his disillusionment from the "long-cherished human values in the wake of inhuman bestial horrors and insane savage killings on both sides during the partition of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan in August 1947."[2]

The impact of partition has been realistically expressed with scathing irony in the novel. The title of the novel is in tune with the realistic flavour of the novel. Originally entitled *Mano Majra*, the novel portrays the brutal story of political hatred and violence during the partition of British India when the spirit of communal frenzy was fuming within the masses. The novelist's objective is to expose the world around him in all its naturalistic setting. The socio-political theme which he takes up in the novel essentially reveals the artistic tenets of sincerity and truth with journalistic skill. The change in the title is from the static to the dynamic: Mano Majra, the name of a village, is a fixed point in space, whereas the train is a symbol of movement. The train signifies groups or multitudes of people who are going in various directions. On the eve of the partition of the Indian subcontinent, millions of people from either side of the dividing boundary were on the way, looking for refuge and security. Millions of non-Muslims from Pakistan eagerly desired for a passage to India whereas millions of Muslims from India sought for the way to Pakistan. Thus, the communities were torn from their roots and the train indicates the harrowing process of this change. It also indicates the awful and ghastly experience of human beings involved in a historical, impersonal, and dehumanised process.

The novel is not just a political novel but a social one – a politics-polluted society where the bureaucrats claimed for their personal and

private ends, under the pretensions of executing the political affairs of the so-called Government. Despite their manipulation and skilful management Hukumchands and the sub-inspectors are all human beings and mere helpless instruments for execution of law. Manohar Malgaonkar, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal have taken upon themselves the responsibility to portray the British rulers and short-sighted national leaders who were blind to this horrendous catastrophe. Being a valuable social and political document, the novel keeps the reader engrossed. As Arthur Lal puts it in an introduction to this book:

> Its intrinsic qualities as a fine novel grip the reader. Throughout, the action sweeps one along. The characters are vivid and highly credible, and Khushwant Singh keeps them going magnificently on two levels: in their quotidian matrix compounded of their passions of love and revenge, their tremendous sense of belonging to a village community, and their insolence and heroism; and then again on the wide stage set by the tornado that breaks on their lives in the shape of the cataclysmic events of the partition of India in 1947.[3]

The novel has a well-taut structure. The main element of the plot is the emotional responses to the partition by Sikh, Muslim and Hindu communities. The novel is divided into four parts: (a) "Dacoity", (b) "Kalyug", (c) "Mano Majra" and (d) "Karma". The titles of the four parts

of the novel are Indian and aptly present the kaleidoscopic picture of a turbulent phase of India's history. The novel has an agreement with the traditional structure which grows out of a chronological sequence of time.

The historical novelist gets at the pulse of the rural India while portraying the changing patterns of communal relations between the Sikhs and the Muslims. The Sikh novels on Partition show the strength of communal harmony during the pre-Partition period but also remain untouched during communal genocide of Partition. The Muslims and Sikhs are shown in bitter enmity during the migration of people across the Radcliff line. But at the same time, the intensity of communal harmony between the two communities of the same place is never shown to have been corrupted. How the emotions of the people are aroused by the rumours spread by each community about the barbaric deeds of the other, is described by Khushwant Singh through the mounting tension between the Sikhs and the Muslims who had hitherto lived in amity in Mano Majra; “The head constable’s visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter.”[4] The Muslims and the Sikhs gather in separate groups and talk of inhuman savagery of each other.

> Muslims sat and moped in their houses. Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims in Patiyala,

> Ambala and Kapurthala, which they had heard and dismissed, came back to their minds. They had heard of gentlewomen having their veils taken off, being stripped and marched down crowded streets to be raped in the market place.... They had heard of mosques being desecrated by the slaughter of pigs on the premises, and of copies of the holy Koran being torn up by infidels.... For the first time, the name of Pakistan came to mean something to them — a heaven of refuge where there were no Sikhs. (120)

Hukum Chand, the district magistrate, is in charge of evacuating the Muslims from the village so that they would not be subjected to any kind of violence. But there were no communal feelings. This could be achieved by generating feelings of antipathy between the two communities. So Hukum Chand has the rumour spread that Iqbal is a member of the Muslim League and has come to the village to cause trouble. Further that, it is probably Sultana and his gang of Muslim dacoits who were responsible for the dacoity. The presence of ghost train filled with about fifteen hundred corpses of Sikhs killed by the Muslims of Pakistan escalates tension. They had been cremated right there in Mano Majra. This mix of fact and fiction engineered by Hukum Chand leads to a division among the Muslims and the Sikhs.

The writer believes in the stark and naked realism of life unlike the photographic and artistic reality portrayed by R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand. He artistically presents various symbolic suggestions through his novel. The first symbol is Mano Majra which is representative of a village, a society and a country i.e. India itself, a land which once believed in *Ahimsa*. The village called Mano Majra, on the border of Punjab in India has a rail-track leading to Lahore in Pakistan. The events and characters — portrayed in this novel could be taken to be the replicas of those that took place in many parts of north India at the time of partition. The novel captures the mindlessness of the communal violence with great objectivity in the portrayal of the situation before and after the carnages. Mano Majra, a village lost in the remote reaches of the frontier and far from the crowded cities and towns, gives the picture of unity in diversity. The sub-inspector of Police gives a vivid picture of the ignorance of the partition in the natives of Mano Majra: "I am sure no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. Some of them know about Gandhi but I doubt if anyone has ever heard of Jinnah" (22).

The realism in the novel is realized on various levels with the basic conflict due to contradictory forces. Division and disharmony are the ruling principles of the world of the Mano Majra. The social and religious beliefs and divisions of Mano Majra community are highlighted

against a larger world which is also divided. Sikhs and Muslims form the rural community of the village. There is only one Hindu house in Mano Majra, Ram Lal's, who is the principal moneylender of the village, several families of sweepers in Mano Majra seem to be Muslim and yet are found within the fold of Christian missionaries. The religious adherence can be perceived in the novel more clearly when we find the devotion of Mano Majrans for the 'deo,' the local deity, "a three-foot slab of sandstone" (2) which is worshipped by all villagers alike.

Religious diversities are overcome by the original beliefs of unity in the psyche of the people of the village. Singh seems to indicate that somewhere these inhabitants of a village feel the folly of erecting communal differences. Partition has generally been understood as a division based on different religious beliefs. Khushwant Singh does not agree with the hypothesis and believes that religion acts as a force in cementing communal relationships. The people of the village, irrespective of their religious faiths, show solidarity in the symbolic act of repairing to the 'slab of sandstone' whenever they face hard times. The personal and the national issues form a fine blend to give to the novel its universal appeal. The multiple responses of people reveal the responses of people in general. The purpose of the writer is to discover the true Indian response by revealing the people with their views and also their

actions. Khushwant Singh has shaped the novel so as to explore and expose the brutal and hypocritical image of man and simultaneously reveal his faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity. To quote K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, “Here’s functional "integration”, and indeed there are tens of thousands of villages like Mano Majra, where the law has always been peaceful co-existence, and not communal strife.”[5]

The novel develops out of the combination of the traditional structural pattern with value judgements. I.A. Richards has perceptively observed that Creative literature is a large storehouse of recorded values. Mark Schorer believes that “as the novel becomes more thoroughly comic or more thoroughly tragic, it passes beyond irony and beyond realism into a new era of fictive expression open to more cosmic and more reflective visions of the world.”[6] The novel surely makes a progress toward realism, but it also shares the area of values.

The setting of novel is laid in India on the eve of the partition in 1947. Shahane rightly says that the natural phenomenon of the severe summer of 1947, combines with the idea of sin. The allusion of God punishing the sinful is in accordance with the law of *Karma*. Such a combination is a significant element in the novels of narrative and dramatic design. Shahane points out that the natural setting characterised by the unusually excessive heat symbolises man's state of anger, of his

agonised heart, and his sufferings and fate. The dry earth becomes the symbol of suffering humanity involuntarily involved in the ordeal of the partition of India into two nations. It seemed that the inner feelings of human heart were drying up. The human and social pressure of life in the novel arises out of the interaction of two forces of division that come into effect in the communities of Mano Majra, a microcosm of rural India. Khushwant Singh presents rural Punjab with its religious and caste divisions and with its belief in forces of union.

Nature has been used effectively to provide a realistic background. The tone of this novel is set right from the first line through a proficient depiction of nature :

> The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. It was hotter than usual, and drier and dustier. And the summer was longer. No one could remember when the monsoon had been so late. For weeks the sparse clouds cast only shadows. There was no rain. People began to say that God was punishing them for their sins. (1)

Beginning with a description like this, an atmosphere of gloom is created. The inner springs of human fellowship, affection and love seemed to be drying up. Thus nature also serves to establish credibility of the stark realism that is an inherent part of the novel. It immediately

establishes the setting in a fixed time and place as well. Shahane observes: “The aridity of the 1947 summer signifies the process of the world of man turning into a human wasteland which is the essential subject matter of *Train to Pakistan.”*[7]

Shahane feels that the seasonal setting of the novel recalls the significant background of winter, summer and the rains in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Forster also attempts to establish a close relationship between the human world and the natural world. But unlike Forster, Khushwant Singh brings an element of Indian superstition into the natural world. According to *Karma*, God punishes the sinful. And due to immoral state of man, one gets naturally involved with *Kalyug:* the era of strife and negation of beliefs.

Right from the first page, the novelist consummately uses nature in creating the authentic picture of the village Mano Majra. Mano Majra is said to be situated about half a mile away from the banks of the river Sutlej, the largest river of Punjab. “In India villages cannot afford to be too close to the banks of rivers. Rivers change their moods with the seasons and alter their courses without warning”(2). This realism also serves as a precursor to the rapidly changing events.

The dacoity in the first part is a symbol of violence. The portrayal of the scene of the dacoity and love scene between Jugga, a budmash and

Nooran, a muslim mullah's daughter are based on a principle of contrast between the two widely different, almost opposite worlds. The implication of dacoity reveals the materialistic world where deprivation and destruction are the ruling motives; love symbolises the spiritual world where the holiness of the heart's desire exists supremely. The world of matter alternates with the world of the spirit, and the combination of good and evil, makes Mano Majra the microcosm of many-sided reality. Thus the novel symbolises the world itself. The social milieu in the novel reveals that Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims made the traditional structures of the Punjabi society in the pre-Partition India. Except for the various religious identities in the village Mano Majra, the focal point of *Train to Pakistan*, is by and large typical of the rural Punjabi life.

Hukum Chand is a major figure on the dramatic stage of *Train to Pakistan*. He is a typical Indian representative of bureaucracy in British-governed India. He is the counterpart of Buta Singh, the mature civil servant in *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale.* The descriptions of Hukum Chand's actions and attitudes are notable. Hukum Chand and the Sikh sub-inspector were discussing in a private room the complicated situations and challenges before themselves. Hukum Chand narrates in a true bureaucratic style how he heard of dead Sikhs and Hindus in convoy passing through Amritsar and how Sikhs attacked a trainload of Muslim

refugees bound for Pakistan in retaliation. In expressing the awful situation of bloodshed and mass murder, Hukum Chand maintained a state of balance. The sub-inspector gets sentimentally involved in the situation raised by communal passion and hostilities, whereas Hukum Chand, the more experienced and balanced bureaucrat does not lose his correct vision: “We must maintain law and order," he answered after a pause. “If possible, get the Muslims to go out peacefully. Nobody really benefits by bloodshed"(21). Here, an extremely sensible attitude on the part of an Indian bureaucrat can be perceived, particularly in view of the provoking period of the partition of India. The tragic sense is shown through small gestures and suggestions. Hukum Chand's seemingly casual remark, "I hope we do not get trains with corpses coming through Mano Majra" (21) has a touch of dramatic irony since it predicts future events. The police force in the Punjab suffered from several failings and weaknesses: inefficiency, corruption, unscrupul-ousness and greed. The fiction writer rightly exploits the weaknesses of such motivations. His revelation of the bureaucratic postures in India echoes Charles Dickens’ satirising of bureaucracy. The long conversations between Hukum Chand and the sub-inspector bring out the journalistic aspect of Khushwant Singh’s art.

The whistle, the pounding of the engine, the shunting of wagons—all regulate the life of the village: "Mano Majra has always been known

for its railway station" (3). Shahane says that the train suggests the fate of individuals, the destinies of the two newly formed nations, consequent upon a political decision and the miseries, which issue from it. It is also symbolic of the machine age, an era dominated by science and technology. The realisation is explicit that the modern mechanistic, materialistic age has been destructive to the humanistic values. The age of machines has led to increasing dehumanisations. The association of Mano Majra, a village on the Indian side in the Punjab, is with the train. The train also forms the sequence and process of motivation in the novel. The train and the bridge also present some kind of solution to the communal discord, as they provide a platform for the sacrifice made by Jugga. In the novel, bridges are the symbol of reconstruction and reconciliation. The irregularity of trains symbolises the disturbance in the smooth flow of life in Mano Majra. It predicts chaos and disorder:

> Now the trains were often four or five hours late and sometimes as many as twenty. When they came, they were crowded with Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan or with Muslims from India. People perched on the roofs with their legs dangling, or on the bedsteads wedged in between the bogies. Some of them rode precariously on the buffers. (39)

The shunting of the goods trains in the novel was in progress when Malli, a criminal and his gang were involved in housebreaking and murder, when Jugga, a budmash and Nooran, a muslim mullah's daughter were locked in each other's arms, and when Hukum Chand and Haseena, a muslim mistress were engaged in an attempt at physical contact. Shahane opines that the train seems to be assuming the role of a human character— keeping watch on all the three events taking place at the same time. The train thus constitutes the principal rhythm in the novel. The three scenes taking place almost simultaneously to the refrain of the railway engine's whistle demonstrate the principle of contrast inherent in Khushwant Singh's art of fiction. Shahane rightly says:

> Dacoity is contrasted with love, and spiritual love is differentiated from sheer physical passion. The act of dacoity is conceived in a world of growing materialism in which the desire to possess things and the wish to dispossess others is in the process. In the Jugga-Nooran love scene personal relations and emotional involvement overcome the objective world, though the rumbling of the freight train is a sad interruption which reminds us of that humdrum world.[8]

Hukum Chand, the District Magistrate, is the occupant of the government rest house. The objects of his everyday use are there to

project the self-importance of government machinery. Thus the glittering brass emblems of orderlies, pampas-stick chicks, big cane chairs, and tables, whisky and soda water bottles lying idly, all are highlighted. Hukum Chand's confrontation with Haseena, muslim mistress exposes several aspects of Hukum Chand as man and magistrate. Hukum Chand as magistrate expects to be entertained in a manner reminiscent of Punjabi fedual traditions. Liquor, music, and girls form part of his entertainment.

The gecko motif in the scene between Hukum Chand and Haseena is a brilliant example of the novelist's art of atmospheric and symbolic portrayal. The geckos crawled making odd sounds and stopped for a short time before they collide – present a strange sight. The sudden, unexpected fall of the lizards from a wall or ceiling to the floor is considered a bad omen by Indians. They fell near Hukum Chand’s pillow and cast an almost mysterious shadow over his desire for sensual enjoyment.

Khushwant Singh describes the atmosphere in detail. For instance, when the ghost train had arrived in Mano Majra, the villagers were all shocked. The entire day the villagers are unable to follow their normal routine. The novelist reflects the state of uncertainty further: "Everyone expected something to happen. The sun sank behind the bridge, lighting

the white clouds which had appeared in the sky with hues of russet, copper, and orange. The shades of gray blended with the glow as evening gave way to twilight and twilight sank in to darkness"(84).

The very first page of the novel deals with communal issues. The reports of a possible partition of India into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, had led to riots that started in Calcutta. The Novelist gives a realistic account of the riots which started in 1947 as a result of the partition of the sub-continent: "The riots had become a rout. By 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" (1-2). The Muslims and the Hindus both blamed each other for starting and planning the riots. However, the fact was that both sides killed, shot, speared, clubbed, tortured and raped. From this fierce background, the historical novelist goes on to paint the picture of the peaceful village, Mano Majra, which was soon to be changed due to the partition. Violence is about to be unleashed in this tiny village as well. Hukum Chand says that in response to the convoys of dead Sikhs being sent from across the border, the Sikhs here also retaliated in attacking a Muslim refugee train and sent it across with over thousand corpses and also the words of bitter irony; "Gift to Pakistan", (19) written on the engine. The sub-inspector believes that this is the only way to put

a stop to the killings, man for man, woman for woman, child for child. He approves of the RSS getting the better of Muslim gangs. In such inflamed situation, it is natural that people of a particular community have feelings of hatred for the other community. An interesting fact is that they are completely against the Congress Government. The repercussions of the partition are clearly narrated in the novel, rather then the Partition itself. Politics, and the major events mould individuals' lives, and reaction of the individuals to these events, have always been of interest to the literary imagination since the Greek and Roman epics and the Mahabharta and, no doubt, beforehand. Orwell wrote, "There is no such thing as genuinely, non-political literature."[9]

The town is a more important than the role of any single character in the novel. Bureaucracy began its work of investigating Ram Lal's murder in Mano Majra. Twelve police constables and a sub-inspector arrived at the station for an on-the-spot inquiry. The thought of Singh as a sociological novelist and realist is appropriate. Iqbal was a 'Babu', a city dweller, who had received western culture and education, which was reflected in his urban and fastidious style. He had boarded the train for Mano Majra which was overcrowded by a large number of Muslims who were migrating to Pakistan. The description of the overcrowding gives the train an individualistic quality: "There were dozens outside perched precariously on foot boards, holding on to the door handles. There were

several people on the roof. The heat and smell were oppressive. Tempers were frayed..."(39). Muslim refugees had asked him many personal questions. But circumstances did not allow him to disclose his name, and also his faith.

Iqbal's arrest excellently exposes the facile working of the Police force in the Punjab. The situation is a little reminiscent of the notorious practices of the unscrupulous French aristocracy in the time just prior to the French Revolution, which Dickens dramatised in *A Tale of Two Cities*. The signing of blank warrants offers a restricted parallel owing to the fact that it presents the utter arbitrariness of the administration of law and justice. The arrest of Iqbal has a melodramatic tinge. His political bravado and conceited nature are brought into full play in this process. The scene becomes very painful when Iqbal is stripped naked by the police sub-inspector to see whether he had been circumcised and hence a Muslim. In the whole range of Indo-Anglian fiction, this is an extraordinary scene for its exposure of ugly and naked reality and the stupidity and inhumanity of reckless bureaucracy. Singh's narration of the event of Iqbal's arrest is absolutely traditional. The irony implicit in the scene is well-depicted by Iqbal's pretensions to patriotism and also in the police constable's action in holding a yellow piece of printed paper before Iqbal. The policeman asked his name first, then filled out the blanks, and then prepared the warrant of arrest. Iqbal, though a socialist, had valued personal freedom and dignity, and his values were ignored by

a yellow piece of paper. He dreamt of jail as though it were a better place than the world. He believed jail life to be a step toward success of a dream world of power and popularity. His concern was for assuming the role of a leader.

Focusing on the impact of the partition on the minds of the people, the novelist presents diverse views to bring to light the genuine Sikh/Indian/human voice and through it its ethos. He reveals these voices by putting them in debate over the issues. The writer has also revealed a baffling aspect of religious and moral codes in the village. It can be perceived in the scene when Iqbal is released from jail, it seems as though the ideas belong to Khushwant Singh himself. Take religion, Iqbal ponders: "For the Hindu, it means little besides caste and cow-protection. For the Muslim, circumcision and kosher meat. For the Sikh, long hair and hatred of the Muslim.... Ethics, which should be the kernel of a religious code, has been carefully removed" (171).

The author has revealed the existence of a common perception, that is, a person who is immensely religious is respected by everybody. When Iqbal is discussing the issue of freedom and religion with the villagers, one of them says that if man does not have faith in God, he is nothing but an animal. Gandhiji is respected all over the world because he reads the Koran Sharif, and the Unjeel along with the Vedas and Shastras. During his prayer meetings, there are always a number of white men and women sitting cross-legged alongside him. Even the English

respect a man of religion. This statement depicts the geneses of the colonial hangover that Indians suffer from even today. Iqbal is revealed as anti-British because he reacted violently to the British colonial and imperial power in India and elsewhere. He was therefore stunned by the crude attitudes of the Sikh lambardar Banta Singh, the Sikh priest Meet Singh, and the Muslim Mullah Imam Baksh towards the role of the British power in India. An interesting insight is provided into the attitude of the peasants towards independence. When Iqbal tells the villages that it is a good thing that the English have left, he is surprised to know that the *Lambardar* preferred the English officers to the Indian officers. Independence has no effect on them: "Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it ? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes" (48). Khushwant Singh has traced the genesis of the demand for Khalistan to the leaving of the British. Iqbal offers the villagers his party's solution to this problem. He says that the workers and peasants would have to unite and get rid of the Bania congress government, the princes, and the landlords. Then they would have land, more buffaloes, no debts. However, the peasants are not convinced, and the lambardar says that it is only the robbers, thieves and cut-throats who are enjoying freedom. Villagers also expressed the view that the British power was better than the Indian government because it at least afforded security.

Being a strong anti-imperialistic, Iqbal declared that the British, though nice as human beings, were politically the world's "biggest four twenties"(49). But the rustics could not be easily distracted by abstract ideological notions. Such comments tell us a lot about the misuse of power in the hands of corrupt leaders and administration in the country in brief.

Kalyug, the age of strife, implies the loss of humanist values and their suppression by forces of destruction and division. The writer has portrayed this inverted world skillfully and he suggests that “the time is out of joint.”[10] In this nightmarish world a strange train arrived from Pakistan which had a ghostly quality. The setting of the extraordinary train is in tune with its funeral atmosphere, "There are no lights on the train"; "The engine did not whistle"; "It is like a ghost" (142). The events of the day were brought to an end by destroying the large number of the dead near the station. The train had carried about fifteen hundred corpses, and when red tongues of flame leaped into the black sky, everyone knew the horrible reality of the massacre. The red tongues of flame symbolised the poisonous and aggressive nature of the snake indicating how men turn into poisonous reptiles in such a destructive period. The distant fire brought "a faint acrid smell of searing flesh", (84) which caused a sense of horror among the villagers. It was a world

without the word of God, bare and naked in its ugliness and horror: "That evening, for the first time in the memory of Mano Majra, Imam Baksh's sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of the God" (84).

Another train loaded with the dead arrived from Pakistan at Mano Majra. From across the railway line where a thousand bodies were committed to the earth, “a jackal sent up a long plaintive howl. A pack joined him. The men shuddered" (142). A heavy bulldozer was used to bury the dead. The village life is demonstrated in this cold, massive, mechanical burial. The use of the words ghost and ghostly accentuate the expression. The sight of the dead in the ghost train made Hukum Chand aware of the horror of death: "There was a man holding his intestines, with an expression in his eyes which said:" Look what I have got!" (85). Lavatories were filled with corpses. "An old peasant with a long white beard did not look dead at all" (85). Hukum Chand shrieked with horror. The stream of his thoughts at the sight of so many dead reveals Hukum Chand's consciousness about the human values. He suffers like Buddha at the sight of so much pain and suffering:

> It was everyone's destiny.... He had watched young and old brought on crude bamboo stretchers, lamented for, and then burned. Visits to the cremation ground left him with a sense of tranquility. He had got over the immediate terror of

> death, but the idea of ultimate dissolution was always present in his mind. It made him kind, charitable and tolerant.(87)

Khushwant Singh's portrayal of the horror of the ghostly train and its effect on Hukum Chand recalls the nightmarish descriptions of the novels of war. British and American novelists have depicted war to be like hell—particularly the 1914-18 war and the soldiers' nightmarish experiences on the battle-field. Like other Commonwealth writers he depicts the nation searching for its roots and identity. The identity of any community or nation can be comprehended best when it is passing through critical times. There are many occasions of forgetting its principal values. It may lead to a kind of debate in accordance with their traditions. Singh shows how people go back to their scriptures, heroes and their actions during the time of crisis. The novelist succeeds in revealing the true and wrong interpretations of the convention and values. The arrival of a ghost train at Mano Majra unveils the horrible drama of communal violence and the erosion of human values. Human values have been annihilated under the garb of religious fanaticism. As V.A. Shahane correctly points out, "Mass madness is in the air and it invades Mano Majra too."[11]

Shahane believes that the rain is an ambivalent symbol which symbolizes both life and death. The rain falling causes the river to rise relentlessly which symbolises horrific situation. The stunned villagers keep watch over the fierce Sutlej all through the night. It was the first time that the river had risen too much, signifying that the partition and the communal killings also took place first time. The river is full of floating forms. The novelist gives a pathetic portrayal of this ghastly scene:

> There were also men and women with their clothes clinging to their bodies; little children sleeping on their bellies with their arms clutching the water and their tiny buttocks dipping in and out. The sky was soon full of kites and vultures. They flew down and landed on the floating carcasses. They pecked till the corpses themselves rolled over and shooed them off with hands. (143)

It is obvious that a massacre had occurred and violence too had reached a peak with the fury of nature. Serpents, centipedes, scorpions and the moths fluttering around the lamps, mosquitoes and flies made life awfully restless. The monsoon, giving a boost to the tempo of life and death, is symbolic of the inhuman acts. The swelling Sutlej presented a terrifying sight — flood in river suggested and foreshadowed the flood of violence. Retaliation became the talk of the day. The train to Pakistan and the train from Pakistan became the symbol of man's inhumanity to

man, man preying upon man. But the Mano Majrans still had some amount of sanity and wisdom, humanity and fellow feeling. Imam Baksh, the Muslim Mullah, broke into tears and responded: "What have we to do with Pakistan? We are born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you as brothers" (126). The Sikh lambardar Banta Singh replied: "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 anyone speaks rudely to you, your wives or your children, it will be us first and our wives and children before a single hair of your heads is touched" (126).

The novel focuses on the close relationship shared by the people of different communities of Mano Majra. The sub-inspector believes that retaliation is the only way to put a stop to the killings. It is evident that both the communities had become biased against each other. But this was not the case in Mano Majra. Regarding the village, the sub-inspector says that no incident of violence has as yet occurred:

> Here we are on the border with Muslims living in Sikh villages as if nothing had happened. Every morning and evening the muezzin calls for prayer in the heart of a village like Mano Majra. You ask the Sikhs why they allow it and they answer that the Muslims are their brothers. I am sure they are getting money from them. (20)

The entire novel is built around the question of religion. The theme is the partition of India is along religious lines. It is poignant that though the hopes, desires and aspirations of the different communities living in Mano Majra are identical, yet they are forced to separate on account of their different religions. But the humanity and sanity is regarded as a sign of cowardice by the Sikh Youths in the novel:

> Do you know how many trainloads of dead Sikhs and Hindus have come over. Do you know of the massacres in Rawalpindi and Multan, Gujranwala and Sheikhupura? What are you doing about it? You just eat and sleep and call yourselves Sikhs—the brave Sikhs! The martial class! (148)

The youths are revengeful of what has happened to the Sikhs in Pakistan. But for the fundamentalist forces all Hindus or Muslims are alike. On the other hand Meet Singh, the Sikh priest protests: "What have they done to you? Have they ousted you from your lands or occupied your houses? Have they seduced your womenfolk? Tell me, what have they done?" (123).

Through the pattern of contrast between pre-partition and post-partition scenario, Khushwant Singh best illustrates the tragedy of partition and indirectly suggests the short–sightedness of Indian leadership which failed to forsee the consequences of division and to

handle the situation even after Churchill's forecast of blood bath. Communal discord was not a feature of Indian rural scene but it was engineered first by the British Government under the policy of divide and rule and then by the nationalist leaders, though unintentionally.

In the novel, we find the seeds of suspicion spreading rapidly due to the misconceptions caused by the British. The Sikhs in Mano Majra recollected the atrocities inflicted upon their forefathers by the barbaric Muslims. History taught them how they and the Hindus had been put to innumerable insults by the Muslims and how their children and women were tortured.

> All through the Muslim period of Indian history…what had they done to the Sikhs?...hundreds of thousands had been put to the sword for no other offence then refusing to accept Islam; their temples had been desecrated by the slaughter of kine; the holy Granth had been torn to bits.(121)

The atmosphere was thick with stories of atrocities, real and imaginary, in Pakistan; Muslims and Sikhs became mutually suspicious: "Quite suddenly every Sikh in Mano Majra became a stranger with an evil intent. His long hair and beard appeared barbarous, his kirpan menacingly anti-Muslim" (120). Similarly, a sense of fear of suppression and domination by the Muslims, gripped the Sikh minds. As they remembered what their Gurus had exhorted them, "Never trust a

Mussulman" (121). They became stimulated. The report of Iqbal's aim of spying them was a shock to them. This made them lose their goodwill for the Muslims: "We have looked upon the Muslims as our brothers and sisters. Why should they send somebody to spy on us?" (122). This reveals how easy it is to put into action the politics of division. This is particularly true for India, which is a country of people with different religious faiths.

Train to Pakistan and The *Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh have also flexible interpretation especially with reference to the pluralistic, multilingual, multicultural, multireligious and multiethnic characters of the society of India in its wide-spread regions. It can be said that the partition of the Indian sub-continent was the single most traumatic experience in our recent history. The real sorrow of the partition, however, as portrayed in the two novels, was that it brought to an end a long and communally shared history and cultural heritage. The relations between the Hindus and the Muslims were not always free from suspicions, by one group of the habits and practices of the other; but such moments of communal frenzy were a rare exception to the communal bonds of mutual good will of close brotherhood. The author's portrayal of different characters suffering from the crisis of values during the period of unprecedented human tragedy is remarkable. He presents

different characters in their typical situations summarising human life. These are Hukum Chand, the high officer in Government Administration, Meet Singh, the Sikh Priest, Iqbal Singh, the rationalist and non-communal political worker, finally Jugga whose morality stands as a relief against the hypocrisy and cowardice of these characters. The author has created Iqbal for exposing the hypocritical mask people put on. Meet Singh reminds him of his resolve to speak to the people and make them see sense. At this, "Iqbal felt cornered. 'Bhaiji, when people go about with guns and spears you can only talk back with guns and spears. If you cannot do that, then it is best to keep out of their way" (169). He manages to brainwash himself into thinking: "In such circumstances what can you do but cultivate an utter indifference to all values? Nothing matters. Nothing whatever…" (172). We find that Iqbal has no depth in his personality.

Iqbal is a parasite on the society and a big hypocrite. As such he subscribes to the leftist ideology, and he has been in Mano Majra to unite the peasants and workers and also to make them fight against the government and injustice. Satirically, whatever he thinks and says is equally applicable to himself too. His ideology remains confined to his words only. He thinks that religion is irrelevant and it has played havoc with mankind. He realizes that Sikhism can be a shield for his safety. He

assumes Sikh identity. He indulges in self deception. He feels that stopping the people would be "an utter waste of life…"(169). Iqbal is a nice satirical picture of the pseudo-intellectual and progressive elite class that is itself impotent to contribute anything to the society. He believes: "In a state of chaos self-preservation is the supreme duty"(170). Iqbal does not have the qualities of a leader. As H.M. Williams aptly observes,

> He (Iqbal) is, a communist and therefore shares the villagers' dislike of Congress. Yet he too is the victim of the Marxist illusion that class struggle will replace “idiotic”, communal friction. All men are brothers. This is the communist cry – but it was also the motto of the Sikhs in their emergence as a martial community. The paradox of this defeats Iqbal; and in the event he is inadequate and inert. He is even prepared to allow a massacre of the Muslim train load if it will help in the ultimate class struggle and the victory of Communism.[12]

The writer is very critical when he presents Iqbal, a replica of cunning political leader in the garb of socialism. Iqbal's mission was to keep the village unaffected by communalism. But his sarcastic approach dampened the spirit of everyone. He made a mockery of the nation's increasing population. At times one can feel the authorial intervention in

the comments on population explosion in India, hence the progress of the nation gets hampered. The followers of Gandhi who sit and rule from Delhi are quite unaware of the Punjab problems. In the words of Iqbal the English "would not have spread their domain all over the world if they had been honest"(49).

Singh seems to make a point by introducing the character of Hukum Chand representing bureaucracy in the British India. He is the one magistrate who does not conduct himself like a magistrate. Hukum Chand is a symbolic character. He symbolises the lecherous ruling class. Even if the whole of Punjab is drowned in flames, he must have every night a sweet sixteen year old girl to respond to his impotence. As Harish Raizada says: “Hukum Chand, the Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner of the district, is a worldly wise man of easy morals. He owes his rise from a foot constable to his present high position to his sycophancy."[13]

Hukum Chand’s interest in saving Muslim lives is, however, not motivated by humanitarian considerations. He is only concerned about the maintenance of law and order lest his official position is compromised. Later he feels utterly broken by the increasing incidents of arson and looting. He lapses into inactivity and wants just to maintain a pretence of having acted responsibly: "Well, Inspector Sahib, let them kill. Let everyone kill. Just ask for help from other stations and keep a record of the messages you send. We must be able to prove that we did

our best to stop them" (155). Thus the author's realism can be perceived in his art of characterization. Chirantan Kulshrestha writes in this connection: “His characters — mostly ordinary people, foolish and stubborn, even pompous, corrupt and vain– emerge out of the vast amorphous complex of Indian Life.”[14]

Like the socialist realists, Khushwant Singh's approach is positive. His Juggat Singh alias Jugga is a man endowed with formidable will power and individuality. Singh’s ability to see good in every thing inspires him to create a character like Jugga. Hukum Chand too, is essentially good at heart. It is his plan that inspires Jugga to sacrifice his life in order to save the lives of the Muslims leaving on the train going to Pakistan. The author seems to exhort the reader to see the positive aspect of every character and situation. The autobiographical note forms the core of the novel. Singh does not arraign any particular party or community. He finds both the Hindus and the Muslims equally responsible for the inhuman deeds. The author feels the Mullahs actively participating in the frenzied butchery of human beings and human values: "Mullahs roamed Punjab and Frontier province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims in Bihar with an intention to work up Muslims"(1). Still further, the author's attack is on the nonchalant politicians in Delhi, whiling away their time in political gossips and commitments. The people believing in one India were utterly broken by the people in power sitting in Delhi making "fine speeches in

the assembly"(176) in the midst of lovely foreign women. The writer's feelings finds expressions when Hukum Chand who is "a part of the government and legacy of the colonial rule", raises his voice against the power hungry leaders of national movement. The crazy fallacy of the two–nation theory has been fully exposed and exploited. This is an instance of black humour. He could not avoid it here, due to his personal anguish over the events. From a sociopolitical point of view, the rivalry and mutual contempt between experienced bureaucrats and newly crowned power-conscious politicians significantly show the aspects of growing democratic institution in India and it is well depicted in the portrayal of Hukum Chand and the sub-inspector.

Khushwant Singh presents a dichotomy between the rural elderly people and a young Sikh boy. The young Sikh boy is a reactionary and is governed more by impulse than by reason. He has his own interpretation of a few basic things regarding Sikhism and the role of a Sikh in the time of crisis. The aura of mistrust, suspicion, fear and false reading of history Invoked susceptibility to religious sentiments. The Sikh youth, mediating to avenge on the behalf of his Sikh brethren, chanted the verse:

> By the Grace of God,
>
> We bear the world nothing but good will. (152)

The fear complex could be fully aroused by propagating that their religious interests were in danger. He recalled: "What had they done to the Sikhs? Executed two of their Gurus, assassinated another and

butchered his infant children; hundreds of thousands had been put to the sword for no other offence than refusing to accept Islam" (121). The leader of the group asked them to take revenge. "For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two ..."(149). The boy quotes from what the Guru said about Muslims, "Only befriend the Turk when all other communities are dead"(150). Religion, with the soulless world could only be the cause of barriers creating disharmony and discord as in the case of the Indians.

Khushwant Singh also parodies the memorable event of the birth of Khalsa Panth three centuries ago. The boy whose name is not given stands for those nameless youths who were carried away on the path of violence by the anarchy of partition. He represents those who believe in tit for tat policy. The boy assumes a role of a new 'avtaar'. He asks the audience "is there anyone beloved of the Guru here? Anyone wants to sacrifice his life for the Sikh community? Anyone with courage?"(150). The event takes place in a Gurudwara itself. Satirically enough, the person to respond to the call of new Guru is Malli who is neither a Sikh nor has had good reputation. Malli says, "My life is at your disposal"(151). Soon the author reveals the motive of Malli. "The story of Jugga beating him had gone round the village. His reputation had to be redeemed"(151). The new 'avtaar' reminds people of the five supermen who had come forward to sacrifice themselves for 'dharma'. The other four 'supermen' who come forward are the companions of Malli himself.

These five people are the parasites on society. They do not have anything to do with India, Sikhism, Hinduism, society and its values.

The writer appears to give vent to his feelings in the case of Jawaharlal Nehru. This is an example of his merciless satire when he holds Nehru responsible for the partition and violence. The shattered Hukum Chand recalls the people's tryst with destiny with tragic consequences. There was his colleague, Prem Singh, who went back to Lahore to fetch his wife's jewellery dies at the hands of a mob. The Pakistani Pathans had ensured that he would not get back alive. There was Sundari, the daughter of his orderly. She was newly-wed and on her way to her husband's home. Midway their bus was stopped by a mob. The Sikhs were hacked to death. The clean-shaven were stripped. Those who were circumcised were forgiven. Those who were not - were castrated, including her husband; while Sundari was gang raped by countless men. Then there was Sunder Singh, an army man who had won medals in battles in Burma, Eritea and Italy. The government had given him land in Sindh. He along with his family was coming to India by train. There were five hundred people packed in the compartment. It was terribly hot and there was no water. At all the stations there were people with spears along the railings. Then the train was held up at a station for four days. No one was allowed to get off. Sunder Singh's children cried for food and water. So did everyone else. He gave them his urine to drink. Then that too dried up. Unable to bear their distress he shot his

children. He shot his wife as well. He put the revolver to his head but lost his nerve. The train began to move. He threw the corpses of his family out of the window, and came alone to India. These horror stories mock at Nehru's 'tryst with destiny' speech. It is almost scathing attack on Nehru himself. One can feel Khushwant Singh's anguish over the violence that followed our freedom. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) attempt to raise the question of the tryst of others i.e. the tryst of the common people caught between the greed of self-seeking politicians and fanatic religious leaders to exploit any situation to their own advantage.

The author captures well the feelings and the emotional responses of the Muslims when they were rather compelled to leave their homes for good. The rural population of Punjab were not at all prepared for the big holocaust which the partition proved to be and "it came as a big destabilising factor in the smug and contented self-sufficiency of the Indian rural life."[15] It was extremely shocking to go away from what they knew to be their home. Inspite of divisive thinking, the Sikhs even amongst themselves are unable to ask the Muslims of their village to leave. This is because loyalty towards their fellow villagers, irrespective of their different religions. When the time comes for the Muslims to leave, the scene is extremely pathetic: "Slowly the Muslims began to come out of their homes, driving their cattle and their bullock carts

loaded with charpoys, rolls of bedding, tin trunks, kerosene oil tins, earthen pitchers and brass utensils. The rest of Mano Majra came out to see them off "(133). The seen of the evacuation of Muslims from Mano Majra to Pakistan in trucks brought by Pakistani soldiers symbolises the working of the dehumanising process. The evacuation symbolizes the blind forces of history and the wheels of destiny. The villagers facing the critical period highlight the misery and poverty of the Punjabi peasants and of those millions who were uprooted by the Partition in the novel. The government machinery again is quick to interfere. They are harbingers of separation and conflict. With fear instilled in their hearts, as the Muslims of Mano Majra are herded into trucks, guns pointed at their backs, they are forced to come to terms with a journey into a land, which they can not accept as their home. The departure of Muslims from Mano Majra is the scene symbolic of human solidarity and faith. Two communities had been there together for centuries in such a well-knit social pattern that the thought of one community leaving brought tears to both. It is more pathetic to see Sikhs greeting Muslims with 'Salaam' (125) and Muslims wishing them back with 'Sat Sri Kal' (125). All fell into each other's arms and cried. "This is the way of the world" (127).

The writer has managed to put in a few elements of humour in the story and so contributed towards the grim scenario described in the

novel. He has used humour to put off the mask from a particular character, Iqbal Singh. When he gets off from the train at Mano Majra and proceeds towards the village, he happens to be walking ahead of a group of policemen. He knows that the policemen were probably looking at him and talking about him which makes him uneasy; and he walks with an erect gait. This reveals the basic insecurity in his psyche. Subsequently, when he hears of the murder of Ram Lal, he becomes visibly nervous, so much so that Meet Singh comments: "Why, Babu Sahib you have come to stop killing and you are upset by one murder?" (38). Later, when Jugga and Iqbal are released from jail, Jugga worries about Nooran, whereas Iqbal wishes that he could somehow go to Delhi and report his arrest. The news would then be picked up by the papers and he would soon become a hero. But now it would not be wise to move out in the inflamed situation so he resigns himself to staying there, Iqbal weighs the consequences of attempting to put a stop to the diabolical plan of murdering the Muslims going on the train to Pakistan. However, he comes to the conclusion that it would not serve any purpose, for he would have an inglorious death because nobody would learn about it. Khushwant Singh uses humour to expose the weakness inherent in religion as well. According to Meet Singh, committing a crime against a fellow villager is unpardonable. Loyalty towards fellow villagers is of utmost importance. And people go about committing crimes without it

having any effect on their consciences. Iqbal's musings on the subject later on, reveals that religion in India is extremely superficial.

It is satirical that Meet Singh, the Sikh priest is all praise for Hukum Chand saying that he is a "*nar admi* — a he-man", (41) because he started out as a foot-constable and reached his current position due to his ability to please his Sahibs. And so they gave him one promotion after another. When Hukum Chand asks the sub-inspector about the situation in Mano Majra, he comments that Chundunnugger is a good police station because there is a lot of scope to make money. He then says that the sub-inspector could take money out of course, provided he does so within reason. The sub-inspector replies: "Gandhi disciples are minting money. They are as good saints as the crane. They shut their eyes piously and stand on one leg like a yogi doing penance; as soon as a fish comes — hurrup"(20). This is a telling comment on corruption and its justification by people on the lower levels.

Law and order situation still deteriorates. The police become helpless. As Harish Raizada aptly remarks:

> Unable to stem the tide of violence and finding themselves helpless, police authorities release Jugga and Iqbal of whose innocence they are by now fully convinced. The authorities feel that Jugga a friend of Mano Majran Muslims and Iqbal being a non-communal political worker,

> may exert some influence on the misguided people and save Muslims from being slaughtered. [16]

In this situation even an army officer looks for criminals like Malli and his gang, who can do what they can not do in their uniforms. They plunder the property of the Muslims with impunity. The irony of fate is revealed through Malli who becomes the custodian of the property of Muslims leaving for Pakistan. The process of docoity thus came full circle in an organised way, and the full impact of *Kalyug* was felt by men. In this situation we can see the reaction of the Sikhs of Mano Majra when they say : "Property is a bad thing; it poisons people's minds. No, we will not touch any thing. We will only look after their houses "(134). Here, Khushwant Singh draws our attention to the bond of friendship between the Sikhs and the Muslims of the village. We also find in the novel how the common man behaved in a more sensible manner than the Government officers who fanned the fire instead of finding way to extinguish it. A Sikh officer says to Meet Singh who is sympathetic towards Muslims: "The only way people like you will understand any thing is by being sent over to Pakistan: have your sisters and mothers raped in front of you, have your clothes taken off and be sent back with a kick and spit on your behinds" (135).

The concept of the common man as a tragic hero is also an interesting aspect of the symbol in *Train to Pakistan*. Khushwant Singh

often uses irony in this novel. He employs irony as technique to make his novel earthy and true to life. The technique glorifies Jugga's noble intentions emanating from deep love. Ironically, Jugga chants the Guru's words before he executes his plan. This is because he is seeking divine guidance. Here one's belief in religion is strengthened, for if on the one hand it is used to do evil, on the other, it is also used to do good and serve humanity. The positive ending reaffirms one's faith in God. The novel reveals the victory of good over the evil. The mode of introducing Juggut Singh aims at bringing out the essential duality in the nature of the character. The heroic spirit is depicted in the novel not by men respectable in the public but by a man like Jugga a "budmash number ten"(40). He embodies the rare combination of the criminal and the lover, which is the aspect of the realities and complexities of life. Juggat Singh, whose nature is split between cruelity and love, reveals a significant aspect of Khushwant Singh's view of man: he is a being divided between good and evil.

Khushwant Singh intense love for Pakistan accounts for the success of the well-crafted *Train to Pakistan*. The agony that the villagers undergo due to the enforced separation is depicted in an extremely poignant manner. The enforced separation of the lovers, Nooran (now pregnant) and Jugga, is also very touching. Jugga was in

love with Nooran which in a sense cut across religious barriers. After his release from police custody, he came to know that Nooran had visited his mother before leaving for the refugee camp carrying his child in her womb. Nooran was a Muslim weaver's daughter. The irony implicit in the ending of the novel is that by dying to save her life, Jugga may be condemning Nooran to a worse fate, the fate she anticipates when talking to his mother: “1 have Jugga’s child inside me. If I go to Pakistan, they will kill it when they know it has a Sikh father” (131). Jugga's mother has no sympathetic feelings for Nooran. Also by dying he eliminates any hope that he will come for her and, marry her. Nevertheless, he saves her life and many others. His noble act of sacrificing his life makes a satisfying climax to the narrative. Singh reveals his genuine faith in the humanistic ideal, in depicting a real Jugga laying down his life for the woman he loves. It is his belief in ethical humanism that governs his portrayal of the real and the actual.

Train to Pakistan is a classic in the post-Independence Indian English fiction because of the author's enduring faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity and the unconquerable spirit of man in the face of the mighty forces of wickedness and savage cruelties. Jugga is in a way, an embodiment of the basic tenets of Sikhism. He is cast into the image of a Sikh martyr. He saves the whole train load of innocent Muslims at the cost of his life and follows the basic tenets of Sikhism

which preaches indiscriminating love for all. Khushwant Singh writes: "I thought it was time I exploded this myth of the innate goodness in man. There is innate evil in man. And so I just wrote about it, and I did create one character whom I stuffed with the so–called innate goodness of man, and he is the only character which is entirely fiction."[17]

Khushwant Singh and Malgaonkar are both writers of adventure tales of heroes and outcasts embroiled in great events—war, Partition, freedom struggle that call for heroic action. In their novels, the heroes are called upon to deliver the people from the monsters that assail them and will suffer and die. Their doom is inevitable. The novel ends with the supreme sacrifice of a rogue Juggat Singh. In Chaman Nahal's *Azadi,* the loss is not an individual but more so the loss of identity for Lala Kanshi Ram and others. The partition days focus on a scenario which is wonderfully deep and interesting for realism and romance while the romantic element to the narrative is welcome in both the novels. *Train to Pakistan* and *Azadi* tell a saga of the colossal tragedy successfully. In terms of economic sluggishness and cultural backwardness the village was like any other village of the entire subcontinent. As Asnani remarks:

> Khushwant Singh obviously wishes the reader, to see Mano Majra as a microcosm of the communal temper of the country during the days of partition. The peaceful life of the

> villagers is disturbed when the first stories of the atrocities arrive, but for the villagers of Mano Majra they remain the happenings in another world, the idyllic tranquility remains.[18]

The novel chronicles the frightened reactions of people suddenly thrown over to an uncertain destiny. The very character of the national liberation struggle contributed in no small measure to the unpreparedness of the Punjabi rural life. The feudal consciousness that Government was God remained ingrained in the rural consciousness as a whole. Hostility to the British presence in India found a trenchant expression in the rising middle class. The lecherous ruling class which the British gifted to India was symbolised in the magistrate Hukum Chand. The police system in yet worse forms was the worst feudal gift of the so–called British liberals who chose to modernise India. The Australian critic H.M. Williams discovers in the novel what he calls "doomed heroes", perhaps Hukum Chand, Juggat Singh and Iqbal are the "heroes", of this category "being a mystic archetype totally out of touch with the modern age's scepticism and banalities, an age for whom the natural heroes are not kings but pop-singers and footballers."[19]

The weakest link in the novel is Iqbal. He appears to be a political adolescent rather than a functionary deputed by a political party. The social milieu of the novel confirms the novel as a significant

documentary. Other important and realistic characters are Meet Singh and Imam Baksh who represent the clergy. These two aged men often voice their opinions at village meetings. Bhai Meet Singh had rejected religious bigotry and opted for humanism. As Srinivasa Iyengar says: "It is the still small voice of sanity, the voice of reason, the voice of humanity."[20] Imam means a 'religious' person, and Meet means an 'affectionate' friend, so that these names have an allegorical significance in the context of the tragic conflict in *Train to Pakistan.* The name Iqbal means 'fortune', 'compromise', or 'agreement', and Iqbal Singh's role in the novel expresses these implications of action and thought.

In the last part of the novel, 'Karma', one finds how man fights against his destiny and never becomes hopeless and loses his soul. Fanatical outsiders are busy with revengeful activities. They plan to blow up the bridge and the train that is scheduled to go to Pakistan with Muslim refugees. Jugga decides to save the life of his beloved. He climbs the steel spans of the bridge and begins to slash at the rope with a *Kirpan*. The leader of the Hindu saboteurs fires at him. The engine of the coming train is almost on him. As Khushwant Singh describes: "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 to Pakistan"(181). This was the most unbelievable sacrifice made by a Sikh for a Muslim. According to Shahane, "The concept of common man as a

tragic hero is an interesting aspect of the theme and symbol in *Train to Pakistan*."[21]

The language of *Train to Pakistan* is authentic and representative of the period. The language used by different characters like Jugga, Hukum Chand, Meet Singh is realistic. The author has experimented with the Indian English language and got achievement as a writer of Indian English fiction. The kind of English he uses serves the peculiar needs of the Indian situation. Such expression as "cherisher of the poor"(26) indicates class differences. He uses numerous Indian forms of addresses for "Government"(23) and "Bhai"(35) which have no English equivalents. He employs colourful Punjabi expressions and idioms. His style is rigorous for its comic spirit. The third person narrative technique used by Khushwant Singh is in the traditional mode of narration. He narrates briefly and penetratingly many incidents of the partition. Of all the narrations, Jugga's last act of bravery is quite poignant. The novel aptly reveals the irony of the situation. The country, which won her freedom from the shackles of the mighty British rulers through non-violence, could not contain humanistic tradition. The formula of the popularity of the novel is on account of its belief in traditional moral and social standards of Indian society and a charming narrative skill. Jugga's conviction about his faith in the humanistic ideal represents the values ever honoured by India.

Singh's world of realities has a harmonious fusion of the two forces—tragic and comic. In the novel, a hint at disillusionment regarding post–colonial milieu is made. Politicising religion by a handful of people leads to the destruction of values. The individual is important in Khushwant Singh's created cosmos but he is also a part of a greater reality of man and nature. In effect, the fate of the individual is so closely linked with what is in store for his community and his religion. The collective destiny of groups and communities dominates the individual's fate. The description of the arrival of the train laden with corpses, made more real through Hukum Chand's reaction to it, and the subsequent burning of bodies, makes one shudder with horror. The next ghost train and the burying of the corpses by a bulldozer is terribly inhuman. It is the writer's deep emotional involvement with the subject that has enabled him to write such a magnificent novel. This rendering based upon the real makes the entire background of the novel authentic. One can almost visualise Mano Majra.

It is beyond doubt that the novel is free from communal bias as the novelist rails against all those Hindus, Muslims, Sikh, Congressite, Leaguer, Akali, or Communist, the sub-human species who were all out to slaughter. The author seems to deprecate the part played by the educated people of the country making an irony of the whole movement. Nevertheless, the novel, appears unparalleled in its objective and realistic

treatment of the partition. "Violence when viewed in retrospect often leads to descriptions that are simplistic or schematic."[22] It is, therefore, clear that *Train to Pakistan* is a documentary novel. The horror accompanying the transfer of population as a sequel to the independence and partition of India has been perfectly handled by Khushwant Singh. The novel is a tragedy written in a mock-comic tone, criticizing the celebration of freedom with mass murder and bestiality and exposing the pity and horror of the two-nation theory. It is a "nightmare with an exciting finish. One closes the novel with a sense of relief."[23] The novel is essentially the triumph of the individual over the system. For the novelist, love inspite of its concomitant frustrations, "is the greatest, the most exhilarating experience of life."[24] *Train to Pakistan* depicts the fragile nature of human relationships. During the partition, relationship between two communities broke down completely due to external forces. Singh seems to warn us that we must strengthen our mutual relations so that such an eventuality does not take place again. This is why the book ends on a note of hope. The novel is a social-realistic novel, as Prempati says:

> What sort of social realism does one find in *Train to Pakistan?* The formula which got this novel its well-deserved popularity was: a sincere belief in traditional moral and social standards of Indian society (agrarian in this particular case) and a charming narrative skill. An

> occasional dose of sexual sensationalism is also contrived to punctuate the text here and there. It is, therefore, obvious that *Train to Pakistan* is a documentary novel with no claims whatsoever to the artistic techniques, an extra-artistic philosophies of social realism and naturalism.[25]

Khushwant Singh is a sensitive and accomplished craftsman in the world of Indo-Anglian fiction. He has succeeded in communicating to his readers the ghastliness of the partition tragedy through his masterpiece *Train to Pakistan*.

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CHAPTER-4

I SHALL NOT HEAR THE NIGHTINGALE

India, the jewel in the crown of the Empire, achieved independence in 1947. Since then post-colonial literature has referred mainly to the former colonised areas of Asia and Africa as they became self-governing states during the 1950s and 1960s—yet related by their pasts as Ghana and Singapore, or Pakistan and Sierra Leone. The colonial experience persists despite the withdrawal of political control, as a result of the continuing strategic and economic power of the former colonisers. As Sahgal admits, however minimal the impact of the empire upon a particular people in the long perspective, it has always left its imprint.

By the mid-1960s, most British-held possessions were independent, the Empire had been dismantled, and in its place, the Commonwealth had come into being, with the Queen as its head. The transition from the Empire to Commonwealth during the interwar years meant a continuation of white British hegemony, although nationalist feeling was growing apace, especially in India. A key moment in the transition took place in April 1919, in the Jallianwallah Bagh at Amritsar in the Punjab, when General Dyer, a British officer in the Indian Army, ordered his soldiers to fire on a crowd of unarmed civilians. This massacre turned Gandhi against the British.

The impact of European colonialism on the world was a complex process. The damage to indigenous cultures, the suffering and loss of life can never be measured as also the resentment of those formerly colonised. For having been instilled with a sense of inferiority based on race is part of the price we all have to pay for the ascendancy enjoyed by the West since Columbus's first voyages. As Fanon described it, colonialism was a denial of all culture, history and value outside the colonizer's frame; in short, 'a systematic, negation of the other person.'[1]

Colonial rule has played an important role in influencing the situation of inter-dependence between the rulers and the ruled. The colonizer establishes the feeling of inferiority in the mind of the colonizer by spreading the myth of the 'Whiteman's burden'. As Om P. Juneja remarks:

> …having been thrown out of the history making process, the colonised loses interest in his selfhood and accepts the myth of his…inferiority…the colonised accepts the passive roles assigned to him by the colonizer. The colonizer destroys the past of the colonised by changing the frame of history…[2]

As a result, myth becomes a part of the social and cultural fabric of the colonised. The coloniser and the colonised have been in conflict

and this conflict is considered to be a major thematic concern in many Indian English novels like R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Malgaonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi.* In these novels different aspects of colonial encounter between Indians and Britishers like protest, love-hate relationship, compromise etc. are focused upon and therefore, they can be compared to similar novels by Commonwealth writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi and Patrick White.

In *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale,* Khushwant Singh presents the colonial encounter between Indians and the British Government against the background of the Punjab. Punjab is known for its military history and Sikh religion, although it is related to India politically. This novel is not merely a record of real theme, real characters and real incidents but a creative depiction of the real. The historical novelist has tried to portray a very microscopic picture of the Punjabi life in the novel and his concentration is on the political theme. The novel deals with the India of 1940s, when the colonial encounter between the Indians and the British was coming near a climax on account of the nationalistic consciousness among the Indians. A mixed reaction among Indians towards the British Raj is presented by the novelist accurately with the strange mixture of attitudes to the alien rule. The situation shown here is easily comparable to those in other colonised countries like Africa and West Indies.

In *Train to Pakistan*, there is a description of the violence and heroism of peasants and dacoits but in *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale,* Khushwant Singh provides a deep insight into the human psyche that faces trials and tribulations during the period. As Haydn Moore Williams describes aptly:

> Khushwant Singh followed it up (Train to Pakistan) with a novel that deals with the lure of violence and the paradox of heroism. *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* centers on a middle class Sikh family in the Punjab during World War II. Where *Train to Pakistan* had been all action, passion and a hymn to the heroism of simple peasants and wild bandits, the new novel was a complex and disturbing study of adolescent psychology.[3]

In this novel the writer does not make any political statement as such in spite of the fact that the story is shaped during the time when the call for the Quit India Movement was given by Mahatma Gandhi. This is perhaps because the novelist did not really want to write about the effects of any political event as he had done in *Train to Pakistan*. However, the period in which it is based, did give him some inspiration to show the activities of would-be politicians. But Singh's object was to expose the character of Sher Singh and not to give any political view. There are discussions about the loyalties of Sikhs for the British Empire in the

novel, and the nationalist's struggle and their desire to hear the voice of the nightingale i.e. the voices of freedom. The basic symbolism of the title is to do with the theme of the book. As Sher Singh, the son of Buta Singh—the first class magistrate tells his mother when she asks:

> 'What will you get if the English leave this country?'
>
> 'I? Nothing. But we will be free.'
>
> 'Then what will happen? What sweetmeats will we get?'
>
> He became lyrical 'Spring will come to our barren land once more...once more the nightingales will sing.' [4]

Politics forms the backdrop of the novel and the foreground of the novel is occupied by Buta Singh and his family. As Khushwant Singh mentions in the introduction of the novel, "The chief characters in the story are Sikhs."[5] Their nature is determined by historical movements.

The novel is set in pre-independent India of the 1940. We are exposed to the political scenario of that time through the lives of two families of the Punjab—one Sikh and the other Hindu. Post–colonial theory is based on the existence of the coloniser and the colonised. In the case of India as the writer describes it, the British coloniser succeeded in invading the mind of the colonised. We also find that Buta Singh considers it to be of great value that he is a loyal follower of the British Crown. The sycophancy of Buta Singh is realised by him through the act of rubbing his nose at the feet of Englishman like Mr. Taylor. He is

constantly praised by the Deputy Commissioner and is proud of what he considers to be a privileged position. "I wish other Indians talked like you, Buta Singh! I rely on you to guide them" (31). Such words from Mr. Taylor are the high points in the life of this servile colonised Indian. Buta Singh obviously fits into the 'hegemonic phase' of colonialism as he seems to have accepted the coloniser's system of values, attitudes etc. Hence he does not believe that being disturbed on Baisakhi Day should matter to an Indian. He does not protest or mind being offered a cigarette even though as a Sikh he is not supposed to smoke. Even his reaction when he is offered one by Taylor reeks of servility: "That is all right. Sahib Just an old superstition," explained Buta Singh. His reaction to a similar indiscretion by a fellow Indian would have been a little more emphatic"(30). He has internalised the views thrust on the colonised and believes that "We Indians have no character.... We have still a lot to learn from the English" (85). Sher Singh argues with his father and says that the British "too have something to learn from us...like hospitality... tolerance" (87). Colonialism has succeeded in instilling such a feeling of inferiority in the mind of the colonised that the colonial relationship necessarily becomes one of inequality. As Nandy writes:

> This colonialism colonises minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the process, it helps to

> generalise the concept of the modern West from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds.[6]

The novel revolves around the relationships of the members of the Buta Singh household and also their relations with other people. Buta Singh is engaged in one-upmanship as is perceived in his relationship with his colleagues. He uses various ploys to establish his superiority over the other magistrates. He is keen to dominate Wazir Chand, a Hindu official. So, when a deputation of Hindu merchants requests him to procure a license for them to take out a procession, he agrees readily,

> If it had not been for the fact that Wazir Chand had admitted his inability to get permission for the Hindu procession, Buta Singh would never have taken on the task. He had reasoned that if he failed, it would not do him much damage; if he succeeded, his prestige amongst the Hindus of the city would greatly increase and that of Wazir Chand suffer. (70)

Buta Singh gains the upper hand from Wazir Chand. The latter being a Hindu had been unable to help the merchants. Whereas, he a Sikh, had easily been able to come to the rescue of the entire Hindu community. His relationship with his colleagues is competitive and he

tries to be one step ahead of them by staying in the good books of the Taylors. His relationship with the Taylors is representative of the relationship between Indians of his class and the English. Taylor on the other hand is genuinely fond of Buta Singh. He belongs to that minority of Englishmen, who believed that India should be governed by Indians. When he gets information that Sher Singh is becoming a little too active in terrorist activities, he tries to tell Buta Singh about it gently. He also admits that they do not have any evidence against his son. In contrast to this straightforward, genuine behaviour of the Taylors, is the double-dealing of Buta Singh. In front of them he professes complete loyalty. He is ready to do everything to please Taylor. He is the typical caricature of a boot-licking subordinate. His relationship with his wife is also somewhat ambiguous. He is not above using her to further his own ends. He uses her death to be benefitted by the Taylors.

The mutual relationship between Buta Singh and his son is also ordinary. As is usual with fathers and sons, they are perpetually arguing with each other. They stand for two opposite views. While Buta believes in the continuity of the English rule, Sher Singh thinks that India should be left to the Indians. So they end almost all conversations with an unpleasant personal argument. Nevertheless, Sher Singh has regard for his father. And, when he realises that Taylor could be aware of his terrorist activities, he is anxious that his father should not suffer due to

him. Buta too, is proud of his son's nationalistic activities, but advises him to be on the right side of everybody. It is clear that Buta has a great deal of affection for his son, yet his behaviour after Sher's arrest is strange. Buta Singh neither visits his son in jail, nor advises him not to say anything. It is the basic selfishness of Buta Singh that compels him to behave in this manner. Taylor had told Buta Singh clearly that they did not have enough evidence against his son. They only suspected him of being involved in the headman's disappearance. Unless he confessed or told them about his accomplices, they did not have very much to go on.

The nightingale's song denotes the freedom of India. It is highly ironic that it is Sabhrai the morally strong, and central character of the novel who does not live to see the nightingale's song. This is focused in the scene of Sabhrai's death where she whispers: "I shall not hear the nightingales, my son" (261). In the novel, nature is treated in the manner of an interlude in the narration, or as a prelude to some of the events that are to occur.

The central irony in the novel is perceived in the fact that both the pro-British and the anti-British ideologies are cherished by different members of the same family. Buta Singh, the District Magistrate, has a great admiration for the British rule in India, but his son Sher Singh has a different view. Buta Singh believes:

> Loyalty to the Raj had been as much an article of faith with him as it had been with his father and grandfather who served in the army. He, like them, had mentioned the English king or queen in his evening prayer. 'O, Guru, bless our Sovereign and bless us their subjects so that we remain contented and happy.' (25)

Buta Singh tells his son that the Indians should help the British in their war against the Germans and other European powers.

> I do believe that in this war our interests and that of the English are identical. If they lose, we lose. If we help them to win, they will certainly give us something more than we have now. We should know who are our friends and who are our enemies. The English have ruled us for over a hundred years, and I do not care what you say, I believe they have treated us better than our own kings did in the past; or the Germans, Italians, or Japanese will do if they win and take over India. We should stand by the English in their hour of trouble. (24)

In the above passage we find that Buta Singh has great sympathy for the British rule. He does not care for being unpopular with his countrymen as long as he has the patronage of the British rulers like, for example, the District Commissioner, Mr. John Taylor. He is opportunistic and wants to be benefitted by the political life so that he

can lead a life of security and ensure happiness for his family. The writer's observation and understanding of different relationships and behavioural patterns provide an insight into the myriad forms of human nature. This novel depicts the life of a Sikh family, and in that it is evidently autobiographical, to a great extent. As a Sikh who has lived in Punjab, Khushwant Singh draws upon his personal knowledge to create an effective backdrop for the novel. He is well aware of the social conditions that prevailed during that time. As he has made a comprehensive study of the Sikhs, he has been able to give a spiritual mould to the novel by giving quotations of passages from the Granth Sahib. The novelist was very attached to his grandmother and shared a close relationship with her. In this novel too, he fashions the character of Sabhrai after his grandmother. The similarity is as far as their intense faith in God is concerned. And this forms the core of the character of Sabhrai. It is she who redeems the drawbacks of the other characters. Shahane aptly analyses Sabhrai's character:

> Buta Singh's devoted wife, Sabhrai is the moving spirit of the family. She is deeply religious, and the sacred *Granth Sahib* is the source of all knowledge and enlightenment for her. Although she is an uneducated woman, she has an extraordinarily profound and instinctive understanding of life.[7]

The piece of information of Sher Singh's arrest breaks Sabhrai's heart. The course of her life is changed with this news. Her faith in God is put on trial. With a perplexed mind she decides to take the shelter in the eternal words of *Granth*. She declares, "We will first do the non-stop reading of the Granth. 'The Guru will guide us. We will do what He commands' "(214). At the time of crisis like every Indian woman she constantly prays to God to show her the right path. She goes to the Gurudwara in the night and prays to God whole-heartedly to save her son:

> Eternal God, who art our shield
> The dagger, knife, the sword we wield.
> To us protector there is given
> The timeless deathless Lord of Heaven. (229)

The thought of Guru gives her strength and courage to face life. The passage read by the priest in the Gurudwara beautifully expresses the feelings of Sabhrai's heart. The priest reads:

> 'Lord, thou art my refuge
> I have found Thee and
> my doubts are dispelled**.**
> I spoke not, but Ye knew my sorrow
> And made me to meditate
> on Thy holy name.
> Now I have no sorrow;
> I am at one with Thee [...]'. (230)

The character of Buta Singh is also based to some extent on Sir Sobha Singh, the writer's father. Sir Sobha Singh was loyal to the British regime and believed that after they left, India would be plunged into anarchy. He was also extremely diplomatic and knew exactly how to get his work done. He was an honorary magistrate as well. Buta Singh has all the traits of the writer's father. Both of them were caught between their loyalty to the British Crown and freedom for their motherland.

> In a way you have the history of Indo-British relationships represented by Buta Singh's family tree. His grandfather fought against us in the Sikh wars; his father served us loyally. He has continued to do so with certain reservations. His son is impatient to get rid of us. Poor Buta Singh is split between the past and the future. (243)

Sir Sobha Singh believed in the continuity of the British rule. So there is a blend of fact and imagination in the character of Buta Singh. Singh's grandfather, Sujan Singh can also be discerned in Buta Singh. Both of them knew precisely how to get favours from the English officers. "Buta Singh had always tipped the Deputy Commissioner's staff and had no fear about his card having been deliberately withheld" (70). The English officers never accepted any kind of bribe, so Sujan Singh would gift them with a basket of fruit saying they were from his orchard

in the village (no fruits grew in his native village Hadali). The wily Buta Singh also buys the best oranges from the market and sends them to Mrs. Taylor in the name of his wife. In the letter he writes, “Pray accept this humble gift of oranges for Christmas Day. They are the first pick of the year from our garden. I hope you will like them" (238).

Sabhrai’s attitude towards her husband Buta Singh and his son Sher Singh is balanced. Buta Singh’s son Sher Singh has a different vision from that of his father. He is the leader of the Terrorists' revolution for freedom of India from the British rule. The novel opens with Sher Singh involved in terrorist activities. The opening scene is highly significant from the realistic point of view with meaningful reference to 'baptism in blood.' The idea is in contrast to the atmosphere symbolised by its title. Sher Singh and his friends are determined to kill as many Englishmen as they can. They want to drive the British out of India. Sher Singh with a group of his friends goes for hunting. With a view to baptising their weapons Sher Singh shoots a crane. On the way village headman stops them and demands license for the gun. Sher singh shows the license issued in the name of his father, Buta Singh. When the village headman hears that Sher is the son of Buta Singh, he changes his tone. Sher, suspecting him as the police informer, introduces his friends with false names .In his excitement Sher Singh forgets to pick up six

empty cases of bullets at the place of target practice. As V.A. Shahane aptly observes: "The first scene is highly suggestive of the development of situation and character in the novel."[8] The author throws light upon the unpleasant aspect of the freedom struggle and portrays a very realistic picture of the freedom movement.

At the other extreme of the colonial spectrum, Sher Singh as a student leader is deeply involved with the Nationalist movement. His mother, as an illiterate woman, has a similar view to that of her husband. She believes; “We eat their salt, and as long as we eat it, we will remain loyal" (89). To this her nationalist son, Sher Singh angrily answers: “Who eats whose salt? They suck our blood”(89). His hope for and faith in freedom is forcefully expressed: “Spring will come to our barren land once more... once more the nightingales will sing” (89). Here we find this colonised eager to change the colonial situation while his father Buta Singh willingly supports the continuation of the British rule. Buta Singh expresses his feelings effectively like a subaltern. He is the most articulate supporter of John Taylor. Sher Singh represents a small segment of the ruled that refuses to surrender like Caliban in *The Tempest.* Sher Singh realises that he is the actual owner of the land and that the British coloniser is to leave this land sooner or later. He becomes an embodiment of the nationalistic ideal. His philosophy is diametrically

opposite to that of his father. His patriotic zeal and nationalistic philosophy is influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders. His attitude is questioning about the British rule in India. He favours self-government for the motherland. He expresses his nationalistic ideology in the fiery speech he delivers at the gathering of patriotic students:

> Comrades, we meet at a critical time. The enemy is at our gates…. Comrades, we not only have the enemy at our doorstep, we have enemies within our own house…. Those who sacrifice the interests of the motherland for foreign countries are our enemy No.1. They have been rightly named as the *Kaum nashts*—destroyers of the race…. There are also people who want to cut off the limbs of Mother India and make another state of Pakistan. They too are our enemies.... But we are Sikhs who do not fear any enemies. We shall destroy all those who stand in our way. (43-44)

Thus the conflict between the pro-British attitude and the anti-British in the same family accurately symbolizes the phenomenon of the Indian political life. The novel describes the ways of the Indian Magistrate's attempts to please his British Superior, Mr. Taylor and his wife. Buta Singh's support for the British rule is on account of his knowledge of the internal conflicts of Indian life. He, therefore, believes

that the British rule can keep these conflicts under control and offer a political unity to India.

The writer points out the drawbacks inherent in various religions. This is seen in the conversation between Buta Singh and his son Sher Singh. Buta Singh says that caste Hindus are completely intolerant as far as untouchable are concerned and so are Hindus and Sikhs about the Muslims. Sher Singh replies that such examples are found everywhere, for instance, most white people are anti-semitic. Hitler annihilated Jews, Russians killed many, Europeans and Americans are similarly prejudiced against them. Such racial discrimination is not found in India. But Buta Singh says that untouchability is in fact racial. A skeptical Sher Singh says, We do not kill them at least. To this Buta Singh retorts: "Because they have never had the courage to revolt. What religion of the world other than the Hindu — and I conclude the Sikhs in the Hindus —has degraded humanity in the same way ?" (88).

There are some descriptions of the nationalist activities in the novel. In north India under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, the Gandhi cap covered patriots begin to attack the shops and public offices. The British soldiers try to beat the patriots violently. Thus the nationalistic struggle is encouraged and occupies the mind of Indians. Shops are looted, roads are blocked and trains are stopped by the nationalist

agitators. Sher Singh reads the newspapers full of news about the nation-wide agitation. He also receives a cyclostyled letter with a caption, 'A Manifesto of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army'(170).

> It drew attention to the arrests of the leaders and asked the youth of India to rise and rid themselves of foreign rule. It did not mince its words. 'Shoot English officials and the Indian toadies who serve them. Destroy roads and bridges; cut telegraph and telephone wires; create chaos and paralyse the administration. This is your sacred duty. Long live the revolution. '(170)

Singh's art of portraying characters is appropriate. As Chirantan Kulshrestha aptly remarks: "Characters again become chessboard pawns in a situation that claims the greater attention of the novelist".[9]

The novel also portrays the disruption of the mutual relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims. A deputation of Hindu merchants requests Buta Singh to help them get a license to take out a religious procession. Buta Singh points out to Taylor that the Sikhs and the Muslims have already had their celebrations. So this grievance of the Hindus should be taken seriously, or else, it could be taken as a form of discrimination against them. This could even result in some kind of communal tension in the city. Evidently, divisive tendencies had taken root by 1942. Here the fact is focused that the people holding power

should treat all the communities as equal. If one community is discriminated against it fosters hatred in the one for the other. And this finally led to the partition and the formation of Pakistan. The situation in Mano Majra is in contrast to this.

Another instance in the novel reveals this fact even more effectively. This is when a boy volunteer was going to picket an English store on the Mall in Shimla. He was beaten up and arrested by a European sergeant. Subsequently most of the bazaar closed shops as a protest. However, all European and some Muslim-owned shops remained open. Clearly, the Muslims did not want to be a part of these nationalist demonstrations.

The bureaucracy has been personified in the form of Buta Singh. It is an example of Khushwant Singh's disillusionment with bureaucrats that he does not present them in a favourable light. Buta Singh is skilled in persuading everyone. He advises his son too that he did not mind Sher consorting with the nationalists because one must keep in with both sides,

> **...**Buta Singh had decided on a muddle-headed and somewhat dishonest compromise. When he was with Englishmen he protested his loyalty to the Raj. 'At my age I cannot change,' he would say. When he was with amongst his own countrymen, he would be a little critical of English ways.' (26)

Here, we find duplicity in the character of Buta Singh. His accent and vocabulary also changes when talking to Englishmen, "Wallah figured prominently in his speech" (31). Buta Singh's attempt at one-upmanship and his tendency to manipulate people and situation to his advantage give rise to several instances of humour. He is an extremely witty character and knows how to solve his purpose.

The depiction of the urban milieu in the novel shows the divisive tendencies more clearly. For instance, when a colleague of Buta Singh asks him about the news, he decides not to tell him anything because; "It was a Muslim colleague and with Muslims it was not wise to be honest about politics. They pretended to be against the idea of Pakistan when they were with non- Muslims but gave it their support in every way they could"(176). Buta Singh tells him that it probably concerns some arrests of the Nationalist leaders. To this the Muslim says rather maliciously that the papers of some Gandhi disciples had been brought to him by the police. He had sentenced them to six months' detention. Buta Singh knew that if the papers had concerned a Muslim supporter of Pakistan, then he would have reasoned with the police. In that case the papers would have been brought to himself or Wazir and they would have promptly sentenced the Muslims for six month's detention. It was obvious that the English were playing one community against the other. "That was the

accepted method of dispensing justice from the lowest tribunal to the highest"(177). When the other magistrates arrive, they take their seats according to their faith—Muslim with Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs with Hindus and Sikhs. The growing dichotomy between people of different faiths can be perceived.

Mr. Taylor is portrayed as being the supporter to the demands of India's struggle for freedom. There were a few such British officers who also believed in India's freedom. Their soft attitude towards the cause of India's struggle helped to some extent towards India gaining independence. The image of John Taylor is different from the usual image of the powerful coloniser: "Taylor did not belong to the class which has produced the builders of the Empire....They found themselves isolated from the English community....They found the snobbery of the senior English officials a little irksome... (69). However, Mr. Taylor does not play any significant role for the Indian cause in the novel. In the crisis the Englishmen seemed to have become Buta Singh's only hope. Mrs. Taylor requests Mr. Taylor to release Sher Singh. As she says, "John, why can't we give her a Christmas present which will mean something to her? Really mean something"(246). At this request Sher Singh is released for there was no evidence against him.

There is a also a reference in the novel to the incidents revealing the resistance of the Indians to the British rule. Some Nationalist leaders

are arrested, several demonstrators rounded up, and riots occur in several towns. In Shimla, a young boy volunteer pickets an English store. He is hit full in the face by a European sergeant. His teeth are knocked out and he rolls down a dozen of the steep steps. He along with the man who helps him is arrested. Subsequently, many shops close in protest. Perhaps Khushwant Singh writes of this out of personal experience. Nationalist volunteers in Gandhi caps come to surround them. One of the volunteers shouts showing no fear, “Victory to Mahatma Gandhi" (163). He too is hit by a white sergeant and the previous day’s scene is re-enacted. Madan is a witness to this and although he gets stimulated, he does not do anything. None of the main characters take part in any of these activities.

The writer exposes the essential weakness in the character of Sher Singh. It has been his tendency to unmask the hollowness of people with effective use of irony. Sher Singh hopes to have a bright political career. But as the hunting incident in the beginning of the novel demonstrates him just a grown up boy masquerading as an adult. His character reminds one of the characters of Iqbal Singh in *Train to Pakista**n***. Like Iqbal Singh in *Train to Pakistan,* he does not take the right decision.

> He did not realise that the strength was not a natural development of his own personality but nurtured behind the protection provided by his father’s position as a senior

> magistrate and a respected citizen. He was like a hot-house plant blossoming in a greenhouse. The abuse, beating, and arrest were like putting that plant out in a violent hailstorm. His bluster and self-confidence withered in the icy cold atmosphere of the police station. (215)

In the novel, Sher Singh is actually revealed as a young boy who prefers to live in a world of his fantasy. The novelist is an observer of human behaviour and character and reveals it in an engaging style. Sher Singh is like Iqbal Singh who dreams of becoming a hero but is unable to recognise his true self. The situation becomes miserable when he fails to take a decision in an emergency. When the policemen come to arrest him, he crumbles immediately, and does not have the courage to resist. Ironically, it is his dog, Dyer who displays more bravery and courage than his master. Mr. Taylor intentionally sends Anglo-Indian and Muslim Policemen from Northern Punjab to arrest Sher Singh. He does it to intimidate him. Sher Singh loses whatever little courage he might have had when threatened by the two people. Later in the jail, Sher decides that he would reveal everything in case he is tortured. His loyalty towards his associates is deceitful. But being Buta Singh's son, he too is not above manipulating things to his advantage. Certainly, his thinking is like a politician if not anything else. When he is to be released, he is quick to make the use of the situation. He immediately sends a note to

Madan extolling his own boldness in not disclosing anything to police. Thereafter, Madan arranges for a grand procession, coverage by the press, and, Sher Singh makes a rousing speech. He says that he is proud that he had been called upon to do a small duty to his country and he did it. He says that the police were unable to break the spirit of this son of India. And ironically, he is hailed as a great hero by everybody. Sher Singh is moved by the affection of the crowed.

The historical novelist also throws light on the psychology of the people who camouflage their petty desires under false appearance of righteous ideals. They want the genuineness of the purity of their pursuits and their honorable image to be noticed among their relatives, friends and masses. Sher Singh is a pertinent example of this type, who declares his belief in patriotism, practices terrorism with a view to encourage an armed revolution to throw out the British, but gets exposed as a coward, who bends from fear at the first blow that is struck on him. When Jhimma Singh, the village headman questions him about the license of his shooting gun, he gets frightened. His conduct during his imprisonment, especially during his questioning is an act of shame, and presents him shorn of all that is worthy in man. Subhash Chandra says:

> A significant feature of the modern literature, beginning with James Joyce's *Ulysses* is the anti-heroic hero it

> portrays, and Sher Singh fits the bill.... *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* is not hero but a heroine-oriented novel and that Sabhrai, the true heroine is in the classical mould of the hero. Sher Singh's moral corruption and his political rise (glorifying in the mantle of leadership which falls on him by default) become symptomatic of the malaise afflicting the modern society (in India or else where).[10]

The realistic presentation of the brutal practices of the police is also shown significantly by the novelist. A post–colonial novelist is interested in the operation of power and power structures. The coloniser uses his power to control the colonised. This power can be observed in indirect, coveted ways like making the person wait as Taylor does to Sher Singh as well as to Buta Singh. The use of this power can be observed in the use of the arm of law in the case of the arrest of Sher Singh. The historical novelist presents a realistic flavour of the brutal practices of the police. The scene in which Sher Singh is abused and beaten is a scene of wide realistic significant. Jimma Singh, the police informer is missing. He is supposed to have been murdered by Sher Singh. As John Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner, suspects the hands of Sher Singh in the murder of the village head, he hands over the police Commissioner two warrants, one to arrest Sher Singh and the other to search the house of Buta Singh for any explosives. The police raid the

house of Buta Singh. Sher Singh observes the white sergeants sitting in the arm-chairs with their legs on the table smoking. The post-colonial tendency to coloniser is epitomised by Sher Singh. He wishes to bring his land and country to its pre-colonial state. Sher Singh asks them if they have come to see his father. Thereupon, the head constable seizes his hand. Sher with angry tone, asks them by what authority they are behaving like that. The sergeant calls Sher a bugger.

> Without warning the sergeant struck his knee sharply into Sher Singh's privates. As he doubled over with pain, the sergeant hit him on the face with the back of his hand. Sher Singh's turban came off and fell on the ground; his long hair scattered about his face and shoulders. (197)

The sergeant even before he completes "Cheeky Nigger. That will teach" (197). Sher Singh's dog Dyer leaps at him with savage fury and knocks him down. The other police come and save the sergeant's life. They beat the dog with their iron shod bamboo poles. The sergeant attempts to shoot the dog by saying "I will shoot the bloody pariah" (197). But the other sergeant prevents his move by saying that the English officers are mad with dogs. The sergeant orders the police to search the house to find out any explosives. They find nothing. They take Sher to police station by saying "take this bloody patriot to the station and put some red hot chillies up his arse" (198). The colonizer

insults by using foul language: “Rape your sister...”(220) and also uses the threat of violence to make the coloniser submit. Singh accurately portrays the pitiable condition of those who do not follow the directives like Sher Singh. We find Sher Singh crumble easily in the face of the slightest trouble. This incident throws light upon the divide and rule policy of the British. Here, we see his disloyalty towards his friends which can be followed in case of the country. Such cowardly youths like Sher, and greedy informers were both concerned about their own well being. And they caused the long rule of the British in India.

Against the character representing one way of life in the novel, is shaped the heroic figure of Sabhrai whose way of thinking is totally different. Being a religious minded lady, she respects the entire creation and that is why she advises her son, "I don't like this business of killing poor harmless birds. If you ask my advice, I would say, 'Sell the shotgun'.... To take the life of innocent creatures is sin" (15-16). Though not aware of any environmental problems which we are facing today, such as pollution, population, water crisis and earthquake, she teaches us to respect the laws of nature. And only by doing so, we can solve our problems. She has both moral strength and emotional warmth. She knows the values of religion, integrity, dignity and has faith in the principles of selflessness, love, loyalty to the family, nation and even

humanity. She acts as a force in her family to maintain harmony in the family. She displays indomitable courage, strength of character and sacrificing spirit. When Sher is arrested for the murder of Jimma Singh and the police search into case for disclosing the names of other conspirators, Sabhrai decides to take up the responsibility of meeting her son.

> The responsibility fell automatically on Sabhrai. She accepted it readily, not because she had any advice to give her son on the statement he was to make, but because her heart ached to see her son and to clasp him to her bosom.... Sabhrai had developed a stubborn indifference to rudeness and irritation and asked her husband:' What will happen if he refuses to make a confession?' (222-23)

To which Buta Singh replies:

> As far as I am concerned, my service, pension and the land granted by the Government all go. But that is a small matter; in addition, the boy will be hanged. (223)

She tells Sher Singh the story of her Guru and how the Guru had sacrificed all his sons for freedom .She points out in an indirect way that death is preferable to the betrayal of his friends. She finds out that Sher Singh is prepared to betray rather than suffer torture at the hands of the police:

> I have no opinion. I will do exactly what you people tell me to do. If it is true they know all about the affair, there seems no point in hiding anything any more....Who is not afraid of a beating? Only those who get it know. It is easy to be brave at the expense of other people....Then are you all agreed that I should make a statement? What do you advise me? (233)

Even at the critical moment of her life she cannot forget to thank Mr. Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner of the district and Mrs. Taylor his wife. Her philosophy of life is simple and meaningful. She believes, "Those who are with you in your sorrow are your real friends" (231). Though illiterate, she is open-minded and confesses her limitations to Mrs. Taylor in a letter she writes:

> Dear Taylor Memsahib, I am an uneducated Punjabi woman who cannot write nice words of thanks in English. Ask one of your clerks to read this to you. God bless you for what your have done. You wanted to share the grief of a mother whose child has been stricken. There is no greater act of kindness in the world. (235)

Sabhrai is given much importance and it is her dialogue with her son, the title of the novel is chosen. As M.K. Naik aptly remarks, “The only character that wins our respect is the old mother Sabhrai who has the dignity of an ancient people behind her. [11]

Sabhrai refuses to take sides. She does not take her husband's stand nor does she approve of her son's weakness. She takes refuge in her Guru: "He said that my son had done wrong. But if he named the people who were with him he would be doing a greater wrong. He was no longer to be regarded as a Sikh and I was not to see his face again"(234).

Sher Singh desires to be popular in public. When he learns that Taylor could be aware of his illegal activities, he becomes fearful, "Despite his love for his country, he knew he was not the sort who burnt his bridges himself"(131). He had always hoped that he would enjoy the protection granted to him by virtue of his father's position. Buta Singh is more concerned about his position and does not wish to associate himself with his son in the prison. He is the senior most magistrate. In him as M.K. Naik rightly points out "the novelist has mercilessly pilloried Indian officialdom."[12] Buta Singh is a favourite of the British. He wishes to maintain the status quo on account of his being colonised. He "fawns on the British, is a creature of sheer self–interest."[13] He has no strength of his own. As Chirantan Kulshrestha also points out: "Both (Buta Singh and Sher Singh) are spineless and, in many ways, unreal characters, most of their attitudes being determined by the type they represent."[14]

In his characterization Khushwant Singh combines the elements of contrast and parallelism. For example, Sabhrai and Mrs. Joyce Taylor

reveal parallelism in tendencies. Joyce is a pious Christian woman and Sabhrai is a pious Sikh woman.

It is ironic that Sabhrai is the real freedom fighter in the novel. Though she loves her son, she is willing to sacrifice him if he so decides. She does not impose her will on either her husband or her son. Ironically, it is Mrs. Taylor who realises this and urges her husband to free Sher Singh. Singh portrays the British in their kindness. However, the illiterate Sabhrai decides to visit her son in the police lock-up and courageously advises him about what the Guru considers to be his duty. She manages to rise above the servility of the coloniser followed by Buta Singh towards them. The author has revealed the kind temperament of the British. They understand the deep love of the mother and her firm faith in her Guru and her country. Malgaonkar too paints the British and their kindness towards Gian in his novel *The Bend in the Ganges.* The Deputy Commissioner and his wife, Mrs. Taylor provide a deep insight into the personality of Buta Singh. Mrs. Joyce Taylor pays a visit to Buta Singh's house and gets puzzled by his character and personality. She says; "Curious lot, aren't they?.... I don't understand, the old Walrus with his obsequious "respected Memsahib" (243). For this Mr. Taylor says, "Don't be too hard on the old stick; he's been brought up like that. The English are his Mai-Bap, Father-Mother" (243).

When Sher Singh is discharged by the intervention of Mrs. Taylor, he considers it his victory. He manipulates the situation in his favour. On the other hand, Buta Singh gets his name in the honours list. The novelist artistically shows that Sabhrai has freed herself from the worldly relations, the fetters of her family bondage. She has taken refuge in her Guru. As Haydn Moore Williams puts it:

> …there is heroism in this novel—the heroism of Sher Singh's mother who emerges in strong lines at the end of the book. Yet ironically she does not live to hear the nightingale of Indian freedom. She dies in the middle of the celebration of the British honour conferred on Buta Singh for loyal service to the Raj.[15]

The victory of nobility of love in *Train to Pakistan* which results in saving the lives of a whole train–load of Muslims leaving for Pakistan is confined to Juggat Singh's love for his beloved, Nooran, whom he wants to save from death. Sabhrai moral strength disregards the safety of her beloved son which shows that her moral vision is broader in its horizon.

The novel also describes one of the aspects of nature in the beginning. The first chapter begins with a metaphoric portrayal of the killing of a sarus crane by a group of boys who are training to become terrorists. The manner of the killing and the events that follow it are described by the novelist with descriptions of flora and fauna in minute

detail. This reveals Singh's knowledge of nature, and establishes credibility in the reader to the story. This event is purposeful and establishes the time frame of the story. It also reveals the hollow bravado of the would-be terrorists of the Freedom Struggle of India. The killing of the crane, an extremely senseless act, symbolises the recklessness of the boys.

> Sher Singh could not make up his mind. He had never killed anything before. Even the sight of a headless chicken spouting blood as it fluttered about had made him turn cold with horror. He had been full of loathing for the cook who had wrenched off the fowl's head, and had given up eating meat of any kind for some months…. "If you are going to funk shooting birds, you will not do much when it comes to shooting Englishmen," taunted Madan. (2-4)

The incident has momentous repercussions and leads to the ultimate crisis in the story. The scene does not have any symbolic meaning. Rather it serves as an interlude.

The intense heat of the plains results in Madan, Sita, Beena, and Champak going to Shimla for the summers. It probably is reminiscent of the defeat of the English during the Second World War. It is almost natural in the novelist to give an account of the Indian monsoons following a portrait of the Indian summers. The most important

description is the description of monsoon. The fiction writer describes monsoon with minute details and visual images. The description begins thus:

> To know India and her peoples, one has to know the monsoon. It is not enough to read about it in books, or see it on the cinema screen, or hear some-one talk about it. It has to be a personal experience because nothing short of living through it can fully convey all it means to a people for whom it is not only the source of life, but also their most exciting impact with nature. What the four seasons of the year mean to the European, the one season of the monsoon means to the Indian. It is preceded by desolation; it brings with it the hopes of spring; it has the fullness of summer and the fulfillment of autumn all in one. (112)

However, here the monsoons do not play as significant a role as they do in *Train to Pakistan*. Most of the passage quoted from the Granth Sahib through Sabhrai, also spin around nature. This is due to Singh's deep study of the holy book and keen interest in the relationship between nature and religion. These quotations show spiritual depth and meaning and make the story universal. The end of the monsoons in the hills is also described in a beautiful manner. This provides a kind of dramatic relief after the shocking arrest of Sher Singh and loss of face of Buta Singh. It provides a link between the happenings of Punjab and Shimla. The

peaceful descriptions also symbolise the peace before the storm in the Buta household, and, Sabhrai's fatal illness. The title of the novel has also been taken from nature and has symbolic meaning.

The title of the novel has its importance in its attachment to the character of Sabhrai. In the title 'I' stands for Sabhrai. The title is taken from her dialogue with her son, Sher Singh. As M.K. Naik rightly points out; "The novel derives its title from her reply to her son's assurance that after Independence, 'once more the nightingales will sing', she says 'I shall not hear the Nightingale'– a sentiment in tune with the temper of the novel."[16]

Khushwant Singh has also given a humorous interpretation to the title, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*. The nightingale symbolises the coming of spring. The nightingale is symbolic of the events of India's independence. The implication is that the achievement of freedom like the spring gives joy to millions and therefore, the basic meaning of the title is apt and sound. It means that Sabhrai will not see that happy day of Indian independence, when nightingales sing but Sher and others will do. Khushwant Singh, who writes about political themes, becomes a poet in this novel; "Spring will come on our Barren Land..."(89) is symbolic and poetic at once. The spring here stands for the hope of freedom, and the desire is to hear the voice of nightingale. The novel is rich in symbols.

The novelist uses symbols to add vitality to his plot. Sher Singh's natural act of killing an innocent crane turns into an appropriate symbol of senseless violence, culminating first in the murder of Jhimma Singh and then in the sacrificial death of his mother. Killing of that bird symbolises recklessness and aggressiveness of youth. The same point is pointed out by the famous critics Sheo Bhushan Shukla and Rini Shukla thus:

> A natural act in keeping with the character of Sher Singh, it soon turns into an appropriate symbol of senseless violence and causes conflicting emotions of guilt and pride in him. It finally culminates, first in the murder of the *Lambardar* and then in the sacrificial death of Sabhrai.[17]

The symbol of the nightingale is not merely harbinger of spring or dawn of freedom. Its song may be a herald of spring but it could also be an expression of intense agony and misery. The spring of 1947 in India is also causing a winter of discontent. The basic theme of the novel is love which proves a solver of the problems of life. The love is inter-linked with symbols. Sabhrai embodies the motif of love.

Though, Khushwant Singh has studied in the West, he exhibits a deep Indian sensibility. A complex image of India can be found in his writings. He focuses on a truly Indian response to life in its various circumstances. He performs this through a rigorous prose. This aspect of

Khushwant Singh's language is evident from the speeches of his characters especially those of Jhimma Singh and Sher Singh:

Who doesn't know of Sardar Buta Singh? He asked 'but how should I have Known! Do forgive me, Sardar Sahib'.

'Not at all', answered Sher Singh. It is you who must forgive us for speaking rudely! You are a Lambardar and we should respect you! (9)

Like Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh employs Punjabi expletives. He translates Punjabi expressions word for word into English. This is evident when Wazir Chand tries to convince Buta Singh: "Sardar Sahib, you are a big man and we are but small radishes from an unknown garden" (29).

It is Khushwant Singh's power of observing a world which is devoid of a set of values and emerges into a world where people like Sabhrai and others doesn't lose courage in the midst of trying situations. Her death is marked by the life–sustaining virtues that she embodies in herself. *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* excels in artistic qualities and thematic expansiveness. The novel delineates the paradoxical picture of the colonial encounter between the Indians and the British including both the positive and the negative aspects. One wonders why Khushwant Singh did not paint any of the characters, barring Sabhrai as virtuous. If

one of the characters was heroic shown to be involved in the Quit India Movement, this novel would have reached great heights. As R.K. Dhawan rightly comments: "While as *Train to Pakistan* is a powerful exposition of one of the most moving and violent events of contemporary Indian history, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* treats Indian nationalism in a most detached and critical manner."[18]

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CHAPTER-5

DELHI

History is a record of various events that happened in different times. It gives us an account of great personalities who dominated their respective eras. Khushwant Singh with his characteristic down-to-earth approach reconstructs the history of Delhi in the novel *Delhi.* In his foreword to the paperback edition of the novel, Khushwant Singh states: "All I wanted to do was tell my readers what I learnt about the city.... My only aim was to get them to know Delhi and love it as much as I do."[1] The novelist discovers history like an artist. He uses a different point of view and a novel technique in portraying history. The aspect of romanticisation of past is admitted by the novelist himself: "I constructed it from records chronicled by eye-witnesses. Hence most of it is told in the first person. History provided me with the skeleton. I covered it with flesh and injected blood and a lot of seminal fluid into it."[2]

In *Delhi* (1990), Khushwant Singh moves beyond the immediate past to the days of the early Muslim invaders and rulers of India. He goes as far back as the thirteenth century and attempts to recreate the period and recount the experiences of the major dramatis personae of that era. Indira Nityanandam states: "Both the historian and the novelist depend

upon 'factity' with the novelist exhibiting a greater liking for selectivity."[3] The author chooses the fictive structure to narrate historical facts. He sees Indian history in the ironic mode. So he employs history as a satire. While reconstructing the history of Delhi, Singh highlights the life-governing phenomenon of birth-growth-decay. Sumeet Varghese opines: "Khushwant Singh does not believe in an imposing, communal, monolithic, exclusivist, homogenising vision of history. He posits several histories from a variety of positions, each competing and conflicting with any totalitarian perspective, by the sheer weight of its heterogenising outlook."[4]

The novelist uses historical events and documentary evidence for his framework to uncover the history. As Anita Singh observes: "He offers a critique of the conventional historiography that is often authoritarian, monologic and prescriptive."[5] Singh narrates the saga of Delhi and its people and rulers in his typical realistic style which proves successful in unveiling all the gory incidents of the story of Delhi. The novel focuses on a period of six centuries ranging from the time of Ghiasuddin Balban to the assassination of Indira Gandhi leading to the massacre of Sikhs. In the novel *Delhi,* the city of Delhi is revealed with its glory and its cosmopolitanism. The use of first person narrative gives biographical twists to history. Hence history here becomes what Carlyle

says 'the essence of innumerable biographies.'[6] The novelist does not tell all the stories that can be labelled as history in the novel but opts "to pick and choose episodes which tell the story (of Delhi) from 1008 A.D. upto the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the riots that followed which I decided would be the cut-off point."[7] The author speaks of reality in all its details: “The essence of Khushwant Singh’s art of fiction is his innate capacity to capture reality in all its magnificence and horror.”[8]

Like in *Train to Pakisan*, herein also Khushwant Singh does not fail to notice the brighter side of humanity. While unfolding the saga of Delhi, he tries to view every historical situation and the personages in a detached manner. The historical novelist tries to grasp the innate feelings and the essential strengths and weaknesses of the rulers of Delhi. Singh highlights the contribution of gracious people in strengthening the life of Delhi. Singh's narrative mode is comic in the Bhagmati episode. In Singh’s fictional world “the comic is inextricably linked with social and moral criticism and also with the free play of mind in a spirit of detachment.”[9] The author sees himself essentially as agnostic: "Being an agnostic without any prejudices, I may have become the loudest voice against religious fundamentalism and stupid beliefs in miracles, astrology, and that of hocus-focus.”[10]

Khushwant Singh inverts normal practices of relating history. Out of the nine historical chapters, seven are largely monologues of ordinary

men. To suit their stature, he applies 'We' for kings like Taimur, Aurangzeb, Nadir Shah and Bahadur Shah Zafar, whereas 'I' for commoners like Musaddi Lal.

The scenes change frequently which results in a Kaleidoscope – a multi dimensional word picture. Anita Singh says that the narrative mode of the novel builds up the assumptions, cultural moorings, sexual taboos and fetishes. The novel embraces a large number of autonomous, dissonant voices. Travelling in time, space and history the narrator, a Sikh in the novel discovers his beloved city Delhi. The novel begins with a very unusual analogy where Delhi is compared to a *hijda*. Khushwant Singh remarks: "I have two passions in my life; my city Delhi and Bhagmati. They have two things in common: they are lots of fun. And they are sterile."[11]

Bhagmati, the *hijda* in the novel indicates the hollowness prevailing among the higher strata of life. The author gives the reason in an interview for making a *hijra,* the symbol for Delhi:

> The *hijra* stands for a symbol of sterility. It can never conceive and I thought this was a wonderful symbol for a city in which too much has happened like a sexual intercourse that repeats itself. With Delhi all that has happened to it in the way of violence, in the way of change of dynasties, it has still not produced anything as great as one would have expected of it.[12]

As Anita Singh says that Delhi is a site /text/persona that assumes multiple identities. As a writer of the past, Khushwant Singh writes not from the perspective of the present but with a judicious perception and perspective of the past: "…the historian and the novelist also share the narrative space of textuality."[13] The story of Delhi that Khushwant Singh delineates in the novel has been aptly summarised by the well-known historian Percival Spear in 1951:

> The story of Delhi during these years is not one of weaklings or mountebanks, creeping amidst deceit and subterfuge, but of strong men lusting for power. It is a story of men throwing away successively in the heat of that passion everything that could make that power worth having, and mutually squandering the resources for which they were all contending. The nemesis of these men was the nemesis not of weakness but of strength unallied to principle, not of idealism but of power politics.[14]

It is important to observe that Khushwant Singh reveals every historical personage with his or her own personal as well as communal biases and ascertains that the story does not suffer any kind of communal generalisation in their hands. All the episodes of history are narrated in the first person by the protagonist to give the narration the strength of authenticity.

Beginning with Balban in the thirteenth century, the novel *Delhi* traces the lives of some people who have participated in the major historical forces that have shaped Delhi. The first story narrated by Musaddi Lal, a Hindu Kayastha, who lived during the reign of Sultan Ghiasuddin Balban (AD 1265-AD 1287), shows how the narrator's attitude of tolerance towards both the principal faiths viz. Hinduism and Islam had earned him not just a dangerous notoriety among the Muslims but also invited some form of excommunication from his Hindu brethren. The novelist has adroitly depicted the exploitation of the religious sentiments of different communities by the rulers for their own selfish purposes. Politics has always been inexorably linked with religion as is seen in the chapter, "Musaddi Lal". The chapter is built around the framework of religion.

Rather than recalling the monarchs by their periods of reign or their victories in war, they are known for the monuments that they got built. Ulka Mayur says:

> Khushwant Singh's *Delhi* is not a story of a hero or of a dynasty or of some happening, but it is that of a city— a city which has been a capital of many dynasties, which has witnessed many turbulent times and like phoenix has regained life after getting almost perished. All this history lies frozen in the monuments built in their respective time.[15]

The idea is focused in the novel about how men who boast of creating buildings and structures die though the buildings that they erect are immortal. The remnants of these buildings speak of history and so function as narrators.

> My ancestors had been scribes in the service of the rulers of Delhi. They had served Raja Anangpal, the Tomara Rajput, who built Lal Kot and planted the sacred iron pillar of Vishnu Bhagwan in the middle of the city. They had also served Raja Prithvi Raj Chauhan who renamed the city Qila Rai Pithora.... My great grandfather served under sultan Qutubuddin Aibak and with his own eyes saw the destruction of Hindu and Jain temples, the building of the Jamia Masjid later called Quwwat-ul-Islam on their ruins and the beginnings of the tower of the victory, the Qutub Minar. My grand father served under Qutubuddin's son-in - law and successor Sultan Altmash. Like a common laborer he dug the earth for the Shamsi Talab at the site where the Sultan had seen the footprints of the Holy Prophet's horse, Buraq, and carried stones on his head to build the mausoleum of the Saint Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. (50)

The bias amongst the different religious communities was present throughout the history of India. Being highly satirical about religious fanaticism that provokes people to insult other religion, Khushwant

Singh shows how even architecture is employed in asserting one's religious identity and destroying the others. Musaddi Lal in his narrative says:

> We came down and I took her towards the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. I explained to her how the Turks had demolished twenty–seven Hindu and Jain temples and buried the idols of Vishnu and Lakshmi beneath the entrance gate so that Muslims going in to pray could trample on them. (53)

Khushwant Singh's use of architecture becomes a brilliant tool for narrating some aspects of history. The author gives the minutest details while reconstructing Delhi. In this context, we can refer to Musaddi Lal's narrative wherein he says:

> One morning I took Ram Dulari to see the Qutub Minar. We climbed up to the first storey and I pointed out the mausoleum of the Saint Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, the Aulia Masjid alongside the Shamsi Talab, our own little home on the otherside. And right below us the tomb of Sultan Altamash. I showed her the slab on which a Hindu stone mason had inscribed Sri *Visvakarme Prasade Rachita* and stuck it into this Muslim tower of victory. (53)

Singh's approach to the history of Delhi is totally new. The

general beliefs about various accuracies and personalities are put in an overturned state. As we find in Musaddi Lal's case when he has something different to say:

> Nobody really knows the truth about this Prithvi Raj. A poet fellow named Chand Bardai had made a big song-and-dance about him. This great hero Prithvi Raj married lots of women and even abducted the daughter of a neighbouring raja. But you could not say a word against him to the Hindus. Next to Sri Ramchandraji, it was Samrat Prithvi Raj Chauhan who they worshipped. (54-50)

Musaddi Lal's beliefs cost him his community space. The vehemence of religion is voiced in the book, people of other religion are looked down upon; Hindus are called infidels, Kafirs, desecration of Hindu temples and murders of Hindus are justified. Singh's ideas are voiced by Musaddi Lal who begins his account of the thirteenth century court and society with the names of Allah: "May Ishwar who is also Allah, and Rama who is also Rahim, bear witness that what I have written is true, that nothing has been concealed or omitted"(50). The novel focuses the point that people who belonged to the religion of their ruler, were always in a better position as compared to those belonging to a different religion. Those who attempted to be a part of both, like Musaddi Lal were worse off but the times are not devoid of saviours.

Nizamuddin stands as a pillar of sanity amidst the prevailing frenzy of bigotry. In the novel he pronounces; "Kings come and Kings go. The will of Allah is eternal"(82).

The Oxford History of India records the saintly greatness of Nizamuddin and the like who have won the hearts of masses among Hindus and help spread Islam in India. The tone changes along with the mood. It is a change from sensual to sublimity. Nizamuddin was a highly learned Sufi saint who made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. There is an undercurrent of philosophy of Sufism in the novel. Khwaja Nizamuddin's message highlights the message of the novel itself:

> There is only one God though we call Him by different names. There are innumerable ways of approaching Him. Let everyone follow the way he thinks best for him. His path may lead to the mosque or the tabernacle, to a temple full of idols or to a solitary cave in the wilderness. What path you take is not important; what is important is the manner in which you tread it. If you have no love in your heart then the best path will lead you into the maze of deception. (67)

In spite of various references to religion, the novel does not become a treatise on religion. The fiction writer has written of some unbelievable incidents to reveal the intense faith people in those days had

in their guru. During the reign of Allauddin Khilji, the summer had reached a peak. People and cattle began dying, and there was danger of a famine. But Khwaja Sahib prevented it. Though there had been no rain all through the monsoon season, in autumn the Auliya's prayers brought about rain. It was this kind of faith that sustained people in those days through the difficult time in their life, as it did Musaddi Lal and his family. It is also noticeable in the novel that partisan actions on the part of successive rulers were in a large measure responsible for fostering mutual antagonism between the different communities. Kings irrespective of their personal relationships also followed such a discriminating policy. Ghiasuddin Tughlaq and his son were married into a Hindu noble family. Yet they behaved cruelly and unjustly towards their Hindu subjects.

Delhi is a discourse based on history. *Delhi* is certainly not only an account of kings and courtiers or of heroes who are supposed to have made history. In the novel, the novelist is trying to portray the picture of the society of those days. Through Musaddi Lal's story, Singh asserts that any period of history is not consistently crude if not consistently kind.

Varied and diverse relationships are depicted in this novel. We can take an example of the homosexual relationship between Qutubuddin Mubarakshah and Khusrau Khan and the relationship between the

narrator and Bhagmati, a *hijda*. The latter is the consistent relationship throughout the novel, because the semi-historical novels have different characters depending upon the particular period of history that is being depicted. Apart from the strange relationship between the narrator, Khushwant Singh and Bhagmati, depicted in the "Bhagmati" chapters, the novel reveals other various kinds of relationships. The narrator gets a call from his friend who is the secretary in the ministry of education. He asks the narrator to act as a guide to the lady who is a renowned archeologist. The narrator perhaps tries to get intimate with her. They spend the day in exploring Tilpat and the banks of the Yamuna. The narrator tells her of the story of the Pandavas and the myths surrounding the river Yamuna. They also discuss the Tomara Rajputs. The narrator's behaviour towards the lady is peculiar. It seems unbelievable that an archaeo who has come for some serious work would behave in such an amorous way. The narrator has relationship with a woman named Kamala. She also wanted to write a book on Delhi. They discussed the history behind the monuments. They also make love to each other. She asks him to tell her about Aurangzeb. This serves as a prelude to the next chapter, "Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan." But it is evident that the narrator is only interested in the physical aspect of the relationship and infact, one can assume that both of them were in it for

casual sex. All women who met the narrator seem quite irrelevant to the narrative structure. It is only his relationship with Kamala which serves as a prelude to the next chapter. May be the narrator is shown as a bawdy and licentious person to provide a contrast to the serious note that prevails in the semi-historical chapters. Perhaps the libidinous episodes have a deeper meaning. Since Bhagmati signifies Delhi, may be the other women denote different places, even foreign ones. The narrator finds fulfillment only in the arms of Bhagmati. In the company of the other women, he is unable to attain completeness which denotes that Delhi is an integral part of his psyche the way no other place can be.

The semi-historical chapters too portray different kinds of relationships. The chapter "Musaddi Lal" depicts an unusual relationship between Musaddi Lal and his wife. There is also the relationship of vast multitudes of people with Khwaja Nizamuddin and the mutual relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims. And since he remains a Hindu, he has an uneasy relationship with Turks throughout his life. He realises that he belongs neither to the Hindus nor to the Muslims. He is disowned by the Hindus and exploited by the Muslims who otherwise disdain his company. His wife, Ram Dulari refuses to cohabit with him considering him to be a *maleecha*. This state brings about his association with the highly revered Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia. Ram Dulari is

greatly influenced by him. In the novel, we also find that due to their belief in the Sufi Saint Nizamuddin, Musaddi Lal and his wife become members of a community, which celebrated both Hindu and Muslim festivals. When Allauddin Khilji became the emperor, the situation changed from bad to worse. He set about despoiling Hindu Kingdoms. In such conditions Hindus like Musaddi Lal had to adopt Muslim ways and life became more difficult for him. When some Mussulmans treated him unkindly, he sought refuge in the hospice of Nizamuddin at Ghiaspur. Nevertheless, he was still treated contemptuously by Hindus and Muslims alike. This reveals the antagonistic relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims from the earliest times. This was further aggravated by the rulers who favoured only those belonging to their own religion. In such a situation, religious men acquired a great deal of importance in providing sustenance to vast population of disappointed people. Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia assumed great prominence during this time period in the history of India: "Nizamuddin was our umbrella against the burning sun of Muslim bigotry and the downpour of Hindu contempt." (62). A similar situation is seen in the chapter, "The Untouchables." Here the Rangretas are the most backward people of society. They are also shunned by everybody. They also seek after Guru Nanak's help: "I said to myself, 'At least I am something— a Sikh of

Guru Nanak. I do not know what it means but it is better than being nothing but a Rangreta untouchable' " (127). These instances reveal the habit of the discriminated citizens to establish a relationship with highly accomplished spiritual persons.

A most strange relationship described in this chapter is that between Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah, the Emperor of Hindustan and Khusrau Khan, a Hindu Pawar boy captured during an expedition to Gujarat. The Sultan's infatuation towards him was so intense that he neglected all the beautiful women of his harem. One evening the Sultan adorned himself like a Turkish bride, and the Pawar rode into a palace as a Rajput bridegroom. The two were married by Hindu rites. On the wedding night the Pawar boy motivated by the ambition to become the ruler, beheaded the Sultan and proclaimed himself the emperor. He announced that he had executed the Sultan because the people did not want to be ruled by a degenerate travestite. This unnatural relationship indicates more than anything else the disbalanced priorities of the emperor of Hindustan. Instead of concentrating his energies in ruling the country, he was more concerned about his own physical pleasure.

Singh fills his narrative with some sexual episode, thereby giving the impression that there is always an undercurrent of sex in every history. The kings have concubines, the conquerors have captive

damsels, the guides have the bored wives of diplomats and spinsters and the common man has the city prostitutes.

The architecture helps historical figures to step in the novel. The author- narrator's visit to Hauz Khas, the old madrasa and Hauz-i-Alai, a huge tank dug by Sultan Alauddin Khilji suddenly reminds him of Taimur's advent and his cruelty: "I see the scenes of horror which must have taken place around Hauz-i-Alai during the massacre.... The Mongolian shadow of God on earth enjoying the scene from somewhere near where I am sitting"(92). The author attempts to enter into an argument on Taimur's invasion against India. It is aptly suggested that behind the facade of holy wars, there lies the question of personal ambitions and interests which are given precedence always. When Taimur was sixty-two years of age he had strange dream. This was interpreted by his two accomplished saints to signify that he should go forth and invade the kingdom of Hindustan in order to propagate Islam. Taimur's ability as a diplomat and his understanding of human nature is revealed in the manner in which he convinces his nobles to support him:

> We told them that our object in undertaking the invasion of Hindustan was to bring infidels to the path of true religion and to purify the country from the filth of polytheism and idolatry.... if victorious they would gain renown as warriors who had carried the flag of Islam to the farthest horizons of

> earth; If subdued they would gain admittance to paradise as martyrs. We told them of the enormous wealth of Hindustan.... The minds of Turks are as narrow as their eyes. In order to gain their support and to tie up their tongues, it is necessary not only to excite their zeal for Islam but also their greed for gold. We reminded them that as in the past whatever had fallen into our lap after a victorious campaign we had divided amongst them without keeping anything for ourselves, so would we divide the gold, silver, cattle and slaves that fell into our hands.... (96-97)

It is also made clear that most of the rulers and the people, irrespective of their religious affiliations, are simply men of their times only. The principal narrator—a Sikh who appears intermittently between every story and is in some senses Khushwant Singh's mouthpiece in the novel, rages at Taimur's massacre of some 50,000 citizens of Delhi. The narrator searches into Taimur's mind for the motives that spurred him to loot and kill, and discovers how power pursuits were shrewdly mixed with religious crusades during his times. History has always been read from the points of view of the sufferers at the hands of these tyrants, but reversing this trend, the fiction writer allows these monarchs to speak for themselves, wherein they try to justify their actions and attempt to prove that they were religious crusaders and not cruel human beings. Taimur who committed ghastly crimes of slaying thousands of people narrates it

as if he was compelled to do so. Each such invader seems to have his own explanation or even justification of the unlawful actions : “In order to preserve our sovereignty, we took justice in one hand and equity in the other and by the light of these two lamps kept our royal palace illuminated” (102).

By so showing Taimur, the narrator is not passing judgement on him but contrary to it, for all his shrewdness, Taimur himself had fallen prey to this deception. We have Taimur reasoning these crimes. He concludes as if he has been the most just, religious and generous ruler.

> "We received sad tidings from Delhi. We were informed that after our departure there was no one to bury the dead.... But we had fulfilled our life's mission. We had realised early in our youth that just as there is one God in heaven, so the earth can support only one king.... May Allah forgive us for any sins we may have committed."(101-102)

In spite of Taimur’s carefully chosen words, his crimes become obvious. The guilt that he could not mitigate for a lifetime is brought out. After all the blood letting, he is portrayed as seeking divine pardon by simply lip servicing the prayer. The monologues are psychological studies of characters. So is the case with Khushwant Singh’s protagonists.In this sense, Khushwant Singh’s monologues, specially those of Taimur, Aurangzeb and Nadir Shah are quite Browningsque.

In the novel, Taimur is revealed arrogating to himself the right to act on behalf of Allah, Taimur had believed Allah to be on his side rather than the other way around. He is himself not sure whether he had rightly done so. Here, the novelist points out that any secular historical discourse must fulfill the principle of contradiction. Khushwant Singh demonstrates through the life of Taimur that desires for wealth and power can be fulfilled by religious sanction. This pulls down those myths that have nourished sectarian histories. History for him is a mixture of complex forces and aspirations. In using the first-person narrative, the writer makes certain that there is no authorial intrusion. He does not pass any moralistic judgments.

The semi-fictitious, semi-historical novel has a great deal of autobiographical content in it. According to the structure of the novel there are chapters on Delhi, alternating with chapters depicting modern day Delhi. The chapters focusing on modern day Delhi are entitled "Bhagmati." The narrator of these chapters is a thinly disguised Khushwant Singh himself. In fact, the narrator is given the name Mr. Singh. And these chapters represent Singh's personal ideas and opinions. The author has been an observer of several events that have shaped Delhi. There are some quasi-historical chapters in which the narrator appears to be speaking in Khushwant Singh's voice. The point that Singh

makes clear is that one has to go beyond the surface appearance in order to appreciate the beauty of Delhi. He substantiates this by bringing in the fictitious Bhagmati, who though outwardly repulsive has several redeeming qualities.

A few other fictitious characters are introduced in these chapter like: Budh Singh, the watchman, Lady Hoity-Toity, and the coffee-house cronies of the narrator. These are set against the real backdrop of the prime ministership of Nehru, the anti-china demonstrations, the Janpath, the Mugal city hall, the mosque of Zeenat Mahal etc. The first chapter is a fascinating amalgamation of the sordid and the beautiful, which is what Delhi is all about. The second chapter entitled, "Lady J.H.T." also has several autobiographical elements. Here Khushwant Singh presents an almost personal account of the rural country side of Delhi, the village Tilpat and Surajkund: "A jeepload of Sikhs armed with rifles and shotguns comes zig-zagging through the bushes. 'Sardarji, did you see a herd of deer go by?'"(18). This seems to be an account from his personal life.

The autobiographical note can be perceived in the narrator's knowledge about Delhi. The roads, the buildings and the historical sites of Mehrauli comprising of Qutub Minar, Aulia Masjid, Shamsi Talab and Jahaz Mahal are completely authentic. In the chapter, "Musaddi Lal" it

appears that it is Khushwant Singh who is speaking rather than the narrator for instance, Musaddi Lal says:

> The Muslims had conquered Hindustan. Why hadn't our gods saved us from them? There was that Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni who had invaded Hindustan seventeen times.... They said that even the sea prostrated itself twice every twenty-four hours to touch the feet of Somnath. But even the sea did not rise to save Somnathji from Mahmud.... The Hindus lived on the stale diet of past glory. At every gathering they talked of the great days of the Tomaras and Chauhans. (53-54)

The above passage indicates the novelist's own view that one should live in the present and endeavor to improve it, instead of thinking about the past glories. And religion should not consist of futile idol-worship and the performance of rituals.

In the fifth chapter "Bhagmati", the author draws upon his personal knowledge to give an account of the ancient and the modern in present-day Delhi: "We take the Qutub road. Past the mausoleum of Safdar Jang, through the rash of bungalows that have smothered Yusuf Sarai and all the Khilji, Tughlak and Mughal monuments that once dominated the landscape" (87).

It is clear that the novelist must have spent considerable time in exploring Delhi, particularly its ancient monuments. One can see the avenue of ancient banyans that lead to the arched gateway opening into the citadel of Tughlakabad, on the right side of it the tomb of Ghiasuddin Tughlak which is red and white-marbled dome. At another time the narrator finds himself at Hauz Khas facing the tomb of Firoz Shah Tughlak, and the Hauz-i-Alai, the tank dug by Alauddin Khilji for providing water to the new city of Siri.The narrator sits here dreaming about the time when Taimur had massacred thousands at this very place. One may guess that it must have been during one of Khushwant Singh's numerous visits to places like these that must have led to the genesis of the novel, *Delhi.* Singh admits this himself: "Scenes from the past come vividly before my eyes. I wonder what kind of savage was this Taimur who revelled in the massacre of innocents! I have his *Memoirs*. To his own words, I add some gloss" (94). The narrator is savagely bitten by a number of bees. He gets the doctor's attention by talking in his Oxbridge accent: "English works like magic in independent India" (93). Here, we find no demarcation between the narrator and Khushwant Singh.

The chapter “The Untouchables” brings to light some of the lesser known aspects of Sikh religion. No doubt Singh's considerable knowledge in the field of Sikhism helped him to shape this chapter. This piece of the novel brings us to notice that the city of Delhi has a variety

of castes and communities living there. The writer presents a realistic picture of the city of the Mughal period. He describes the reign of the Mughal ruler Shahjahan as viewed by an untouchable. *Delhi* casts a glaring light on the Badshahs like Jahangir and Shahjahan. An autobiographical version of the Mughal Badshah Shahjahan is depicted by an untouchable. The rulers of Delhi were no less bigoted. One tyrant replaced another tyrant. The rule of the Afghans, the Gujjars, the Iranians, the Marathas, the Jats, the Mughals and the Khiljis was one of bloodshed with the events of fratricides, incest and even homosexuality. They prided themselves on the strength of their loins rather than their ability to administer. Shahjahan is paid this compliment. The building of the Taj Mahal- one of the wonders of the world is described in a very matter-of-fact manner. Taj Mahal is considered to be an emblem of love and Shahjahan, a great lover. So it is interesting to note the way Jaita Rangreta, an untouchable looks upon this:

> …like his father, grandfather and great-grandfather and others before them, this badshah also liked women. His favourite was a queen whom he kept pregnant from the day he married her. In the fourteen years they were married she had fourteen sons and daughters. She couldn't take any more and died giving birth to her fourteenth child. The badshah was so sad that he decided to make the biggest and most beautiful grave over her body…. It took over twenty

> years to make. People who came from Agra said it was higher than our Qutub Minar and much more beautiful than the tomb of Badshah Humayun at Arab-ki-Sarai. (125)

This is in fact the history of the most beautiful monument in India—The Taj Mahal, built to enshrine the memory of Shah Jahan's queen Mumtaz Mahal. Qutub Minar appears in the novel almost like a recurrent metaphor. For Taimur, it is a wonderful piece of craftsmanship and so the emperor decides "to take their master craftsmen with us to work on the mosque at Samarkand"(100).

In describing the political happenings of the period, Khushwant Singh does not overlook the social realities of that era. In presenting a realistic picture of this variety, Singh describes the reign of the Mughal ruler Shahjahan as viewed by an untouchable who realises that:

> We untouchables were the poorest of the poor. No one did anything to us except run away if we came near them. That, said my *Bapu,* was also a kind of *zulum*. It was in our *karma*. We had done bad things in our previous births. That is why we were born black and had to do all the dirty work. (123)

The helpless untouchable is forced to take an employment in the executioner's yard:

> This was really dirty work: first I had to get used to seeing a man's head being hacked off; then see his arms legs cut off. After this had happened it was my job to put the pieces together and lay them out for the people to see.... Every evening there were atleast three to four unclaimed corpses to be carted off and dumped in the river or on the garbage mound. (127)

The untouchables attached themselves to the feet of the Guru after having been discriminated from others. They began calling themselves the Sikhs of the Guru Nanak. This is similar to the lower castes adopting Christianity later on. There was a commercial aspect to becoming a Sikh as well. Jaita was told that he had to pay a certain amount of money for his father's soul and for the accession of the new Guru. Singh has not hesitated in writing about this somewhat demeaning aspect about his own community. This is the revelation of his objectivity as a writer.

A feature in the novelist's conception of historical narrative in the novel is the use of different personae. The stance and tone vary according to the insider/outsider perspective. In this chapter, the particular belief of the Muslim conquerors can be perceived. According to the Muslim conquerors, they were determined to show everyone "which is mightier, the sword of Islam or the neck of an infidel!" (134). The old tradition of passing on stories from one generation to another is

brought about by the writer as the untouchable narrator says: “My babu says...”

The angle of vision shifts alternately from the extreme to the moderate; from the native to the alien. The loss of the city is always highlighted by Singh. It is the silent victim whose cause is always protected by him. In the episode of Banda Bairagi, one can notice the spreading of Sikh religion among the lower classes of society of Delhi, and in what manner this Bairagi has helped the lower classes develop self-esteem. But in the eyes of history, Banda Bairagi remains an "imposter"[16] only.

Hearing the narrator's clearly expressed rendering of the execution of Banda Bairagi, Kamla Gupta, a bored wife of a brigadier comes to a belief that the narrator must be a Muslim-hater. To make her free from suspicion, the narrator has to give the details of that very history. He tells her forcefully that he does not hate Muslims and that "Banda had slaughtered them by the thousands before they caught him and his band" (140). He summarizes it: “Those were savage times” (140). Kamala is still unconvinced and asks the narrator whether he likes Muslims. At this he replies: “Most of my friends are Muslims, not Hindus or Sikhs” (140). For a third time, when narrator is asked whether he could possibly like someone like Aurangzeb—a man who, in Kamala’s estimation**,** "killed

his brothers and nephews and put his father in prison. He destroyed Hindu temples and had one of your Gurus executed" (140). The narrator fails to convince Kamala and says: “My dear young lady, you've been properly brainwashed! You’ve never been told that this Aurangzeb also gave grants to build Hindu and Sikh temples” (140). Such a piece of information against the facts that Kamala cherishes is meant to be a blow to those who judge a Historical personage from reportage alone. Singh gives history the human voice. Khushwant Singh does not treat history as a thing of the past, but linked to the present. He produces history not as one whole single document but reconstructs in episodes.

Probably, no other city in the world has innumerable associations, as Delhi has. Each stone of Delhi has layers of revelations. Khushwant Singh rightly says: "Since Delhi has more ghosts than any other city in the world, life in Delhi can be one long nightmare. I have never seen a ghost nor do I believe they exist. Nevertheless for me they are real" (164).

It is a common feature of *Delhi* to have a narrator. For each chapter, there is a new narrator. The fiction writer presents Aurangzeb here as a lonely voice crying out for recognition. His claim to fame depends on his firm faith that he was only obeying the voice of his master:

> In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful and in the name of His messenger, the Refuge of the World, I, Abdul Muzaffar Mohiuddin Mohammed, on whom Allah in His Divine wisdom bestowed the sovereignty of the Empire of Hindustan, pen this brief account...of his reign. I do this so that Allah who is just will punish those who have transgressed against truth in writing about me. (144)

In the chapter, "Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan" Singh has put forth Aurangzeb's point of view for he believes that the Emperor has been wrongly represented by most historians. The entire chapter denotes that Aurangzeb was an extremely pious man and the guiding force in his life was his intense faith in God. It seems that most great rulers were motivated by their firm faith in their religion. Aurangzeb believed that since Allah had given him birth in the dynasty of kings, it was his duty to serve humanity and to spread Islam. He remained a devout Muslim even in the face of all kinds of accusations and temptations:

> Misguided historians have written many falsehoods about the way we came to acquire sovereignty over Hindustan while our father Emperor Shahjahan was still alive. They have maligned our name as a scheming self-seeker and a plotter. They forget that the holy book says; 'God is the

> best of plotters'. We were but the instruments of His design. (151)

Aurangzeb sets out to justify his murder of his brothers, deposing an imprisonment of his father and harassment of Hindus: "Allah who knows the innermost secrets of our hearts knew that we had no thought of royalty when we responded to Murad's request to join him on the march to Agra...from falling into the hands of enemy of Islam like Dara Shikoh (153-154).

An unrepentant Aurangzeb reminded his father that he too had disposed of his kin and had then ascended the throne and that kingship meant protection of the realm and the people and not self-indulgence. Shahjahan at that age was still enjoying wine and carousal: "To put an end to this pointless dialogue we wrote: 'If God had not approved of my enterprise how could I have gained victories which are only the gift of God?' "(158).

The novelist delineates the spine-chilling acts of horror that have been committed in history. He is not biased while revealing the historical point of view. The novelist has tried to put across Aurangzeb's point of view regarding the criticisms he has faced at the hands of chroniclers of history. However, this does not justify the forcing of his beliefs upon people of another faith, and the execution of their leaders and gurus.

Singh ably visualizes the penitent Aurangzeb in his death-bed when he is sad not because of the fast approaching death, but with impending dismantling of his empire. With the sense of unfulfillment he says:

> I came alone and I go as a stranger. I do not know who I am, nor what I have been doing. The instant which has passed in power has left only sorrow behind it.... Life, so valuable, has been squandered in vain.... I fear for my salvation, I fear for my punishment. I believe in God's bounty, but I am afraid because of what I have done. (162)

In Singh's view, the rulers of Delhi except the viceroys were either murderers or fornicators or both. Aurangzeb was a man for whom the Kingdom took precedence over everything else. But he could not remain untouched by love. The stories of the Sultan's infatuation with Hira Bai, spread everywhere. This liasion reveals the power of love. If Hira Bai had not died so young, she would perhaps have been a moderating influence in his life, and prevented Aurangzeb from becoming a fanatic. The effect of Noor Bai on Nadir Shah is similar to the previous effect. In this chapter we see how much influence this Noor Bai and Hakeem Alavi Khan have on the emperor,

> There were only two people with whom we left some of our heart. One was the sharp-tongued Hakeem Alavi Khan and the other the saucy Noor Bai. An Emperor may command

> anything within his empire except an honest man and a woman's heart. We could have forced both to accompany us but we knew that the old man would not be able to make the journey and Noor Bai would have cried all the time. We realized that we could take her body with us, but her heart would remain behind in Delhi. And what is a woman's body worth if her heart not be in it! We loaded the *hakeem* with presents and gave Noor Bai her weight in gold and bade them and the city of Delhi farewell.(192)

In the above passage we find that there was a humane person underneath the tough Nadir Shah. It is obvious from the examples that the writer's attitude to historical institutions is not reverent. He highlights the sorry aspects of history rather than the glorious. Khushwant Singh also describes that the monarchs who ruled over India through the centuries spent all their time indulging in wine and women. This, through the successive generations became a habit and a weakness. There was another factor which gave foreigners the chance to hold Hindustan. All the monarchs came upon the throne after slaying their own brothers, fathers and other male heirs. After coming to power they were incapable to lessen the sufferings of the common man. The Mughals were the descendants of Taimur and Babar. But they ended up being defeated by outsiders – Mohammad Shah by Nadir Shah, and Bahadur Shah Zafar by

the British. History was repeating itself, and they were conquered just as their own ancestors. The chapter, "Nadir Shah" also reveals the role that Islam played in his invasion of India. This brings to notice the incursion of Taimur. At one place Nadir Shah said to himself:

> ...but we will not allow an Islamic kingdom to be despoiled by heathens just because it has the misfortune to be ruled over by a man who thinks that paradise is a garden where fountains spout grape juice and common harlots are as bewitching as houris…we would soon be taking the road to Delhi to put the House of the Mughals in order and to restore the Kingdom of Hindustan to Islam.(171)

The one common factor that allowed these invaders to emerge victorious was their cunningness in the field of battle. The Indians lacked a proper military strategy. Once their weakness in battle was exposed, the soldiers would flee. Nadir Shah has his own assessment of the people of India or in particular Delhi:

> They were cunning in the way they had invited us to come to their help. They were double-faced in the way they continued to protest their loyalty to their monarch and to us till they were sure who was going to be victorious. We had seen how timid they were in the field of battle and how abject in the hour of defeat. We had suffered their florid

> speeches in which they concealed insinuations under a sugar-coating of flattery. We saw how violent they could be when they came in large numbers upon a few unsuspecting soldiers. And now that the angel of death hovered over them they were as supine as flock of sheep. (185-186)

The illustrations of personal reflection, historical information and anecdotes uncover the history in full. The novelist focuses on the most gruesome chapter in the history of Delhi, Nadir shah 'The angel of death'(186). Nadir Shah showered his anger over Delhi like rain of fire. The loot and plunder of Nadir shah is described in his own words:

> Those who remonstrated were brought before us. We had them flogged in front of their kinsmen...their women stripped naked. Many, unable to face themselves after the chastisement they had received, ended their miserable existence with their own hands. Gold and silver and precious stones flowed into our treasury as the waters of Oxus flows into the sea. (187)

Gold, Silver and precious stones flowed into his treasury so much so that he proclaimed that there would be no taxes levied upon Iranian subjects for the next three years. "With the spear of Islam we had pierced the heart of the land of infidels and sent thousands of idolaters to hell; we had served Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him)" (187).

The results of both the invasions by Taimur and Nadir Shah were disastrous. In the novel the explanation of the invasion, the killing of innocents and the looting in the name of Allah sounds quite hollow. How can a religion direct a king to loot another kingdom in order to fill the coffers of his own country? Khushwant Singh has also put forth Nadir Shah's motivation in invading India. Nadir Shah certainly believed in the justness of his act, but it seems that he was fulfilling his own secret motives pretending religious motives. After the plunder by Nadir Shah, Delhi became a wasteland where gangs of Rohillas, Marathas, Jats and Sikhs troubled greatly the people.

It is strange that both the invaders had invaded India in the name of Islam. This when the current rulers of India were themselves Muslims and the believers of Islam. Religion was used as a tool for acquiring wealth and riches. India was never the same after Nadir Shah left. His successor Ahmad Shah Abdali undoubtedly also invaded India. He was motivated by the wealth Nadir Shah had taken with him. And finally all the anarchy paved the way for the British. The novelist subtly satirizes corruption of religion. Nadir Shah's observation in this sense is noticeable: "We later learnt that Roshan-ud-Daulah was a notorious bribe taker. As in Iran, so in Hindustan money makers were also the builders of mosques" (176). The author also realises that our ancient rulers

expected *nazrana* from their subjects. Their subedars charged the common folk for too much money and extracted gifts from them. During the reign of Aurangzeb, Khafi Khan was a revenue collector. He comments that a swineherd has a higher morality than a revenue collector.

The significance of religion is voiced by many characters. Meer describes Sikhs as being 'the lowest and the worst of elements of society'(229) and further says: "What worse fate could befall a beautiful city then it become the abode of savages!"(229). The Christians are called *nasaras* and the Muslims are labelled *maleechas*.

The pages of the history of *Delhi* open a new chapter related to the poetry of Meer Taqi Meer for whom 'poetry was a feeling of ecstasy' (195). Meer's amorous involvement with Begum Sahiba, and his act of estranging with his own wife leaves an impression of human infidelity.

Singh strengthens the belief that the principle of peace was not an unfamiliar concept among our historical ancestors. The English and Indian characters are strikingly used by Khushwant Singh to counter-pose and juxtapose the Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian attitudes that inform the respective perspectives. This technique is subtly employed when the novel deals with the 1857 mutiny and its aftermath. In the year of 1857, the year of First War of Independence along with all its political

intrigues, Delhi finds itself in a new situation. In the episodes of “Alice-Aldwell”, “Bahadur Shah Zafar", and “Nihal Singh” the inherent evil in man is focused upon. During this period all sections of the people including Europeans have suffered. There is first the story of Alice Aldwell. We find that hers is a harrowing tale of the insults and cruel deaths that the Whites were subjected to. The novelist’s selection of narrators to describe 1857 mutiny is astonishing.

The historical novelist gives vivid details of licentious relationships. The sex instinct and sex exploitation are shown as part of life irrespective of caste or creed or religion. Alice’s conscious effort to get her husband reinstated through George Atkin, and the latter’s attempt to exploit her, brings every human to the very level of the most ordinary person. Alice Aldwell alias Ayesha Bano Begum’s experiences with the Nawab Sahib and hijda are self-revealing as they expose the national character where faith and character have no importance. Alice, the English lady becomes Singh's mouthpiece. The parties of the English, the Muslim Zanana and the exchange of gifts between the rulers and the ruled, substantiate the very foundation of the details. Contempt towards the firangi could be felt. The chapter "1857" reveals Alice Aldwell, an Anglo Indian woman who hides the fact that she is only half-British. This is ironical because she and her children escape death after she admits her Indian roots and gets converted to Islam. Alice recites several verses from the Kuran and has her daughter recite the *Kalima*.

The grace of the Nawabs was at its decline and they passed their time with nothing else but inhuman licentiousness. One such example was Bahadur Shah Zafar, an ageing Mughul Badshah surviving on the thoughts of the past glories of Mughul empire who is declared to be the emperor of Hindustan by the mutineers, but is not given any authority and is more indulged in creating poetry and spending time with his favourite queen, Begum Zeenat Mahal. The old man could not contain himself even during the holy month of Ramzan. After the act he is supposed to have quoted the poet Hafiz to reassure his begum about his undying desire for her:

"I do not restrain desire
Until my desire is satisfied
or until my body touches hers,
or my soul from my body goes.
When I am dead, open my tomb,
You will see my heart on fire
And my shroud in smoke." (264)

The last lines attributed to the wretched emperor are,

With laughter we came,
With wailing we parted. (313)

This indeed is better than the regret attributed to the bigot Aurangzeb who thought that Allah had guided him in his fratricides. When faced with death Bahadur Shah wrote to Kam Baksh: "Every torment I have inflicted, every sin I have committed, every wrong I have

done, I carry its consequences with me. Strange that I came into the world with nothing, and now I am going away with this stupendous caravan of sin!" (162).

The writer highlights the sordidness of monarchy. For instance, if at one moment he suggests that Aurangzeb was a saintly ruler, then in the very next moment, he reveals his image opposite to the previous one by asking about the case of Hirabai, his mistress. Despite Singh's appreciation of the British administration, they are not spared the critical gaze that he lavishes on everyone. The description of the preparations for the grand and solemn Delhi *Durbar*, for instance, is not without its set of howlers. The writer gives the ludicrous detail about the British *durbar*. This trend in character is not confined to the British alone. Their sycophants, the Gorkhas, are steely fighters with practically no brain power: "A Gurkha's skull is made of iron and its inside is stuffed with cowdung. If the sahib says shoot your father, he will shoot his father and mother" (276). 'The father of the nation' too does not escape Singh's sardonic comments. Seen through the eyes of Ram Rakha, the depressed Hindu loyalist and R.S.S. ideologist, Babu is "the Old Fox"(369), "the enemy number one of the Hindus" (371).

Poetry flows throughout the novel. The epigraph to the novel is from a nenowned poet, Ghalib. Three poets–Ameer Khusrau, Meer Taqi

Meer and Bahadur Shah Zafar are present in the novel, thinking, writing and reciting poetry. There are many quotations from Shaikh Saadi, Hafiz and other Persian poets. Poetry is an active force in the novel. It is noteworthy that poetry in this novel is generally associated with those who were related to royalty in some way or the other. Poetry helps in capturing the medieval period.

Weakness became an inherent part of the psyche of successive rulers. In the chapter “1857” Singh shows the pathetic condition of Bahadur Shah Zafar. Delhi was losing her glory along with the decline of the Mughul Saltnat. Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughul Emperor witnessed the recession: "We remembered the days when it was encrusted with silver and gold leaf. Now even the plaster had peeled off in many places. We saw the marble columns and the empty sockets which once had been studded with ruby, amethyst, lapis lazuli and cornelian..."(261). The autumnal gale had blown through the garden of Delhi and uprooted every tree. How pensive might have been the soul of poet Zafar who explained: "This was Delhi, the queen of all the cities of the world now a ruined desolation. "O Zafar, what calamity has come to pass? Or is it that thy own youth hath fled? "(311). Even when the rebels after revolting against the British, proclaimed him as emperor, he was unable to take charge. There were several people who wanted to fight the *Jihad.* But nobody bothered to train them. The Revolt of 1857 was also

triggered as a result of religious fanaticism. Khushwant Singh has given an account of this in, “1857”.

> No one could oppress the poor as did the *firangi* because he even interfered with matters of faith. For him religion made no distinction between clean and unclean flesh. He was allowed to eat both cows and pigs. But what right had he to order our Hindu and Muslim soldiers to put cartridges smeared with the fat of cows and pigs in their mouths? Did we need more to prove that he meant to despoil both Islam and Hinduism and make everyone Christian? (267)

If on the one hand religion served to unite the Hindus and the Muslims on the other, it helped the British to fight the rebels as well. Sikhs were recruited in the British army and were told to fight the Mussulmans. The British also enlisted Pathans, Biloches and Punjabi Muslims in order to fight the Hindus on the rebel side. In this way the British were able to exploit religion to their advantage. The rebels also used religion in an attempt to incite the Indian soldiers to go against their British officers. To the Muslims soldiers they sent Muslim emissaries with the Quran and begged them to *Jihad* against the pig-eating *firangi*; Brahmins carrying *ganga* water in brass-pots were sent to convince the Sikhs to murder the cow-eating *maleechas.*

Khushwant Singh, the humanist comes to the fore and within this sordid situation a glimpse of heartening light is provided. This is when a

middle-aged Muslim jihadin is captured. The 1857 mutiny is a memorable one because of the secular message it holds. After taking a Muslim prostitute who had allied with the rebels, prisoner, Nihal Singh and his fellow soldiers proceed to have a good time with her before killing her as ordered by Hodson Sahib. Nihal Singh typifies the average Indian hirelings of both the British and native camps during those harrowing days. The woman requests them to allow her to offer *namaaz* and turns her face first to the right and then to the left and blesses people on either side. The thought behind it hits everyone and Nihal Singh asks for her forgiveness. He does this at the risk of losing his life. This is the triumph of humanity in the face of the most adverse circumstances. This discovery of one's real self, is something peculiar to some of Khushwant Singh's characters, and reminds us of Juggat Singh's case in *Train to Pakistan*. The fiction writer also reveals how the English took the advantage of the internal jealousy and conflict prevailing among the Muslims and the rulers. Finally Delhi became the property of the English. Thousands of men who witnessed the execution remained passive when their leaders had surrendered, the rebels had perhaps no choice, but to follow suit. Bahadur Shah, the last emperor of Mughul India is revealed as a truly generous human being. He faces his trials, subsequent imprisonment in his own fort and exile from the city with the calmness of mind. The novelist also describes about the citizens who were courageous enough to face the British even without proper arms or training, they were let down by their king. It was the lack of proper

leadership that resulted in the failure of the revolt. The British understood too well the importance of religion in India. They were prepared to exploit this for their own purposes. They enlisted Indians in their army to fight fellow Indians by preying upon their religious sentiments. The Sikhs were recruited in the British army and told that they were to fight the Mussulmans.

The Indians regarded the English as superior and so their mutual relationship has always been implicit. This is exemplified by the relationship between Nihal Singh and Hodson Sahib. Their relationship can be taken as being representative of the relation between Indian soldiers and their British officers. The slave mentality of Indians is brought about. Whereas the English officers did not really care for their Indian subordinates, the British were also able to exploit the antagonistic relationship between the Indians to their advantage during the revolt. For instance, the Sikhs were told that they were to fight the Hindus on the rebel side. After the suppression of the revolt, the English favored the Hindus and discriminated against the Muslims. This kind of exploitation served to further cause rift in the mutual relationship between the different communities of India.

The chapter, “The Builders” is based during the time period in the history of India when the genesis of the partition was laid. The Hindus were angry because they believed that it was done to further divide the

Hindus and the Muslims. At this time militant organizations were given importance in Maharashtra and Bengal. Terrorism broke out in several parts. The militants were inspired by Hinduism and alienated the Muslims from the Hindus. The English were quick to exploit this to their own advantage. The agitation achieved its objective as the partition of Bengal was revoked. The English spread propaganda to make this event appear as a concession to Hindu nationalism. As expected, the Muslim began to turn their backs on the Hindu Oriental Freedom Movement. Then England declared war on Germany. Thousands of Indians were recruited to fight in the War. World War I marked the zenith of Indian loyalty to Britain. As the War dragged on, the Indians secretly enjoyed the reverses suffered by the English. This reveals an aspect of the Indian attitude towards the British. Even those Indians who were loyal towards the English, enjoyed it when the English received a beating. In the chapter "The Builders", we are given details of Khushwant Singh's own family. In this part of the novel *Delhi* looks more autobiographical than fiction. Along with the progress in the building of the new capital of India, the writer has also given an account of the rise of Indian Nationalism. When Lord Reading came to India as the Viceroy, there was an agitation amongst the Sikhs to liberate the gurdwaras from hereditary priests. Gandhi and other Congress members were also

demanding selfrule. The Muslim Moplahs rose against Hindu money-lenders. Gandhi, Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru called for a boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales. Reading promptly jailed them. He then sent the army to crush the Moplahs. However, he was not able to stem the rising tide of Indian Nationalism. The Congress swept the polls in the 1923 elections and Motilal Nehru became the main spokesman in the Central Assembly. The new Viceroy Lord Irwin was friendly with the Nationalist leaders. It was believed that the English and the Indians would now work together as partners. But the Nationalists were themselves a divided lot. Some of them were willing to cooperate with the English. Others wanted to drive them out of India; by force if necessary. The narrator of this chapter, Sobha Singh is prejudiced in favour of the continuance of British rule. Contrary to the feeling of patriotism that pervaded among youngsters of 1920's and 30's, the narrator is all for British rule. When the charges are brought against the British he says: "There was no justice in India till the British came. There will be no justice in India after their impact has worn off…. Can you think of another race besides the British who would have put up with your Gandhis and Nehrus preaching sedition against them?" (345). Sardar Bahadur Singh in the last line, to a great extent Khushwant Singh's own ego, is certainly an Anglophile. He is totally clear about his

preference for the British. The chapter ends on a pessimistic note with the narrator enumerating the ills that sicken India. The poverty, the alarming increase in population, the all-pervasive corruption, due to which everyone: from the prime minister to the poorest-paid constable, has his price. The grim picture of a post-Emergency India can be felt through the following lines: "You will see much worse in the years to come. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists will go on killing each other in greater numbers. Your Gandhi and his *ahimsa* are as dead as …. as dead as .... Whatever the dead bird is called. 'Dodo'" (346). The novelist builds the image of the city of Delhi like an architect. Singh's ancestors were builders, so he has a special interest in architecture. The chapters reveals that the personal ambitions of the leaders have become more pronounced over the years. As the World War I dragged on, the Indian politicians began making more demands. Khushwant Singh refers to them as cowardly *Banias* here too, as he does in *Train to Pakistan*: "They were *Banias* and lawyers who had not raised their little fingers to help our fighting men but were the loudest in demanding more self-government which would give them greater privileges" (331). This has today resulted in the crises of leadership. In this chapter, the inherent contradictions in the attitude of the Congress leaders have also been revealed through the episode of the firing at the Congress members

during the Central Assembly. The boys, Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev, and Rajguru were arrested and hanged for the murder of an Anglo-Indian sergeant committed earlier. The Congress leaders talked of non-violence in one breath and supported political killings on the other. Religion also continues to remain an important part of politics and was exploited by the English. Corruption has become an accepted part of the business dealings. It was the presence of Indians like Khushwant Singh's father and grandfather that helped the English to carryout their architectural works.

Khushwant Singh has given descriptions of the havoc that was wrecked upon Delhi and India during the partition and the post- partition period. The arrangement of stories in the novel is perhaps intended to point out the increasing communalisation of society.

The chapter "The Dispossessed" is concerned with providing a glimpse into the genesis and rise of the militant Hindu organization, the *Rastriya Swayam Sewak Sangh* or the RSS. The writer has traced the growth of militant Hinduism in this chapter. He shows accurately how innocent young men are encouraged to become terrorists. The boys were stimulated to fight for their *Dharma;* cleanse *Bharat* of the unclean *Maleechas;* Mussulmans as well as Christians, who were foreigners and ate there sacred cow matter. They had taken possession of their women

and property. Muslim begin fleeing to Pakistan; their homes, properties and businesses are soon taken over. The secret agreement of the police force with such people is brought out. Looting and robbing are justified in the name of political ideology. This kind of dogma finally culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid. In an atmosphere where Gandhi fever is at high pitch the book incorporates the narrative of a man called Ram Rakha who accidentally becomes an R.S.S. worker. He calls Gandhiji's fasting 'a put-up show, a *tamasha'*(368). The story symbolises that communalism can be spread in India with ease. The Sangha believes that they have to fight the Mussulman-loving Hindus like Gandhi and Nehru; drive out the remaining Muslims to Pakistan. They regard Sardar Patel as their friend because he knows that they are patriotic citizens. Gandhiji's death comes as a great shock to Ram Rakha. His inverted point of view is aptly revealed by the writer: "My *bapu* is dead...I killed him with my own hands" (374). He regrets over his act of supporting Hindus after witnessing the assassination of Gandhi. The writer has also commemorated Nehru in one of the “Bhagmati” chapters. The satire is reflected when the president speaks about non-violence. Nehru is also criticized here, because of the terrible loss of life during the Partition, and during the wars with Pakistan and China. Another disastrous result of the close connection between religion and politics is seen in the last chapter “Bhagmati.” Khushwant Singh has thrown some light upon Sikh

militancy. He returned his Padma Bhushan as a protest following Operation Bluestar. He had always taken the storming of the temple as an error of judgement. The writer has held members of his own community responsible. The last chapter may be treated as an introduction into the brittle nature of our secular foundations. It is in the first person narrative. The chapter is narrated by the author-narrator himself. The narrator finds himself affected by the communal hatred when faced an event like the storming of the golden temple at Amritsar on the 5th of June, 1984 by the army. The narrator's secular standpoint is reflected after this episode: "A deep depression enters my soul. I ask myself over and over again, am I Sikh? I am certainly not the Bhindranwale brand nor the gurudwara Bhai brand. Bhindranwale was loonier than Budh Singh. I can not remember when I last went to a gurudwara. I have not prayed in fifty years" (384).

The glory of the Sikhs is also focused upon in the novel. The narrator is witness to one such chauvinistic event of history, when he hears the Bhai of the gurdwara say: "We Sikhs never forget or forgive. Remember what we did to the Afghans and to Massa Ranghar? We desecrated their mosques and cut off Massa's head. That's what some son of the Guru will do to these demons. You wait and see"(384). The narrator's reaction to the fiery speech exemplifies his commitment to peace and sanity. He says: "Great boasters, these Sikhs! They live in the

past and refuse to understand that in a civilized society you don't desecrate mosques or cut off people's heads"(384). The narrator criticizes Bhindranwale and the Sikh terrorists as 'one demented monk and his gang of armed goons!'(386). At the same time, he says that Indira Gandhi did a "stupid thing" (383) in launching Operation Bluestar. Khushwant Singh has put his own anguish into the descriptions because he was a witness to the very scenes. The attitude comes to the fore when the same Bhai of the gurdwara celebrates the death of Indira Gandhi. With his revulsion about what has happened the narrator slams the door in the Bhai's face and ponders to himself: "Celebrating the murder of a frail, little woman! What have the Sikhs come down to?"(386). *Delhi* ends with the victory shouts of Congress youth activists, their *'Boley So Nihal! Sat Sri Akal!'*(391) covering the death screams of half-witted Budh Singh. This certainly questions our secular consciousness. The true role of the administration and the Police in perpetuating the violence has been narrated by Singh in his bold and poignant style. The author refers to the assassination of Indira Gandhi, killing and burning of the Sikhs alive in Delhi, as if he refers to the times of Nadir Shah. The novel is as an attempt to oppose those discourses which are sectarian in their aims.

In Delhi the humour is bawdy and offensive sometimes. An instance is seen in a chapter dealing with Bhagmati. This is when Budh

Singh has been arrested on charges of eve teasing. The temporary madness that came over Budh Singh serves to add to the anarchy that prevailed in Delhi after Nadir Shah had left. It also acts as a precursor to Meer Taqi Meer's blind love for his beloved. In the novel, we find some other instances of a somewhat crude type of humour, again in one of the "Bhagmati" chapters. It is Republic day and everybody is excitedly preparing to go and see the parade. The narrator on the contrary is not interested in going and awaits Bhagmati to "celebrate *gantantra divas* on the carpet" (103). Finally Bhagmati arrives, "And I am possessed with the urge to celebrate *gantantra divas*. I get to the job with an adolescent eagerness. A minute later I lunge into an exultant cry of *'Jai Hind'*…over my radio. It's all over in sixty seconds"(104). Khushwant Singh's characteristic sarcasm is juxtaposed with this incident. The narrator switches on the radio to catch the reporting of the parade: "I switch on the radio and hear the deafening roar of cannon. Twenty-one salvos in honour of the Rashtrapati! He will take salute of the units of the Army, Navy, Air Force and then proceed to tell the world of Gandhi, his message of non- violence and peace" (104).

The writer also comments upon the irony of talking about non-violence just after a show of strength by the defense forces of the country. There is an instance of the colonial hangover that most Indians

suffer from, in the incident where he is bitten by the bees. His description of the bees in the format is also comical.

> Delhi has a rich variety of bees of which one species, the *apis historicus Delhiana,* is noted for its attachment to the past. Habitat: high vaulted arches with special preference for the pre-Mughal, Mughal, post-Mughal, Lutyens and Baker. Size of hive: the most massive known in the beeworld. Natural enemies: the urchins of Delhi who torment it with stone, brick, dung smoke and flaming rags. Natural victims: unsuspecting absent-minded, old men who visit historical monuments to daydream. (91)

The last bit where Khushwant Singh is clearly describing himself as natural victim of the bees is funny for the humour directed at himself. He rushes to the Ram Manohar hospital, for the bees' attack could prove fatal. But the doctor is more keen to discuss restaurants over the phone, than attend to the patients. The furious narrator admonishes him: "I reply in my *haw haw* Oxbridge: 'Busy, my fucking foot! Discussing restaurants and food with some broad while people here are in agony"(93). Thereafter the narrator is attended to with haste and the doctor also apologizes for his negligence. The *haw haw* Oxbridge is extremely funny. More so it is a fact of life in post-colonial India. The historical chapters of the novel are largely bereft of humour. This is probably in

order to keep the sombre note of the chapters intact. There is some amount of humour in the chapter "Nadir Shah". On the victory of Nadir Shah there is a great deal of drinking and dancing and the Mughul Emperor Mohammad Shah joins the nautch girls. Mohammad Shah was a colorful character and was given the epithet *Rangeela*.

Apart from all the relationships portrayed in Delhi, the only steady relationship is that between the narrator and Bhagmati. This extraordinary relationship is the all-pervasive and makes the novel complete. The significance of Bhagmati is manifold. Singh opines that just as Delhi appears repulsive at first glance, so does Bhagmati. But it is only later that they reveal their attractiveness. As Nihal Singh says about Delhi in "1857" that you could get everything you want in Delhi. Bhagmati too is everything for everybody. The novelist writes about the relationships among the people belonging to different races and religions, like: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians; and Indians and the English. He says that apart from few exceptions, there is a lack of genuine understanding between the people of different communities.

The novelist draws upon his knowledge of Punjab in shaping the character of Nihal Singh in the chapter, "1857". "All my life I had been hearing of Delhi. When I was a child *Mai* told me of Aurangzeb, King of Delhi, who had cut off the head of our Guru. She called him Auranga and spat whenever she used his name. I also learnt to *thoo* on Auranga's

name"(273). This had enabled the British to recruit Sikhs in the army to fight the perpetuators of the revolts of 1857. The British had played upon the Sikhs sentiments by telling them that they must fight the muslim rebels who had proclaimed Bahadurshah (descendent of Aurangzeb) emperor.

The description could have come from the writer having heard such a thing that prevailed in 1857. The maximum focus of the autobiographical component is seen in the chapter, "The Builders." This contains an almost authentic account of the migration and settling down of Khushwant Singh's family from Hadali to Delhi. Singh creates the next chapter on Bhagmati by describing the qualities of the various types of mangoes that are available in India that is due to his personal knowledge. The mango is a sex symbol in the novel. It is true, as the writer says, 'that sex is an integral part of life'[17] and that in the novel under consideration sex may be viewed as a symbol for 'violence against Delhi'.[18]

The novelist goes back to his roots to build the background of the chapter, "The Dispossessed." The narrator, Ram Rakha is said to belong to Hadali. All the details about his childhood and adolescence are probably constructed through the writer's own experiences. The narrator along with his parents migrated to Delhi after the partition. He says that for the first time he realised what the Jews must have felt like in Nazi Germany, and what Indian Muslims must have felt in riot-torn Bhiwandi,

Jalgaon, and elsewhere. He was no longer a member of an over-privileged community, but of one which was hated. He was advised by everyone to get out of his home because Sikhs were being killed everywhere. Along the way to Delhi they saw long lines of Muslims on their way to Pakistan. Hindus and Sikhs were on their way to Hindustan. In Delhi, Ram Rakha is unable to get a job because the city is full of Punjabi refugees, all looking for jobs. This was another adverse consequence of the partition.

After each historical episode, there is a shift to the present, to the author-narrator and his mistress Bhagmati. Though the historical narrators and characters appear for a brief period, they leave lasting effect. A number of personalities have been chosen in the novel from different historical epochs; some anti-Indian, some anti-British and some perhaps neither, tell the tragic-comic history of Delhi. His Bhagmati chapters may look a derivation from the main stream i.e. the historical perspective of Delhi. But the fiction writer makes his narration a very common and independent monologue. The Bhagmati's character epitomizes reconciliation to one's situation- psychological, social or economical. In a fictional cosmos marked by disharmony, Khushwant Singh, through Bhagmati, communicates the message of harmony, peace and love for humanity. Khushwant Singh gives the account of story of the city through the turbulent First War of Independence, the rivalry

between the Marathas and the Mughals and later the British India during the two World Wars, the freedom struggle and the leaders of that period which comes to its end with the storming of the Golden temple—an event which greatly upset a secular Indian like Khushwant Singh.

The events and situations described in the book are real, so are the characters. Singh portrays Delhi in all its vividness, its tombs and mausoleums, the dirt and squalor of old Delhi along with the glamour and splendor of New Delhi. *Delhi* is partly biographical and partly autobiographical. The writer has researched Delhi deeply. It is episodic, but the episodes in the book are presented through characters and turn it into a character-oriented novel. The socio-cultural aspect of this work can not also be ignored. The commitment of the writer to the cause of secularism comes out through hints and suggestions. 'If anyone asked me, says Musaddi Lal, whether we were Hindus or Mussalmans, we would reply we were both"(62). The socio-cultural stance of the book can also be observed in Nihal Singh's character. This erstwhile policeman from Punjab is now an orderly to Hodson Sahib. Being a Sikh, he hates Muslims, for Aurangzab had killed one of the Sikh *Gurus*. He is somewhat rattled with the British for they misbehave with the Indians. Despite all bitternesses, he remains so very loyal to his British masters. All the same, when a Britisher kills a dancing peacock, he weeps and hurls abuses at the peacock-killing Britishers he has been fighting for.

The question of Sikh identity and the crisis has been treated in the novel by the writer. The object of the writer seems to catch the history of Delhi through the last few centuries. He emphasizes its servility, the symbol of which in the novel is Bhagmati. Only the concluding chapter of the novel attempts to give the message of love and communal harmony. The narrator of the novel bears a resemblance to Khushwant Singh, though he could not have witnessed the coming up of New Delhi or the Delhi *Durbar*. In the last two sections dealing with the twentieth century, Singh has described the building up of the city and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 which may be an indirect portrayal of his progenitors and his own reaction. Singh appears to be a secularist in the novel.

A novel feature in Khushwant Singh's conception of historical narrative is the use of different personae or the multi-focal vision. Delhi is highlighted as the silent victim as Khushwant Singh poignantly puts it, "Delhi was never the same after the Iranians had slain its soul. Kings, noblemen and their hirelings came like flocks of vultures to peck at its corpse"(226).

The writer begins the first chapter of his mega novel, Delhi, with a description of nature in order to give the reader a feel of the ambience of present day Delhi when Pundit Nehru was Prime Minister. In Khushwant Singh's fiction, we find the use of authentic details of nature. When

describing the sunset at Tughlakabad, the language is almost poetic. The buildup of the atmosphere is an essential feature of good story telling. Nature has also been treated in the manner of a prelude to forthcoming events. In the present day Delhi, the narrator is savagely stung by bees symbolizes the countless massacres of the people of Delhi by Taimur. If on the one hand, the novelist has shown nature to turn against mortals, it also becomes submissive for the fulfillment of a good deed. In the chapter entitled "The Untouchables" nature helps Jaita Rangrita. The Indian summers and the monsoons are also a regular feature of Khushwant Singh's fiction. The writer is essentially a realist. He gives the reader a view of life in all its aspects. He describes the glory of nature, but does not shy away from the sordid aspects of human behaviour and relationships. This serves to make his fiction more complete.

Khushwant Singh’s *Delhi* has a plot that is well-constructed and characters who are not always types but leave impact on us as living individuals. Singh's choice of words is unfathomable. They give significant messages to everyone in the present conditions. Khushwant Singh's view of history and society seems to be balanced which comes closer to a secular rationale. He possibly believes history to be propaganda material. In this novel, Singh looks at Delhi from the cultural, moral and human aspects in addition to the political and social ones.

It is clear from the above details that no period of Indian history has remained untouched from religion. Each chapter of *Delhi* is a witness to this fact. Religion used for political purposes leads to a loss of countless innocent lives. In the novel *Delhi,* the writer reveals how closely religion is turned together with the history and polity of India. Religion has been one of the important factors shaping the fate of India over the centuries. It is Delhi that has been a witness to the huge panorama of history- a neutral observer like *hijra.* Khushwant Singh watches events through a microscope and gives a clear picture in miniature. History and fiction thus get fused in the novel. Due to its artistic presentation of glamorized and subjective history and narrative technique, *Delhi* is thus comparable to great historical novels as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Ivo Andric's *The Bridge on the Drina*.

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CHAPTER- 6

SHORT STORIES, ESSAYS AND ARTICLES

With the dawn of Independence in 1947 the tone of Indian literature changed. Anxious concerns of a slave nation to seek spiritual sustenance from the glorious past and to fight the tyranny of the present gave way to the euphoria of a new nation. Promises, plans, dreams became the common staple of literature in the form of story writing. Khushwant Singh made his debut in this form with the publication of *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* in 1950. He published three other collections: *The Voice of God and Other Stories* (1957), *A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories* (1967), and *Black Jasmine* (1972). Khushwant Singh's *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh* published first in 1989 had gone into six other impressions declaring the popularity of the collection. The stories thirty-two in all, were published in various journals and magazines.

It can be perceived that the writer's journalistic style has crept into his novels and short stories but none can overlook his role as an observer of human nature. In his stories and novels, one can appreciate his "calm, control, objectivity and self-effacement."[1] Like a true journalist he is accurate, objective, impartial and detached. The writer's technique of the

short story is very clear. He has stated that a short story should be built around "one incident or series of incidents illustrating one theme."[2] The writer believes that a short story could be "real" or "fantastic" but it must have a "message" to convey with a "ring of truth." Singh has written numerous books, essays and stories based on religion. This is perhaps because India is a deeply religious country. Singh's view about the various superstitious practices inherent in religious faiths of Hindus is focused in one of his short stories "The Mark of Vishnu." He has attempted to disclose the hypocrisy behind most religions having been attracted towards the religious ethos of India. Through his work, the novelist brings out the good teachings inherent in all religions, and advises people to give up mindless superstitions. In this story, the novelist has given his view-point in an objective manner. The protagonist of the story, Gunga Ram, is a pious uneducated Brahmin. The class system was formed in ancient India on the basis of various attributes of the different classes. Brahmins were supposed to be the most educated and highly learned class. But with the passage of time there was deterioration in the value systems. And it is ironic that Gunga Ram who though highly religious, is not only illiterate, but extremely superstitious as well. This story effectively explains to us the futility of blindly following religious superstitions. Gunga Ram, the devout worshipper of

Vishnu and saviour of all creatures particularly, the Kala Nag; is ironically bitten by the same Nag whose fangs leave the sacred, though blood-soaked V mark on his forehead! The V mark, which is supposed to signify the preservation of life, being a symbol of Vishnu, here signifies the destruction of life. Shahane believes that the pure scientific and biological reality of the natural poisonous fangs of the cobra is pitted against the religious and superstitious belief of the Hindus that the cobra is divine.

Another story "The Great Difference" brings out Khushwant Singh's views about the hollowness of the so-called god men—which is inherent in all religions. In the story, the writer seeks to expose two such highly religious men, a renowned Maulana and a learned Swami ji. Both of them try to persuade the narrator, a Sikh in favour of themselves. In this story later, the Swami ji narrates that Sikh religion forbids the narrator to share the meal offered by Maulana to him. Moreover, his ancestors had fought the Muslims. And they were outcastes and dirty people, and so he should keep his distance from the Maulana. Maulana also reminds the narrator that Guru Nanak had tried to get Hindus to give up idol worship, cow worship, *Ganga* worship and such other unintelligible things. He had tried his best to unite the two communities but had failed because the Hindu, incapable of reason, only understands

the language of the sword. There are a number of people who have hostile feelings for each other. And when any appropriate situation occurs, such feelings are easily ignited which cause violence and bloodshed as happened in the past. As Shahane rightly explains: "The writer employs their hostile reactions, explicit and implied, as a means to create the irony emerging from the gulf between their preachings and practices. Though all religions teach love and tolerance, these two religious leaders express deep-rooted prejudices towards each other."[3]

The author also reveals to us the fact that when such religious leaders are so biased against each other, it is natural that their followers would be similarly influenced.

In the story, "The Fawn" Khushwant Singh has questioned the sanctity of kosher meat. This is a tale of the narrator and his Muslim friend going on a hunting trip. Finally, they come upon a doe that does not run away too far from them. This is because she has a fawn nearby. The hunter is easily able to shoot the innocent fawn. The fawn does not die and struggles for life. The hunter then puts his boot on its antlers and slits the fawn's throat swearing all the time:

> "I wish I did not have to do this ceremonial cutting of the throat," he continued, "but you know what an orthodox Muslim household is! No one would touch anything I shot

> unless I had also pronounced a pious ‘Bismillah’ and sent the beast’s soul flying to paradise.” “I did not hear you say 'Bishmillah.' " I said quietly. He laughed. “I promise to say it when I get the mother. We will get her all right. You just wait and watch."[4]

The inherent cruelty in the psyche of the hunter is brought out. However, it is the supposed religious sacredness given to unnecessary killing, and that too in an inhuman, bestial manner that is brought into focus. The hunter had performed the gory slashing of the half-alive fawn’s throat saying that it was enjoined in his religion, but he did not pronounced the important ‘Bismillah’ while doing so. So much for his belief in the religious purity of the act! Later, the aggrieved doe unable to tear herself away from her child follows them up to the village. When they stop to rest, she comes up to sniff at the dead fawn lying in the luggage bunk at the back of the car. The hunter pleased and shoots her as well.

> I heard my friend swear triumphantly and rush towards his prey with his razor blade. “In the name of God- Bismillah” he yelled and got on with his gory task. The countryside relapsed into silence once more. The sonorous call of the muezzin broke the stillness of the gloom, 'Allah-o-Akbar.' (93)

Here, the cruel modes of man sanctified by religion are forced on to consider. Shahane feels that the doe's intense sorrow for the fawn is revealed in contrast to the inhumanity of the Muslim hunter. In this story, the novelist focuses on certain aspects of a particular religion. Through this story a fact is disclosed about the religious faiths which become the cause of communal feelings when they are blindly put into practice. In this manner, the novelist makes a strong statement on religion.

Another story "The Riot" brings out the contrast between the conduct of man and the habits of animals. The story is set at a time when there were communal tensions in the town. The genesis of communal violence is presented by the novelist effectively. In this story we find that violence can be roused in no time any where. This causes so much loss of innocent lives and property, and develops hostility between different communities. In contrast, the street dogs appear almost civilized, fighting only to stake one’s right over a loved one. The landscape, the ethos and the ambience of rural Punjab is clearly drawn in the "Riot." In many other stories like "The Rape", "A Punjab Pastorale" Singh has succeeded in revealing the ethos of rural India. He has presented the genesis of communal provocations in a masterly manner. It is rather pitiable that it takes so little to invoke senseless violence all around. Thus the reader is compelled to think whether religion promotes animosity.

Khushwant Singh being a post-colonial writer believes in "dual consciousness." He is "ambivalent about any very stark dualism or native celebration of pre-colonial revival." [5] Thus the fiction writer if on one hand is nostalgic about the imperial culture and language, on the other, he is also critical about the changes. In "When Sikh Meets Sikhs", he also criticises the infatuation of Indians/Sikhs for the white skinned women. Punjabi slogans like, *" Wah Guru Jee Ka Khalsa; Wah Guru Jee Kee Fateh"* have been included in the story. Khushwant Singh, being a Sikh, also focuses on his community in some of his works. In this story we find considerable information about the Sikhs. They are actually a peace-loving community. They were the first to prove the success of passive resistance as a political weapon against the British. The "Brown Sahibs" have been mocked at in "A Bride for the Sahib", "Maiden Voyage of the Jal India" and "Karma." He seems to suggest that the rejection of one's own culture results in the lowering of the self.

The novelist by virtue of his personal experiences has narrated the religious practices in a typical Punjab village in, "A Punjab Pastorale." This is a story about Peter Hansen, a young American from Illinois, who took to Christianity for he wanted to serve humanity. His mission ordered him to preach the gospel of Christ among the Sikh peasantry. He met the narrator who too believed in serving humanity. Hansen tells the narrator about how he managed to convince the Sikhs to allow the

Christians into their temples. They entered the Christian area and were surrounded by affectionate sweeper children. They entered the Christian homes and it is paradoxical that the Christian homes have pictures of Hindu gods. It is only after considerable passage of time that the newly adopted Christians merged into main stream of Christianity. It is evident in Singh's writing that he does not subscribe to any particular political creed and openly points out the drawbacks and weaknesses of the individual concerned when the situation arises as he did in the case of Indira Gandhi during Operation Blue Star. He is able to bring out the inherent quality of Hinduism which unites all other religious beliefs within its fold and yet retains its original flavour. We also find that though the writer declares to be an atheist, he continues to be greatly influenced by religion.

The author also gives his views on politics through his short stories. He mostly writes about the corrupt practices that develop in the various departments due to the lack of political will to tackle them. One such story reveals the hollowness of the electoral system in India named as "The Voice of God". In this story the author comments on the prevalence of corruption in the police force. The upholders of law turn into the exploiters. The writer candidly opines that when corruption is at the peak degradation pervades the entire system. The story is based in the time period before India gained independence. This is the tragedy of the

democratic system in our country, that there are criminals misusing the political power today. Khushwant Singh has used irony in revealing the happenings of that time.

> We hear that the voice of the people is the voice of God, but in elections frequently the divinity that lies concealed among the people is trampled upon by demagogues, who on their success, become the legally constituted representatives of the people and begin behaving as the tiny tin-gods of power. (35)

Some other stories also focus upon the actual reality of the government and its servants. In this story, "Man, How the Government of India Run" the novelist reveals the irony of the administration of the Government of India which is in charge of those whose ways of handling it are mysterious. As we see in the working of the secretaries, additional secretaries etc. They establish their self-importance by spending time in attending meetings, drinking tea and dictating a few memos. They begin the day by reiterating that it is infact they who run the Government of India. "And which senior officer knew the rules of procedure as well as they and who could make a file vanish mysteriously and as mysteriously make it reappear? Was it a great wonder then that,…. they felt the administration rested squarely on their shoulders?" (95).

This is highly ironic authorial comment. There is actually a symbolic relationship between the polity and the bureaucracy whereby they feed off each others. Evidently, the writer has drawn upon his extensive personal experience to write this revealing account of the apathy that prevails in almost all government organizations of the country. Shahane correctly says: “The story, events and characters are lifelike to such an extent that they appear to be almost a photographic reproduction of every day life.”[6]

Another story which reveals the fruitless red tapism in our country is, "My Own My Native Land". This too reflects the short-sightedness of the political will of our country. If the power at the centre really understood the problems faced by the common people, such a situation would not appear. Singh also tells us the fact that the various governments merely make assurances but does not take action against the problem to solve it. He has described it in an article "Prohibition in India" in the book *We Indians.* Khushwant Singh explains to us the fact that the government policy of implementing prohibition leads to more drinking and a good business goes on in the smuggling of alcohol. Ironically, this short-sightedness becomes the cause of corruption in the police force and other departments, and greater indulgence in liquor by the youth in order to defy the government. The fiction writer has been

able to bring out the drawbacks of the system and the causes of corruption in a humorous manner. In this story we find personal experiences and patriotism of the writer.

The story "Rats and Cats in the House of Culture" also points out the drawbacks inherent in the Indian system and brings to our notice the pointless red tapism in other countries as well. The penchant of the bureaucracy for blowing simple things out of proportion is portrayed in a humorous manner. The story begins with Langford, the Director of the House of Culture at paris, going through a ten page thick file entitled ‘rats’. It contained information in the form of a confusing web of proposals, counter-proposals, facts and figures penned in by several subordinates from different departments. He learnt that rats from the sewers had taken to eating up all the canteen provisions. This because the canteen was located in the basement which was connected to the sewers. The French director had asked for plans for the destruction of the rats and that is how the file was started. The schemes of poisoning, names of various brands of poison and cost of operations were listed in the file. But he had to abandon it because there was a danger of disease from the dead rats. The Italian director resorted to using rat traps. The file contain details of varieties of rat traps, bait, services of trappers, disposal of trapped rats, etc. But this idea too was abandoned, for the rats were said

to be bigger than cats. One can well imagine the additional havoc that the rats must have caused, while the officials were simply wasting time in trying to determine how they could get round the problem. Now Langford was convinced that cats were the only solution to this problem.

Once more several departments swung into action. A scout went to find the price of kittens. They could be had for free; yet for budgetary purposes, a franc was affixed for each. The job description of the manager was amended to include, “care and feeding of cats”. The head of administration decided to have six cats. The file was sent to the budget department for scrutiny and after that to Langford for approval. Half-yearly estimates showed that there were no depredations at all, instead the canteen showed good profits.

Six months later, the cats began invading other parts of the building. They had begun to copulate and the population of the cats increased. Soon the profits of the canteen were evened out by losses explained by “depredation by cats.” This led to the ‘cats’ file. The General Conference was due to meet in six months and it was imperative that everything was just right for the delegates. However, first an attempt was made to get a census of the cats. Then the Department for the Dissemination of Science prepared a note on the known methods for the destruction of cats. The Bureau of Budget made a complete breakdown of the resources available in Paris with an estimate of costs. The entire

thing was translated into the working languages of the House: English, French, Russian and Spanish and then printed. In this way, just as in the case of the rats, for the cats too, several weeks went by without any action.

Then, The Conference for the Mutual Appreciation of the Culture of the Orient and the Occident was held. The Minister of Education of the Government of India was the first speaker. Just when the minister was winding up, a fight between two tomcats disrupted the proceedings, and the assembly burst into laughter. The minister was miffed and the conference was adjourned. An enraged Langford sent for the Head of Administration. He explained that they had been considering the matter for quite some time, but Budget was not sure whether they had provision for that sort of thing, so they wanted to consult Audit before committing themselves. At this the furious Langford flung the 'cats' file into the waste paper basket. He ordered him to forget the Budget and Audit departments, employ some cat-catcher, and get rid of the cats over the weekend. A cat-catcher was duly found who first made a rough estimate for the job and then a fair one after doubling all the figures and gave it to the Head of Administration. He approved it though only after he got the consent of the Budget department

The story is a fine example of Singh at his wittiest, while at the same time attacking an archaic system that is bound by numerous procedure, rules and regulations. Shahane rightly comments: “The satire

directed against officialdom, governmental procedure, and methods of work is relentless and is expressed powerfully."[7]

In one story, "A Love Affair in London" Khushwant Singh has used the "Quit India" movement of 1942 as a backdrop. During this time, the protagonist Kamini, along with her college mates had gone round the streets, singing patriotic song and shouting the slogan, 'Quit India' whenever they came across a foreigner. They had been rounded up by the police and put up for trial. When Kamini was sent to the police lock up and was summoned before the District Magistrate, Robert Smith, she audaciously said, "Tell him to go back to England and mind his country's business"(185). Robert is fascinated by her. He offered to lend her the book while she was in jail. She found two lines in red ink and the initials 'K.G.' next to it:

Her face was like the king's command,
When all the swords are drawn. (186)

Khushwant Singh has used the same quotation to illustrate his opinion of Indira Gandhi in the article, "Indira Gandhi's Assassination and its Aftermath" contained in the book, *My Bleeding Punjab.* In his opinion she is the only woman who answers Hilaire Belloc's description of a beautiful woman. He has used the quotation for Gayatri Devi as well, in his essay, "The Woman of India" included in the book, *We*

Indians. Perhaps the British could manage to rule India for such a long period due to the presence of anglicized Indians. They have been shown as being pathetic creatures in his stories like: "Karma" and "A Bride for the Sahib". It was the support of people like Mr. Sen and Sir Mohanlal, that the English were able to successfully administer a vast country like India. In this story the writer tries to explain that the government policies have nothing to do with particular individuals as we see in the presence of several Englishmen who were sympathetic to the cause of India's struggle, like Mr. Taylor in *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*, similarly there were several Indians who did not want the British to leave India, like Sir Sobha Singh in *Delhi*.

Some stories of Khushwant Singh also comment on the relationship between Indians and Pakistanis. One such story is "The Convert." The story revolves around the pet hates of Mrs. Sarla Sethi. Apart from her husband and sister-in-law, she hates the Pakistanis passionately. She had done so ever since she was a child. Later she was advised by Mrs. Moore of the love group organization to be cleanse of it. And she decides to confess her hatred of the Pakistanis to the Counsel General of Pakistan. Finally, she explains the purpose of her visit to Mr. Ali, Counsel General,

> She unfolded her past life: her childhood in Lahore, the memories of the Hindu-Muslim riots of the summer of

> 1947, how their home was burnt down by a Muslim mob, their days in a refugee camp in India. And how that had created a deep-seated hatred in her heart for everything Muslim, particularly Pakistani Muslim. (217)

Mr. Ali was very excited about his meeting with Mrs. Sethi. Mrs. Sethi explained that she chose to tell him of her hatred because, he represented the whole of Pakistan; and that it was not possible to go to every Pakistani and ask for forgiveness. But everybody made fun of the meeting and Mr. Ali enjoyed it as well. This resulted in Sarla's hating the Pakistanis more fervently than ever. The fiction writer had tried to find out the reason for the antagonism in the hearts of Indians and Pakistanis for each other, through Sarla Sethi's background. The two neighbours do not live together in peace due to the deep-rooted hatred for each other. They do not have faith for each other and this easily causes communal riots. The seeds of distrust are buried deep inside the psyche of the two groups which is depicted also in the story "The Riot." The story brings out the close link between religion and politics in India.

Another story based on the relationship between Indians and Pakistanis is, "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia." The united front presented by the Asians: Hindus, Sikhs, and Pakistani Muslims in the story is Utopian. This gives Khushwant Singh's own Idea India that India and Pakistan would unite in the event of some kind of World War. Singh

has a soft corner for Pakistan as is evident from his essays "Pakistan, Sweet and Sour" and" Home to Hadali." This is because he was born in Hadali, and as he says "there is something elemental about one's place of birth."[8] Unfortunately, he had to leave Lahore due to the Partition and this is still remembered by him with bitterness. Singh has also based several stories upon his personal experiences of Punjab. His knowledge of the landscape of the Punjab country side, and a typical village of Punjab lends credibility to the story "A Punjab Pastorale." Another story "The Voice of God" narrates the writer's perception of rural Punjab.

Khushwant Singh's personal opinion about the lack of substance in the character of so-called god men is found in the story, "The Great Difference". About this story Shahane believes: "The story exposes the hypocrisy of institutionalized religion and the hollowness of its pompous practitioners."[9] The sense of humour is noticeable here. He is a self-confessed agnostic and believes that one should not waste time in fruitless rituals. Shahane opines: "The authorial prerogative and Singh's assumption of persona lend colour and charm to a few short stories, which appear to emerge from the inwardly felt experience."[10]

Through his short stories Khushwant Singh brings to light the stark reality behind government machinery and institutions. The apathetic attitude of government servants is disclosed in one story titled "Man, How the government of India Run!" Singh has given an extremely

cynical and satirical account revealing the indifference that is found in almost all government organizations of the country. In the story, "The voice of God" the hollowness of the electoral system of India is exposed. Contempt for the English can also be perceived in the story. Shahane rightly says: "Singh is a skilled craftsman in unmasking the central character in a story, in the process; he is mildly satirical, or farcical or lively and light-hearted."[11]

Khushwant Singh has anguish for the violence that followed India's freedom. He has written the essay, "Nehru" in his book, *India: An Introduction*. In the essay, he points out Nehru's failure to stem the rising tide of Muslim separatism. In 1937, the Muslim League raised the issue of the Hindu-Muslim conspiracy to persecute the Muslims. Nehru took no notice of it. After Nehru was failed during the Quit India movement, Jinnah had the field to himself. He convinced the Muslims that they should have a separate state for themselves. Nehru continued to underestimate Muslim fears of Hindu domination, and the demand for a separate state. The 1945 Elections proved to everyone save Nehru, and Gandhi and the Congress that the Muslims meant business. The refusal to face Muslim separatism made Nehru ride roughshod over proposals to accommodate the Muslim point of view. As a consequence India had to pay a heavy price for it.

In another essay, "Nehru as Prime Minister" the writer affirms that Nehru knew what he said at historic moments which would be quoted in books of History. He then quotes the "tryst with destiny" speech as one example. There is no doubt that the writer is highly critical of Nehru's rule during a critical period in the history of India.

Khushwant Singh has traced the genesis of the demand for Khalistan to the leaving of the British. After they left the percentage of Sikhs in the armed forces declined from one third to ten percent today. Consequently, there was a loss of an important source of employment. A cause for discontent among the Sikh community is the fear that the percentage may go down further. This has been described in the essay "A Formula for Peace in Punjab" contained in his book, *More Malicious Gossip.*

In his essay, "Why Indians Love and Hate the British" the author says that India had never been a nation. It was divided due to different religions, races, castes and languages. The masses were indifferent, and frequently hostile to the upper classes who monopolised the leadership. The princes were only loyal to themselves. They were eager to see the downfall of their rivals. They were easily outgunned by the better trained, better disciplined and better equipped soldiers of the company. The English conquered India with the help of the Indians—Madrasi

regiments against the Marathas and the Bengalis, Madrasi and Behari regiment against the Sikhs, and Sikhs and punjabi Mussulmans against the mutineers. The British played the divide and rule game. They exploited the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. The British created a class of people whose interests were closely tied to the continuance of the British rule. Of these the three most important classes were: the princes, the so-called martial classes and the brown bureaucracy. The princes were encouraged to remain irresponsible and autocratic and helped in putting down democratic movements. In the defence services the favoured mercenaries were the Gorkhas, the Punjabi Mussulmans and the Sikhs. And great care was taken to see that after the great mutiny, the Punjab Committee on Reorganization set the communal pattern of the Indian army. Indian soldiery were, "neatly grouped into battalions, companies and sometimes even platoons of specified classes."[12]

The writer has also written an essay, 'Aurangzeb' in his book, *More Malicious Gossip*. In this he says, "It was this combination of diplomacy and restless campaigning that helped him to establish and maintain the largest empire ever ruled over by an Indian monarch."[13]

The partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon was a trick to develop divisive tendencies amongst the Hindus and Muslims. In his essay,

"Freedom Movement- I" in the book, *India: An Introduction,* Khushwant Singh says, "Under the pretext of better administration he wanted to segregate the Muslims of East Bengal, who were loyal to the British from the Hindus of West Bengal who were not."[14]

Khushwant Singh has not shied away from writing about the corrupt practices followed by his grandfather Sir Sujan Singh, by which he laid the foundation of the fortunes of the Singh family. He has also written candidly that his own father Sir Sobha Singh followed in his footsteps and did the same. He comments in the essay, "Are We a Corrupt People" included in his book, *We Indians*: "Every developing country becomes a happy hunting ground for corrupt people. India was no exception. The laying of canals, roads, rail tracks opened up primrose paths lined with gold for contractors and the Public Works Departments".[15]

The writer explains that the Muslims had been separated from the freedom movement led by the Congress because of its Hindu orientation. They were brought back into the fold of the freedom struggle. He describes in his essay, "Freedom Movement -II", Gandhi was not above exploiting situation which suited his general purpose. He saw that the Muslims were agitated over the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire. They had organised the *Khilafat* movement to protest against it. He

assured the Muslims of support in a non-cooperation movement against the British. The plan proved successful. In this essay, he gives description about the Gandhi ji's political views in an unbiased manner. He tells us that Gandhi ji was not firm in his belief of pacifism. He helped the British administration in suppressing Zulu rebellion. He also helped recruitment in the First World War. He had a habit of preaching non-violence to others, even when it was impractical. However, he had refused to accept a truncated India when partition was to occur, and toured the country trying to douse the fires of communal passion. He had also refused to take part in the celebrations that followed independence.

In his essay, "Nehru as Prime Minister" Khushwant Singh says that the manner in which the state of Hyderabad was taken over (1948) and the Portuguese enclaves of Goa, Daman and Diu annexed (1961); distorted the image of India as Gandhi-land. A series of border incidents were created in Hyderabad to justify the Indian army marching into restore order. The same procedure of generating tension and spreading exaggerated stories of build-up of Portuguese naval and armed strength was used to justify the take over of Goa, Daman and Diu.

Another miscalculation on Nehru's part was underestimating the trouble that could be caused due to squabbles over languages. In 1920 the Indian National Congress had passed a resolution that after the British left, the boundaries of the states would be redrawn on the basis of

languages spoken in the region. Nehru believed that linguistic disputes were an artificial creation of the British. The commissions set up were also of the same opinion. However, the savage riots that broke out over the demand of a separate state by Telugu-speaking people proved the fallacy of their perception. Andhra had to be formed. A few years later, riots broke out in Bombay and spread to Gujarat. The old state had to be divided into Maharashtra and Gujarat. Then agitation flared up in Punjab. There was a readjustment of boundaries between Himanchal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. "A fostered regional chauvinism now threatens the country."[16]

Khushwant Singh returned his "Padma Bhushan" as a protest following Operation Bluestar. He always took the storming of temple as an error of judgement. The author opines in his essay, "Zail Singh" that had Mrs. Gandhi consulted the president, he would have advised her to pre-date action and avoid killing innocent pilgrims. Mrs. Gandhi had assumed that the Akal Takht would be rid of Bhindranwale without having to be knocked down. What she saw of the havoc shocked her. Khushwant Singh says in his essay, "Plain Speaking on the Punjab" that the government should have acted much earlier. And that a limited commando action would have sufficed to capture Bhindranwale. Instead, action was taken at the worst time and in the worst manner, storming the temple with tanks and blasting the Akal Takht, Bhindranwale was killed which gave him a halo of martyrdom which he did not deserve.

The novelist has also indicated members of his community. For instance he says in this essay "A History of the Sikhs: The Sikh Home Land" that it was after independence and partition of Punjab that the quality of Sikh leadership went into decline. The educational and ethical standards of the emerging Akali leadership fell well below the level of their predecessors. Switching parties for better prospects became the motivating factors. Corruption became rampant in the gurdwaras. There was misuse of gurdwara funds for political purposes. The Akalis, and more than them Bhindranwale and his goons, did grievous harm, by driving a wedge between the two communities who had always shared a common historical, linguistic and religious heritage. Most uneducated Sikhs construed the desecration of their temple as an act perpetuated by a Hindu government. But Indira Gandhi did not admit her blunder.

In his essay, "Religion Versus Morality" in the book, *We Indians* Khushwant Singh says, there is a huge difference between the practice of religion and the precepts of morality that plague Indian society. The novelist has exemplified it in *Train to Pakistan* where religion was deprived of its law-making functions, for these came under the purview of the state. So, men committed crimes because their consciences were undisturbed and they learnt to settle their lying and cheating by paying lip-service to God.

In the article, "Indira Gandhi's Assassination and its Aftermath" he gives an account of the planned manner in which the Sikhs were

murdered. Most of the looters and killers were sweepers, cobblers, day-labourers or beggars from towns, or villages whose agricultural lands had been acquired to provide housing sites for Delhi's increasing population. Their main object was to loot. The lesson to be learnt from this is that political, social and economic problems can not be solved by gunpowder, but by persuasion. Religion used for political purposes leads to a loss of countless lives. The political leaders were not adept enough to solve the problem at the right time. Instead of trying to handle the situation, the politicians too took part in aggravating the serious situation.

Thus we find through the political views of Khushwant Singh that he is essentially humanist. Whether it is apolitical issue in the short stories, or the political compulsions that led to the Partition, or the anti-Sikh riots, he speaks from the point of view of the common man. Because he can identify with the people who have faced these situations.

In his column "The Above All" published in *The Telegraph,* Calcutta, the writer gives his strong views on the claim of a separate, sovereign state for Sikhs. He regards Khalistanis as the worst enemies of the Khalsa Panth and traitors to the country. Singh asks supporters of Khalistan to draw a map for Khalistan and its communal constitution. How many Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and Christians will it have? They must keep in mind the future of Sikhs living outside Punjab. The writer condemns them in Parliament and wants them to ponder over the future of Khalistan seriously.

In his article "Oh, That Other Hindu Riot Of Passage", published in *Outlook Magazine,* the writer recollects those two days, one is October 31st, when Mrs. Gandhi was gunned down by her two Sikh security guards, the other is the following day, when the frenzied Hindu finally killed nearly 10,000 innocent Sikhs across North India down to Karnatka. Twenty five years later, the killers of 10,000 Sikhs remain unpunished. The writer finds it the most horrendous crime committed on a mass scale since India became an independent nation. He wants the perpetarators of the crime to be punished because crime unpunished generates more criminals.

In his article "The State of Our Neighbours" published in *Hindustan Times,* Singh again shows up the consequences of combining religion with politics which was the British policy. Religion and politics got irrevocably intertwined in Punjab. The Congress's support of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale resulted in the killing of innocent Hindus and Sikhs. He has also given comments on the knocking down of the Babri Masjid, the mosque. The writer holds the leaders of the country responsible for such incidents, the leaders are incapable of maintaining peace in the country on account of their being influenced with religious fundamentalism. In his regular column in *Hindustan Times*, "With Malice towards One and All" the writer recalls the past:

> Sixty years ago when we parted company, our leaders assured us that as soon as the partition of the country was

> over, we would be rid of communal strife…. Both the learned Pandit and the great leader Mr. Jinnah were woefully wrong in their prognostication. A succession of Pakistan's heads of State repeatedly told their people that Indians had never accepted the existence of a Sovereign, Independent Pakistan.[17]

Khushwant Singh has no ill-will against the country. He welcomes writers from Pakistan to his homeland. Through his columns Khushwant Singh reminds us that we are one nation and we should be concerned about being one people. On several occasions we have been tested whenever our borders have been attacked by our neighbours. But we have yet to become an integrated nation as community difference may take place in many forms. Khushwant Singh has always emphasized on the importance of religion for Indians who consider themselves as secular. But Extremism and Fanaticism are deleterious for national security and stability. It weakens the national and social structure and destroys the intrusive national feeling and the sense of patriotism.

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CHAPTER-7

CONCLUSION

What is the good of your stars and trees,
your sunrise and the wind, if they do
not enter into our daily lives?[1]

E.M. Forster

Khushwant Singh is a versatile writer interested in Indian history and the history of the Sikhs. With his excellent command in Urdu language and poetry, he is acceptable as a scholar. Singh's exploration of the experiences of rural India depicts the magnanimity of his creative effort. The process of exploration of this experience is also the mode of his quest for identity.

Khushwant Singh has established himself as a distinguished Indian writer "with an individual status in modern Indo-Anglian literature."[2] The author has succeeded in communicating to the readers the ghastliness of the partition. Being an Indo-English novelist, the author has treated partition comprehensively giving an artistic form to the holocaust. The writer's British education has relieved him of his narrow parochialism and made him "a cultured humanist,"[3] as Shahane calls him. The writer has acquired precision of style that comes out of his hard journalistic work.

The novelist has maintained objectivity while treating partition. The author reveals that the barbarous incidents have a humanising effect on even depraved men like Juggat Singh and Hukum Chand. Juggat Singh's heroic deed to save the passenger-loaded train redeems the abuse of religion that led to inhuman acts of violence. Infact, partition gives rise to many communal issues and reflects one's lack of correct judgement. The author generates a historical consciousness in a reader through his treatment of history in *Train to Pakistan*, we find the mixture of sympathy and bitterness in the author's attitude. Khushwant Singh is inside the action as a participant and outside it as a dispassionate observer while narrating the pathetic tale of individuals and communities caught in the swirl of partition.

Blending of the historical with the fictional is the need of the plot of historical novels. 'They start from the particular, the historical and moves to the universal'.[4] The novelists dealing with the theme of partition do not blame the British. The British exploited the Hindu-Muslim feuds to their advantage, but they did not invent the enmity between the communities. These novelists have reprimanded national leaders whose short-sightedness brought about the division of the country. All the leaders of united India — Gandhi, Nehru, Rajaji, Kriplani, Master Tara Singh and Jinnah — were held responsible because they showed no

concern to the solidarity and right action required most at that time. There was no insight into the decisions that the leaders were compelled to take. All the novelists make it clear that people belonging to the sub-continent were conscious of the superfluous difference among them. They were completely forgetful of the fact that they had common ancestors, history and heritage. Bhishm Sahni says that Indians' 'roots were the same.'[5] Bapsi Sidhwa declares that Indians 'came from the same stock but Indians do not know history. They only live it.'[6] Thus these novelists serve us the history which has a moral. They also convey that differences are always there whether religious, regional or others but we should keep ourselves free from biases. As India was set to achieve freedom communalists were prepared to take benefit from the differences among all parties and creeds. There were members of national parties who supported the Congress and at the same time the Hindu Mahasabha or the Muslim League. Thus they were directly responsible for the disaster. The militant Sikh youth in *Train to Pakistan*, Abdul Ghani in *Azadi* and Sher Singh in *Ice Candy Man*, Murad Ali, Ranvir, Lakshmi Narayan in *Tamas* were all communal. Imbued with religious fervour, they were ready to kill each other believing strongly in their religion. The novelists treating the partition theme do not allow those poignant memories to turn into sentimentalism and maintain the discipline of art.

Khushwant Singh's novels—*Train to Pakistan* and *I Shall not Hear* the *Nightingale*, are an artistic exploration of varied facets of Sikh consciousness. They are documentaries in the form of fiction. They are the works of an artist who becomes passionate about his ideological concerns. The author has instinctive understanding of the Sikh psyche which finds expression in glorious Sikh virtues of valour, heroic sacrifice and fearlessness. We can perceive that both the novels are a fictional recreation of his own experience. The novelist is free from religious biases as is highlighted in *Train to Pakistan.* He himself states: "I think it is a documentary novel of the partition, an extremely tragic event which hurt me very much. I had no animosity against either the Musilms or the Pakistanis but I felt that I should do something to express that point of view."[7]

Train to Pakistan is an imaginative storytelling with refutations of certain types of pacifism to have become known to the India of Mahatma Gandhi—which is also of course the India of Netaji Bose and the Sikh military orders. The writer has explored another facet of Sikh consciousness, i.e. Sikh militancy which came into being as a reaction against Muslim social chauvinism and fanaticism. The Sikh Gurus, who stood up in defence of their faith, had to suffer persecution at the hands of the then Mughal Emperors of India. The martyrdom of the Gurus hurt the

Sikhs and led them to the path of militancy. This militant trait of Sikh consciousness is suggested by Malli and the Sikh leader as a metaphor. Both the characters represent the Sikh youths with vengefulness who must avenge the wrongs done to them whether by an individual, a class or a community. The militant trait of Sikh characters is also focused in the novel, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*.

Khushwant Singh is a realist and modernist in the sense that he has the courage to face harsh reality. V.A Shahane rightly observes, Khushwant Singh's realism, "is not an attempt at a book-keeping of existence, but an artistic endeavour to transcend the actual, asserting the dignity of individual stimuli and expressing the tragic splendour of man's sacrifice for woman."[8]

In his second novel *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale,* the novelist very subtly portrays the distinction between love and hate in one's fight against an alien Government. We can say that in terms of characters, situations and language both the novels are soaked in social realism.

The writer has also considered the havoc wreaked upon *Delhi* through his novel *Delhi,* a part of India during the partition and during the post-partition period. In the caricature of Mahatma Gandhi and in the fictionalization of his assassination, the historical novelist points out the corruption influencing the young minds as seen in the person of

Mahatma's assassin, Nathuram and also the ultimate victory of Mahatma over violence. The author has also considered the recent incidents which stand as examples of further penetration of evil and oppression. He warns readers of the disastrous consequences of linking religion with politics, beginning with *Train to Pakistan* to *Delhi*. Through his works, the novelist appeals to the people, and politicians in particular, to cease using religion as a tool. Religion can either divide or unite large number of men and women having been exploited by politicians. He also asserts that the root cause of all problems is economic disparity. The people in power are unwilling to face this problem and the frustration of the masses easily culminates into violence at the slightest provocation.

Religion forms an important aspect of Singh's fiction. He criticizes the pointless religious rituals followed by society, and tries to bring this to light. He makes the readers aware of charlatans in our society, who use religion to fulfill their purposes. He does this in a very genial, good-natured and humorous manner. He does not try to hurt the sentiments of any particular religious community in any of his writings. Khushwant Singh also reveals the positive aspect of religion also. In *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale,* it is the intense faith of Sabhrai that provides strength to her family in the face of crises. Religion also provided comfort to the minorities and the down-trodden as is seen in the case of Musaddi Lal and

Jaita Rangreta, in *Delhi*. Down the ages, successive rulers exploited religion to strengthen their position. It were the English who exploited it to the maximum to foster the divisive tendencies. After they left the national leaders ignored discontent among the masses. Over the years, the dissatisfaction resulted in communalism; again leaders took benefit from it by securing powers for themselves. This led to a further alienation between the different communities. The writer tries to make one aware of this sinister side of religion. Indian history is replete with examples of religion being used as a tool by rulers to secure gains for themselves. He has tried to expose this fact through all his works, especially *Train to Pakistan*, and *Delhi.* The author exhorts people to see through the manipulation of the leaders in the name of religion.

In India, there is a link between religion and politics. Singh being a journalist, and a sociologist to a certain extent has revealed this fact through his books on political issues and subjects, like: *My Bleeding Punjab, Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar and after with Kuldip Nayar, Punjab's Tragic Story, Indira Gandhi Returns*, and others. He analyses the effect of linking religion with polities, in *Train to Pakistan* and *Delhi*. Being a humanist, he cannot help speaking from the point of view of the common man. The historical novelist warns us that we should not let the politicians to use religion, to take advantage of the sentiments

of the masses. This only leads to bloodshed, tremendous loss of lives and property. He analyses the use of religion by the rulers from the earliest times, like Ghiasuddin Balban, the various invaders like, Nadir Shah, right down to the RSS and Bhindranwale. Khushwant Singh holds the politicians responsible for the ills that plague our society.

Khushwant Singh's short stories cover various issues like corruption in the electoral system, pointless red tapism and bureaucratic manipulations neglecting core issues, the mutual relationship between Indians and Pakistanis, and also Indo-British relations. So these views reveal the concerned humanist and patriot in the writer. The novelist points out the drawbacks of the political system that result in an incompetent and corrupt police department and civil service. This is seen in stories like, 'Man, How the Government of India Run!" and "The Voice of God". A much-inflated bureaucracy is also the result of inefficient political leadership. It is the common man who faces the consequences.

All good writers imbue their fiction with a great deal of credibility. A writer's personal or second-hand experiences and observations make for credible writing. In most cases, fiction can be termed as veiled autobiography. In some instances, the autobiographical element is pronounced, whereas in some it is marginal, but in all instances, it is present all the same. Fiction holds up a mirror to life and so an

autobiographical note becomes an integral part of all good fiction. Khushwant Singh's fiction is characterized by a distinct autobiographical component running through it. Whether it is the short stories or the novels, all of them are coloured by his personal experiences and observations. Imagination also plays a part in his fiction to enhance the autobiographical factor. As Singh himself points out: "My first collection of short-stories, *The Mark of Vishnu* largely based on my experiences in Lahore and Ottawa was published by Saturn Press."[9] The autobiographical note is extremely strong in all his writings. This is a reflection of his ego and indicates that the author deals with different subjects in his writing with full honesty.

The novelist is able to write so intensely about religion and politics because he has been personally involved with the subject. It is his close association with these subjects that has enabled him to write so poignantly about them.

The Sikhs, in partition were provided with no permanent solution. They had suffered together with the Hindus in the communal riots and the holocaust that preceded and followed the Partition. This feeling of oneness received a jolt at the hands of the politicians in search of vote banks. Though many in the Sikh community underwent transient crises of identity, the heart of the community remained by and large in the right place. *Delhi* ends its panoramic survey with a section on the Operation

Blue Star, the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the anti-Sikh plots of 1984. The question of Sikh identity and the crises it faced has been treated in some detail by the author in this novel. There are a few Sikh characters in the novel. In the section entitled "1857", there is a Sikh soldier Nihal Singh who does speak up and that in the defence of the role of the Sikhs in India's first struggle against foreign rule. He is loyal to his British masters and is not repulsed by their acts of massacre, loot and rape of Hindus and Muslims alike. He seems to be a bundle of contradictions. He has a reason to support the British for Aurangzeb had cut off the head of their Guru.

There is another Sikh character Budh Singh. He is generally an object of both sympathy and laughter, who evokes nothing but our pity in his gruesome end. It appears that Singh is the sturdy secularist who is very conscious about his own Sikh identity when he tries to portray a crisis in the Sikh psyche. The author writes about himself in his "Introduction" to *I Believe: "*But I am a Sikh and want to continue to have a sense of belonging to the religious community in which I was born and reared."[10] However, liberal and tolerant he may be, his political beliefs cast an unmistaken shadow on the novel. Khushwant Singh gives his personal views and the details of his life with maturity and innate honesty. He is equally comfortable with the squalid, as well as the wonderful aspects of his life.

It is the author's unique sense of humour and his ability to portray it effectively in his writings that makes him one of the most popular writers today. His essays, pen-portraits and travelogues are immensely readable due to their all pervasive comic spirit. He uses satire and irony as a weapon to expose the drawbacks that sicken the system.

The writer uses humour to show the pretentiousness of people. He raises a laugh while exposing the weakness of a particular character. He does not sit in judgement of such characters, but merely sees it as a part of being human. However, mostly Khushwant Singh focuses upon the ills that prove disastrous to our country and exposes them in an amusing manner.

A writer should be a good observer to portray the different aspects of life authentically. Khushwant Singh possesses this quality in great measure. Singh is a nature lover, and is a keen observer of natural phenomena, flora and fauna. This has resulted in the book *Nature Watch*. He has also made a highly acclaimed serial for Doordarshan entitled, *The World of Nature*. Nature is an integral part of his fiction. He invariably writes about what he himself has observed. It gives a realistic and earthy flavour to his writings.

Having faith in the sanctity of life Singh often projects his views on animal killing through his writings. This is evident is his story— “The

Fawn" and in, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale, and Delhi*. He also endows animals with the so-called human emotions as seen in the sparrows in , "The Portrait of a Lady," the dogs in "The Riot", Dyer in, *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*.

Adept at analysing human relations, he depicts human nature with fidelity to truth. He reports the foibles of human behaviour and relationships as he sees it. *Train to Pakistan* depicts the fragile nature of human relationships. Relationships between two communities broke down completely owing to external forces. Singh warns us that we must be able to survive against the external forces. He seems to caution us that we must strengthen our mutual relations so that such an eventuality does not occur again. Through this novel, he shows the triumph of personal relationships against the inhuman forces of communal division. In *Delhi*, he focuses on the relationship among the people belonging to different races and religions, like: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians; and Indians and the English. He says that apart from few exceptions, mutual relationships are not strong; there is a lack of understanding between the people of different communities.

Khushwant Singh has concentrated on giving real-life characters who essentially belong to Punjab (basically the pre-partition Punjab), which included Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, but mostly the latter. This

makes his writing authentic. This concentration upon the people of Punjab is perhaps a limitation of Khushwant Singh's works. This is true for several of his short stories, *Train to Pakistan,* and *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale* as well. The plots of the short stories do revolve around his friends, acquaintances, and a few relatives. Singh's personal experiences of the Partition, the violence, and the landscape of the Punjab villages help him to create an effective backdrop for *Train to Pakistan*. Khushwant Singh draws upon his personal experience of Punjab, Shimla and Sikh family life to imbue his work with realism. It is in his novel, *Delhi* that the line between fiction and autobiography becomes extremely thin. In *Delhi,* the writer describes every kind of relationship ranging from that between a disciple and his guru, to a homosexual relationship, to the sexual relationship of a *hijra*, Bhagmati as the chief persona. She represents what Virginia Wolf calls "the unity of being".[11] She is capable of surviving the crises and yet not lose the desire for life.

> To articulate the past historically, does not mean to recognize the way it really was. The repressed portion of history is relocated. The text seems to be liberating itself from the high seriousness of history—the protocol of historical convention. History is parodied, transvestied and travestied. The novel could be hailed as Singh's significant contribution to Indian English fiction for its erudite content

> and insightful recreation. In comparison to many other novelists of the late eighties and early nineties, Delhi displays intellectual content. The author's sensitive grip on history, its ramification makes an impression upon the reader."[12]

An important relationship that the author depicts throughout his fiction is the breakdown of mutual relations between Hindus and Muslims, and also the alienation of Sikhs from the mainstream.

Khushwant Singh's fiction needs be considered in the context of the development of Indian English literature. Khushwant Singh has got the courage to say: "My mother-tongue is English though my mother cannot speak one word of it".[13] In his characteristic way, the historical novelist, defines "mother-tongue" as the language one is most at home with and which one loves. It was the language of protest against the colonial rulers. It is English, more than any other Indian language, which gives us Indianness. The author's affluent family background and his exposure to the language in a variety of diplomatic assignments in the Western countries have created in him a passion for English.

In order to determine the merit of the novelist's works, all his writings, fiction and non-fiction, must be taken into account. In the sphere of non-fiction, Khushwant Singh has produced brilliant books on a variety of political, religious and social subjects.

His mammoth work, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. I and vol. II, by itself is enough to ensure him a rightful place in the history of Indian writings in English. First published in 1963, this remains the most comprehensive book on the Sikhs. The first volume of *A History of the Sikhs* deals with the birth of Sikhism and the rise of the Sikhs to political dominance in the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This volume takes up the narrative from the death of the Maharaja and brings it up to the present times. It is divided into five parts which deal respectively against the conflict with the English and the collapse of the Sikh kingdom, its consolidation as a part of Britain's Indian empire, religious and sociological movements born under the impact of new conditions, the growth of political parties—nationalist, Marxist and communal—the fate of the Sikhs in the division of the Punjab, and the great exodus from Pakistan. It ends with the resettlement of the Sikhs in independent India and the establishment of a Punjabi-speaking state within the Union. The theme of volume I was the rise of Punjabi consciousness and the establishment of an Independent Punjabi state under Sikh auspices. Volume II deals with the Sikh struggle for survival as a separate community. It started with resistance to British expansionism; it was continued resistance against Muslim domination: and after independence, it turned to resistance against absorption by renascent Hinduism.

The Sikhs (1957) presents a concise history of the followers of one of the world's newest religions Sikhism. Beginning with the life and times of the founders, the highly revered Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the contents move onto describe the vital contribution made by the following nine Gurus in shaping the Sikh religion. The significance of the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib is emphasised. The author dwells upon important events such as the rise of the Sikh confederacy, the acquisition of a kingdom by the Sikhs and how they eventually lost it. The pivotal role of Maharaja Ranjit Singh has been highlighted.

The focus shifts to Punjab under the British rule. The author discusses the movements for religious reformation, the setting up of the Singh Sabha, the social reform, the Akali agitation for control of various Sikh shrines and the impact of the Ghadr rebellion. The different political groups and their influence on Sikh affairs are also discussed. Historically, crucial episodes such as the struggle for independence from the British, the partition of India, the communal holocaust that followed and the exodus of vast multitudes are narrated in detail. At the end, there is a description of the cultural heritage of the Sikhs and a survey of what the future could hold for this community.

Khushwant Singh's *Ranjit Singh: Maharaja of the Punjab* (1961) is the first detailed biography of the first and only Sikh ruler of the Punjab

by a Sikh writer who has devoted many years of his life to research on Sikh history. Ranjit Singh was a full-blooded man and an astute politician. And in this classic work, the writer presents Ranjit Singh as he really was; a man single-minded in his pursuit of power; a despot who did not take a single life in cold blood; an ugly man, blind in one eye and pitted with small-pox, who loved to surround himself with beautiful men and women, and had a passion for horses, strong liquor, nautch girls and precious jewels.

More Malicious Gossip (1989) is the book which includes candid portrayal of public personalities such as Zail Singh, Rajiv Gandhi, Nani Palkhivala, Rajni Patel and Nargis Dutt. There are also vivid portraits of places such as Delhi, Amritsar, Goa, Lucknow, Bhopal and Hyderabad. The author also discusses various issues as communalism, terrorism and bride-burning. The book reveals the depth of Khushwant Singh as a writer.

Sex, Scotch and Scholarship (1992) comprises some of Khushwant Singh's best writings where we find some talk of sex, a little of scotch and much scholarship. The collection shows Singh's concerns and passions, his love of nature, his anguish over the situation in Punjab, his interest in religions of the world and his scholarly research on Sikhism. We find in this book a beautifully written piece on Guru Nanak, as well

as translations of some of his hymns, a lyrical chapter on nature, an analytical article on Khalistan, a concept which has always been opposed by the author. The author's years as a member of parliament are documented in his fearless style. There are pen-portraits of a number of people in the book. The autobiographical opening piece written in Khushwant Singh's candid style is the most complete self-portrait painted by him.

In *The End of India* (2003), the writer shows concern about the future of the country after witnessing the violence of partition over half a century ago. Khushwant Singh is concerned about the future of the country. He believed that he has seen the worst that took place in India. In this book, the author has analysed the communal violence in Gujarat in 2002, the burning of Graham Staines and his children, the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, and the targeted killings by terrorists in different parts of the country. Singh wants to make us aware of the corruption due to religion that has made us inhuman. The writer also warns us of the rise of religious fundamentalism among the Hindus threatening our democracy. He warns against supporting the divisive and retrograde agenda of the fundamentalists which will break up the country.

Truth ,Love and a Little Malice (2002), the autobiography of the legendary Khushwant Singh, deals in detail about his relations with

political dignitaries. The publication of the book was held up for more than five years after Menaka Gandhi filed a case against the release of the book. As the book gives details of the relationship between the ex-Priminister Indira Gandhi and her daughter-in-law Menaka Gandhi. Khushwant Singh's scholarship shines through every page when he reminisces over many decades of Indian history and the individuals who shaped it. He held Indira Gandhi responsible for the bloodshed of the thousands of innocent pilgrims of the Golden Temple in the month of June 1984. Then there was a dramatic move to return his "Padma Bhushan" to Giani Jail Singh, the president of India. The author's speech in the parliament remains to be the best commentary on "Operation Bluestar".

Khushwant Singh called the 1984 riots a one sided riot. Singh called it a pogrom. There was no retaliation from Sikhs, even in Punjab, where they form a majority, he explained. The comparison with the Nazis' elimination of Jews in Germany was obvious. The author has all along written about the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and even mentioned it in his book *My Bleeding Punjab*. The novelist has a strong question for those who inject religion into politics: from Islamist religion radicals to the Hindu nationalist leaders. He is concerned about the resurgence of fundamentalism, the phenomenon of Bhindranwale, Hindu fundamentalism, Sangh Pariwar, Muslim fundamentalism. These are the themes in his newspaper columns and in other writings.

Khushwant Singh is a rationalist at heart and his approach towards life and in all matters is essentially liberal. He is intellectually committed to pluralism and multiculturalism. Singh's contribution to India's multicultural ethos is significant. The renowned historian Mushirul Hasan says; "Some people may have complaints about Khushwant Singh. Yet, they would find it difficult to deny that this man has done so much to enrich our cultural and intellectual life for well over three decades. As an outsider to the capital of India, it is hard to think of Delhi without him." [14]

In *Train to Pakistan,* Bhai meet Singh, the priest read out lines from the holy book when Jugga had gone over to seek Guru's blessings for his sacrifice. Writing on Khushwant Singh's art and technique, V.A. Shahane says:

> Khushwant Singh's art and technique of fiction show several notable features: his use of rhythm, especially of the train; his sensitive depiction of atmosphere,...his excellent portrayal of characters 'round' rather than 'flat', the exploration of their human context; his natural and almost effortless presentation of point of view through situation and character designed to convey the final significance of the novel.[15]

Khushwant Singh is able to convey serious issues in a simple style. His fiction edifies and widens one's awareness. One of the writer's close

friends, writer and member of the National Commission for Women, Syeda Saiyiddain Hameed, sums up his attitude towards religion well:

> I regard him as close to Islam as to Hinduism, to Sikhism, and to Christianity. He treats all religions with the same reverence and irreverence. He owns at least six different translations of the Quran. He has done the most fascinating work with the Sikh scriptures. He can not stand a fanatic nor can he stand a person without humour. Of prudes he is most intolerant."[16]

The writer constantly supports the cause of Indo-Pakistan relations. He believes that literary and cultural exchange between the two countries can be of utmost use to the betterment of Indo-Pakistan ties. The writer's periodic visits to Pakistan have been instrumental in bridging the cultural gap and removing the political differences between the two countries.

Referring to the questions raised at the Press Conference after the screening of the film version of *Train to Pakistan* directed by Pamela Rooks at the International Film Festival in New Delhi (11-20 January 1998), Khushwant Singh made the following comments on Partition which seem to be very pertinent even today i.e. sixty two years after the unfortunate tragedy:

> Should the partition be forgotten ? Has it any relevance to us today? My answer to both the questions is an emphatic yes. We must not forget the partition because it is relevant today. We must remember that it did infact happen and can happen

> again. That is why I keep reminding people who clamour for an independent Kashmir, Khalistan or Nagaland to remember what happened to Muslims when some of them asked for a separate Muslim state. I keep telling my fellow Sikhs that the worst enemies of Khalsa Panth are Khalistanis, and of the Nagas those who ask for an independent Nagaland. Reminding ourselves of what happened in 1947 and realizing the possibilities of its recurring, we should resolve that we will never let it happen again.[17]

Khushwant Singh admires the likes of Mother Teresa – spiritually minded people whose mission in life is to better the lot of their fellow human beings, especially the poor and the deprived. Singh has crossed 90, he still continues writing regular columns for newspaper and magazines. But more than money or recognition, it is the sense of fulfillment that writing gives him. He did not get it practicing law, diplomacy or teaching. The writer hopes to do so till the pen drops out of his hand. A critical appreciation of Singh written in the *Indian Express* by Mushirul Hasan, an academic, judges Singh as a person and as a writer as well:

> But, all said and done, he has kept intact his image of an iconoclast and a nonconformist. That is because he questions conventional wisdom incessantly, challenges political and religious orthodoxies fearlessly (for which he

> got into trouble with the high priests in the Akali leadership), and flouts established norms and time-honoured conventions, relentlessly. Yet, he is not self-righteous as the late Nirad C. Chaudhuri was. Besides, he is tolerant, eclectic, and intellectually committed to pluralism and multi-culturism. He is the quintessential liberal, one of the dwindling tribe in India of today and I find his outlook much closer to Jawaharlal Nehru's worldview than that of any other public figure in the 20th century.[18]

Khushwant Singh exposes so called religious and superstitious beliefs, expressing disillusionments about man's rationality. Being a postcolonial writer, he has disclosed the drawbacks of the government system through his short stories. The partition made Punjabi writers more self-conscious of their social responsibilities. Perhaps no other state in India felt the sorrows of Partition than did Punjab. Through his writings, Khushwant Singh has tried to fulfill his duty as a writer. In *Train to Pakistan,* a hint at disillusionment regarding post-colonial milieu is made. However, he avoids making his writings harsh and too moralistic. He has always taken pride in his Sikh origin, by growing unshorn hair and a beard according to the Sikh tradition and by wearing a turban.

Khushwant Singh is an artist in human relations. He deftly probes into the human psyche. He is a keen observer of human behaviour as well as the human mind. He upholds human values like love, sacrifice, forgiveness, patience, tolerance with the aim to propagate and inculcate

them in his countrymen. Khushwant Singh is the writer who places humanity before a personal quest for salvation. In the words of Warren French, "Singh's terse fable suggests a profound disillusionment with the power of law, reason, and intellect in the face of elemental human passions…. Singh is a brilliant, sardonic observer of a world undergoing convulsive changes; and his novels provide a unique insight into one of the major political catastrophes of this country."[19]

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SUMMARY

In the thesis entitled *Treatment of History in the Works of Khushwant Singh,* an attempt has been made to explore Khushwant Singh's art of portraying history through his works. Khushwant Singh who has become a legend in his lifetime, is among the subcontinent's most prolific historians, critics and creative writers. While his two-volume *History of the Sikhs* is accepted as a scholarly work, his novel *Train to Pakistan* has won him international acclaim. For his contribution to art, literature and culture, he was presented with "Punjab Ratan" award by the Chief Minister of Punjab.

Khushwant Singh has remained true to his Indian roots. Most of the books that the writer has written are on Punjab, politics and religion. It is his journalistic writings and his two weekly columns, "With Malice towards One and All" and "Gossip Sweet and Sour" that have contributed towards his immense popularity. He is among the first Indian writers who put Indo-Anglian literature on the International literary map. The partition of India gave the author the excuse to leave law and join the foreign office. It was during his posting at Ottawa that he began his foray in the world of fiction.

With the publication of his first novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956) that the critics heralded the 'arrival of Khushwant Singh' on the contemporary literary scene. At the time of Partition, the author was greatly moved by the harrowing events during those turbulent days. The

Partition of the country attracted Singh's attention to the profession of writing. The first subject for the writer in the field of writing, was on the partition, and the other on his own community.

Khushwant Singh has treated certain aspects of religion in his novel and short stories by delving in to historical events. Through his short stories the novelist tries to unveil the hypocrisy behind most religions. He advises people to give up mindless superstition and pointless rituals. His novel *Train to Pakistan* reveals the inherent unity among the people of Mano Majra in spite of religious differences. The novel also cautions us against the man-made distinctions of religion which cause great harm to the country and the countrymen. In *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*, firm faith in religion is shown to provide guidance to a family at the time of crisis. In *Delhi,* the novelist focuses upon how closely religion is intertwined with the history and polity of the nation. Religion is shown to be one of the important factors that have shaped the destiny of India over the centuries.

The purpose of the present thesis is to study how Khushwant Singh has fulfilled the social obligation of a writer by highlighting the ills that plague society. Through his writings the novelist has motivated people to overcome them. This has been done in an objective manner. The fiction writer has described the atrocities perpetuated by the two communities upon each other should serve as a lesson to all people so that such horrors could not take place ever again. In his novel, *Delhi* the killing of Sikhs in 1984 is also described by the author. In *Delhi*, it is

evident that no period of Indian history has remained untouched by the question of religion. Religion used for political purposes leads to a loss of countless innocent lives.

The format of my thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter I, *Introduction*, studies how some basic economic and social changes formed the background to the fictional works of the creative artists in English. They portrayed the lives of the middle class people and their joys and sorrows. Their themes were based on experience and observation which were described in a foreign language. The emergence of the historical and the social realistic novel in Indian fiction in English is also affected by the rise of Nationalist Movement. The novelists who have been influenced by this movement invoked the feelings of nationalism in common man through their works. Chapter-I highlights the several factors that influenced the writer in his literary career. It also deals with the characteristics of the historical novel.

In the second chapter, *A Historical Perspective,* we find that the Indo-Anglian fiction writers whose mother-tongue is not generally English, have written their novels and stories in this language to give expression to their Nationalist Spirit. The chapter also draws our attention to the growth and development of Nationalism in India. One aspect of Nationalism is the spirit of self-assertion and another aspect is the glorification of the past which helps in learning lessons for the present.

Chapter III *Train to Pakistan*, deals with the theme of partition in the novel. The author has given the pathetic picture of the bestial horrors enacted on the Indo-Pakistan border during the days of 1947. A train-load of massacred men, women and children give a realistic portrayal of the Partition turmoil. The train is a powerful symbol in the novel which is the cause behind the loss of humanistic values. The fiction writer projects Mano Majrans as contented and calm while most of the other villages in the country were under the influence of communalism. We find that there is always a humanistic concern in the novel. Khushwant Singh has been successful in his realistic portrayal of those turbulent days. The writer has presented reality through symbols and images. He has succeeded in communicating to his readers the ghastliness of the partition tragedy. The novelist also depicts how religion is exploited by many for serving their own purpose. Being a believer of humanism, Singh has faith in the goodness of man during the time of crises. The novelist has also commented on the part played by the educated people of the country making an irony of the freedom movement. Singh has skillfully made use of nature in the novel. He portrays different types of human relationships with complete authenticity. Khushwant Singh has put in a few elements of humour in the novel to add to the total effect of the story.

Chapter IV *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*, introduces us to the colonial encounter between Indians and the British Government against the backdrop of the Punjab. The novel does not directly deal with

political issues throughout the novel. The writer has tried to give a very microscopic picture of the Punjabi life in the novel.

Sabhrai, the wife of Buta Singh, the seniormost magistrate, is the most important character in the novel. She is a woman with religious mind. Her life is devoted to her family, looking after the needs of every member. In the novel, Buta Singh represents the colonised mind while her son Sher Singh represents the indomitable will of the ruled. He refuses to accept the myth of the 'whiteman's burden'. Khushwant Singh describes in the novel the post-colonial theory. We find that the British coloniser succeeded in invading the mind of the colonised through the character of Buta Singh who considers it to be a matter of pride to be a loyal follower of the British.

In the fifth chapter *Delhi*, the novelist reconstructs the history of Delhi. Khushwant Singh in his typical realistic style unveils all the gory incidents that have made up the story of Delhi. Bhagmati, the *hijra*, is an interesting character that intensifies the sterility prevailing among the higher strata of life. In the caricature of Mahatma Gandhi and in the fictionalisation of his assassination the novelist points out the corrupting influence of evil of bigotry and violence on the young minds as seen in the person of Mahatma's assassin. Being a secular Indian, Singh's view of history and society is balanced. The novel has nine historical chapters, seven are monologues of ordinary men- Musaddi Lal Kayastha, a government official living in the reigns of Ghiasuddin Balban and his successors; Jaita Rangreta, an untouchable living in the reigns of Shan

Jahan and Aurangzeb; Meer Taqi Meer, a poet living in the turbulent period of later Mughals marking Nadir Shah and Abdali's invasions; some of the representative characters of the revolt of 1857 – Alice Aldwell, a British lady, Bahadur Shah Zafar and a Sikh soldier Nihal Singh who fought for the Britishers. The political events of the early twentieth century in "The Builders", the plight of the refugees in "The Dispossessed" and finally the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the killing of Sikhs are narrated by the author – narrator himself. Only three chapters are allotted to historical personages like Taimur, Aurangzeb, Nadir Shah. It is a common feature of *Delhi* to have a narrator for each chapter. The novel progresses with descriptions of subsequent invasions on Delhi. Each invader seems to have his own explanation for what seems such inhuman actions. There are some instances of a somewhat crude type of humour in one of the "Bhagmati" chapters.

The novelist ensures that the story does not suffer from any kind of communal generalisation in the hands of the narrators in the novel. The novelist is aware of the current political condition. It is evident that he tries to warn readers of the disastrous consequences of linking religion with politics. He has described in the novel how India was invaded many times and invaders exploited the religious faiths of the people of different communities. This proves fatal to maintaining peace and integrity for the country and its countrymen.

The Chapter *Short Stories*, *Essays and Articles* gives Khushwant Singh's views on politics. In his stories he mostly writes about the

corrupt practices that flourish in the various departments, obviously due to the lack of political will to solve them. There are some stories that put across Singh's views regarding the various superstitious practices inherent in Hinduism. Khushwant Singh also highlights communalism as the root cause for the loss of peace and safety of the society. We find that the writer tries to tell us how the person is instigated to any extent owing to adherance to their own religious faiths. Such people become the cause for ruining the law and peace of society as is depicted in the short stories "The Riot" and "The Great Difference." In his essays the writer has focused on the divide and rule policy of the British with which the British conquered India. Through his articles he also highlights various political issues influencing the fate of the country and its people.

To sum up Khushwant Singh is judged as a writer who has motivated the people of the country in an objective manner to overcome the ills that plague Indian society. His advice is that instead of following religious practices we should believe in our true selves and fulfill our responsibilities as citizens of the country by not discriminating against people of other religions. The author reminds us that the event of the partition was catastrophic for the integrity of the country and therefore should not be repeated again.