Chapter VII

Conclusion
Khushwant Singh has established himself as a distinguished artist in social realism. He is a short story writer, a novelist and a social and religious historian. He became better known with the publication of his first novel, *Train to Pakistan* in 1956 and it was awarded the Grove Press India Fiction Prize. It successfully records the real life in India. As 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 splendor of man’s sacrifice for woman."¹

His second novel *I shall not Hear the Nightingale* is about the joys and sorrows of a joint Sikh family. It deals with the nationalist movement recording the reactions of the manyho of the characters to the freedom struggle of 1942. The novel very subtly portrays the distinction between love and
hate in one's fight against an alien Government. This is an exciting novel. The Indian fiction in English began with the phenomenal movement of social realism. Mulk Raj Anand, Manohar Malgonkar and Khushwant Singh are its chief representatives. Mulk Raj Anand is the spokesman of the downtrodden; Malgonkar uses his real life experiences in his novels while Khushwant Singh portrays the life around him with its realistic details. The factors that bind these three novelists together are themes, characters, events and the use of language.

These three novelists namely Anand, Malgonkar and Khushwant Singh deal with the realistic themes. Untoubhacle deals with the rigidity of caste system. Coolie is about the tyranny of class system. The Princes depicts the princely way of life. Train to Pakistan deals mainly with the aftermath of the partition and I shall not hear the Nightingale presents the real picture of a Sikh joint family. Though, the themes are
different, they are realistic. Except for Abhay, all heroes (Bakha, Munoo, Jugga) are the ordinary men and they are anti-heroes. The characters are realistic and life like. These heroes including Abhay symbolically represent their class.

The events that these novelists picture in their novels are realistic and they can be seen in real life. In *Untouchable* Bakha is not allowed to enter the temple. The evil is prevalent in most of the villages even today. A coolie has been exploited by the owners even in real life. The princes leading a life of sensuality is an instance of real incident. The ghostly train getting a load of dead bodies is an example of real event. The brutal atrocities of the police on the arrested persons are instances of real events. They find their parallels in real life. These novelists use language keeping in view with the characters and situation that the real people in society do so. The above mentioned novels are soaked in social realism. In
terms of Characters, situations and language these novelists
made their novels inescapably realistic.

From the elaborate discussion of Khushwant Singh, the
man and writer, and the vision and art in his novels, it is
clearly that Khushwant Singh is both a very lively and
interesting personality as well as a great novelist. He combines
experience with imagination in his novels. One of the points of
a continued interest in him is that he is always surrounded by
certain controversies. He has been acclaimed as an aggressive
writer, a satirist, an iconoclast, a drunkard and a womanizer
etc. But beneath all these levels Khushwant Singh is a
sensitive man with a positive attitude and an artist with a
realistic vision.

The approach in this concluding part of this thesis is to
refute certain labels on Khushwant Singh as underserve and
to confirm the view put in the beginning that Khushwant
Singh is basically an artist and a novelist par excellence, not less than any Indian novelist writing in English.

There has been an oft quoted charge on Khushwant Singh that his language is pornographic. The novels like *Delhi* and *The Company of Woman* contain passages dealing with naked sex and hence at times the language turns to be pornographic. Even in *I shall not hear the Nightingale* which is called a serious novel there are such passages. Shunno the maid servant in the house of Buta Singh meets Peer Sahib to get cured of her some imagined ailments and has sex with Peer Sahib several times. Again there is nothing like artistic cover when Champak is completely naked before the glass:

"Her hair feels to the point at which her buttocks rose like softly rounded water melous. There were dimples on either side of her rear waist. She turned round once more, inhaled deeply and lifted her breast with the palms of her hands and them ran her fingers round her nipples"
till they became rounded like berries... she studied her 
face and figures in all the postures she had seen in 
photographs of nude models."²

In Delhi Khushwant Singh is more naked in description of sex. The narrator describes his experiments with Georgine:

"I ran my fingers up and down her lower arm. She
watched them till goose pimples came up there after all I
had to do was to put my arm around her waist, draw her
towards me and smother her lips, eyes, nose, ears and
neck with kisses. She moaned helplessly. I slipped my
hand under her Kamiji and played with her taut nipples,
and then I undid her pyjama accord and slipped my
fingers between the damp thighs. A little gentle
ministration with the hand made her convulse and she
climaxed groaning O God! O God!"³

Similar language when Begum Sahiba, the wife of Nawb
Rais has sex with the poet Meer Taqui Meer:
"Without bothering to blow out the lamp, she shed her clothes, stripped mine off my body and put her arms around me ... she pushed me quietly on the bed and spread herself over me. Her thighs were moist as dew on a rose bud on a summer morning ... After a while she began to moan, and with a shudder that shook her entire frame, collapsed drenched in sweat."

The pornographic language at places in Delhi is so obvious that even Baljit Malik, the nephew of Khushwant Singh fails to defend his uncle. Sex has been blended into almost all stories and novels of Khushwant Singh but in Delhi it is purely naked. He writes:

"However, his treatment of sex or rather misuse of it, in the novel, Delhi was as sad as far as I am concerned and foul according to many others. I was saddened because his diversion into pornography between chapters only
marred what I thought was an otherwise brilliant historical novel."

The Company of Women seems to be more pornographic according to morality oriented readers and critics. Mohan Kumar is seen having sexual intercourse with several women but one instance is quoted to show how Khushwant Singh is quite unhesitant in his nude painting with pen. Mohan Kumar describes his sex with Molly Gomes:

"Molly got up from her arm chair and came over to me without another word she slipped her blues over her head and undid her bra two beautiful rounded breasts with black nipples emerged. She rested her arms on my shoulders and put up her mouth. I ghered my lips to hers and fondled her breasts with my warm hands. She unbuckled her skirt and let it drop to the ground, then undid my belt, pulled down my trousers and felt my pennies ... Indeed she effortlessly slipped my organ into
her vagina ... I began to pump into her. She crossed her legs behind my back and heaved up each time. I plunged down. 'Harder' she cried 'For God's sake, don't stop, she screamed.'

Dilip Padgaonkar in his review of The Company of Women defends this novel from being pornographic and writes, "Pornography attempts to do more than present explicit erotic material with the singular purpose of arousing the reader sexually "but", by o stretch of imagination can Khushwant Singh be described as an erotic novelist." But all such efforts become futile and they are unable to absolve of the charges of pornographic language in action.

The beauty and charm of Khushwant's stories and novels is this openness and frankness in the matters of sex. He ridienles those who hesitate to be open on sex though inside they love to read and relish. One of the reasons of Khushwant Singh's popularity is his love for frankness. The circulation of
The Illustrated Weekly touched a great height when Khushwant Singh became its editor and started giving nude pictures.\(^8\)

Khushwant Singh’s reading public has increased due to the fact that he knows what the people want to get. M.V. Kamath, the one time editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India writes: “Khushwant Singh has always been readable, he was always known how to titillate the readers’ interest in ways that I could never emulate.”\(^9\) Khushwant Singh reads the pulse of the public interest. He is very sensitive to the changes in taste and attitude of the people. He also knows the taste of the young generation. It is in this context that sex has crept into writings of Khushwant Singh. Jug Suraiya rightly points out:

"Khushwant Singh's phenomenal success as a columnist and writer springs from a most unwriterly
virtue, he writes for the reader, not for himself. He has the knack of seeming to speak directly to the reader..."\textsuperscript{10}

There are some more reasons of Khushwant Singh's popularity as a writer. He has a knack of mixing humour in his language and this quality draws the readers to his writings. Even the iconoclast in him is seldom aggressive and blunt. There is generosity and spontaneity in his dealings with others. Masooma Ali’s comments are very perceptive on Khushwant Singh’s innate goodness both as a man and as a writer:

"There are a number of things about Khushwant Singh which people have noticed, savoured and written about. I personally have been most influenced by his essential human warmth and his sunny temperament. Another one of his outstanding qualities is his instinctive understanding of and sensitivity to, people he knows."\textsuperscript{11}
Shobha De who is frank and straight forward in dealing with sex, observes:

"Khushwant Singh is really a nice man to know, a very nice man, in fact."\(^{12}\)

One of the most important things which emerge from his stories and novels and which must be added here is that he is a great humanist. He is disturbed to see men behaving not as man. His satire comes out from his deep love for humanity. In *Train to Pakistan* his purpose is not to highlight and glorify the mass killing during the partition of India but to show that humanity is still alive. Jugga who is called budmash and a declared criminal saves the whole train full of Muslim refugees going to Pakistan. The novel registers a victory of human love and selfless sacrifice which Khushwant Singh wants to be practiced. Khushwant Singh is a novelist with a positive vision and profound human love.
Once, his own grand daughter put him a question, "Nanna are you really a womanizer?" when her teacher called him so in a class. Mr. Singh was not surprised or shocked to hear his grand daughter but him most confidently writes: "Unfortunately it is not a true portrayal. I am not a drunkard; I have never been drunk even once in the over fifty years I have been drinking. And though some women have come into my life as they do in the lives of most men, I have never made unwelcome passes at them, nor been snubbed or slapped for taking undue liberties with any. As a matter of fact, though I am nothing to look at, it is women who have sought my company more than I have sought theirs."14

Rahul Singh almost supporting his father’s views speaks in the same tone, when he says that his father has never been "a philandering womanizer." He further adds that he is a most conservative person. Khushwant Singh himself reveals:
"All I can say in my defence is that I have penned my impressions of people, places and events as objectively and truthfully as I can."\textsuperscript{16}

To a question by Masooma Ali as to how he manages to acquire the image of a man with a supercharged libido, who drink all the time and loves to shock people's religious belief. Mr. Singh replies "I am responsible for that image. I love shocking people. And I am an agnostic. Nothing shocks us Indians more than talk about sex and mocking religion. I do both."\textsuperscript{17}

It is this iconoclast in Khushwant Singh who is present in his writings which are rich in satires and humour. But at the same time Khushwant Singh is basically a novelist and there is a fusion of his vision and form in his novels. Another point about his novels is that they are all autobiographical and each novel is a testimony to his life experiences. Like a good craftsman Khushwant Singh creates very suitable
imaginative situations to render the events in his novels. In **Train to Pakistan** Mano Majra becomes a symbol of India and the Train to Pakistan becomes a functional metaphor of life and death. The conflict in the family of Buta Singh has been most artistically unfolded as the theme of **I shall not Hear the Nightingale.** Delhi offers a big canvas for a large number of characters to have their roles. The novel has a well-organized structure and the relations between characters and the plot are inseparable. The technical excellence of **Delhi** lies in the narrative style. The novelist adopts first person narrative to make the story more convincing. But there are so many narrators as there are so many characters. The novelist uses what Forster calls shifting view points to look at a thing from many angles. While talking of the use and benefit of "shifting view points" or "bounced narrative" E.M. Forster writes:
"A novelist can shift his view-point if it comes off, and it came off with Dickens and Tolstoy. Indeed this power to expound and contract perception of which the shifting view point is a symptom, this right to intermittent knowledge. I find it one of the great advantages of the novel-forms and it has a paralleled in our perception of life."  

In Delhi each narrator has a different view point and this variety in narrative modes make the story more lively and interesting. Obvisously, the technical excellence of Delhi lies in its deft use-of-narrative stance.  

Despite certain charges of pornographic language especially in Delhi and The Company of Women Khushwant Singh is essentially artist. His descriptions of sex at places are due to the demand of the situations. He has no hypocrisy and cannot tolerate hypocrisy in others. But there are many passages in his novels where he crates beautiful and artistic
objective correlative. In *I shall not Hear the Nightingale*, the novelist describes the earth as a heated woman and sky the male symbol pouring heavy rain to fulfil the earth's physical hunger. He elaborates poetry in prose with an elaborate simile in action. It is a beautiful poem on copulation in nature which is a functional metaphor of meeting of man and woman in sex.

To sum up, Khushwant Singh is really a literary genius. Surbhi Banerjee's views are very pertinent and perceptive:

"Khushwant Singh is the only creative writer I have known who can quip about his own creations with malice as well as modesty. He is the solitary Indian author who has been writing in English for over four decades and who is capable of playing down his achievements. ... is first and foremost a consummate creative artist, a conscious craftsman, a master of medium, a first rate creative writer who has produced outstanding works like *Train to..."
Pakistan, I shall not Hear the Nightingale and above all, an immortal classic like Delhi." 

REFERENCES


4. Ibid. pp. 204-205.

5. A Man called Khushwant Singh, VBS PD, New Delhi, 1996, p. 27.


10. Ibid. p. 94.

11. Ibid. p. 104.


13. Ibid. p. 8.

14. Ibid.


