Chapter II
Making of the Novelist
In this chapter, an effort has been made to understand and interpret the novelist's vision. His *Train to Pakistan* is a combination of various strains. Humour, violence, cruel events and torture all lend it a tinge of the 'picaresque' novel. The anti-hero Jugga plays a dual role of the creator and the destroyer. The novelist tries to recapture a certain period in history but he does not succeed in giving it the features of a historical novel. Though thrills, excitements and suspense make it a novel of adventure, the horror gives it the appearance of a terror novel. Predominant is the element of parochialism for which Khushwant Singh chooses a certain locale and the characters inherit qualities particular to that area.

Sardar Khushwant Singh made his debut as a writer more by accident than by choice. But for the compulsive inner urge he felt as "an angry middle - aged man"¹ to let out his disenchantedment with 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 Indian and Pakistan in August 1947, he would have perhaps continued to philander with legal profession or diplomatic assignment in the Indian foreign Service.

The harrowing incidents of 1947 had shaken the faith of all the sensitive and thinking people of India in the intrinsic nobility of man, taught by its sages and saints, including Mahatma Gandhi, during various stages of its cultural evolution of thousands of years. They brought great disillusionment and crisis of values in the life of Khushwant Singh also. Describing his mental agony and distressing inner conflict of this period of disillusionment, he remarks:

"The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the
history of the country... I had believed that we Indians were peace-loving and non-violent, that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became ... an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world ... I decided to try my hand at writing."²

Train to Pakistan is, however, a classic in the post-independence Indian English fiction not only because of the bold, brutal and unsclenting realism with which it tears asunder the mask of hypocrisy and exposes the sordidness and savagery of human life, but also because of the novelist's optimistic and affirmative world view that emerges from it, his 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.
This heroic spirit of man is revealed in the novel not by men who are considered religious and respectable in the public and supposed to have innate goodness but by a man like Jugga who is treated as a confirmed ruffian, "budmash number ten." When powerful and potential authority of the land sulks in indifference and inactivity, religious priests cower in timidity, and the best of political and rational ideologies recoil in fright, it is Jugga, the deviant, who combats the forces of darkness and sacrifices himself selflessly to save innocent lives threatened by the planned Mano Majra massacre. Describing Jugg's indubious moral stature, Khushwant Singh writes:

*I thought it was time one 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 that I stuffed with the so-called innate goodness of man, and he is the only character which is entirely fiction.*
Khushwant Singh is one of India's distinguished men of letters with an international reputation. A brief account of his achievement as a novelist, short-story writer, historian, essayist, sketchiest, journalist and editor are sufficient to establish him in Indian writing in English as a versatile genius. His presentation of the real and the comic makes him stand as a pillar and peers among modern Indian writers on subjects of concern to contemporary man.

As a novelist he is famous for **Train to Pakistan** (1956) and **I shall Not Hear the Nightingale** (1959). Three factors shaped Khushwant Singh the man and the artist. He spent his childhood in the village of his birth in Punjab. He admits: "My roots are in the dunghill of a tiny Indian village." Then he went to school in Delhi and Lahore where he graduated: "I grew up in the Indo-Anglian atmosphere of New Delhi." Later he went abroad, first to England and then to Japan, the
Khushwant Singh is what his British education made him, a cultured humanist. He is the product of both East and the West. The Punjab countryside, Urban Delhi, and the liberal, the sophisticated city of London are the three dominant factors that influenced Khushwant Singh. Thus exposed to the ideas and attitudes of the West, Mr. Singh is essentially an orientalist in outlook who has Indian self and individuality of personality. His journey is not without travails and tribulations, it is ceaseless quest for identity which is reflected through the medium of his literary career and art.

Khushwant Singh’s creative urge as a novelist, short-story, writer, historian and essayist have been the gradual achievements of self-expression and a continuous search for self-seeking. Though his mind and personality as a whole have been moulded by western education and culture, he is at
heart a Sikh and a pure Indian. He values Indian art and
culture and is deeply rooted in the soil. His writing has grown
out of the grass roots of the social milieu as his experience of
rural India is the base of his creative endeavour. He has
portrayed India both as an outsider and an insider. On his art
of fiction Anthony Burgers comments:

\[ \text{The most notable writer from the Punjab is} \]
\[ \text{undoubtedly the Sikh Khushwant Singh, whose I shall not} \]
\[ \text{Hear the Nightingale is a fine Chronicle of life in a Sikh} \]
\[ \text{community in the period 1942-43. We have here a} \]
\[ \text{formidable novelist who writes too little.} \]

Once, Khushwant Singh described himself as a writer of
history and fiction. He submitted that while historian called
his history books mere fiction, critics felt that his fiction
appeared to be heavy going history: “I write about the people I
detest most, he asserted.” On the fundamental quality of
Khushwant Singh, V.V. Shahane Writes:
Although Singh's consciousness appears to range from fiction to journalism certain basic qualities govern his creative talent and characterize the development of his art. His writings, critical as well as creative, fall into a pattern which emerges from, and is imperceptibly linked with, the primary characteristics of his creative mind.9

For Khushwant Singh comedy is a social corrective and in this perspective it is clear that in his fiction the comic is linked with social and moral values. He identifies his objects with moral intentions. Laughter has always formed an integral part of the comic, thus his fiction has comic inner motivation and an effective source of laughter. It is an affirmative, positive and vital aspect of his comic vision.

Khushwant Singh did not become a full time writer by choice; had no such intention. The decision to write came to him when he found something compelling to write about. It was the time of partition which greatly moved him. The
harrowing events and turbulent days drastically changed his outlook to life. His faith in the nobility of human race was shattered and finally decided to try his hand at writing.

Mano Majra, a small village in the Punjab, serves at the fictional setting of *Train to Pakistan*. It is situated on the India-Pakistan border, half a mile away from the river Sutlej. Though the frontier area has become a scene of rioting and bloodshed, life in Mano Majra remains to be peaceful. Partition does not even mean much to Mano Majra: "no one in Mano Majra even Knowles that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan."

*I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) is the second novel by Khushwant Singh. It has basic structure of social and political narrative. It is essentially a social and human document, a story of two families one Sikh and the other Hindu. It covers the Period from April, 1942 to April, 1943. Its range is limited and the canvas restricted, the form and
structure are both conventional and traditional. The mode of presentation, plot construction, characterization, setting, situation and climax are entirely conventional.

As a short story writer Khushwant Singh follows and practices the art of the short story in its early twentieth century mould and narrative form. His stories show a distinct narrative structure and a traditional development of the Plot. The action and episode dominate the stories. The plot is based on the conflict or crises in character and situation. The development of action is sequential. It is marked by progression in time rather than in space. The action unfolds in a series of complications to create suspense and curiosity. A conflict in situation and characters is created, developed and resolved through a succession of scenes and the resolution brings out the point of the story. It is sometimes revealing. The development is linear and the design
geometrical, but the lines move to find the ultimate point of resolution.

The first collection of his stories The Voice of God and **Other Stories** (1967) is marked by both verbal irony and by irony of situation. It is the story of the people of two villages in the Punjab, Bhamakalan and Bhama Khurd. There is nothing important that happens in these villages. **A Bride for the Sahib** and **Other Stories** (1957) is his second collection of stories. These stories bring out intense human predicament, temperamental, social and marital dissonance. The predominant quality of Khushwant Singh as a short story writer is his comic spirit. He is never attracted to the philosophy of existentialism or any philosophical approach.

To this aspect of his stories V.A. Shahane writes:

"His short stories communicate elements of experience in which darkness is distilled into light and in which the comic in creatively transmuted into essence."10
Some of his important stories are 'The Mark of Vishnu', 'The Butterfly', 'The Insurance Agent', 'The Morning After the Night Before', 'The Maiden Voyage to Jal Hindia', 'The Constipated Frenchman', 'Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle', 'Rats and Cats in the House of Culture', 'Kusum', 'The Great Difference', 'The Riot', 'The Man with Clear Conscience', 'The Rape', 'A Punjab Pastoral', 'A Town called Aflice', 'Memsahib of Mandla', 'A Love Affair in London' and 'Posthumous'. The compression of a maximum of life within a minimum of space is an essential element of Mr. Singh's short stories. He is twon in one a humoruist and a realist. His gentle irony makes it more interesting. There is plenty of sardomic wit and knowledge of people and their circumstances but no nonsense anywhere. Irony is his mode of statement and sometimes the total effect of the story is ironic. The story writer succeeds in comprehending and expressing the incongruitities and complesities of life.
Khushwant Singh exhibits a genuine faith in the humanistic ideal in *Train to Pakistan*. Some novelists are contented to depict simply the sordid actualities of life, but Khushwant Singh goes deeper and deeper in ethical humanism that regulates his portraiture of the real and the actual. The novel is not simply on realistic track, it is a record of actual events, people and places. It reaffirms the novelist's faith in man and his commitment to the humanistic ideal. He creates Juggut Singh like character that lies down his life for the woman he loves and adores. Hukum Chand, the humanistic bureaucrat is the preserver, where as Iqbal Singh, the communist, is the destroyer, Juggut Singh plays a dual role of creator and destroyer. He destroys only to create again and thus symbolizes the triumph of good over evil within himself as well as the concept of renewal. His soul, like that of the phoenix, rises from its ashes only to proclaim that atleast
his **Train to Pakistan** is a symbol of hope and light in the cruel world of darkness and despair.

Though Jugga occupies a central place in the novel, he cannot claim to be the real hero of the novel. Mano Majra is more dominant character than Juggat Singh. It is of greater importance than Hukum Chand and Iqbal Singh. The cosmos created by the novelist shows the individual more important because he is part of vaster and greater reality of man and nature. The fate of the individual is closely connected with what is in store for his community and religion. Juggat Singh has his own self and his own free will but at least for a time, he becomes part of the train and is overrun by it. His will is not, of course, weak, but his thinking is native. As such he suffers quietly and heroically. Jugga establishes himself in our hearts by his Supreme self sacrifice. He is neither satanic nor Machiavellian. He is truly an uncouth Indian rustic. He is
seen caught in the evil but he struggles out of it and gets spiritual reclamation.

Juggut Singh is notoriously known as Jugga, the badmash no\textsuperscript{10} but at moments he shows a degree of deep self awareness. He embodies that rare combination of the criminal and the lover, which is a baffling aspect of the realisties and complexities of life. He combines the ambivalence of moral values. His nature is split between earthly brutality and passionate love. He represents a significant aspect of the novelist’s view of man hopelessly divided between good and evil, noble and ignoble, sacred and profane.

The novelist paints jugga as a humanist in his final act of sacrifice, the waves of feelings and expectations in his mind. Before his final act of sacrifice we see the Sub-Inspector carrying out the orders at once by releasing both Iqbal and Jugga. He purposefully informs Jugga that all Mano Majra Muslims were to be evacuated to Pakistan by train that night.
They were also told of Malli's misdeeds and looting and killing Muslims. Iqbal dreamed of being a hero consequent upon his being in Jail. Jugga's main concern was the fate of Nooran and her welfare. He jumped off the moving Tonga and disappeared in the darkness. His arrival at a late hour at the Gurudwara to seek the blessings of the Guru underscores to seek the duality in his character. He asked Meet Singh: "I went the Guru's word. Will you read me a verse?" In compliance of his wishes, Meet Singh read the prayer that God, the Giver of Truth, honours the works of men who want to perform good actions.

For Meet Singh indulgence in immoral practices could be overlooked if it was motivated by the desire to help and protect a friend. He was neither horrified by the ugly act that Jugga was a professional robber or dacoit but he was shocked by his alleged action of murdering a fellow villager. Fellowship was
more important than blind adherence to an abstract moral code.

Since Jugga had no part in the crime of Ram Lal’s murder his conscience was clear. His mother, who was shaken by his arrest, produced a packet of broken bangles which had been thrown by Malli soon after the dacoity. The police did not accept the broken bangle as an evidence of Jugga’s innocence, nor did Jugga reveal to them the place he had gone to or the person whom he had met. He left home without showing a trace of emotion for his mother. He also recovered his temper because he had no malice or ill will toward the policeman. The novelist describes the situation with a sense of humour which appears almost psychic release: it was like a procession of horses with an elephant in their midst - taller, broader, and slower, with his chains clanking like ceremonial trappings.
Khushwant Singh is a witness to the holocaust that followed woke of partition of the country. It was really the bloodiest upheavals of our history that took countless innocent lives and loss of property. The novel *Train to Pakistan* is the result of his sense of guilt that he had done nothing to save the lives of the innocent people. The internal tensions provide the novelist fruitful areas of characters and situations, particularly the ability to present a situation with down to earth worldliness and to reveal the tragic in the actualities of life.

After all, Khushwant Singh is known worldwide a historian of the Sikhs. *A History of the Sikhs* is his first attempt to tell the story of the Sikhs from their inception of the present day. He had made judicious use of extensive researches in this area. It includes study of original, unpublished documents and historical records. It carries the central concept underlying the origin and growth of Sikh
religion in India. In this book of history Khushwant Singh gives out moral, cultural, religious and national expressions. The story of the Sikhs in India, he writes, “is the story of the rise, fulfillment and collapse of Punjabi nationalism.” Thus it is a testament of national self-expression. Their race, language, culture, religion, growth of social and moral ethos-contribute to the making of the history of Sikhs. It has become the powerful expression of their cultural consciousness and collective achievement. It is detailed and comprehensive with an account of rise and fall of Sikh’s religion.

As a historian, Khushwant Singh, presents a comprehensive account of the reasons and results of the birth of the Sikh religion under the dynamic spiritual leadership of Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1538), the founder of a new faith.

Khushwant Singh describes Guru Nanak as the king of Holy Men in the Punjab. He emphasized the doctrine of action or Karma Yoga as a way of life. This has impact on the Sikhs
all over the world. It is clear that the Sikh religion has great
deal in common with Hinduism. The institution of ten Sikh
Gurus is an essential element of the Sikh faith. Khushwant
Singh traces out in detail the Sikh's theological belief, forces
and expansion of Sikhims. He explores how under the
inspiring and militant leadership of Guru Goyind Singh a new
people were born in the Punjab: bearded, beturband, bangled,
fully armed with Kirpan with crusader like zeal and how they
were able to create a new social and religious order in the
history of the land of five rivers. He outlines the growth of
various religious movements in the Punjab. The Niriankaris
are the followers of Guru Dayal Das; the Radhaswamis of Beas
is another sect; Namadhaus are the dancing wandeers who
chanted hymns. The Sikhs' had to face two dangers - the
Presbyterian mission in Ludhiana in 1835 and the conversion
of Sikhs to Christianity. The second one was the growth of
powerful Arya Samaj. The partition of India into separate
nations gave a severe blow to the Sikhs. Besides large-scale
disruption and suffering to the Sikhs, the Sikh culture
suffered a lot to preserve its identity.

The horror, accompanying the transfer of population as a
sequel to the independence and partition of India, has been
the major theme with Indian English writers. Mulk Raj Anand
and K.A. Abbas have treated it in their moving stories or rare
power and many other writers like B. Rajan, Balwant Singh
Anand, Attia Hosain, Manohar Malgonkar, Raj Gill and
Chaman Nahal, in their full-length novels of artistic
excellence, The Darknecer, Cruel Interlude, Sunlight on a
broken Column, A Bend in the Ganges, The Rape and Azadi
respectively. But none of these works approach Khushwant
Singh's Train to Pakistan in extraordinary power and
unrelenting realism. It still remains the most forceful and
exquisite of the creative works born out of the agonized
torments and travails of body and spirit endured by the sacred soil of the five rivers.

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