PREFACE

In the midst of hectic work in September 2005 I wrote a letter to Khushwant Singh. In no time came the reply: “Thanks. I hope you are not so disappointed with my fiction. I wish you the best of luck in your venture.” I need not explain how happy I was with this postcard, which gave a fresh impetus to expedite my work. Nevertheless, working on Khushwant Singh, though seemingly simple, was a tremendous amount of work in reality. Applying narratology to the works was a greater challenge. As I started with the short stories and moved on to the novels I developed a liking for the narrators in the works. And thus the angle of study chosen here is that of the narrator. A superficial reader of Khushwant Singh doubts his characters’ morality, his narrators’ morality and his morality. Only one who has attained a bird’s-eye view of the housetops, can estimate a work of art and enjoy its beauty in its totality. This perception of Khushwant Singh I could fathom after going through his autobiography. Never patient with pretences, he lashes out with vigour and vitality, a quality liked and disliked alike. Thus the dissertation, The Observer as Server: A Study of the Short Stories and Novels of Khushwant Singh, observes Singh’s observation, and assesses his service to the reading public.

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