CHAPTER TWO

THE EXTENT OF THE NARRATOR'S PARTICIPATION

As the title suggests this chapter analyses the narrator's participation in the narratives. The attempt here is to study the narratives and find out how far the narrator participates in each story. He may participate in the story fully, partially or not at all. Some times, he may be fully personified and portrayed on a realistic level, and at other times, he may recount a story without personal involvement. That is, the narrator may be either absent from or present in the story he narrates.

According to the Encyclopedia of Literary Critics and Criticism there are three types of narrators: Autodiegetic, Homodiegetic and Heterodiegetic. An autodiegetic narrator tells his own story. The homodiegetic narrator takes part in the narrative in a way. He is a sort of onlooker who is present in person, but he does not talk about himself. Being a witness to the events in the story, he poses to have a kind of control over the narrative. The heterodiegetic narrator is not a character in the narrative. He does not participate in the action, but he can move on as he likes, and be present in some places and absent in others. He can also fly to varying periods of time and go beyond the events in the narrative. He is in a way omniscient, and hence has an
authoritative voice for he knows the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the characters and ‘how’ and ‘when’ the narrative will come to an end.

An autodiegetic narrator is the one who tells his own story. He plays a central role in the stories he narrates, and so he is the protagonist narrator. When the narrator is a character in a narrative, it is clear that he can narrate only certain things. As a rule he cannot narrate directly what goes on in places where he is not present. He cannot also narrate what is inside other people’s heads, what they think about and what they dream. However in this type of narration the reader is very close to the narrator, and may have access to the mind of the narrator. Homodiegetic narration also allows the narrator to show the reader how the narrator thinks, feels and reacts. One of the pleasures of the first person narration is that the reader can experience how the world looks at somebody else. Thus the homodiegetic narration has made an inside view of the narrator possible.

The homodiegetic narrator does not demand the power of the all-knowing, the omniscient. He exists in the same world as those of the characters and he may be, more or less an important character in the story. Anyway the scope of a homodiegetic narrator is unduly limited compared to that of a heterodiegetic omniscient narrator.

Quite contrary to the narrators mentioned, the heterodiegetic narrator who is absent in the narrative narrates the experience of others.
He has a position outside the world of the story, and he assumes the power of omniscience. He comments on characters, their actions and even on the story-telling. The heterodiegetic narrator is very powerful because he can order events as he pleases. In addition, he can find out what he wants to know about the characters’ minds. The heterodiegetic narrators may be classified into the omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator and the partially omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator. An omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator who has a wide scope, can give information not only regarding the characters’ outward expressions and utterances but also their thoughts and feelings. The word “omniscient” is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as, knowing all things, or infinite in knowledge. The heterodiegetic narrator is considered omniscient, but in the act of representation he is forced to select certain areas of knowledge for narration and to deselect others. He is able to allow some characters’ voices to be heard and other voices be suppressed. As Rimmon-Kenan certifies:

An omniscient narrator . . . can go where s/he likes: to some scenes and not others; to different time periods and not others; inside characters’ heads; and to Olympian positions, above and beyond the events in the narrative. An omniscient narrator can use a narratorial voice to say what s/he likes without fear of it being out of
character . . . The omniscient narrator also tends to know how and where the narrative will end. (94)

Thus the omniscient narrator can comment on whatever he likes, can analyze the character’s motives, or describe situations which none has watched. The omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator has familiarity with the character’s innermost thoughts and feelings, has knowledge of his past, present and future, is present with the character in secret places, and is aware of what happens side by side at several places.

On the other hand, the partially omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator is not omniscient in principle. Yet, while narrating the story he knows everything about a character’s problem and also the solution to his problems. But curiously enough, he is able to step into the shoes of a character at times and participate in the story.

The short stories of Khushwant Singh have all types of narrators mentioned above. “Posthumous,” “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” “The Morning After the Night Before,” and “My Own My Native Land” belong to the autodiegetic type of narration. Fifteen stories out of thirty-two belong to the homodiegetic narration type. They are “The Mark of Vishnu,” “The Butterfly,” “The Interview,” “The Portrait of A Lady,” “A Punjab Pastorale,” “The Great Difference,” “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” “The Insurance Agent,” “The Fawn,” “The Bottom-Pincer,” “Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia,” “India is a Strange
Country,” “Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle,” “Mr Singh and the
Colour Bar,” and “The Red Tie.” The stories which are narrated by the
heterodiegetic narrators are “Karma,” “The Voice of God,” “Kusum,”
“The Riot,” “The Rape,” “The Memsaib of Mandla,” “Death Comes
to Daulat Ram,” “Man, How the Government of India Run!,” “Black
Jasmine,” “A Bride for the Sahib,” “A Love Affair in London,” “Rats
and Cats in the House of Culture” and “The Convert.”

“Posthumous,” a homodiegetic story gives an account of the
narrator himself. So the story is generally homodiegetic and
particularly autodiegetic. It gives pleasure and delight to the reader as
the narrator attempts to view the happenings just after his death,
especially before the burial of his body. While he imagines the reaction
of his close friends on his death, he sets the readers enjoying
themselves at the ordeal. The narrator’s observation turns into a service
for the humankind. The end of life is an important concern for
everyone and yet it is the most avoided subject. The thought of death
produces a series of shocks, for it exposes the truths one tries to evade
usually. The narrator presumes that his friends and dear ones had put
him on a pedestal and glorified him as a great hero. But in his
posthumous glory, Singh understands his position more realistically,
for the experience was contradictory to his presumptions. There is a
stripping off and a coming-to-terms with the stark realities of life. So
there is beauty and joy in the story. The narrator reveals himself happily as none other than Khushwant Singh. The homodiegetic narrator assumes omniscience as he reads about his own death in the paper, as he sees the people visiting him and as he assesses matters in posthumous glory:

In the morning I get the paper before my wife. There is no chance of a squabble over the newspaper as I am downstairs already, and in any case my wife is busy pottering around my corpse. The Tribune lets me down. At the bottom of page 3, column 1, I find myself inserted in little brackets of obituary notices of retired civil servants — and that is all. I feel annoyed. (1-2)

Pradeep Trikha rightly observes in the article, "Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property": "Apart from having craftsmanship and perception, Singh has a sense of self criticism which he uses to reveal comedy of life" (Dhawan 317).

In “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” an autodiegetic story, with the narrator as a protagonist, identifies himself as a Sikh man. In the beginning he gives a full-page description of himself and then with the help of an incident continues to elaborate on what he said. The narrator’s observation is beneficial to the readers to help them to withdraw from hypocrisy and make-believe and to come to terms with
reality. As Pradeep ascertains in the article, "Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property": “He comprehends human nature with sympathy and ironic humour in his stories . . .” (Dhawan 319).

Another autodiegetic story “The Morning After the Night Before” provides hilarious laughter. The story is humorous and joyful, especially the delightful narration at the very outset of the story. Very soon the narrator's escapade is described elaborately and that provides pleasure to the readers. The narrator's improper behaviour after being drunk makes the audience and the readers enjoy a hearty laugh. The narrator enumerating an escapade lends his eyes to the reader to see what he went through. The narrator’s frankness is appreciable: “Cold sweat mounted my forehead. Had I really gone that far in drink? What would my wife say when she discovered it? She had warned me that the one thing she would never condone was physical disloyalty. Had I ruined my home life by one senseless fling?” (182). The reader has access to the narrator’s mind, shares the writer’s observation that the separation between conscious and unconscious levels of human mind is hairline thin. In “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property,” Pradeep Trikha comments on the author: “He uses the genre to reveal comedy of life, which makes him an ‘intelligent,’
‘shrewd’ and ‘exciting’ short story writer” (Dhawan 320). Ashok Chopra rightly observes on the writer in “A Publisher’s Dream”:

He worked with simple gut feeling of what the ordinary man in an ordinary workday life wanted to read at the end of the day. And this meant using a language close to the spoken one and writing on the topics that mattered most: entertainment, even if it was often a little bawdy, information that few had, and education which all loved to acquire. (Prasad 137)

In the autodiegetic story “My Own My Native Land,” the protagonist as the narrator talks of his experience as he reaches Bombay harbour. He does not depict the characters’ thoughts or feelings but just witnesses and reports events. The narrator depicts here the lowly condition at the customs office in his native land. His long waiting in the queue, the maladjustments at the office, the appearance of the guardian angel, battling with the hordes of coolies, are all 'glorified' as the typical features of his native land. By talking about the peculiar scenes at the customs office, the narrator enlightens the reader on the loving bond between the patriot and the country despite all its unworthiness. Khushwant Singh once uttered in his article “Why I am an Indian”: “I can scarcely breathe, but I yell, ‘Yeah, this is my native
land. I don’t like it, but I love it’” (Mehta 7). A striking quality of the narrator is that he is fully conscious from the beginning. The story, which is hardly three pages, takes into consideration a few hours of an afternoon. In the first quarter of the story the narrator notes that they arrived at the Customs shed at 1.30 p.m. (206). In the second quarter the narrator notes, “The Customs clock stood at 2.30” (207). As the narration progresses the narrator uses expressions like, “forty minutes later” (207), “in twenty minutes” (207), “in half an hour” (208) and so on. The narrator notes that when he left the customs officer, “the clock struck five” and “the clock struck six” when they shot out of the pier (208). In this connection one remembers Khushwant Singh’s own words in “Why I am an Indian”: “My head tells me it’s better to live abroad, my belly tells me it is more fulfilling to be in “phoren,” but my heart tells me “get back to India” (Mehta 6).

The homodiegetic stories, in which the narrator is a witness, are equally marvellous. “The Mark of Vishnu” is a homodiegetic story in which the narrator “we” is identified in many ways – as “youngsters” (13), as “students” (16), as “the children of the household” (14) and as “a set of four brothers” (16). Sometimes the narrator refers to himself as “we” and at other times “I.” His prior knowledge of Gunga Ram the servant, is clearly revealed from his comments on Gunga Ram’s beliefs and superstitions. At the same time the narrator admits his limit of not
being omniscient: “He picked up wasps we battered with our badminton rackets and tended their damaged wings. Sometimes he got stung. It never seemed to shake his faith” (13-14). The narrator depicts an illiterate and superstitious Brahmin, Gunga Ram who is in conflict with the younger generation. For Gunga Ram, “Kala Nag” is divine and holy, but the youngsters cannot approve of what Gunga Ram believes. There arises the conflict. For the youngsters “Kala Nag” is only a snake and a specimen to be taken to the laboratory to be experimented. The narrator suggests the truth that superstitions do not have any redemptive value. Further more they are helpful only in sowing destruction. The narrator takes his stand against Gunga Ram and hints that if he had faith in God and love for his fellow creatures he would have been saved. The narrator’s toughness is clear as he himself admits. The narrator has the most appropriate words in order to build beautiful word pictures: “Outside the classroom stood Gunga Ram with a saucer and a jug of milk. . . . With hands folded in prayer he bowed his head to the ground craving forgiveness. In desperate fury, the cobra hissed and spat and bit Gunga Ram all over the head . . .” (16).

“The Portrait of A Lady” belongs to the homodiegetic group of stories. The narrator, identified as “I,” talks about his past experience with his grandma. In fact the narration resembles a memoir. As the narrator winds up the story there is a melancholic feeling or a tinge of
sadness in the reader. The death of the pious old lady and the reaction of the sparrows to that loss, agitate the mind of the reader. The narrator describes, "All over the verandah and in her room right up to where she lay dead and stiff wrapped in the red shroud, thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirping" (31-32). And while the narrator's mother threw crumbs of bread towards them, they took no notice of them. When the corpse was taken off, they flew away quickly. Such a description warms up the soft feelings of the reader.

"The Butterfly" has a homodiegetic narrator "I" which changes to "we" at times. The narrator does not have a major participation in the story as such, except his active witnessing and clear reporting. However he gives an elaborate description of Charles. In fact the story began with the end. A circle is completed at the end of the story. The narrator takes the reader to the past life of Charles and allows him to travel with the narrator and then ends the story where he has begun. As the narrator unfolds the story, the readers come to know how Charles has transformed himself – an Indian who was anglicized by circumstance, shows courage to strip off all Anglicanism from his body and spirit. The narrator depicts the aloofness of Charley at the time of peril and this makes the story emotionally demanding. However, the end of the story is marked by a romantic turn.
The story, “The Interview” has a homodiegetic narrator who is identified as a Public Relations Officer (25). The narrator’s keen observation helps him to discuss everything in detail. The readers are capable of viewing the whole scene as they read through. The narrator is an active participant in the story. The ever-observing eye of the narrator takes heed of the trap set for him being the Public Relations Officer and portrays his inability to escape from it. The uninvited guests just rush into the P. R. O.’s office illicitly. The way the intruders choose their seats and their behaviour at the P. R. O.’s office cause laughter and mirth to the readers. The narrator also mocks at the intruders’ language. The dilemma in which the narrator is involved in, the limit of the narrator’s knowledge in the field of Numismatics, his frankness in admitting it to the readers, are all depicted here.

The homodiegetic narrator in “A Punjab Pastorale” is one of the two principal characters involved in the story. The narrator along with his philanthropic errand depicts the scenic beauty of Soorajpur: “All around it stretched a vast expanse of wheat fields. The corn was ripe and ready for harvesting. A soft breeze blew across the cornfields like ripples over a lake. Under the trees the cattle and the cowherds lay in deep slumber” (42). The narrator seems to suggest that revolution is not an easy task and it cannot be done within a day or two. It's a long process and it needs always a backing up or a follow up. Such facts are
illustrated in the story through the description of a particular incident. The narrator emphasizes the impossibility of bringing people to the path of truth and light if they have been already trapped into a troublesome and superstitious way of life. The narrator, the witness observing the occasion reports it to the readers. His language and style add beauty to the story and make it capable of imparting the intended message.

In the story, "The Great Difference" the narrator "I" is named: Khushwant Singh. The narrator pokes at the religious leaders who do not understand the meaning and essence of religion. Khushwant Singh says that the great difference and the only difference in religion is in the outward manifestation. All people are the same at the core – loveless and hard-hearted. Outward manifestations, mannerisms and some such matters decide the difference between the religions. Singh disdains religions that neglect the individual. At times, the narrator assumes omniscience. The beginning of the story reads like an omniscient narration. The narrator, a participant, witness and a reporter, adopts an ironic and satirical style, and juxtaposes himself with two god men. S. B. Shukla observes in the article "Khushwant Singh": "The two religious fanatics . . . who though fiercely antagonistic to each other, mis (behave) in an identical fashion towards
the young French girl, Mlle. Dupont, whose steatopygous behind was an invitation to lustfulness forbidden by the laws of man” (Dwivedi 93).

In “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” the narrator identified as “a bearded and turbaned Indian,” gives a detailed picture of the Sikh and about their professions (76). The narrator says that there is nothing racial or hereditary about the professions the Sikhs chooses. In order to prove this point the narrator tells a story of his encounter with Narinjan Singh, the wrestler. The narrator does not have a major role, except that of a witness, an active witness. The narrator’s presence is not prominent. At times he reminds the reader about his presence. The narrator depicts everything he sees, accurately and descriptively. In “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property” Pradeep Trikha observes, “how Indians abroad misrepresent India so much that they often become a butt of ridicule” (Dhawan 317). The story is informative about Sikhs. The narrator states: “As a matter of fact, in India itself other communities belittle the Sikhs as an odd people and have lots of stories making fun of them” (73). Nevertheless the Sikhs ignore such jokes and have a lordly sort of superiority. Singh comments, "Sikhs are not just a crude fighting type" (73). Despite their participation in many battles, "they are essentially a peace loving
people" (73). They were, in fact, the first community to prove the
efficacy of passive resistance as a political weapon and paradoxically
the first to organize a planned insurrection against the British rule.
Their spirit of pioneering is also noted: "There is hardly a country in
the world without a Sikh – except perhaps Saudi Arabia and now,
Pakistan" (73). The Sikhs occupy various professions such as sentries,
policemen, taxi drivers, farmers, artisans, doctors, peddlers, fortune-
tellers, and so on. There is nothing racial or hereditary about the
profession the Sikhs choose, but they are preferred posts that demand
strength, confidence and valour.

"The Insurance Agent" has a homodiegetic narrator "I,"
identified as "a respectable bachelor having false teeth" (83). Though
"I" changes to "we" at times, the narrator's main role is to pour
ridicule on the character of the Insurance Agent, Swami, but at the
same time putting the responsibility on the malicious people who rated
him. In fact "malicious people" is an opportune mask worn by the
narrator:

Malicious people said the man was a gate-crasher. But
that, as I have already said, is what people with malice
said.
Malicious people said Mr Swami loved publicity and paid press cameraman for the photographs that appeared in the papers.

Malicious people said Mr Swami was a snob. But that, as I have already said, was what people with malice said.

Malicious people said Mr Swami was putting it on and his work was of no importance.

Malicious people said this was only sales talk. But that as I have already said is what only people with malice said.

Malicious people said that Mr Swami was an insurance agent and had sold the old man a life insurance policy. But that, as I have already said, is what malicious people said. (84-88)

The narrator increases the satirical effect of the story by the technique of repetition. There is no emotional involvement of the narrator in the story. Like the narrator in “The Interview,” the narrator here talks about people who intrude into the privacy of others. The story is a hit at the Life Insurance agents. Without prior information they barge in,
wearing the mask of a friend. Though uninvited they continue to pretend until the truth of the matter is revealed by the comment of “malicious people.”

“The Fawn” is a story of two characters of which one is a homodiegetic narrator. He is involved in the story. The story is depicted as the narrator’s own experience. The narrator is an active participant who takes the readers along with him. His main role is that of a reporter. The insightful narrator understands his own faults as well as his companion’s, whereas his companion is negligent of his defects or unaware of it. The narrator’s ever-observing eye, looking deeply into people’s actions and intentions, sees what they are in reality. He serves them by opening their eyes towards reality, however impure or unwholesome it may be, and helps them to come to terms with it.

“The Bottom-Pincher” has a homodiegetic narrator, identified as a person who likes to pinch the bottoms of people, and who is a law-abiding citizen, a respectable member of the community, and an office goer. In the beginning, the narrator gives a short introduction about himself and reports the positive and the negative aspects of the Bottom Pincher. The narrator’s role is varied – first as an observer, then as a detective, and again as a culprit and, at last, as a guilty one, caught unawares. In the end he surrenders like a little lamb. The narrator points out to inclinations and desires which are not always healthy.
Some people appear gentle and honourable in outward manifestations but succumb to their petty and vulgar desires like bottom pinching. The account turns out more interesting when the narrator corrects the Bottom Pincher through his ceaseless observations and phone calls. It is doubly hilarious when the narrator himself is caught by the police for bottom pinching. Finally he admits, "I had put the noose round my own neck" (126). Though Singh does not warn his reader against bottom pinching, the hint is obvious. Considering the laughter the story provides, in "A Publisher's Dream" Ashok Chopra rightly observes: "More than any other journalist before and since, Khushwant realises the value of lighter moments in the lives of most of us and he realises, above all, that language has to be simple and close to the bone" (Prasad 138).

In the story "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia," the narrator "I" witnesses the action. A traveller in the ship, the narrator does not have an active role in the story as such. But being a co-traveller he reveals the highly funny situation during the journey. The main object of joy is Dr Chakkan Lal, a learned man, who in his search for a blonde girl in the ship after midnight was caught by Mr Tyson, another traveller, and attacked nearly to death. This exciting incident causes a great commotion in the ship at midnight, but slowly through the intervention
of Mrs Tyson, peace and harmony were regained. The end of the story heightens the jubilation by a fancy dress ball, enjoyed by all the travellers. From the beginning to the end Dr Chakkan Lal and the blonde girl amuse and gladden the co-travellers as well as the readers. S. B. Shukla comments in "Khushwant Singh" about the story thus: "What are we to do when we run into men like Dr Chakkan Lal? Just to smile as broadly as we can without any bad taste in the mouth" (Dwivedi 89). As the story moves on, the narrator hides in the background and his role overlaps with that of a heterodiegetic narrator and he assumes an omniscient pose.

"India is a Strange Country" has a homodiegetic narrator "I" is identified as a Sikh (166). Here the narrator's attempt is to show the reaction of foreigners when they visit India. From the sixteenth-century Mongol invader to the present-day European "box-wallah," the invaders differ in their opinion and attitude towards India. Some do like India, others do not. Indians usually divide foreigners into three categories. Some hate both India and the Indians. The second category consists of half-haters who dislike Indians but who admire the Indian landscape and the conditions of living in big bungalows with servants, shikar, polo, and so on. The third category loves everything about India and Indians. Singh adds a fourth category, a group whose reactions are uncertain. Moving from the general to the particular, the narrator acts
as a detective in the story and finds out the reason behind the foreigner, Mr Tyson’s staying back in India even after most of the Europeans had left. The narrator reports his search and finds the possible answer of the search.

The homodiegetic narrator “I” in “Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle” is one among the participants of the story. The main role of the narrator is that of a witness and a reporter. The narrator painstakingly depicts the character of Mrs and Mr Kanjoos, a description thoroughly enjoyed by the readers. Describing Mr Kanjoos's readiness to accept everyone's hospitality, the narrator tells the reader to be on the look out for people who pretend to be generous. At close quarters such people prove themselves first class “kanjoos.” Instead of giving help, they grab every single opportunity to accept it. Pradeep Trikha’s comment in “Khushwant Singh’s Short Story: Our Exciting Literary Property” appears apt: “Perhaps, the writer zeros in on covetous nature of Indians” (Dhawan 318).

In “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” the narrator is identified as “we” (175) as no other individual identity is given to him. He becomes one among the listeners of Mr Singh. Later, the narrator appears to practise Mr Singh’s advice. The story is supposed to educate and enlighten. Nevertheless it turns out funny. Though Mr Singh waxes
eloquently about colour prejudice and ill mannerism, by the end of the story, he proves himself living against his own word. The story draws a line of demarcation between the educated and the uneducated. The educated can talk effectively about behavioural patterns but they cannot behave well. With absolutely no qualms, the narrator asserts that the educated misbehave and cheat others more than the uneducated.

The narrator “we” in “The Red Tie” is identified as “an anglicized Indian” (202). One among the party of Mr Chishti’s listeners, he has a prior knowledge of Chishti. As he reports Chishti’s experience in the train, he also proves his expertise in mimetic representation. Chishti’s meeting with a lady who travels in another train in the opposite direction, his long winking at her, her disappearance from her seat, his anxiety while he hides in the lavatory, and the hearing of the footsteps in the compartment, provide immense pleasure for the readers.

Some of the homodiegetic stories are comparable with each other. In two stories in this section, the narrator is identified clearly as Khushwant Singh himself: “Posthumous” and “The Great Difference.” In other stories the narrators have different roles. He is “a Sikh” in “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” “a bachelor” in “The Insurance Agent,” “a Public Relations Officer” in “The Interview,” “a respectable
member of the community” in “The Bottom-Pincher,” “a bearded and turbaned Indian” in “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” “an anglicized Indian” in “The Red Tie” and so on. It is not possible to believe that all such qualifications exactly refer to the writer, Khushwant Singh.

The narrator in “The Fawn” and “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” talks about characters who possess no clear conscience. The title “The Man With a Clear Conscience” is ironical like “The Fawn” in which after killing the innocent being, the narrator’s companion says to himself, “I feel happy at the end of a day like this, . . . Good exercise. Good sport. No backbiting, no bickering, no hatred, no unkindness” (93). Likewise, in “The Man With a Clear Conscience” the reader is provided with an occasion to judge whether the narrator is just or not. Though the reader agree that the narrator does not have so clear a conscience, the narrator stresses repeatedly, “My conscience was clear” (109). S. B. Shukla’s comment in the article “Khushwant Singh” is apt: “His structural strategy consists in the juxtaposition of contrasts and contradictions. Irony and muted satire are his instruments . . .” (Dwivedi 93).

“The Man With a Clear Conscience” is comparable with “The Bottom-Pincher” for a different aspect. The introductory part of the two stories is exclusively meant for the narrators to talk about themselves. In “The Man With a Clear Conscience” the narrator
introduces himself as a good man, tolerant, sufferable and merciful. Only after describing himself he initiates the narration of the event. Likewise, the narrator in “The Bottom-Pincher” begins the story talking about himself, his desires, his qualities and his precautions against bottom pinching but later succumbs to the indecent practice himself.

In the stories “When Sikh Meets Sikh” and “India is a Strange Country” the narrator moves from the general to the particular. In the beginning of “When Sikh Meets Sikh” the narrator gives information about the Sikh in general (73). Slowly, the narrator moves to a particular Sikh, Naranjan Singh and narrates an incident, which he witnessed. Likewise, in the beginning of “India is a Strange Country” the narrator talks in general about foreigners and their different kinds of reaction to the Indian situation and to Indians. Then the narrator concentrates on a particular person, Mr Kenneth Tyson and his attitude to India.

The protagonists in “A Punjab Pastorale” and “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” are parallel in a way because they aim at reform and renewal. The narrators in both stories show that both Mr Hansen of “A Punjab Pastorale” and Mr Singh of “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” are not redeemed from their human frailties even though they have ideals and advices to impart to others. “Hansen’s eyes were fixed on her. His
mouth was wide open... Hansen was trying hard to give his emotions a poetical form. 'I've got it,' he exclaimed, snapping his fingers and looking up at the sky” (“A Punjab Pastorale” 45). "The devi closed her eyes in ecstasy. 'He took me out dancing and we used to have drinks in his room after that’” (“Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” 178). Shukla observes the righteous anger of the writer in the article “Khushwant Singh” thus: “His ire rises against hypocrisy and pretentiousness, corruption and ineptitude, superstition and bigotry, anything which comes in the way of healthy and humane living” (Dwivedi 91).

“Karma” has a heterodiegetic narrator, whose prior knowledge of the characters is undisputed. He is able to speak about Lady Lal thus: “She was fond of a little gossip and had no one to talk to at home. Her husband never had any time to spare for her” (9). Being omniscient, the narrator is capable of viewing Lachmi and Mohan Lal simultaneously even though they are seated poles apart. Even though the narrator depicts the thoughts and the mind of both characters, his quizzical projections of Sir Mohan Lal is obvious. Though he supports Lady Lal, he juxtaposes Sir Mohan Lal and Lachmi for the reader to decide. According to the reader and the narrator Sir Lal stands for all that is pompous and artificial, whereas Lachmi, in her natural goodness, is without any shade of artificiality. The title of the short story is very apt as it shows the reward for each one’s Karma. The story
gives the awareness that pride goes before a fall. Sir Mohan Lal becomes the prey in the hands of the two English soldiers who hardly know him. This story is based upon the doctrine of Karma:

The Indian people believe that whatever one does consciously will, sooner or later bring upon him the result he merits, and that there is no escape from it. What we sow we must reap. The Karma doctrine signifies not merely that the events of our life are determined by their antecedent causes, but also that there is absolute justice in the rewards and punishments that fall to our lot.

(Chandra 15)

Focusing on the character of Sir Mohan Lal, Pradeep Trikha comments in the article, “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property”: “The crux of the matter is that anglicised Indians unnecessarily ape the West, they must respect their own culture otherwise they are left with a handful of dust in their endeavour to imitate others. This they do at the cost of losing their self-respect, individuality and identity” (Dhawan 317).

The heterodiegetic narrator in “The Voice of God” reports and summarises his prior knowledge of the village Bhamba, its people and their daily affairs. The narrator in the story views corrupt electoral
practices and serves the society by revealing it to the people so that they might take steps to correct themselves. On the day of the election in Bhamba, the narrator notes that smelly, dirty Sikh peasants tumbled out of Seth Sukhtankar's lorries, drunk with Ganda Singh's liquor. "But they knew who to vote for. Thousands went in and, being illiterate, named their candidate – and walked back home. The Seth's lorries did not take them back nor did Ganda Singh give them more liquor for sustenance" (39). The narrator opens the eyes of the reader towards such political intrigues and malpractices. The result of the polls was in the expected order: Ganda Singh, Kartar Singh and then Baba Ram Singh. Singh draws attention to such malpractices and the deceitful behaviour of the authorities.

The narrator in the story "Kusum" begins to talk about Kusum's outward features, her academic performances and her beliefs. He then focuses on her nineteenth birthday, the presents sent by her friends and her reactions to them. The narrator is able to depict even the posture of her mind; "Kusum cycled home with her mind a complete void" (47). He notes that none of her family members or friends had come to the scene, and conveys the message that there are no human beings devoid of the desire to be attracted and to be loved. But the narrator's
omniscience is limited when it comes to the case of the hawker: “He seemed to be enjoying the situation” (47)

“The Riot” has a heterodiegetic narrator who talks of the atmosphere of the town. His focus is on two dogs, Rani and Moti about whom he talks elaborately and with a cinematic effect. The narrator’s omniscience helps him to read Rani’s fancies, her thoughts and disappointments: “... with the advent of spring, Rani’s fancy lightly turned to thoughts of Moti and she sauntered across to Ramzan’s stall. ... She was disappointed” (50). Regarding this story, S. B. Shukla comments on Khushwant Singh in the article “Khushwant Singh”: “He offers a bitter comment on communal riots in “The Riot” by showing how a petty incident of the mating of a dog and a bitch engulfs the whole city in communal conflagration. While the humans loot, burn and kill, the real cause of the riot lives in love and peace” (Dwivedi 92).

The heterodiegetic narrator in “The Rape” gives an elaborate description of what Dalip Singh, lying on his charpoy, sees and feels. Supportive and sympathetic towards Dalip, the narrator watches and witnesses what Dalip sees externally and goes through internally. Following Dalip wherever he is, the omniscient narrator seems to know even his pulse rate: “Dalip Singh was wide awake and his heart beat wildly. The loathsome figure of Banta Singh vanished from his mind.
He shut his eyes and tried to recreate Bindo as he saw her in the starlight. He desired her and in his dreams he possessed her” (54). Aware of the past related to Dalip, the narrator is able to know his desires and intentions as well. In a way he also opens the eyes of the reader to the malpractices in the court:

Banta Singh had hired a lawyer to help the government prosecutor. . . . He introduced the court orderly and the clerk to Banta Singh and made him tip them. He got a wad of notes from his client to pay the government prosecutor. The machinery of justice was fully oiled.

Dalip Singh had no counsel nor defence witnesses. (57)

In “The Memsaib of Mandla” the heterodiegetic narrator is on the side of the Dysons. Extending his view to the tropical jungle, the birds, and the variations in the living world as the twilight turns to night the observer-narrator reports what Dyson sees and says. Keen on observing the surroundings, the narrator watches the footprints of the figure, which frightens the characters in the story. He builds up suspense focusing on the externals of the characters.

In the story “Death Comes to Daulat Ram,” the narrator’s attempt is to read the mind of Ranga. The story, which is the report of an event as it is recalled by Ranga, gives a crisp and clear description
of the setting. The narrator knows the manners, the feelings and even the family tradition of Ranga:

It had been a family tradition to die surrounded by friends and relations. No one in Ranga's family had died alone or suddenly. There was an uncanny something which brought people together — sometimes by letters and telegrams; sometimes it was just intuition which drove them to the bed of a departing relative. (81)

In "Man, How the Government of India Run!" the heterodiegetic narrator begins the story, reporting the dealings in the stenographers' room. The narrator throws light into the happenings of a typical government office. One of the characters in the story, Sunder Singh, comments on the government officials thus: "All they do is attend meetings, drink cups of tea, dictate a few memos and then go home to their memsahibs pretending they are tired because they have been so busy" (94). When the employer warns the employee on being late, he gets the answer: "You don't talk mister. You never come to office before 11 a.m. Today for the first time you are punctual and I for reasons beyond control am five minutes late and you give me a lecture to drink!" (95). The employees understand the limitations of their superiors and they mimic them in their private groups. After misusing
time according to their whims and fancies, the employees pretend to be busy. Singh notes it in the voice of an employee, "Don't you know how to appear busy? Always go late for lunch even if you have nothing to do so that your wife at least thinks you have been working very hard" (97-98). The tricks played by the employees are many. When Sunder Singh goes out to play he keeps an incomplete letter on the typewriter and says to the chaprasi, "If the Sahib rings for me before 12.30 just tell him that I must have just gone somewhere – to the bathroom or for some work, say my coat is there and things on the table. If it is after that, say we've just this minute gone for our lunch" (99). The employees spend hours reading newspapers during office time. They also discuss news for long hours and the narrator reports on it; "This was a part of their daily routine in office – and perhaps the most absorbing part of it for they never missed it. The friendly banter continued till it was midday" (98). The employees understand the employers well enough. The narrator notes that some employees know how to be successful at work. Mr Singh, one of the characters in the story, gives tips regarding the secret of success in government service:

You only have to get on with the man just above you and forget everyone else. It has nothing to do with work or ability or anything like that. Say "Yes Sir, Yes Sir" to everything he says; call at his house on festivals with
garlands or sweets for his family; play with his children, if he has any, or flirt madly with his wife if he hasn't; do little jobs for his household like getting the electrician or carpenter when required – and you will get A+ for everything. Then nobody can touch you. Promotion after promotion. You may even become an Under Secretary. (102)

Even when the employees waste the whole day, they put up an outward show of dedication and pose like they are the great ones who work for the running of the government of India. At times the narrator talks for them, supporting them. Displaying his prior knowledge of the three stenographers, the narrator talks about their inclinations and feelings. Following Sunder Singh, the narrator is able to read the mind of the characters and their time-consciousness: “The little conscience at their having left their offices early had vanished with the beginning of the official lunch-hour break of 1-2 p.m. and the knowledge that bosses who left for their lunches late seldom returned before 3-4 p.m. after having their afternoon siestas” (100). The story is enlightening as it gives the joy of truth. In “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property” Pradeep Trikha rightly observes, “He is one of the few writers who observe, record and analyse people and place freshly without recourse to hackneyed situations” (Dhawan 320).
The heterodiegetic narrator in the story, "Black Jasmine" understands the condition into which Bannerjee was thrown and reads his mind: "Visions of the Martha he had known in Paris came back to him and a forgotten passion warmed his limbs" (118). The narrator is able to see through clearly the frozen memories of Bannerjee. He summarises beautifully Martha’s visit to Bannerjee’s house and observes that Martha had taken initiative earlier but now it is Bannerjee who takes the lead. There is not much description of the surroundings except where they are absolutely necessary. The story is a dig at lustful emotions. The illegal relationship of Bannerjee and the Negro girl, Martha, during and after their college days arouses excitement in the readers. The narrator seems to warn the readers against such lusty emotions which may overrule reason and thus bring about unpleasant after-effects. In the article "Khushwant Singh" Shukla comments, "Stories such as these are by and large stories of humour, humour which is the natural outcome of an untamed, unsophisticated passion for life" (Dwivedi 91).

The heterodiegetic narrator in the story, "A Bride for the Sahib" is one of the superb stories with an educative and enlightening quality. The narrator talks about an "un-Indian Indian" namely Mr Sen who is a Hindu by birth and was taught in an Anglo-Indian School. His accent and mannerisms have been transformed into English. The narrator
depicts the incidents on the day of his marriage and also the following days. The root cause of his problems arises from the day of marriage, probably because he marries a girl of his mother's choice, not his own. So the bride and the groom are at two poles, in thoughts, words and deeds. As the conflict begins, they are unable to spend the honeymoon according to their hearts' desire. The girl who is more sensitive leaves her husband and after a time returns to her husband's house, just to take off her life. On the other hand, Mr Sen, irritated and angered by his wife, spends his time uselessly, quite unable to cope up with his life partner and the new life. The observer-narrator's underlying message is that marriage is the beginning of a new life in which one enters after a long-term preparation and careful thoughts. There may be differences between the bride and the groom in many matters; but in the union of their hearts and minds these disparities have to come to a halt. Sen's tension arises because he belonged to one world before his marriage, but he had to live in another world after his marriage. Within the grasp of a strong ego, he had to struggle hard for a married life. In fact there was promise of a successful married life because Sen's mother and uncle had consulted a pandit who declared that the stars of the would-be pair were ideally suited to each other. Auspicious dates for the marriage were chosen. But reality proved that the pandit was wrong. Singh perhaps voices his opinion through Sen's mother's words, "love
and patience conquer all" (142). The fact remains that the marriage could have been a success, if Sen had been loving and patient with his wife. Well aware of Mr Sen's past, the narrator is always with him, reporting what Mr Sen speaks, what he watches, and what he thinks. The story begins soon after the wedding day of Mr Sen, and then the narrator takes the reader to Sen's past and then comes to the present, and reads his thoughts and feelings: "Would his wife be a Memsahib, he mused as he drove back home for lunch" (132). The narrator moves very fast, giving picturesque descriptions and delving deep into the conversation and secret thoughts.

The heterodiegetic narrator in the story "A Love Affair in London" focuses on Kamini, and follows her wherever she is. There are particular spots where aesthetic joy is very explicit. For example, the narrator notes the first time when Kamini was complimented for her looks: "Thereafter, every time she looked at herself in the mirror, the words came back to her and she had the odd sensation of Smith staring at her, making her embarrassingly conscious of her young womanhood" (186). Kamini believed that if she had willed it ardently, somewhere she could run into Mr Robert Smith I. C. S. with whom she had had a curious affair once. And the narrator affirms that people who were attracted to the same thing were drawn often together. Assuming her past he says: "After a month of agonizing indecision about her
scholarship, followed by difficulties in getting her passport, visas, foreign exchange and income-tax clearance and health certificates, there she was actually flying into London!” (184). The narrator talks of her beliefs, her thoughts, hopes, decisions, obsessions, daydreaming, apprehensions, resolutions and feelings (184-87). Looking through her eye he hears what she says to herself and is thus able to read her mind and memory.

The narrator in the story “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” seems to know Langford long before, and is able to depict the psyche of the characters: “He (Langford) recalled the fiasco of the meeting and thought how much more embarrassing it would be if the same thing were to happen in the plenary session” (197). Generally the narrator focuses on the outward expressions.

The heterodiegetic narrator in the story, “The Convert” provides matter for serious consideration. He portrays the picture of a woman who is courageous enough to forgive and forget all those whom she hates. Though it was a praiseworthy act, when people around the woman refused to understand her motivation and started to gossip, she could not withstand the accusation. A remarkable point made by the narrator here is that when people change their past way of life, the society is not ready to accept them with their new faces and their new way of life. He highlights the calamities sown by the gossipmongers,
but he also suggests that if Mrs Sethi's conversion was deep enough, no obstacle would have hindered her from being good and doing good. The narrator's observation is the result of his acquaintance with Mrs Sethi and his omniscience regarding her whereabouts and hence he is a good judge of her character.

In "Karma" and "A Bride for the Sahib" the respective narrators focus their attention on the couples and the differences in their attitudes. Sir Mohan Lal and his wife Lachmi in "Karma" are seated at two poles like Mr Sunny Sen and his wife Kalyani in "A Bride for the Sahib." Both bridegrooms are Sahibs and they are real wogs; meaning, "westernized oriental gentlemen." The narrator seems to imply that the brides are not up to the Sahibs and the bridegrooms are inefficient to accept the typical Indian ladies. Both couples do not get on well. The narrator depicts the characters' inner thoughts clearly. In "Karma" the narrator shows the couple's inability to adjust, thus keeping themselves apart. But in "A Bride for the Sahib" the narrator proves the same, by bringing the couples together and showing their disparities. In "Karma" the narrator depicts Lady Lal as more understanding and adjustable than Sir Lal. But Mrs Sunny Sen is too young and strange to the ways of the Sahibs.

The narrators in "Kusum" and "A Love Affair in London" are very keen on reading the mind of the characters. In both stories the
narrators focus on single characters – Kusum in “Kusum” and Kamini in “A Love Affair in London.” The narrators talk of a single incident which deeply influenced the character in consideration. After narrating the incident, the narrator in “Kusum” depicts Kusum’s condition: “The wrath disappeared but the picture of the rascally hawker winking and making lewd suggestions stuck in her mind. Nobody had ever done that to her before. Did the hawker find her attractive?” (48). Likewise in the story, “A Love Affair in London,” the narrator depicts Kamini’s mind: “Kamini had not quite understood what the lines meant except that they were some sort of compliment to her looks. . . . Thereafter, every time she looked at herself in the mirror, the words came back to her and she had the odd sensation of Smith staring at her, making her embarrassingly conscious of her young womanhood.” (186)

The narrators in “The Voice of God” and “Man, How the Government of India Run!” open the eyes of the readers to view the malpractices prevalent in the political and social spheres. The narrator in “The Voice of God” depicts how the politicians try and gain their ends making the illiterate people blindfolded. Likewise the narrator in “Man, How the Government of India Run!” is too confident to depict how the Government employees as well as employers misuse their duty time and how they cheat their authorities, family and themselves.
Khushwant Singh’s observation of political and moral anarchy provides the theme for these short stories.

“Death Comes to Daulat Ram” and “The Memsahib of Mandla” have ghost-figures in them. In “Death Comes to Daulat Ram” the narrator talks of an unusual old beggar, his similarity to Ranga’s grandfather and the coincidence of his disappearance and Daulat Ram’s death. Likewise, in “The Memsahib of Mandla” the narrator talks of a figure in white dress which appears during night and whose footprints are seen on the lawn. In both stories the figures are the ghosts of the people who are dead and gone. In both stories the writer deftly weaves an eerie atmosphere and brings the mysterious and the supernatural to life. According to V. A. Shahane, Khushwant Singh’s “treatment of the intangible, inexplicable, and supernatural elements of human experience and its differentiation from the activities of experience and its differentiation from the actualities of experience brings out his view of the complexity of life and the danger of over simplifying it” (qtd. in Dwivedi 93).

In “Black Jasmine” and “The Rape” the omniscient narrators are too outspoken while depicting the characters. They try to read the characters’ emotional and feeling levels, and depict their past and present actions. Considering the end of both stories S. B. Shukla comments in the article “Khushwant Singh”: “Interspersed with some
lively descriptions and minutiae of manners, the tales of Khushwant Singh keep screwing up the note of suspense while they move towards the probable but unexpected climactic end” (Dwivedi 87).

Three Stories, “The Memsahib of Mandla,” “Death Comes to Daulat Ram” and “The Mark of Vishnu” show that the characters are influenced by different kinds of superstitions. In “The Portrait of A Lady” and “The Convert” there is the portrait of a lady. The former is a story about the narrator’s grandmother, a solemn but a beautiful good old lady. The lady in “The Convert” is a lady who took the risk of changing for the better, but the society was not willing to accept her new face. According to Suresh Kohli in “A Writer and His Niche,” the story demonstrates “a distinct change in narrative style, greater freedom in the use of language; more confidence and maturity” (Prasad 142). Suresh Kohli is also of the view that there is never a dull moment in his stories. He adds: “His terrific sense of humour, inventiveness, precision, use of irony, deployment of pathos, sentiments and emotions, attention to environment – all find adequate place in his shorter fiction, and in craftsmanship can be compared with the best anywhere in any language of the world” (Prasad 141-42).

The narrators in the short stories have one major point in common. The heterodiegetic narrator yearns to cross the border to peep at the homodiegetic, while the homodiegetic shows an inclination
towards the omniscience of the heterodiegetic. In the same way, the autodiegetic often leaps over its fence to enter the area of the homodiegetic and vice versa.

*Train to Pakistan*

The novel *Train to Pakistan* belongs to the heterodiegetic type of narration. The locale of the novel is Mano Majra and the time, a few weeks of the fateful days of August and September of 1947. The main action of the novel takes place in the village, Mano Majra, which is described as one of the "oases of peace" (*Train to Pakistan* 4). The village embraced all Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians in one clasp. The omniscient narrator of the novel, who is not a character in the story, takes an authoritative stand and dares to depict the mental state of the people. Written in the background of the partition of India, the novel clearly portrays some of the painful aftermaths of the same. Along with the partition of the land, values of greater concern were also shattered. Peace, love, unity, cooperation and nonviolence were wiped off and animosity, inhumanity, hatred, horror, violence and revenge, were planted. In other words, the evacuation of people led to evaporation of values. If the novel is divided into two, the first two paragraphs form the first part of the novel, and the remaining whole, the second. In fact, the second part of the novel displays elaborately what the narrator condenses in the first two paragraphs.
The narrator being omniscient, peeps into the life of the characters and unearths all the truths for the sake of the reader. Iqbal’s anxiety to save his life is revealed in the lines: “Iqbal realized that it was the company of Jugga and the constable, who were known Sikhs, that really saved him from being stopped and questioned. He wished he could get out of this place where he had to prove his Sikhism to save his life. He would pick up his things from Mano Majra and catch the first train” (143). Similarly the narrator exposes Jugga’s hope that Nooran would stay back even if all the Muslims left Mano Majra. He wished that her father would also stay back with her: “Even if he had left with the other Muslims, Nooran would be hiding somewhere in the fields, or would have come to his mother” (143). The narrator’s omniscience is also seen in the portrayal of Hukum Chand’s guilt feelings: “Hukum Chand felt a little foolish. The girl had been there two nights, and there she was sleeping all by herself in a chair. . . . He felt old and unclean. . . . He felt a pang or remorse” (83).

As the narrator talks about Jugga’s and Hukum Chand’s past experiences, he gives details of the punishments Jugga had gone through: “Hands and feet pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policemen sitting on them. Testicles twisted and squeezed till one became senseless with pain. Powdered red chillies thrust up the rectum by rough hands, and the sensation of having the tail on fire for
several days" (67). The narrator delineates the past of Hukum Chand thus: "Death had always been an obsession with Hukum Chand. As a child, he had seen his aunt die after the birth of a dead child. . . . 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" (76-77).

The omniscient narrator depicting the inner conflicts of characters, reveals lqbal's agony related to the gangsters' plan to derail the train: "Should he go out, face the mob and tell them in clear ringing tones that this was wrong – immoral? Walk right up to them with his eyes fixing the armed crowd in a frame – without flinching, without turning, like the heroes . . ." (147). The narrator drops hints here and there about the events, which are to be followed in the course of the novel. This makes each incident believable and realistic. For example, on the day lqbal reaches Mano Majra, he sleeps dreaming a peaceful life in jail and early next morning he gets arrested.

The omniscient narrator uses the flashback technique to depict lqbal's train journey. After his arrival at Mano Majra he tries to sleep since he had spent the previous night sitting in a crowded third-class compartment. As he tries to sleep, all the past events in the train disturb his mind, and the omniscient narrator faithfully records all of them. The same technique of flashback is used to describe the horrible
He saw women and children huddled in a corner, with their eyes dilated with horror, and their mouths still open as though their agonized cries had made them speechless:

Some of them did not have a scratch on their bodies. There were bodies crammed against the far end wall of the compartment, looking in terror at the empty windows through which must have come shots, spears and spikes. There were lavatories, jammed with corpses of young men ... The most vivid picture was that of an old peasant with a long white beard; he did not look dead at all. He sat jammed between rolls of bedding on the upper rack meant for luggage, looking pensively at the scenes below him. (75)

In contrast to horrific scenes, the omniscient narrator is able to bring in a kind of harmony – a harmony of opposites and thus provide aesthetic joy in the novel. On one side, the narrator describes the dacoity in Mano Majra, followed by killing, firing, wailing, and so on: “On the roof of his house, the moneylender was beaten with butts of guns and spear handles and kicked and punched. He sat on his haunches, crying and spitting blood. . . . In sheer exasperation, one of
the men lunged at the crouching figure with his spear" (10). As such atrocities happen on one side, the narrator focuses on another part of the same village where the situation is a love-scene between Juggut Singh and Nooran. And the omniscient narrator witnesses it: "Juggut Singh started with the hand on his eyes and felt his way up from the arm to the shoulder and then on to the face. He caressed her cheeks, eyes and nose that his hands knew so well. He tried to play with her lips to induce them to kiss his fingers" (12). Both these disparities are described one after the other and so the description attains the height of relief.

There are other harmonious occasions too. For example, when a group of people plans for massacre and revenge, some others sacrifice their lives for the good of thousands of people. The strange boy and his group who appears all of a sudden at gurudhwara, challenge the assembly gathered there, to join him in his revenge: "For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. . . That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them we also play this game of killing and looting" (130). When Iqbal hears this from Meet Singh of gurudhwara, he is moved and concerned about the coming calamity. He feels awfully bad for the lives of the many. Though he thinks in terms of self-preservation first, the point of sacrifice also strikes him: "The doer must do only when the
receiver is ready to receive. Otherwise, the act is wasted" (148). While
his meditation ends without any action 'budmash number ten' acts in
time so that he becomes the saviour of a whole lot. Even though Juggut
Singh was counted as a budmash, he is not devoid of humane qualities.
It is clear from his words to Iqbal: "Kill my own village bania? Babuji,
who kills a hen which lays eggs? Besides, Ram Lal gave me money to
pay lawyers when my father was in jail. I would not act like a bastard"
(93).

The omniscient narrator changes over to the partially omniscient
while he introduces the characters. Juggut Singh and Nooran are first
introduced to the reader through the dacoits. The reader is given more
details about Juggut Singh through the conversation of the subinspector
and the magistrate: "You must remember Juggut Singh, son of the
dacoit Alam Singh who was hanged two years ago. He is that very big
fellow. He is the tallest man in this area. He must be six foot four – and
broad. He is like a stud bull" (22). The magistrate answered: "Oh yes, I
remember. What does he do to keep himself out of mischief? He used
to come up before me in some case or other every month." With a leer
on his lips the subinspector said: "Sir, what the police of the Punjab
has failed to do, the magic of the eyes of a girl of sixteen has done."
Hukum Chand enquired: "He has a liaison?" The subinspector revealed
the identity of the Muslim weaver's daughter: "She is dark, but her
eyes are darker. She certainly keeps Jugga in the village. And no one
dares say a word against the Muslims. Her blind father is the mullah of
the mosque” (22).

Another remarkable thing about the partially omniscient narrator
is that from the beginning of the novel he is careful enough not to
reveal the identity of Iqbal. Bhai Meet Singh enquires whether Iqbal is
Iqbal Singh. No answer is given. Bhai continues with his next question.
Then playing with the name of Iqbal, the narrator opines that Iqbal
could be a Muslim, Iqbal Mohammed or a Hindu, Iqbal Chand or a
Sikh, Iqbal Singh. It is one of the few names common to the three
communities. Thus the narrator builds up suspense in the story. The
partially omniscient narrator who takes so much care from the
beginning not to reveal the identity of Iqbal, exposes the truth towards
the end of the novel: “The situation was different now, and in any case
it was true that he was born a Sikh” (144). This leap from the partially
omniscient narrator’s role to the omniscient narrator’s is quite
unexpected but thrilling. The police too play a dubious role in
declaring Iqbal ‘a Muslim’ at first and then ‘a Sikh’ later. V. T.
Girdhari in “Historical Text, Human Context: A Study of Train To
Pakistan” agrees that the novel is “not just a political novel but a social
one – a politics-polluted society, played with by the bureaucrats for
their personal private ends, under the pretensions of executing the so-called policies of the so-called Government” (Dhawan 83).

The heterodiegetic narrator who is also active in the novel, states that with the advent of new events and happenings people are likely to forget the past events and incidents, however painful or joyful: “By evening Mano Majra had forgotten about its Muslims and Malli’s misdeeds. The river had become the main topic of conversation. Once more women stood on the rooftops looking to the west. Men started going in turns to the embankment to report on the situation” (122). S. Ravindranathan and R. K. Jacob in “Khushwant Singh Writes at Home: A Postcolonial Reading of Train To Pakistan,” rightly point out that the tone of the book is set by the peculiar mixture of sympathy and bitterness in the author’s attitude. He is simultaneously inside the action as a participant and outside it as a dispassionate observer (Dhawan 77).

The narrator notices that the innocent people of Mano Majra are ignorant of the political situation of their country. The subinspector’s words, “I am sure no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan” (21). The people accept the fact that they know nothing and they are also ignorant of the reason why the English had left India. But they desire
to know more about the world, and so when they know that Iqbal is an educated man they demand information. Singh comments: "Independence meant nothing or little to these people," and they think, "freedom is for the educated people who fought for it" (43-44). They consider themselves slaves of the English in the past and now the slaves of the educated Indians. According to them "the only ones who enjoy freedom are thieves, robbers and cutthroats" (45). They are also aware that they "were better off under the British. At least there was security" (45).

Politics and political chaos are painful points for the narrator. The village, Mano Majra, according to him, was a single whole family but its wholeness is shattered by the political and judicial intrusion. The narrator has much to say about politicians and judiciary. They use their power according to their whims and fancies. They have neither any regard for the prestige of the persons concerned, nor for the reality of the matter. Their interpretation of facts varies with time and place. For example, when they arrested Iqbal, they themselves determined he was Mohammed Iqbal, a Muslim Leaguer, and not a social worker. But by the end of the novel they change his name, "Mr Iqbal Singh, social worker" (140). Hearing that, Iqbal retorts, "Not Mohammed Iqbal, member of the Muslim League? You seem to fabricate facts and
documents as it pleases you” (140). The police intensify the youth's resentment but Iqbal has to surrender. The narrator invites the reader to think, “Where on earth except in India would a man's life depend on whether or not his foreskin had been removed?” (143). As S. Ravindranathan and R. K. Jacob point out, “the authorial point of view is effectively communicated without the reader feeling it as intrusion” (Dhawan 80).

The heterodiegetic narrator notes that the magistrate and the police manipulate the lives of the common folk and drag them towards their end. They first make the people uncertain and unsteady, by a lot of brainwashing. When the police try to evacuate the Muslims from Mano Majra they had no authentic reason. The narrator says that the head constable's visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter. But cruelty and inhumanity prevailed as the Muslims were sent off first to the camp, and then to Pakistan. Even the common folk dread the injustice of the police. While the villagers noticed the unfavourable occurring in the river somebody thought of informing the police. Then a small man commented bitterly, “What will they do? Write a first information report?” (125). This helpless situation faced by the common man was aggravated by the calamity and destruction sowed by the authorities. For instance, Malli's Gang and Jugga were released in Mano Majra,
and not in Malli's hometown; and that too without a trial and acquittal. Knowing fully well that Malli's group housed the culprits, they were let loose deliberately, in the place where the murder occurred: "I see the trick now. That is why the police released Malli. Now I suppose Jugga will join them, too. It is all arranged" (146). K P S Gill’s observation on the essence of Singh in “The Quintessential Sikh,” is striking:

As an Indian, he has spoken without fear and with complete honesty in each of the nation’s great crises over the past decades, even as he has ridiculed the false posturing and pretense of the political leadership, the prejudice and the narrow-mindedness of the many castes and sects and divisions that proliferate endlessly among us, the rejection of the values of modernity, and the lack of vision and intellectual depth that has marked so many among the most eminent in every walk of life. (Prasad 96-97)

The heterodiegetic narrator uses the technique of juxtaposition to make the narrative more effective. The educated and well-mannered Iqbal is juxtaposed with the uneducated and ill-mannered Mano Majrans. As Iqbal takes rest on the very first day at Mano Majra, the villagers come to visit him. Hearing their voices Iqbal gets up and pushes the air-mattress aside to make room on the charpoy for the
visitors. Meet Singh does not bother to introduce the visitors and the
lambardar ignores Iqbal's well-mannered protests against accepting the
milk. He removes his dirty handkerchief from a large brass tumbler and
begins to stir the milk with his forefinger. To emphasize the quality of
the milk, he picks up a slab of clotted cream on his forefinger and slaps
it back in the milk. The narrator also uses the same technique when he
delineates other characters like Iqbal, Juggut Singh and the police.

The heterodiegetic narrator emphasizes the importance of the
train in the life of Mano Majrans. The punctuality of the train shows
the order and the peace of the time. When the morning passenger train
from Delhi reaches Mano Majra at 10.30 a.m., the people there, have
already settled down to their daily dull routine.

Men are in the fields. Women are busy with their daily
chores. Children are out grazing cattle by the river. . . . As
the midday express goes by, Mano Majra stops to rest.
Men and children come home for dinner and the siesta
hour. . . . When the evening passenger from Lahore
comes in, everyone gets to work again. The cattle are
rounded up and driven back home to be milked and
locked in for the night. The women cook the evening
meal. Then the families foregather on their rooftops
where most of them sleep during the summer. (6)
And the narrator takes care to show that the trains become irregular when there is disorder and disturbance in the life of Manjo Majrans. It was in early September that the time schedule started going wrong and then the punctuality of the train also became conditional:

Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as though the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. On others, it was as if no one had remembered to wind it. . . . People stayed in bed late without realizing that times had changed and the mail train might not run through at all. Children did not know when to be hungry, and clamoured for food all the time. In the evenings, everyone was indoors before sunset and in bed before the express came by – if it did come by. Goods trains had stopped running altogether, so there was no lullaby to lull them to sleep. Instead, ghost trains went past at odd hours between midnight and dawn, disturbing the dreams of Mano Majra. (68)

The heterodiegetic narrator who is also an observer uses the technique of summary at the beginning of the section “Karma” in *Train to Pakistan*. This technique helps him to condense many events in one paragraph. For example: “All that morning, people sat in their homes
and stared despondently through their open doors. They saw Malli’s men and the refugees ransack Muslim houses. They saw Sikh soldiers come and go as if on their beats. They heard the piteous lowing of cattle as they were beaten and dragged along” (121).

Another technique, which the heterodiegetic narrator uses, is the mingling of the comic and the serious as seen in the conversation between Iqbal and Meet Singh: “Tell me, was there any killing in the village?” “No” said the bhai casually. He was more interested in watching Iqbal inflating the air-mattress: “But there will be. Is it nice sleeping on this? Does everyone in England sleep on these?” “What do you mean – there will be killing?” asked Iqbal, plugging the end of the mattress. “All Muslims have left, haven’t they?” “Yes, but they are going to attack the train near the bridge tonight. It is taking Muslims of Chundunnugger and Mano Majra to Pakistan. Your pillow is also full of air.” They continue in the same vein for some more time: “Yes. Who are they? Not the villagers?” asked Iqbal. “I do not know all of them. Some people in uniforms came in military cars. They had pistols and guns. The refugees have joined them. So have Malli budmash and his gang – and some villagers. Wouldn’t this burst if a heavy person slept on it?” asked Meet Singh tapping the mattress (145-46).

In between the serious narration of events, the narrator does not forget to provide some lighter moments for the reader. For example the
conversation between Iqbal and Juggut Singh and the one between Hukum Chand and Haseena:

‘How old are you?’

‘I don’t know. Sixteen or seventeen. May be eighteen. I was not born literate. I could not record my date of birth.’ (89)

The narrator observes animals and plant kingdom as part of nature. A description of nature goes thus: “The sun sank behind the bridge, lighting the white clouds which had appeared in the sky with hues of russet, copper, and orange. Then shades of gray blended with the glow as evening gave way to twilight and twilight sank into darkness” (74). Even the description of small creatures appears attractive: “A moth fluttered round the chimney and flew up in’spirals to the ceiling. The geckos darted across from the wall. The moth hit the ceiling well out of the geckos’ reach and spiralled back to the lamp. The lizards watched with their shining black eyes” (76). Similarly the narrator describes a mangy bitch with a litter of eight skinny pups yapping and tugging at her sagging udders (40).

The Indian’s attitude towards the subject of sex is also a significant point for the narrator:
It was not possible to keep Indians off the subject of sex for long. It obsessed their minds. It came out in their art, literature and religion. One saw it on the hoardings in the cities advertising aphrodisiacs and curatives for ill effects of masturbation. ... One heard about it all the time. No people used incestuous abuse quite as casually as did the Indians. ... Conversation on any topic – politics, philosophy, sport – soon came down to sex, which everyone enjoyed with a lot of giggling and hand-slapping. (94)

The novel justifies the title, *Train to Pakistan*. At the end of the novel, Juggut Singh unfortunately offers his life. Fortunately it was for a noble cause. 'The cruel plan of derailing the train is shattered without any harm to the passengers of the train. Thus jugga's death becomes a glorified act. The heterodiegetic narrator at the end sums up the self-effacing act thus, "The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan" (157). The novel gives credit to the writer's sense of values. In "*Train to Pakistan: A Study in Crisis of Values"* Harish Raizada gives an admirable comment on the writer's enduring faith in morals and values:
Train To Pakistan is, however, a classic in the post-independence Indian English fiction not only because of the bold, brutal and unrelenting realism with which it tears asunder the mask of hypocrisy and exposes the sordidness and savagery of human life, but also because of the author'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. (Dhawan 127)

With love and confidence in his heart, Khushwant Singh's 'train' is capable of going on, not only to Pakistan, but also to the world beyond.

I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale

At the deeper level, the book turns into a clash between and evaluation of two sets of values, two ways of life: conventional, non-violent, staunch faith in religion and God and pure, ascetic, unostentatious but dignified and moral life on the one hand and the modern, sexually promiscuous, morally loose, hypocritical, opportunistic and violent ways on the other. (Dhawan 164)
So says Subhash Chandra in “I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale: A Re-evaluation.” This clash between the two sets of values and the two ways of life is clearly portrayed by Khushwant Singh in the novel. As Basavaraj Naikar says in “The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale,” “Khushwant Singh presents a microscopic picture of the strange mixture of attitudes to the alien rule through the depiction of life in Amritsar district” in the novel (Dhawan 147-48). In the presentation of such a conflicting life, the novelist uses the narrator to portray both sides of the issue. Basavaraj Naikar lays bare the fact that the narrator delineates the “conflict between the pro-British and the anti-British” in the novel (150).

The novel I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale belongs to the heterodiegetic type of narration. Being omniscient, the narrator knows the ins and outs of the characters, their past, their present, their future hopes, their families and their relationships. So the narrator is able to impart his knowledge of the characters, more than they know or more than they reveal themselves. The novel delineates “the paradoxical picture of the colonial encounter between the Indians and the British including the positive and negative aspects, the submission as well as rebellion simultaneously involved in it,” says Basavaraj Naikar in “The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale” (160).
Naturally, the omniscient heterodiegetic narrator digests the situation and emphasizes the change that has come over Sher Singh after assuming the leadership of the rebel group: "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.... But this was different. They were training to become terrorists. They had to learn how to take life – to become tough" (I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale 166). Sher Singh’s accomplice, Madan, the backbone of the group is introduced as the chief supporter and rival of Sher Singh, and one whose presence was an encouragement and a challenge at the same time. The narrator’s knowledge of Sher Singh is comprehensive as he exposes his thoughts and actions, his beliefs and grievances, his past and his state of mind on different occasions:

He was angry with his father for having sent him (to Taylor) and angry with himself for having come. He felt angrier with his wife – he always felt angry with her when he could not find reasons for his temper – for not having stopped him from coming. And of course he felt angry with Taylor for having suggested his calling on a Tuesday and belittling him by keeping him with the crowd of sycophants. (241)
The omniscient narrator is able to figure out the conflicting emotions of guilt and pride in Sher Singh. His companions also considered him a jumble of conflicting emotions of guilt and pride. His feeling of remorse was temporarily smothered by his companions. On the whole, Sher was tortured by the visions of his mind, which the narrator exposes: "The figure of the crane flying in the dark and its crying came back to his mind. Then the picture of the wounded bird kicking its legs, the deafening reports of the pistol shots... He began to feel tired and depressed" (174). Then again: "Four figures kept going round and round in his tortured mind. ... Then he began to dream. He saw himself crossing railway lines" (177).

The minds of the characters lie bare before the omniscient narrator's eye and so he lets out secrets wherever it is suitable. He reports Sabhrai's botherations on several occasions: "But death was far from Sabhrai's mind on the morning she died" (348). On another occasion when the narrator depicts her it is the time of her prayer at the Golden Temple. The narrator notes that even when the clock struck two in the morning, the tumult in her mind was not stilled. She tried to dismiss all other thoughts and bring the picture of the last warrior guru to her mind: "He came as he was in the colour print on her mantelpiece" (327).
The omniscient narrator traces the rebellious mind of Beena as she decides to go for a film. By the time she left the house with Madan and Sita, her mind was a muddle of fear and rebellion. And as she watched the film the narrator notes: “Beena’s mind was still uneasy about the consequences of the escapade” (191). In the same way, the narrator notes that it was only in recent years that Buta Singh had begun to think in terms of bargaining with the British. Before that he was loyal to the Raj to the point of faith, just as it had been for his father and his grandfather who had served in the army. Both of them had mentioned the English king or queen in their evening prayer and Buta Singh too did the same.

The heterodiegetic narrator gives a remarkable reading of the psychology of Sher’s thought-content. Sher Singh had been pampered in his childhood and allowed to have his own way in his adolescence. He hankered after affection and esteem, and he sought them through popularity amongst friends and through leadership. The narrator informs the reader that, to impress Champak became Sher’s obsession at a particular stage. The omniscient narrator tells us that the more his physical inadequacy gnawed his inside, the more daring he became in his political activity. He also knew that Sher Singh had never been beaten before in his life. For the narrator, Sher’s line of thought is vivid. What Sher Singh dreaded most was a visit from his father,
whose career he had ruined and who would have no chance of getting an extension of service or a title in the next Honours list.

The heterodiegetic narrator is able to be present at two different places and report the happenings simultaneously. For example, the narrator is in the midst of the procedures in the gurudwara, for some time, and then suddenly he talks about what is happening outside: “On the verandah outside, Mundoo bullied little children from the neighbouring houses into keeping quiet and sitting in a row. Behind him, whining impatiently, was Dyer” (179). The narrator is able to see what happens on both sides. The thick walls of the gurudwara do not hinder his sight. Similarly, on another occasion in the novel though Peer Sahib is conscious of the privacy of the courtyard as he assures Shunno that the door of the courtyard is shut, and that no one would enter the place after sunset. But the narrator gleefully watches the couple till the early hours of the morning, and then to the reader’s satisfaction reports, “Not a word of affection or explanation passed between them” (277).

The omniscient narrator depicts even what the characters have neglected or ignored. For example, when Sabhra’s time of death approached, she asks Shunno to send for the family members. Shunno rushed out of the house to the sentry and asked him to get the Sardar and other members of the family together. The narrator notes, “Neither
she nor the sentry thought of the doctor” (349). Again, the narrator notes what the doctor does not. For instance, Sabhrai had high fever for a fortnight. The temperature going up to 105, which came down and shot up again. It began to tell on her heart. But this fact “was not noticed by the doctor,” the narrator says (346).

The political situation is made known to the reader through the presence of the partially omniscient narrator. He informs that a war is on and the police are armed with powers to arrest and detain at will. Mahatma Gandhi is also dragged in by the narrator who says: “Gandhi had made loyalty to the British appear like disloyalty to one’s own country and traditions. Larger and larger numbers of Indians had begun to see Gandhi’s point of view. . . . Loyalty became synonymous with servility, respect for English officers synonymous with sycophancy” (182). The novelist does not explain how the change took place in the attitude of Buta Singh and his family towards the Wazir Chands. But through the narrator’s partial omniscience the reader comes to know that, “The attitude of Buta Singh and his family to the Wazir Chands had undergone a change” (230). The narrator’s keen observation provides hearty laughter at the sight, which the Singhs witness as they enter the house of Wazir Chand. The Singhs watch a servant vigorously massages Wazir Chand’s buttocks and legs and Madan shaving himself in front of a mirror. To quote the narrator’s words,
she nor the sentry thought of the doctor' (349). Again, the narrator notes what the doctor does not. For instance, Sabhra had high fever for a fortnight. The temperature going up to 105, which came down and shot up again. It began to tell on her heart. But this fact "was not noticed by the doctor," the narrator says (346).

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“Madan wiped off the lather with a towel and stood up; his face looked like a lawn, only half of which had been mown” (231).

The narrator leaves certain parts for the imagination and the enjoyment of the reader. For example, the narrator does not mention when Sabhrai, Champak and Beena start their journey to the Wazir Chands or how they went. All of a sudden he talks about their conversation in the tonga. Thus the narrator’s technique of condensing and summarising becomes useful to the novel: “‘I am not at all lonely here,’ she (Champak) said in the dutiful tone she adopted in speaking to her mother-in-law. ‘But if you want me to go with Beena, I will.’” And the very next paragraph begins thus: “There wasn’t much conversation in the tonga. Sabhrai made some feeble attempts to make up but Beena continued to reply in gruff monosyllables” (217). The same technique is applied later. After receiving Buta Singh’s telegram, the narrator talks about Sabhrai’s and Beena’s travel back home: “She sat up in her bed and prayed all through the night. Next day on her way down to the plains and again all night in the train, her thoughts and prayers were for her Shera” (313).

The heterodiegetic narrator notices the change of tone of the characters: The narrator notes Madan’s “tone of authority,” Sabhrai’s “sharp tone” at first, and later her “sarcastic tone,” Buta Singh’s “tone
of finality,” at first and then his “tone of righteous indignation.” The narrator particularly notes, Buta Singh’s accent and change of diction when he speaks to Englishmen and Beena’s frequent use of ‘hai’ to show her exaggerated concern. When Sher Singh addresses the student corps, the narrator notes that he started in “a tone of humility” and gradually he switched on to exhortation: “‘Comrades, we meet at a critical time. The enemy is at our gates.’ He paused to let his words seep in then he lowered his voice to a confidential whisper. . . . He raised his voice . . . He paused for applause. . . . Sher Singh worked himself into a fury and let his voice rise to a crescendo” (194-95). Not static by nature, the narrator is not seen with any particular person or group or family or place. Instead, he is on the move, narrating the events, and reporting matters as he moves along.

The narrator appears concerned over the lack of emotional involvement among the English. They reduce human relationships to a set of rules. For example they believe that it is important to know the name of the person to use it as often as possible, and to know the interests of people, and to talk about their interests. According to the narrator a great feature of India and her people, is the experience of the monsoon. Reading about it in books, or see it on the cinema screen or hearing people talk about it, all contribute to the knowledge regarding
the monsoon. Only a personal experience of the monsoon can really convey the feeling of the monsoon.

The narrator observes that in a country of 400 million people, events like birth and death have no proper significance. After the first child is born, a birth is simply looked upon as a nocturnal pastime. On the other hand, the case of death is dealt with differently. There is sorrow expressed at every death but there is the simultaneous relief that there is one mouth less to feed.

The narrator elaborates on privacy and its absence, a phenomenon that pervades life in India, urban and rural, rich and poor. The narrator reminisces that in the olden days the rooms of Indian palaces did not have any doors and those rooms that had doors could not be bolted from the inside. Among the poor, the shortage of living space had made privacy a luxury. Indian practices have not changed very much over the years.

The narrator notes that the art of making love, which requires privacy as well as leisure, is almost unknown in India, the land of the 'Kama Sutra' and phalus-worship. The practice of the honeymoon is known only among the anglicized upper middle class. The newly married girl's first experience is often soulless, because it is an unpleasant subjection to men's desires. The narrator observes that
Indian women are not aware of sex and sexual advances: "To the mass of Indian womanhood, the sixty-five ways of kissing and patting, the thirty-seven postures of the sex act so beautifully portrayed in stone on temple walls make as much sense as a Greek translation of the treatise 'Kama Sutra' itself" (197).

The narrator observes that the absence of privacy has encouraged a new language among married couples. Those who have shared a common past, get to know each other's reactions to particular situations and have an instinctive knowledge of each other's attitude to people events and ideas. At times forgotten tunes come to their minds and without any reason they find themselves humming the same notes. Even in behaviour, they communicate perfectly well. All these observations indicate that the narrator in the novel is as much the observer, Khushwant Singh himself.

The narrator in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is by and large Khushwant Singh himself. The narrator plays hide and seek in the novel, only to come out in the end to be declared the winner. Basavaraj Naikar's words on the writer in "The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*" is true of the narrator as well: "... he is a realist and modernist in the sense that he has the courage to look into the face of harsh reality and describe it precisely
and objectively without any sentimentalism or exaggeration” (Dhawan 161).

There is no need for the narrator-writer to hear the nightingale again, for he is himself the nightingale that sings as in Keats’s Ode to Nightingale:

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains . . .” (1-3).

Delhi

In Khushwant Singh’s Delhi the history of six-hundred year period is wonderfully portrayed from the Muslim invasion in 1265 up to the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The assassination followed by the massacre of the Sikhs remains a painful memory for Indians in general and Sikhs in particular. This indelible mark imprinted on the mind of the author and of the narrator has given flesh and blood to the novel. G. R. Taneja in “‘Time and Tide’: History in Khushwant Singh’s Delhi and Ivo Andric’s The Bridge on the Drina” states:

Delhi: A Novel is not a dirge sung over lost empires. It is a celebration of the unique power of a culture and civilization: the power to generate some of the finer values of life; the power to ensure the survival of these values in the face of a nation’s collective debasement; and
above all, the power to ensure that when all is lost an awareness of that loss remains. What makes the novel an enduring work of art, and lifts it above the deep despair that pervades the whole narrative, is the testimony that it provides to a haunting sense of that loss. (Dhawan 186)

The narrator explores the beauty of his beloved city in flamboyant colours. According to him “Delhi’s history is presented through a rich pageantry of variegated colours. The time is shortened, tampered, broken and finally disjointed, but with immaculate balance and proportion. The protagonists are misplaced and replaced, comprising a ‘backstairs’ view of Gandhi’s role as a politician,” says Anita Singh in “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of Delhi” (Dhawan 203).

The novel is divided into twenty-one episodes, under the titles: “Delhi,” “Lady J. H. T.,” (Lady Jane Hoity-Toity) “Bhagmati,” “Musaddi Lal,” “The Timurid,” “The Untouchables,” “Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan,” “Nadir Shah,” “Meer Taqi Meer,” “1857,” “The Builders” and “The Dispossessed.” The episode “Bhagmati” alone is repeated ten times, thus making the episodes total number of twenty-one. The chapters titled “Delhi,” “Lady J. H. T.” and “Bhagmati” have the same homodiegetic narrator whose identity is not revealed except for the fact that he is a Sikh (368). The novel awakens
the reader to an alert perspective of mind. In “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi,” A. Rajendra Prasad comments: “the novelist lets the history of Delhi ‘relive’ and ‘speak’ for itself. This ‘reliving’ of past at times borders upon ‘fact and fiction combine’ as the novelist does not mean to maintain fidelity to ‘facts’ only” (Dhawan 169). The aspect of the romanticizing the past is admitted by the novelist himself: “History provided me with the skeleton. I covered it with flesh and blood and a lot of seminal fluid into it” (“A note from the author” Delhi 364).

The first paragraph of the episode “Delhi” reveals that the homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator is uninhibited in talking about his attachment towards Delhi and Bhagmati, his mistress. He knows how they both react to their lovers and to their strangers: “It is only to their lovers, among whom I count myself, that they reveal their true selves” (Delhi 365). A participant in the episodes, the narrator notes that the people of Delhi love their city as bees love flowers. But they are ungrateful and cowardly, cunning and double-faced.

It is the homodiegetic narrator of the episode “Delhi” that narrates the episode “Lady J. H. T.” With a knowledge of the historical background and acting as a tourist guide to the foreigner, Lady J. H. T., the narrator describes her as one who is capable of quick decisions.

The episodes named “Bhagmati,” devoted to Bhagmati, portray the narrator’s lifelong, love-hate relationship with Delhi and Bhagmati.
Thus "the narrator tries to have an overview of the movement of certain fragments of historical time, returning to the present and to his beloved Bhagmati, a hijra, after every such foray" observes O. P. Mathur in "Amrinder’s Lajo and Khushwant Singh’s Delhi: Sikhs in a Crisis of Identity" (Dhawan 193). In the first few episodes the narrator reveals that when Bhagmati was born, how she happened to be among the hijdas, how she entered his life and so on. “Khushwant Singh prizes humaneness, tolerance, compassion and fellow feeling, and is against bigotry of all types, and more so against the violence that follows in the wake of bigotry. All these values are invested in the persona of Bhagmati in the novel Delhi,” says Subhash Chandra in “A Note on Bhagmati in Delhi” (Dhawan 179).

After a long chapter “1857,” the episode “Bhagmati” talks about the narrator being uninterested in Bhagmati: “I am beginning to tire of Bhagmati as I am of Delhi” (664). At the same time he understands that he can’t escape from them both: “I told you – once you are in their clutches there is no escape” (664). The novelist winds up the novel with another episode “Bhagmati” in which the narrator is more serious and involved in the story. Describing himself as an old man, he exposes his nightmares and thoughts of death. The narrator allows the readers to know his internal talk as well. The narrator has no opinion about people celebrating the death of Indira Gandhi: “Celebrating the
murder of a frail, little woman! What have the Sikhs come down to?” (731).

Commenting on the episodes “Bhagmati” A. Rajendra Prasad observes in “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi” that perhaps the novelist attempts to tone down the seriousness of the theme by creating highly hilarious situations involving the narrator and Bhagmati, a hermaphrodite (Dhawan 170). In “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of Delhi,” Anita Singh is of the view that Delhi, trampled, destroyed, dismantled and divested of all her precious possessions, is equated with Bhagmati having met with the same fate (Dhawan 199). The narrator notes: “Having been long misused by rough people they have learnt to conceal their seductive charms under a mask of repulsive ugliness. It is only to their lovers, among whom I count myself, that they reveal their true selves” (365).

Delhi contains nine historical chapters and the chapters, except one (“1857”), are named after the concerned narrators. They include historical personages like Taimur, Aurangzeb, Nadir Shah and ordinary men like Musaddi Lal, Meer Taqi Meer, The Untouchables, The Builders, and The Dispossessed.

Musaddi Lal, the narrator in “Musaddi Lal” reveals his identity as the son of Lala Chagan Lal, Hindu Kayastha of Mehrauli. The narrator who is homodiegetic and autodiegetic as well tells his own
story using fine imagery. His birth, his ancestors, his marriage and the difficulties which he faces, are all interesting details for the reader: “I was disowned by the Hindus and shunned by my own wife. I was exploited by the Muslims who disdained my company. Indeed I was like a *hijda* who was neither one thing nor another but could be misused by everyone” (418). The narrator supports the Muslims and looks down upon the Hindus. Recalling his ancestors who had been scribes and had served Raja Anangal, Prithvi Raj and Sultan Qutubuddin Aibak, the narrator assimilates historical facts with incidents from his life. He foresees a time of great transition and perhaps a time of bigotry, and delineates the perversities of degenerate rulers, King Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah and Khusro Khan. A. Rajendra Prasad’s opinion in “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi” is relevant in this context: “Through a fictitious character, Musaddi Lal, a new Hindu Kayastha convert to Islam, the transitional times of Delhi are poignantly viewed at” (Dhawan 171).

The episode “Timurid” is the memoirs of the old Taimur who confesses a deformity in his foot. The homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator talks about his invasion of India and his ascension to the throne of Delhi. Rajendra Prasad rightly observes in “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi,” “It is aptly suggested that behind the façade of holy wars, there lies the question of personal ambitions and
interests who take precedence always. 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” (Dhawan 172). The narrator refers to the year of the Mouse, the year of the Tiger, the year of the Ox with a dash of exaggeration. For instance: “By rapid marches we overtook birds in flight . . .” Again “. . . the skies were as blue as the tiles of our palace roof and the breezes as balmy as those during spring in Samarkand.” And yet again, “The minds of Turks are as narrow as their eyes” (457-58). And about the men of Hindustan the narrator notes, “It does not take long for the men of Hindustan to switch their minds from fawning flattery to deadly hate” (460). In “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of Delhi” Anita Singh comments on the narrator, “One may identify the tongue-in-cheek attitude of the narrator reporting the event” (Dhawan 201).

The episode “The Untouchables” is narrated by an untouchable and named Jaita Rangareta. One of the “Sikhs of Nanak,” the narrator imparts his knowledge of the new badshah Shah Jahan, as it was conveyed to him by his uncle Reloo. For the sake of livelihood, he takes a job in the executioner’s yard attached to the kotwali. And the narrator shares his difficulties in his job: “This was really dirty work: first I had to get used to seeing a man’s head being hacked off; then see his arms and 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. As I worked I could hear the onlookers avoiding me as if I were a murderer” (485).

In the episode “Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan” the homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator, Abdul Muzaffar Mohiuddin Mohammed, pens down a brief account of the ninety years of his life and forty years of his reign. In the beginning of the episode, the narrator addresses himself as a “sinner full of iniquities” (501) and talks about his birth, his star, and his life at home. The narrator’s sharp memory enables him to depict his past. The reader gets to know that his greed for power and wealth together with his religious fanaticism goaded him to undertake a long and arduous journey to gain victory. In “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi” Rajendra Prasad is of the opinion, “the novelist aptly captures the highly complex and multi-faceted personality of Aurangzeb Alamgir who remained to a large extent shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding, in the annals of history of Delhi and India” (Dhawan 172).

The homodiegetic narrator Nadir Shah in the episode “Nadir Shah” turns out to be autodiegetic. The narrator shows how he and his companions defeated the Mughals. When he visits Delhi for the first time, he describes the places with minute care. His destruction of lives and his atonement for the same are also dealt with in the episode. He
dislikes Delhi and says that even Noor Bhai, the child of a courtesan prefers to live in Delhi than the palace at Iran:

\[ \ldots \text{though we had heard so much in praise of Delhi there was little that pleased us about it. We did not like the people or their manners; we did not like their food or their wines. Their watermelons were without flavour and produced wind in our stomach.} \ldots \text{And Delhi’s climate produced only laziness, prickly heat and bad temper.} \]

(546)

The homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator Meer Taqi Meer in “Meer Taqi Meer” is a poet who spans a life from his childhood to the age of eighty-eight. A lover of Begum Sahiba, the narrator uninhibitedly talks about the sexual encounter and the pre-arrangements done by Begum Sahiba. He builds up close relationship with the reader and shares his dilemma, his thoughts and mind. He says, the Begum made and destroyed him. In “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of Delhi,” Anita Singh says: “In the gradual unwinding of the novel we watch the drama of love and passion, laughter and tears of puny figures whom history has not cared to remember” (Dhawan 200).

The episode “1857” is different from all the other episodes. First of all, the episode is not given the narrator’s name as its title, but the
year in which the incidents narrated occurred. Secondly the episode is further divided into ten sections, which are named after the narrators. And in arranging these episodes the narrator follows the pattern of the novel’s major divisions. There are three narrators such as Alice Aldwell, Bahadur Shah Zafar and Nihal Singh. Alice Aldwell narrates two chapters, Bahadur Shah Zafar, five, and Nihal Singh, three. About the narration Rajendra Prasad notes in "Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi": "It is clearly proved that what is ultimately significant is the manifested 'inherent evil' in man" (Dhawan 173).

Alice, the narrator in two sections, is the only lady-narrator in the novel. The reader is thus provided with a female point of view. In the first episode, she is Alice Aldwell and, in the second, she is renamed Ayesha Bano Begum. Alice Aldwell addresses herself as "yours sincerely" (591). The homodiegetic narrator shows no inhibition in revealing her extra-marital sexual acts. As the narrator focuses on personal matters it turns out to be autodiegetic. The narrator gives a clear picture of Indians: "I narrate what happened to me so that the world knows how rotten, villainous; treacherous, degraded and lecherous these Indians are! The entire nation deserves to be put against a wall and their carcasses thrown to pye-dogs!"(608). In "Inscription of the Repressed: Khushwant Singh’s Delhi," Anita Singh observes: "The account of a white woman’s molestation is not found in
history and Alice’s revelation could be seen as the suppressed, tabooed issues in history” (Dhawan 202).

Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last emperor, talks about his plight in five episodes. From the time he became emperor, to the painful days in the dungeon, the narrator gives a short account. Unlike the other narrators in the other episodes, here the narrator does not picturize his private moments; instead condenses them: “Thus like young lovers we lay in each other’s arms with nothing save the hairs of our bodies between us. We were roused from our slumbers by the firing of cannon” (616). Very often, the narrator quotes other people. For instance, he quotes Saadi: “Ten dervishes may sleep under the same blanket but no country can hold two kings” (620).

Nihal Singh, the homodiegetic narrator in the episode “Nihal Singh” identifies himself as a Punjab police, and explicates the opportunity that took him to Delhi. As the narration continues, the narrator becomes autodiegetic. Nihal Singh, a member of the group and the orderly of Hodson Sahib, is also a participant in the activities and a witness and a reporter. The narrator here uses present tense for the narration. In the third section narrated by Nihal Singh he focuses on how the rebels were treated in the hands of the sahibs:

In batches of six the wretches would be hauled up, their hands tied behind them, and nooses would be put round
their necks. . . . It was easy to tell who would die first—the one who struggled most, strangled himself quickest. Their eyes would pop out, blood pour out of their nostrils. Some died quickly; others had to have their legs stretched to finish them off. (651)

"Nihal Singh’s version subverts the popularly revered notions of the freedom struggle," observes Anita Singh in "Inscription of the Repressed: Khushwant Singh’s Delhi" (Dhawan 203). According to her, the narratives of Alice Aldwell, Bahadur Shah Zafar and Nihal Singh in “1857,” “provide a panorama of the time synthesizing the great entities with non-entities” (202).

The narrator in the episode “The Builders” talks about his lineage, his father and his work and how he was forced to take up his father’s work. The narrator’s appreciation of Delhi is noteworthy: “I asked myself where in India you could see such an orderly, well-behaved crowd except in Delhi! White soldiers were directing people to their allotted seats; no one dared to question them. No shouting. No squabbling” (667). The narrator’s ridicule of Delhi is equally striking: “Though the white soldiers would frighten Indians into staying in their places, no power on earth can stop Indians from talking all the time” (668). The narrator openly talks about his attitude towards the British rule. He believed that British rule was good for India, because Indians
themselves would not succeed in being just and fair to all communities. But Indians hoped beyond hope that a just administration would be possible. And the narrator confirms it later by comparing the two nationalities:

We built magnificent buildings which will last for many centuries; they build shapeless, multi-storeyed offices and jerry-houses wherever there is open space . . . We laid wide roads; they make narrow lanes on which two cars cannot pass each other. We planted slow-growing long living trees . . . They plant quick growing gul mohars and laburnums which blossom for a fortnight or two and yield neither fruit nor shade. All they want is something to show in the shortest possible time. They have no sense of the past or the future. (691)

All for the British, the narrator talks of the general change in the attitude of the people towards the British by the coming of Gandhi. But the narrator stands apart and gives his individual outlook upon the reign of the British.

The episode, “The Dispossessed” is narrated by the homodiegetic narrator, Ram Rakha, who explains how his family left Hadali and came to Delhi. The autodiegetic narrator shares his past dreams and nightmares. After the murder of the Mussalman shop
owner and the looting of his store, the narrator describes his own condition; "My hands and knees shook as if I had fever. My heart thumped against my chest – dhug, dhug, dhug. I could not talk" (707-08). The narrator's emotional involvement in the story is seen as he talks about Gandhi's assassination. In "Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi" Rajendra Prasad notes: "In the caricature of Mahatma Gandhi and in the fictionalization of assassination, the novelist points out the corrupting influence of evil of bigotry and violence on the young minds . . . and also the ultimate and undying victory of Mahatma over violence, and the sustenance of the voice of sanity" (Dhawan 173).

However, the novelist has skipped over important events and personages of the past and contemporary India. Yet he has chosen the events and personages in such a way as to give a suitable message for the future generation. The book also serves as a guide for the tourists. On the whole it may be said of Delhi: "The novel embraces a large number of autonomous, dissonant voices unintruded by the anonymous narrator, a Sikh. Travelling in time, space and history he discovers his beloved city Delhi: her invasions and possessions are revealed through the network of intricate metaphors" says Anita Singh in "Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of Delhi" (Dhawan 199).
The Company of Women

In *The Company of Women* Khushwant Singh cleverly shows "how older values have subsided and display of material success becomes paramount as a new hedonistic entrepreneurship has taken India by storm" notes, P. S. Kasture in "Trapped in Sexuality: An Analysis of *The Company of Women*" (Dhawan 235). E. M. Forster says in "The Duty of Society to the Artist" "The novelist seems to say: "I want to experiment, I want to extend human sensitiveness through paint... Perhaps when I have finished, the picture will instruct and inspire people. Perhaps it will amuse them" (qtd. in Sharma 106).

*The Company of Women* has two types of narrators: the heterodiegetic and the homodiegetic. The novel is divided into three parts of which, the first and the last are narrated by the heterodiegetic narrator and the second by a homodiegetic narrator, Mohan Kumar. As Novy Kapadia puts it in "The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*," the narrator talks about "a society that believes largely in externals and glamour" (Dhawan 233).

In the first part, "The Secret Life of Mohan Kumar" the heterodiegetic narrator's omniscience enters Mohan Kumar's psyche and thoughts: "Mohan thought over the relationships he had had with various women before he married Sonu" (*The Company of Women* 7); "Mohan toyed with the idea of getting out of Delhi for a few days, then decided against it"(18); "When he retired for the night, he fantasized
about what the lady professor would be like in bed” (37). In fact the conflict between Mohan and Sonu is one of tradition versus individualism.

The narrator has a sharp eye for details. His omniscience also encircles characters like Dhanno, Sarojini and other minor characters: “Dhanno sensed what was on the Sahib’s mind” (22). “For the second time that morning she (Sarojini) felt ashamed of herself. But the feeling soon died” (43). About the servants he says, “The servants sensed that the sahib and his lady friend were upset” (64). Present during the private moments of Mohan Kumar and Dhanno the narrator says: “He kissed her on her lips . . . Dhanno slipped her shirt off over her shoulders and coyly looked down at her feet . . . Dhanno was stark naked. . . .” (23). Novy Kapadia in “The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in The Company of Women” comments: “With his sharp eye for detail and piercingly accurate characterisation, Khushwant Singh explores the world of passion, romance, fantasy and hard reality of each character” (Dhawan 240).

Section three, also narrated by the hetereodiegetic narrator, describes Mohan Kumar’s last days. The narrator’s prior knowledge of Mohan Kumar is obvious in the narration. Being omniscient, the narrator depicts Mohan Kumar’s private moments. In this section too, he depicts a lady without a name and Mohan Kumar’s clandestine
moments with her. At last he ends his life taking thirty sleeping pills along with thirty Gayatri mantras. The narrator is omniscient in the first and third sections, but his omniscience becomes partial later. For example, when the narrator shows that Sarojini's mind was agitated, he could only say that she was too disturbed. But he was not sure of the reason behind the agitation.

The novelist's observation on ethical standards invites a questionable response from the reader. Mohan Kumar, a respectable gentleman, and the lady professor, an educated person, try to satisfy their emotional and sexual urge without any thought of morals. The narrator draws the reader's attention to the ill-formed conscience of Mohan Kumar: "Occasional adultery, Mohan was convinced, did not destroy a marriage; quite often it proved to be a cementing factor... It was silly to condemn adultery as sinful; it often saved marriages from collapsing" (8). Ironically enough the lady professor tells Mohan Kumar as he offers a drink, "I live in Haryana where there is a strict prohibition; a woman seen smoking or drinking is looked upon as a whore" (33). To the lady herself she is not a whore, but to the reader she is nothing else. Mohan Kumar's ads were responded mostly by women who were divorced or living separately from their husbands. All of them were attractive and educated, and working as teachers or nurses or steno typists. In spite of all that they had, they were unable to
lead a contented life. Novy Kapadia in "The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in The Company of Women," comments "such outrageous suggestions are used as shock therapy by Khushwant Singh to expose sanctimonious attitudes towards sex, arranged marriage and adultery in modern urban India" (Dhawan 224). In "Lust for Life or Zest for Life: A Study of The Company of Women" D. K. Pabby observes, "... very briefly the novel basically celebrates a strong passion for life as also life's vagaries in all its variety" (Dhawan 270). The author's vision is made clear as the narrator comments; "The word love had made lust profane" (70). Later the novelist notes "Sarojini left the temple light of heart" (71). There is a suggestion that the prayer had a soothing effect, on her aching mind.

Part II of the novel, is narrated by Mohan Kumar who is both a homodiegetic and an autodiegetic narrator as well. He is also the protagonist in the first and third part. Mohan Kumar narrates his own life, his first sexual encounter with Jessica Browne an athlete, his relationship with one of the home nurses, Mary Joseph, the failure of his marriage, his relationship with the physiotherapist Molly Gomes, and Susanthika, the second Secretary to the High Commission of Sri Lanka. This section is divided into ten chapters. Very frank about himself, his emotions and feelings the autodiegetic narrator is clearly puts them into words. When he saw Jessica Browne going out with
another boy, he says, he felt a stab of jealousy in his heart. Again he admits, “I was fuming with rage” when Yasmeen launched into a furious monologue with Dr Ashby after his lecture on Hindu Religion (99). At times he dated with two or three girls at the same time, and there was no time to take all the girls to bed. He was clever enough to put a full stop to his relationship whenever he sensed that a girl was getting emotionally involved with him. The narrator is determined that none of his liaisons had lasted very long. He preferred shorter durations because he discovered that safety lay in numbers.

Prayer, the narrator notes, is a good beginning and a good end for a sexual intercourse. For example, Yasmeen prays before she asks Mohan Kumar to make love to her. She went to her bedroom and put her prayer mat on the floor and stood faithfully facing Makka. Then for a long time she squatted on her knees with the palms of her hands open in front of her face. Then she brushed her face with her hands and stood up. After the sexual act she continued her prayer dutifully. When the narrator woke up in the morning he saw her saying her morning namaaz on the prayer mat by the bed. In “Lust for Life or Zest for Life?: A Study of The Company of Women,” D. K. Pabby aptly observes: “Several layers of the thematic meaning, undercutting satire, subtle irony, stylistic experimentation in narrative strategies, etc. start unfolding themselves once the reader looks at the protagonist Mohan
Kumar’s sex adventures with uncoloured vision and unbiased mind” (Dhawan 263).

As Mary Joseph gets ready to surrender to her lustful desires, she takes off her gold necklace first, and kisses the cross and lays it reverently on the table. After the sexual act, she wears the necklace and kisses the cross once again. There are similar occasions in the novel. The narrator’s visit to Haridwar and the banks of the Ganga are preceded by a sexual encounter with Susanthika. The novelist does not resist the temptation to talk to the reader through his character: “I thought you went to the holy river to cleanse yourself of libidinous thoughts” (264). Another example is, Sarojini keenly going through her ritual of lighting agarbatties and invoking the blessings of goddess Saraswāti before waiting for Mohan Kumar to enjoy sex with him. Thus the autodiegetic narrator becomes the true server of the society.

The narrator’s piercing eye falls on physical characteristics too. He notices that Achint Ram had dyed his hair and moustache, but the roots of the hairs were still white. He notices Achint Ram’s sons’ wealthy clothes, ties and red handkerchiefs sticking out of their front pockets. They wore their gold-chained wristwatches with dials facing inwards. He also notices how Sonu and daughter resemble: “A little more fat round the face, bottom and belly and the two would be like twins, though over thirty years apart” (165).
The narrator considers love and lust the be-all and end-all of life. He believes that sex can drain out whatever anti-Muslim or anti-Pakistan prejudices one had imbibed in the early years of life. He rates sex higher than love and companionship:

To me sex was the more pressing need than love or companionship. For too long have we been fooled into believing that the basis of a happy man-woman relationship is love. Love is an elusive concept and means different things to different people. There is nothing elusive about lust because it means the same thing to all people: . . . Love cannot last very long without lust. Lust has no time-limit and is the true foundation of love and affection. (137-38)

The narrator’s bonding with the ladies was based on sheer lust. And he admits that lust loses its frenetic pace as soon as the partners slip wedding rings on each other’s fingers. The narrator’s opinion is that when two people want to get close to each other, sex should be their priority: “Sex is the greatest thing in human’s life. The more varied it is, the more enjoyable” (267).

The narrator justifies his act of adultery. Sex is important for him because he believes that there is only one life to live and it has to be lived well. The need of the body he considers is above religious
taboos and notions of morality. However Mary Joseph and Susanthika put forward their doubts regarding this aspect. But as they gulp down ecstatic joy, they wish to believe that adultery is not a sin. D. K. Pabby observes in “Lust for Life or Zest for Life?: A Study of The Company of Women” that Khushwant Singh is indirectly raising some significant sociological questions that are relevant in the evolving of such a society, shorn of sham-morality, double dealing, deception and confidentialities and above all the general hypocrisy may actually usher the society into a newly-defined era of healthy relationships without any hang-ups and guilt-complexes (Dhawan 266).

The narrator is conscious of the loss of human dignity in a man or woman who craves illegal sex. The narrator who desires sex on a regular basis, with a change of partners every few months understands that his normal human dignity is lost by the practice. He also recognizes himself as “a social outcast” (252). He arrives at the conclusion that a man or a woman can have either sex or human dignity. They cannot have both. By the end of the second part, the narrator is seen as disgusted with his past.

A sad fact that the narrator makes the reader conscious is that, many young girls are seduced first by their own elders or the friends of their elders. For example, Mary Joseph was a prey once to her husband’s younger brother and later to the padre of the village church.
She remembers “the padre made her to pray with him to Jesus to ask forgiveness, kneeling still naked” (181). Novy Kapadia points out in “The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in The Company of Women” the author, “ridicules and upsets the apple cart of many patriarchal institutions and conventions” (Dhawan 238).

He also notes that boys are seduced by their aunts or older maidservants: “When the sexual urge becomes too strong in young people and it’s obvious that they can barely contain it, an experienced older person finds it easy to exploit them”(267). In Khushwant Singh’s words “the book reflects what is happening around us. At one level people are earning quick money and indulging in ostentatious living and a lot of pretence about moral standards that no longer exist” (Dhawan 244-45).

The narrator surmises that whatever be the religion there is not much difference in people’s lustful emotions and feelings. A good observer as well as a good reporter, the novelist creates ironical situations. To describe a simple example, after making love three times with Molly Gomes, the narrator says in the morning that he had the sleep of the just during night. Another ironical situation is with regard to Mary Joseph’s gold ornament in the shape of the cross: “The gold cross dangling between her breast was proof that she was a devout Christian and would not have sex with anyone besides her husband”
(177). The novel celebrates a strong yearning for life and for life's vagaries and a passion for lust. The experiment of using the first person and the third person narrative alternately distances the author from the protagonist. Dr. D. K. Pabby's words in "Lust for Life or Zest for life?: A Study of *The Company of Women*" with regard to the conclusion of the novel is: "The concluding part of the novel does seem to make a definitive statement in favour of the need for balance and moderation rather than excesses and obsessions in all walks of life and more particularly with reference to physical indulgence and reckless qualification of sensual desires" (Dhawan 270).

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*I have known total strangers ring me up to discuss their personal problems. They tell me of their inhibitions, their love affairs, their extra-marital relationships. When it comes to women, I am a patient as well as an interested listener because I love to hear tales of marital discord, the number of times married people had sex, how and where they met, their married paramours and the precautions they take against being discovered and becoming pregnant.*

*Khushwant Singh*