Khuswant Singh is the writer of Indian and Pakistani culture. He is highly influenced with the historical and cultural aspect of these countries. He portrays history as a living character, so his fictional works take here to evaluating the historical importance. He comments about his writings: “I had written a lot of short stories before I embarked on writing my first novel ‘Mano Majra’, better known by its later title ‘Train to Pakistan’. I had no idea how one wrote a novel. I did not think I had the stamina to write one.” He had no idea to depict the theme in his novel and lived through the civil strife that engulfed the whole of Northern India. Almost every other day of the spring to summer of 1947, we heard stories of massacre of Sikhs and Hindus in villages of the Northwest frontier Province and Rawalpindi and Campbellpur district; and of thousands of refugees trekking eastwards to areas where Hindus and Sikhs were in preponderances. When communal violence broke out by the sounds of the gunfire and mobs yelling; Allah-o-Akbar from the one side and Har Har Mahadev and Sat Sri Akal from the other side.
He made his literary reputation with his fictional works. He is the modern short story writer, novelist and a well-known columnist of India. He presents the image and the reality of Indian history with the different taste. This is a highly readable and rewarding initiation into a complex ancient civilization, by one of India's most widely read writers and journalists. He tells the story of the land and its people from the earliest time to the present day. In broad, vivid sweeps he encapsulates the saga of the upheavals of a sub-continent over five millennia, and how their interplay over the centuries has moulded the India of today. More. Singh offers perceptive insights into everything India that may catch one's eye or arouse curiosity: its ethnic diversity, religions, customs, philosophy, art and culture, political currents, and the galaxy to men and women who have helped shape its intricately inlaid mosaic. He is also an enlightening guide too much else: India's extensive and varied architectural splendours, its art and classical literature.

Singh presents the various phase of India in his fictional work. He portrait India with all the reigns of the foreigners. He offers perceptive insights into everything Indian that may catch one's eye or arouse curiosity, its ethnic diversity, religions, customs, philosophy, art and culture, political events, and the galaxy of men and women who have helped shape its intricately inlaid mosaic.
There has been an astonishing flowering in Indian writings in English particularly in fiction — during the last two decades. A systematic and balanced account of the literature of this period is perhaps the need of the hour. Such an attempt has more than one justification the contemporary evaluation has its own special appeal. A contemporary critic rise to what Matthew Arnold termed ‘The comprehension of his age’, more effortlessly than his successors because he himself is the part of the age. Prominent among the writers like ‘Manohar Malgankar’, ‘Salman Rushdie’, ‘Mulk Raj Anand’, and ‘Temer Murari,’ Khushwant Singh began his literary career after independence. He was highly influenced with the historical myth of Indian cultural and its dignity. He is the true representative in the Indian History.

In his first novel Singh, presents the history of India and Pakistan. This time was the parting time of India and Pakistan and this novel presents the simple story of a close-knit family divided by conflicting political loyalties. It is the time to set around the ‘Quit India’ movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi during the II World War. The main characters of the novel are the father who after years of loyal service to the British Raj, expected to be honoured with a title of the King’s Birthday Honours list and his young son who, undetected by anyone in the family, had joined a band of terrorist to disrupt arms supplies traffic on road and rail, and perhaps kill an
Englishman of Few. The story was built around his own family. He located
and in Amritsar, he portrayed Indian history in this novel as an alive character.

In the preface of this novel Arthur Lal comments:

If this novel were to be submitted today as an unpublished manuscript, I believe a half –dozen publishers would readily accept it. Its intrinsic qualities as a fine novel grip the reader. Throughout, the action sweeps one along. The characters are vivid and highly credible and Khuswant Singh keeps them going magnificently on two levels; in their quotidian matrix compounded of their passions of love and revenge, their tremendous sense of belonging to a village community, their insolence and heroism, and then again on the wide stage set by the tornado that breaks on their lives in the shape of the cataclysmic events of the partition of the India and Pakistan in 1947. But this is not only a work of fiction wrought with great skill. In addition it has significant values as a social document that portrays vividly many facets of the great upheaval that accompanied the creation of Pakistan. For historians, sociologists, students of human affairs in general, this is a highly relevant piece of writing by a person who, as a Punjabi whose family was uprooted from its ancestral home, experienced at close quarters the terrible tragedy that overcame the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Reading Train to Pakistan in 1981, twenty-five years after it was written one finds that the
values. Most of the details relating to the uncertainties and the violence pertaining to the period have been mentioned in the course of the discussion of that novel. One thing, however, has not been specifically mentioned. In the wider context of violence as the major theme of the novel other motifs like the one to be taken up here became only the minor issues. When we come to ‘I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale’ this subdued theme of falsehood and uncommunicativeness comes to the fore. There cannot be any naked blatant violence in the well-placed and cultured Sikh family of Buta Singh. By venturing a generalization, it may be said that in the times in which institutions and values are on a slippery ground men loose their rectitude, veracity and credibility. Their loyalties are shaken. They cease to be upright men but not violence for a remedy. Naturally the precautious state of war, the indefinite future of the nationalist movement, the unpredicted shape of things coming up, the fast changing equations at the international front made it difficult for the ordinary man to pin his fate firmly to any cause. The way Hitler was leveling one countryman after another it was difficult to foresee what could happen to India’s Independence at the end of the war. Shall it have to be negotiated with the British or the Germans or the Japanese? Even a firm anti-British reactionary like Debi- Dayal was at his wits end at this confused hour.
Looking to the initial loses in the war the chances that the British will emerge victorious from the melting pot appeared not very bright. Similarly the success at the political front at home could not be a foregone conclusion. In short, the malady of indecisiveness generates, not clear violence, but only subdued surrogate of violence i.e. undecided ness of character. Undecidedness when it gets tangled with the demands of everyday life, people are bound to wobble and lapse into deceitfulness, lying, simulating and withdrawing into their shells. Gian in ‘A Bend in the Ganges’ who is by and large a noble character suffers from the ravages of this shaky ethos. Later when his cousin in a family feud killed his brother over property, he forgot his vow to non-violence and murdered the assassinator of his brother. He confessed his guilt to the Police and was dispatched to the Andemans on a life sentence. Starting from this point his life would be bundle of lies and a series of deceitful deed.

Chapter III presents outrageous historical violence. In his novel ‘I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale’ Singh has traced the same predicament in the Sikh family. The fact that it is a story of a Sikh family has added yet another tangle to the confusion of the times, namely the chivalric heritage of the Sikh community caught in the conflict with not so chivalric way of life. In the life style of Butta Singh and his family there is internally little scope of violence but the uncertainties of the times push each person in the
direction of violence but the uncertainties of the times push each person in the direction of violence, instead of being violent they can only suffer from split personalities and ambivalent social entities. There is a tug of war between the warrior element within the non-violence politics around; the former Sikh loyalty to the British and the present challenge to it.

Thus one more dimension of violence arising from uncertainties and conflicts got to the problems of the family. Khushwant Singh has delineated the violence arising from these complexities through different characters allotting different issues to different persons. Ordinarily any one person's mind, like that of 'Mrs. Dalloway' in Virginia Woolf's novel could be the battleground of the upheaval of the times, but Khushwant Singh has been more artistic in his handling of this unfinished pictures of the time.

The male characters particularly Buta Singh and the Headman bear the burden of lying, simulating and practicing deception, whereas the Sikh heritage is personified in Sabhrai and by transsevation of the ideal violence to some extent in Sher Singh. However, each character shares the violence of uncommunicativeness. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in this "Novel of Character" the bond of uncommunicativeness, which includes lying, deceiving and concealing is a stronger bond than familial contiguity.

As regards women other than Sabhrai they have their share of
uncommunicativeness but otherwise stand for the general drift of the sex without any special reference to the violence in the time.

To enumerate the instances of lying and hiding like that of Champak about Mundu and the bucket of Buta Singh viz. his colleagues or the letter that went with the Christmas gift of oranges from our garder bought from the bazaar, would amount to tenuous duplication. It all fairness a novel of character should be given the dignity of a novel of character. But a word here about the community element i.e., Sikhism would not be out of place, because it goes a long way in determining the psychology and the nature of violence of its surrogates must be viewed in the light of the artistic, religious devotional, traditional contents of their psyche which tended more towards agitation than towards conformity. To some extent their martial identity illness at present was to a certain extent responsible for drawing in their tentacles and they clung closer and closer of the Granth Sahib. The violence in the novel is therefore a compromise of the inherited Sahib. The violence in the novel is therefore a compromise of the inherited psyche, the race subconscious and the present trend separatist, factional communal behaviour. The two elements are well worked out in the impulsive history of the Sikhs and in the allegiance to the British. Sher Singh and his mother touch to the fringe of the former impulse and Buta Singh falls between the two stools.
Buta Singh's unsuspecting liberality at home made the resultant freedom rather enigmatic to the erring. As the family sat in silence waiting for Buta Singh say something to Sher Singh was particularly nervous.
Would his father ask him about misusing the government jeep for a private outing? It is in the same spirit that superseding the refusal of the mother aroused the daughter to go to his colleague Wazir Chand’s house to see Sita.

Instances of such independent, almost enigmatic behaviour are quite numerous. As said above Buta Singh was not likely to be grossly violent. Under the stress of the times the predictions to violence had to flow down the vicarious channels of lies and falsehood. Why should he present to his family a distorted version of his conversation with the Deputy Commissioner? We know the conversation ran as follows:

Taylor received him in his dark, air-cooled office. The shook hands and Buta Singh took a chair on the other side of the working table. Taylor helped himself to a cigarette and pushed the box in front of his guest. Buta Singh shook his head. Beg your pardon, Buta Singh: I keep forgetting I mustn’t offer a cigarette to a Sikh.  

Buta Singh explained, “That is all right, Sahib, Just an old superstition.” His reaction to a similar indiscretion by a fellow Indian would have been a little more emphatic. Taylor lit his cigarette; a cigarette usually determined the length of the interview.

Sorry to have you sent you on a holiday; it’s something like Christmas for you isn’t it? I hope you don’t mind. “mind?” queried Buta Singh in a tone of righteous
indignation. "Mind, Sahib! It is our duty. What impression would the people in Delhi get if they heard that while these Japanese are at our gates, we can't even keep law and order in our towns just because it is Baisakhi Day and the Magistrates want a holiday? Sahib must have seen what the American paper "The New York Times' Japan acts!' There is some truth in that. Air raid warnings in Calcutta, bombs dropping on Colombo, and here, our so called nationalists and Muslims a quarrelling about little details with the English instead of getting on with the work.  

Buta Singh explained, "I wish other Indians talked like you, I rely upon on you to guide them. I do not anticipate any trouble today but one never knows. A small incident may lead to a major riot. There are some politicians looking for trouble. I am told that there are meetings this afternoon." Taylor paused to drop the ash off his cigarette. As Buta Singh made no comment, he continued. "The Superintendent of Police informs me that your son has also organized a meeting of the students. I told him not to bother about him. 'If he is Buta Singh's son', I said 'we can trust him, even if he is a Nationalist or a Communalist or anything else.' "You are most kind, Sahib. He is young man and you know what youth is! Hot and full of ideas. But he is all right. He is as you say Buta Singh's son and through his hobnobbings with these Gandhi-scaped Congress wallahs and Red flag
wallahs, Buta Singh knows what is going on in the city and whom to watch.”

Buta Singh’s accent and vocabulary changed when he spoke to Englishmen, “Wallah” figured prominently in his speech.

The chief characters of this novel are Sikhs. Singh highlights the 15th century history at the time of Guru Nanak. Nine other Gurus of whom the last, Govind Singh, turned them into a military brotherhood succeeded Nanak. The Sikhs became the ruler of Punjab in 16th century. Sikhs wear their hair and boards unshorn. They also add the suffix Singh to their names. They have two modes of greeting. One is to say ‘Sat Sri Akal’, which means ‘God is truth’. In other mode one person says, ‘Wah guru ji ka kalsa’ – ‘the Sikhs are the chosen of God’ – and the other replies, ‘Wah guru ji ki fateh’ – ‘and victory be to our God’. Buta Singh’s family is portrays by Singh in this novel.

In the third novel ‘Delhi’ he presents the historical background of Delhi. Delhi presents the ambitious chronicle covering history of its life more than eight hundred years. He declares that while the blood and flesh were certainly indispensable, the necessity of the making principal characters swim in the sea of semen, it is not quite clear. One finds oneself agreeing with the narrator’s friend, who justifiably asks him, “Do you have anything accept sex on your mind?” It had the prolonged gestation. He portrays the history of various periods like Rajput Raj in India, the life of
'Hazrat Nizamuddin' and Emperor 'Aurangzeb'. The British Period he relied on his ancestors, his father and grandfather had taken the lion’s share in the construction of New Delhi. Likewise for the impact of partition and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. He examined Pyare Lal’s documentation of the last day of the Mahatma Gandhi. The murder of Mrs. Gandhi and the massacre of Sikhs that followed, were deeply imprinted in his mind. Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib comments: "I asked my soul: What is Delhi? She replied: The world is the body and Delhi its life." Singh tells the history of Delhi from its earliest beginnings to the present times. History provided him with the skeleton. Actually Singh’s invention of Bhagmati a bisexual whore, as the objective correlates of the city of Delhi was the brilliant stroke of imagination foregrounding the plight of the city dominated and despoiled by all sorts of tyrants over the centuries. But Bhagmati does not emerge as a Tiresias – like figure. Her performance are described with such salivating zest and titillating detail that the significance of the putative symbol, which should really have been the novelist’s main concern is almost totally overridden by the sordid actuality of the referent, to the detriment of the thematic concern of the novel.

In the V chapter Singh presents the history of India in the different flavour. He portrait every aspect of India and gave a new shape to the Indian historical background. This is the example of his creative historical
art in the modern English novel. He is aware about the historical incidents of India and he portrays Indian people in his work. His own fascination with the subject is contagious, showing through on every page, and in every sidelight that he recounts. 'India; An Introduction' holds strong appeal for just anyone who has more than a passing interest in the country. Indians as well as those who are drawn to it from farther field. And for a traveler, it is that rare companion: erudite, intelligent, and lively. He admits:

I learnt more about India teaching Indian history and religions to American students at Princeton, Swarthmore and Hawai than I could have attending lectures in an Indian university. I was a poor student and imbibed very little learning from my professors. When the rules reversed and instead of sitting in class among students I had to face them alone standing on the podium I had to garner all the information I could, poring over books in the library, arranging it in a presentable order and prepare myself to answer questions that might be put to me.  

India has three major zones – the Himalayas, the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Deccan plateau. Before the creation of Pakistan, the sub-continent had a geographical unity, with mountain ranges forming the frontiers of the north and the west. The importance of these mountains lay in their impassability. They are the highest in the world-Mount Everest rising to 29,028 feet and most of them are snow bound throughout the year, as
Indeed, their name, Hima (snow) Alaya (the abode) signifies. Of greater historical importance than the towering heights and the perennial snows were the few passes which made the Himalayas passable and, like sluice gate of a dam, provided regular inlets for the hordes that lived on the other side. Passes like the Bolan, Khurram, and Khyber are in the North-West; there are many others which link India with Tibet. These passes were known to nomads and shepherds who grazed their flocks of sheep and goats in the valleys, too tradesmen who brought their caravans of merchandise through them and, of course, to marauders who used them to invade and loot the rich plains of India.

The history of India is a monotonous and tragic repetition of invasion through the Himalayan passes. The timing was fixed with calendar-like precision. The invader got his forces together just before autumn, crossed the passes before snowfall and swept down on the Indian plains in early winter when he skies were blue, the air cool and fragrant with the smell of mustard, green wheat and sugarcane. Most of the battles between the invaders and the Indians were fought in the Punjab and if the invaders were victorious, which they often were, they spent the winter months systematically looting the cities Lahore, Karnal, Panipat, Delhi, Mathura and Agra. Before the summer’s heat came on, they carried away the harvested winter crops,
retraced their steps, and disappeared into the mountain passes through which they had come.

While the Himalayas gave Indians Gangetic plain gave Indians the illusion of being guarded by an impassable wall, the Indo-Gangetic plain gave them the illusion of owning an inexhaustible granary. About 70,000 square miles in area, the plain is one of the world’s longest alluvium tracts. Cities, towns and villagers cover it, one within sight of the other. The States of U. P. Bihar and West Bengal, for instance, have about six times the density of population obtaining in the United States of America. When the monsoon fails, Districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa become like the dust bowl of Rajasthan, unable to feed their millions.

The third great divide is the Deccan Plateau. The region is like a vast triangle the low lying ghats running along the sea coast from two sides, while the hill ranges of the Vindhyas and Satpuras, with the rivers Narmada and Tapti, mark it off from the North. Though the region has geographical identity, two racial inhabits it. The northern half, describing itself as Deccani, speaks languages, which are closely related. The Southern half is inhabited by Dravidians speaking Dravidian languages: Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. Indians talk of these three parts of Indian as the head, the torso and the groin and legs of the one entity that is India. They visualize it as Mother India with her head and the snowy Himalayas, her
arms stretched from the Punjab to Assam, her ample bosom and middle (the Indian concept of feminine beauty requires a woman to be big breasted and heavy hipped) resting on the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Deccan, and her feet bathed by the waters of the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka is like a house petalled foot-stool. This deified configuration of Mother India is often depicted by Indian artists as goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of plenty, or Saraswati, the patron goodness of the arts. In 1947, the Indian sub-continent had its Eastern and Western extremes hopped off to make the two wings of the State of Pakistan. Thereafter Mother India assumed the shape of a Venus de Milo. He wrote in his famous historical novel:

To know India and her people, one has to know the monsoon. It is not enough to read about it books, or see it on the cinema screen, or hear someone talk about it. It has to be a personal experience because nothing short or living through it can fully convey all it means to a people for whom it is not only the source of life, but it also their most exciting impact with nature. What the four seasons of the year mean to the European, the one season of the monsoon means too the Indian? It is preceded by desolation, it brings with it the hopes of the spring; it has the fullness of summer and the fulfillment of autumn all in one.
He not only represented Indian history but also gave a new direction to the historians. He portrayed Indian culture and religion of the different periods in India like Aryans, Hindus, Mughals, Jainies, Christians and British people who ruled in India. He tells the story of the land and its people from the earliest time to the present day. In broad, vivid sweeps he encapsulate the saga of the upheavals of a sub-continent over five millennia, and how their interplay over the centuries has molded the India of today. More, Singh offers perceptive insights into everything Indian that may catch one’s eye or arouse curiosity: its ethnic diversity, religion, customs, culture, philosophy, political currents and galaxy of men and women who helped to shape its intricately inlaid mosaic. He is also an enlightening guide to much else.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES


3 Ibid., p. 54.

4 Ibid., p. 76.

5 Ibid., p. 98.
