The thesis, "The Alien and the Artist: An In-depth Study of the Writings of Khushwant Singh" attempts a critical study of the writings of Khushwant Singh in order to identify and establish the feeling of an alien and the fulfilment of an artist.

Khushwant Singh, the alien makes his presence felt in his works because of his religious consciousness -- the Sikh consciousness. The Sikh consciousness is a phenomenon which has evolved in the psyche of the Sikhs over a period of five centuries of the history of the Sikhs. Towards the end of the 15th Century, Guru Nanak, a Hindu mystic founded a religious movement to unite Hinduism and Islam in the Punjab. Later on, quite ironically, it crystallised into a third religious community consisting of the disciples or Sikhas of Nanak. The Sikh struggle for survival as a separate community has been going on since then. It started with the resistance to British expansionism; it was continued as resistance against Muslim domination and after Independence, it turned to resistance against absorption by reascent Hinduism.

Though the Sikh population is about 18 million, their longing for a separate identity is something uncommon. So
much so that the Sikhs, perhaps are the only people who can be easily identified by their outward religious symbols. They are keen on retaining these outward symbols which proclaim their separate identity. Even in the army, they have been given the right to wear the turbans.

Khushwant Singh was a born Sikh and reared in Sikhism in the strict orthodox Sikh tradition till he was 40. So in spite of his scientific and cosmopolitan outlook, he is part of this strong tradition of Sikhs. In one sense, the Sikhs' longing for a separate identity implies a sense of alienation. Khushwant Singh's emotional identification with the vicissitudes of the Sikh community, with a deep sense of belonging naturally makes him an alien. Only after he crossed 40, the grip of his religion over him slowly loosened because of his application of reason and commonsense. At another stage, he alienates himself intellectually from the ugly and uncivilized way of life of the Indians in general. Ultimately, the artist in Khushwant Singh creates, beside a real world, a more humane world. This widening of perspective takes place during the course of his career as a committed writer; and as a true artist, Khushwant Singh gets out of himself, forgets his communal interests and becomes Man thinking for the whole race.
Born in a tiny hamlet called Hadali in West Punjab (now in Pakistan) in 1915, Khushwant Singh was brought up mostly in an affluent background. After becoming a graduate in India, he studied law for four years in King's College, London and then he became a Barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple. For some time he practised as a junior lawyer in the Lahore High Court. After finding it not successful, he turned to reading English poetry and classics. In the post-Independence India, he served in different capacities like Information Officer, Press Attache' and Public Relation Officer in Indian embassies in Western Countries. This helped him to establish contact with eminent literary personalities like C.P.Snow, C.E.M.Joad, W.H.Auden and Dylan Thomas. For ten years from 1969 onwards he was a successful editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India (Bombay). He was a Member of Parliament for six years between 1980 and 1986. Then he was editor of the largest circulating paper in the capital The Hindustan Times. Today even at the age of 80, he continues to write columns on different topics in some of the leading weeklies and magazines in India and abroad. His autobiography is to be published this year.

To his credit he has more than sixty books in literature and journalism. Khushwant Singh is multi-faceted: he is a journalist, a short-story writer, a novelist and a historian. He is the product of both the East and the West.
The Sikh tradition and the Western tradition have combined in him and earned him a unique status -- an Insider-outsider. The commendable concern for the immediate problems of his fellow men forces him to write as a committed artist. Though most of his writings are contextual, it has also a wider perspective which makes his works humanly valuable and universal.

The first chapter "Introductory" analyses how English has struck deep roots in India though it is an alien language. Khushwant Singh's unique position -- namely an Insider-outsider among the other Indian English writers is discussed. An outline of the life and career and works of the writer and the formative influences on his artistic development is given. The comic spirit which is the basic quality of his creative faculty is highlighted. The chapter also deals with how the art converts Khushwant Singh the alien into a "Cultured humanist".

The second chapter "Fictionalised History" analyses his novels Train to Pakistan, I Shall not Hear the Nightingale and Delhi and it reveals Khushwant Singh's art of building an imaginative structure against a historical background. He was a passive spectator to the horrifying and tragic incidents during the Partition. He felt that he did nothing to save the lives of innocent people and behaved like a
coward. He felt like an alien in the violent fanatic society. Like Conrad's Lord Jim, he looked for an atonement for his sin of inaction in times of crisis. Art came to his rescue. The artist in him expresses this conflict in *Train to Pakistan* and the sense of alienation which he experiences from the real historical incidents disappears in the fictional society which affirms faith and optimism in the goodness of humanity.

The novel *I shall not Hear the Nightingale* has pre-Independence India as its backdrop -- namely the Quit India Movement. The novel betrays a sense of alienation because of the writer's total disillusionment with the post-Independence India. The art of Khushwant Singh redeems the novel from the gloomy pit of pessimism and a feeling of alienation.

*Delhi* deals with the story of Delhi from its beginning to the present times. The artist seems to disappear, but the iconoclast and the alien are very much in *Delhi* especially when the narrator reacts to contemporary events. Delhi, for Khushwant Singh, is both a city and a metaphor.

The third chapter "Tales with a sting" traces briefly the genesis of the Indian short story from the ancient times and identifies Khushwant Singh's unique position as a short
story writer among various short story traditions of the world. The interesting point -- how the problems at the microlevel conveyed in his short story could have its impact at the macrolevel, namely the society -- is probed thoroughly in this chapter.

The blending of humour with satire in exposing the individual's eccentricities and follies is another significant aspect, which this chapter analyses. As a committed writer he alienates himself from the ills of society and through art he suggests remedial steps. Khushwant Singh the artist excels in his short stories and the special quality in his short story is the punch/anti-climax at the end of the story; it is "like a scorpion's sting in the tail" and it shocks the readers into thinking on lines which are not quite accepted and acceptable to society.

The fourth chapter "Non-fiction" analyses Khushwant Singh's versatile genius which finds its expression on a variety of subjects including the history of Sikhs. The chapter probes into the overwhelming Sikh conscience in Khushwant Singh's The History of the Sikhs in two volumes. The resultant conflict between the artist and the historian who totally identifies himself with the Sikh community is also analysed. His views on different subjects like
religion, politics, language, sex, marriage etc., expose him as an iconoclast, agnostic, rationalist, outspoken and above all a humanist. On many issues, he thinks quite independently like Bernard Shaw. He is not a Block thinker; he is Man thinking.

The fifth chapter "Craftsmanship" presents a detailed study of Khushwant Singh's aim in writing -- the effectiveness of assertion. Paradoxically the strength of his style lies in his simple language. His paradoxical statement that English is his mother tongue though his mother cannot speak a single word of it, is characteristic of the double-identity in Khushwant Singh.

The various literary devices he employs in his writings are analysed in this chapter. Even his journalistic writings are not mere reporting; they have a "point of view". His effective use of anti-climax and the reasons for his being called a "professional provocateur" are dealt with.

The final chapter "Summation" tries to establish how Khushwant Singh's art, despite its comic tone, has an ethical responsibility. The aspects analysed in the previous chapters are restated and emphasized to prove his artistic genius. His sense of alienation is not out of fear -- but out of anger. But his humane attitude and universal
perspective help him to tolerate the evils of the Indian society -- communal disharmony included.

The artist cannot run away from the world however cruel it may be. The sense of alienation of the artist can only be a temporary phenomenon; the artist will continue to love the world. That is why Khushwant Singh asserts:

Yeah, this is my native land. I don't like it, but I love it.

This paradox is the unifying factor in Khushwant Singh's writings, which the thesis tries to exemplify.

The Interview, the Researcher had with the author on 8.8.1994, was an experience by itself. Khushwant Singh's consistency, his outspokenness, his commitment to the society and his sense of humour were quite evident during the interview. The interview has been appended.