INTRODUCTORY

Art has two great functions. First, it provides an emotional experience. And then, if we have the courage of our inner feelings, it becomes a mine of practical truth. (Lawrence, "The Spirit of Place" 123)

Sociological criticism presupposes that art's relations with society are vitally important. The investigation of the relationship between art and society may deepen one's appreciation of a work of art. For, as Wilbur Scott explains,

Art is not created in a vacuum; it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community of which he is an important, because articulate part. (123)

Khushwant Singh's writings are to be analysed from this perspective. Even a casual reader can see the reflection of the contemporary life in the works of Khushwant Singh; but a careful study will reveal the mind of the artist. A deeper analysis of his works reveals the latent sense of alienation in him. And this is born out of the emotional and the intellectual elements of the artist's personality. His
emotional identification with the Sikh community makes him feel alien with the non-Sikh Indians and his intellectual identification with the West and its culture makes him feel alienated from many of the traditional concepts of Indian culture. But the artist in him helps him transcend the average man in him; and the humanist in him enables him to view humanity in a wider perspective and makes him a citizen of the world. The thesis intends to probe the conflict between the two aspects, namely the alien and the artist in the multi-faceted personality of Khushwant Singh, as revealed in his writings in English.

English has struck deep roots in India and has been the lingua franca of the intelligentsia for more than one and a half centuries. It has become the natural medium of creative writers as well. Today there are eminent people who can claim like Khushwant Singh: "My mother tongue is English though my mother cannot speak one word of it" (We Indians 115).

Khushwant Singh loves English so much that he feels more at home in English than in his three Indian languages, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu. English, like Kashmiri, Sindi, Assamese and Punjabi, is spoken by barely 2% of the population of the country. But, interestingly, people who make a mark in any field of human activity in India speak English. Further, most of the work is still done in English.
because no other Indian language is at present capable of handling the technicalities of administration, justice, technology and sciences. So English has come to stay in India; and if one weighs languages in terms of the power they wield, one will see that English outweighs all the fourteen other recognised Indian languages. In the light of these facts, it is not out of place to discuss how English, an alien language, found its way into India.

No doubt, the British colonial rule is the major factor. English almost was thrust upon India in the beginning to suit the convenience of the rulers. In the early nineteenth century, in accordance with Macaulay's Minutes on Education, the study of the English language was strengthened in India. This revolutionised the thought process of the educated Indians. Because of the diffusion of Western thought and European liberalism, a new consciousness was stimulated in the great minds of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. So Macaulay's educational policy was a catalyst in bringing about Indian Renaissance. In a sense, the Indian Renaissance was the greatest gift of English.

This awakening yielded beneficial results in the realm of literature. The literatures of the West created a consciousness of the individuality of man. This enabled the Indian to see himself in relation to the world around him and to search for his identity. There was a rejuvenation of
Indian literatures through the adoption of new literary forms and genres from the West. Along with this, the Indian creative effort in English sprouted. Thus Indian English literature came into being which in the words of K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar,

... is both an Indian literature and a variation of English literature. It has an appeal to Indians, and it should have an appeal to Englishmen as well. (6)

Indian English literature is unique in the context of the emergence of American literature, Canadian literature, Australian literature, West Indian literature, South African literature and Nigerian literature. They are all different from one another and yet they are the natural expression of an English speaking people. This condition is not prevalent in India because as far as Indian English literature is concerned, English is not the first language of the writer and again English is not the language of the daily life of the people about whom the literature is written. This makes Indian English literature an unparalleled phenomenon in the world literature.

It is Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) who heralded the Indian Renaissance. With official support from Macaulay he turned the table in favour of English as the medium of education in schools and colleges. Consequently Indians
gradually mastered this alien tongue of their rulers and many of them like Toru Dutt wielded the English language so ably that they could write it with ease and grace. Some of the gifted writers in English are Henry Derozio (1809-31), Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909), Arun Dutt (1854-1874), Toru Dutt (1856-1877), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Manmohan Ghose (1867-1924), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) and Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949).

The credit should go to Bankim Chandra, a Bengali, who made the first experiment in Indian English Literature. In 1864, his novel Raj Mohan's Wife in English came out and became an instant success. Then Tagore came to the Indian literary scene. He had a command of English equal to that of British writers and his novels are mostly novels of ideas.

The Indian National Movement for freedom exerted a powerful impact on creative writing. Gandhi's thoughts and principles and his influence on people formed a rich storehouse of themes for Indian writers to draw from. A glance through Indian English literature produced after 1920 reveals how Gandhi influenced every writer. The great trio Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, through their fiction, explored and exploited all the possibilities of the Gandhian theme. The freedom consciousness and the concept of non-violence generated by Gandhi found creative expression in the writings of the post-independence era. In the same
period, women also became conscious of their rights and freedom and that they too belong to a class. Socio-economic problems do not any longer concern them. Most of the novels of these women writers are psychological novels analysing the psyche of the oppressed women in a male-chauvinistic society.

All the same the Partition of the country is a significant theme of Indian English writers. The tragic incidents in the wake of the Partition shocked the conscience of the writers so much that they tried to release their tension through their artistic creations. Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* are examples for this category.

Among the front-rank Indian English writers of today, the personality of Khushwant Singh is unique. He is multi-faceted; he is a journalist, a short-story writer, a novelist and a historian. To his credit he has more than 60 books in journalism and literature. Because of his close contact with the Western civilization - first during his education and then by way of assignment in various capacities as a political diplomat - he took pride in saying: "I am the product of both the East and the West... an Orio-Occidental" (qtd. in V.A.Shahane "Khushwant Singh: An Artist in Realism" 346). Further, his rich experience in
the field of journalism has made him bold and outspoken in expressing his views.

Like George Bernard Shaw, Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton, he has the courage, the conviction and the talent to put forward his minority viewpoint in a highly personal way. The Sikh tradition and the Western tradition have combined to mould him into a rare phenomenon. This has earned him a unique status of being an Insider-outside. Hence, he is able to analyse Indian milieu with an objectivity and individuality which most of the Indian English writers do not have.

In his works he shows a commendable concern for the immediate problems of his fellowmen. Being a writer of the liberal tradition, he firmly believes that moral independence in privileged individuals may help to secure some measure of social justice and peace for a growing community. But that justice and peace, for Khushwant Singh, are only the means. The ends, or purposes of human life are friendship, love, the enjoyment of beauty, the achievement of moral courage and intellectual honesty.

The basic quality of Khushwant Singh's creative faculty is the comic. In this connection V.A. Shahane observes:

The Comic Spirit that characterizes his [Khushwant Singh's] compositions is in certain
respects truly Meridithian. Meredith envisaged the nature and function of comedy in terms of social and moral criticism. Comedy, for Meredith, is a social corrective and psychological curative. ("Khushwant Singh: An Artist in Realism" 344)

The comic spirit in Khushwant Singh's writing does not stop with provoking laughter, but it has a deeply ingrained social purpose.

A close analysis of his writings reveals a pattern which emerges from the primary characteristics of his creative mind. Khushwant Singh himself comments on his career: "The decision to write comes at the same time as when one has found something compelling to write about" ("Compulsions to Write" 184). The harrowing incidents of India's Partition in 1947 had shaken the faith of all the sensitive people of India in the intrinsic nobility of man. They brought great despair and crisis of values in Khushwant Singh too; and it is this disillusionment which impelled him to write as follows:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the
country.... I had believed that we Indians were peace-loving and non-violent, that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to these views. I became... an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world.... I decided to try my hand at writing. (qtd. in Raizanda 1:162)

The outcome of this crisis and agony is Khushwant Singh's first novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956). This brought him fame in the literary world and the Grove Press India Fiction Prize. If one applies the test of psychology, it would become obvious that there exists a link between the crisis and the creation.

A psychoanalyst regards human personality as a vital and dynamic phenomenon in which the self becomes a kind of battlefield. Here different instincts and impulses are always warring against conventions and regulations. Sigmund Freud's deep study of the nature of man and the manner of his mind's workings has helped to establish a bridge between literature and creative activity of the mind. David Daichess
also echoes the same view:

In explaining the nature of a work of literary art, the critic is often led into psychology, into a discussion of the state of mind out of which literary creation arises. (329)

This discussion reveals the fact that the artist ultimately becomes isolated and feels alienated.

Alienation denotes a socio-psychological condition of the individual which involves his estrangement from certain aspects of social existence. The spirit of the modern age seems to conspire against the artist. As M.K. Naik aptly puts it,

... certain aspects of life in post-Independence India cannot but make the artist believe that he hardly belongs. He is deeply affected by the glaring contrast between the values and mores of the days of the freedom struggle and those in present day India. It is a contrast between an era of idealism, selfless service and dedication to a cause and an age of unrepentant materialism, unlimited self-aggrandizement and unabashed pursuit of power. In an age like this, the artist is bound to feel that he is an outsider. (Studies in Indian English Literature 76)
Khushwant Singh feels alienated both from the cultural point of view and the intellectual point of view. Being an agnostic and an iconoclast, Khushwant Singh has been marginalised by the Sikh community. Being an Internationalist both in perspective and training, he is able to present the problem of India with an unbiased attitude. At a time when, in India, the Gandhian myth was quite prevalent, he completely avoids it. Nor does he present any other political leader for that matter. He makes it clear that for the common man, freedom does not mean much. The lambardar's answer to Iqbal in Train to Pakistan conveys this idea:

Freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians - or the Pakistanis. (62)

In fact in his novels, Khushwant Singh exposes disillusionment as regards concepts like patriotism, honesty, truth and so on. He does not create idealistic characters. All his characters are life-like, down-to-earth. The magistrate and deputy commissioner Hukum Chand's advice to the sub-inspector confirms this:

Your principle should be to see everything and say nothing. The world changes so rapidly that if you want to get on you cannot afford
to align yourself with any person or point of view. Even if you feel strongly about something, learn to keep silent. (Train to Pakistan 31)

Khushwant Singh is preoccupied with exploiting the contrast between the insignificant community for which freedom does not mean anything and the affluent community for which both the British regime and the Independent country are bound to help. This hypocrisy which Khushwant Singh underscores makes him feel alienated.

The works of Khushwant Singh suggest a profound disillusionment with reason, intellect and the power of law in the face of elemental human passions. But they reveal his objective observation and fearlessness in saying what many may not like. Quite interestingly, they are studded with wit, humour and insight that delights as well as educates.

Another significant and enigmatic aspect in Khushwant Singh is his Sikh consciousness. He identifies himself with the ups and downs of the Sikh community. In the words of V.A. Shahane,

Khushwant Singh's art is deeply rooted in the soil, and the vitality which it reveals is the vigour of a genuine Punjabi (native of the Punjab), permeated by an inwardly-felt Punjabi
consciousness. His art has grown out of the grass-roots of the land of five rivers.

("Khushwant Singh: An Artist in Realism" 345)

This consciousness is so deep-rooted and spontaneous that whenever the interests of the Sikhs are to be protected, his professed national consciousness is relegated to the background. At times, his total emotional involvement with his community becomes the root cause for a conflict in his mind. In the severity of the conflict his head yields to his heart and a sense of alienation asserts itself in him. This is established, for instance, by his action of protesting against the Bluestar Operation at the Golden Temple in 1984. He returned, in protest, the Padma Bhushan Award which was given to him in recognition of his journalistic and literary work. Khushwant Singh expressed the same sentiment when this researcher interviewed him on 08.08.1994. He said that he felt like an alien at the time of the Bluestar Operation. The view of German Neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohan, on the alien is worth considering here:

The alien was to be protected, not because he was a member of one's family, clan, religious community; but he was a human being. In the alien, therefore, man discovered the idea of humanity. ("Alien," Encyclopaedia Britannica 1964 ed.)
Here, in Khushwant Singh, quite interestingly, the alien becomes a "cultured humanist" through art. The sufferings he has experienced psychologically and physically, he feels, should not happen to any other human being. In his view, love is the greatest, and the most exhilarating experience of life.

Art acts as a refuge and anchor in times of psychological crisis. This crisis is echoed in the tension that exists between the man and the artist. Any work of art which is born out of this tension has certain "not saids". It struggles to unify the contradicting and conflicting emotions. As Terry Eagleton aptly puts it, "Literary texts, like all ideological practices, seek an imaginary reconciliation of real contradictions" (42).

This struggle is very much perceptible in Khushwant Singh's writings. But the artist in Khushwant Singh with a cosmopolitan outlook views the wide spectrum of humanity and cancels the alien in him. He breaks the narrow boundaries and tries to unite society more closely and to persuade men to become citizens of the world.

A brief look at his life will help one to understand the rare phenomenon which Khushwant Singh has become. Khushwant Singh was born in a tiny hamlet called Hadali in West Punjab (now in Pakistan) in 1915. Leaving him under the
care of his grandmother, Khushwant Singh's parents Sir Sobha and Lady Singh migrated to Delhi. There were happy and unhappy moments in his village life. The simple piety and courage of his grandmother, the games he played on moon-lit nights and the perennial tension that existed in the village between the Muslims and the Sikhs became the raw materials for the future writer in Khushwant Singh. His village provided the negative example; it was just the opposite of his Mano Majra in *Train to Pakistan* where peace and harmony prevail among different communities till the Partition. In Hadali, there were often clashes between the Sikhs and the Muslims. On one occasion, a Sikh bride was abducted and forcibly converted to Islam and married off to a young Muslim soldier. In Khushwant Singh's ironic words: "Such periodic experiences kept us in dread of our Muslim neighbours" (*Sex, Scotch and Scholarship* 14).

The affluent family background -- his father was a big contractor associated with the building of New Delhi -- helped him to have his early education at Modern School, New Delhi. He dreaded school and often pretended to be sick. During his nine years at Modern school he was neither good at studies nor at games. At St. Stephen's College, Delhi, he "wasted" more time on playing tennis and hockey than he spent on his text books.
His love for the English language sprouted in his tender mind, thanks to the English women teachers of Modern School. And later on at St. Stephen's College, it blossomed into a taste for the English language and literature. He attended Bible classes though they were optional and he was very much fascinated by the language of the Old and New Testaments: "The Old Testament became my favourite reading -- not because of its moral precepts but because of its sonorous language" (Sex, Scotch and Scholarship 17).

The people who take his jokes casually miss the punch behind the jokes. But a serious reader can identify a profound truth behind even a casual joke. The following joke is an example:

A Hindu family living in a village near the Indo-Pak border which was often visited by Khalistani terrorists, decided to migrate to another Indian state. Their Sikh neighbours came to bid them a tearful farewell. One of them noticed the head of the Hindu family put in the picture of Sant Jamail Singh Bhindranwale in his trunk. "Why are you taking Bhindranwale's picture with you?" he asked. The Hindu replied with tears in his eyes, "Whenever I miss my Vatan (birthplace) I will look at it and feel how lucky I am to have got away". (Khushwant Singh's Joke Book 14)
This kind of a fault-finding self-appraisal is a rare feature among writers. Even his jokes have to be taken seriously for he is comparable with G.B. Shaw. It is Shaw who succinctly remarks: "My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world" (John Bull's Other Island. The Complete Plays 418).

Khushwant Singh's love for the English language has been consistent all along and at a later stage it has made him proudly say:

With me English is a passion. No other language gives me quite the same pleasure. I find it more musical and much richer in its literature than any other language of the world. (We Indians 115)

It was at Government College at Lahore where he did his B.A. his latent sense of humour and comedy manifested itself in the annual college debate. While most speakers were hooted, he was heard with rapt attention; his jokes evoked a lot of laughter. He was awarded the first prize, the only one he won in his entire academic career. His sense of humour which finds its expression in his writings had made him unique and popular and has won him a multitude of fans everywhere. His jokes have earned him two-titles. Some call him "the modern-day Birbal" while others call him "a dirty old man" for the bawdy aspect of his jokes.
After graduation in 1934, Khushwant Singh went to King's College, London for doing law for three years. His wander-lust could be one of the reasons why he chose to do law abroad. Of course, many a time he has travelled around the globe, perhaps,

To see the wonders of the world abroad,
Than, living dully sluggardized at home,
Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness.
(The Two Gentlemen of Verona 1.1. 6-8)

His going abroad did not result in any serious academic work; but he had his first encounter with sex, there. His mind was preoccupied more with sex than with Roman law and jurisprudence. All the same in his letters to his friends about his sexual exploits in England, there was more fiction than reality. He created all kinds of fantasies about his conquests. This was perhaps his earliest foray into the world of fiction.

It took him a year more than prescribed for the course to take his Bachelor of Law degree, and he became a Barrister-at-Law of the Inner Temple. In the meantime he sat for the Indian Civil Service examination. Rating his chances as negligible, he did not take one paper. But, when the results were declared, a great surprise was in store for him. Among the English and the Indian candidates, he was the only one to be given full marks in the Viva Voce.
Khushwant Singh is a paradox. In the formal education his performance was far from enviable. But in the profound understanding of men and matters and in the presentation of his views precisely and briefly with conviction and courage, he has no peers. This is what exactly his Viva Voce result of the Indian Civil Service examination confirms.

In October 1939, his marriage with Kaval Malik took place. His marriage was like winning a competition, because in the race for the hand of Kaval Malik, he had many formidable rivals from India's richest families. The wedding reception was a grand function. It was attended by many dignitaries including Mohamed Ali Jinnah, founding father of Pakistan. This affluent family background opened up new avenues for him to observe and mix with different types of people and use them as raw material for his future artistic creations.

Immediately after his marriage he practised as a junior lawyer in the Lahore High Court. He was not financially successful. But his contact with people including the criminals, the innocent, the police and the judiciary provided him with an opportunity to hear "the still sad music of humanity". This rich experience was fictionalised later. For instance, a real incident which came up for hearing in the Court, later on evolved into the short story "The Rape".
Khushwant Singh became bored with law and turned to reading English poetry and classics. As the British decided to pull out of India, it became evident that India would be divided and Lahore would go to Pakistan. After witnessing the escalating communal violence that rocked the border states, Khushwant Singh decided to leave Lahore for good. He lost his home, his livelihood; and yet he heaved a sigh of relief for he had said good-bye to law.

In October 1947, he took up the assignment as Information Officer in the newly opened High Commission in London. Then he was transferred to Ottawa. There was very little work for him to do and he began to write short-stories and to make friends with writers, poets and editors of literary journals. It was in Canada that his literary efforts first appeared in print in the Canadian Forum, Saturday Night, and Harpers. Canada became his favourite country.

Soon he was transferred again to London to take over as Press Attache' and Public Relation Officer. This proved to be a turning point in his life and he got fed up with diplomatic life. His contact with the important personalities of the literary world widened. Apart from eminent journalists like Kingsley Martin, Harold Evans, William Clarke and David Astor, he entertained writers like
Khushwant Singh's first collection of short stories, *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (1950) was largely based on his experiences in Lahore and Ottawa. It was published by Saturn Press, London. The good reception of the book got, made Khushwant Singh seriously think of taking up writing as a career. In a strange coincidence, the time for taking a crucial decision came in the form of a misunderstanding between the High Commissioner V.K. Krishna Menon and him. So he resigned his job putting an end to his four years of diplomatic service and took to writing. It was clear to him that in order to survive in the highly competitive world of writing, he had to specialise in some subject. He chose the study of his own people, the Sikhs. So he wrote a short history of his community entitled *The Sikhs* (1953). The book stirred a lot of controversy because of its prediction that by the turn of the century, the Sikhs would merge into the Hindu fold. Then he translated into English the Sikh's morning prayer, *Japji*.

None of the three books brought him enough money. Back in Delhi in 1951, he found the entire family hostile to him for having given up his job. Very reluctantly he took up a job with All India Radio, in charge of its English overseas programme. The job did not satisfy him, but it helped him
befriend Nirad C. Chaudhuri and Ruth Prawer Jhabwala who visited the studios occasionally. During his second year with All India Radio, he resigned his job and took over as deputy head of the Mass Communication Division, UNESCO, Paris. He resigned the job after two years because it did not suit his temperament.

In the meantime his first novel, *Train to Pakistan* (1956), won the Grove Press Award for the best work of fiction from India. The novel was accepted by a number of European publishers, including Chatto and Windus (London) and Callimad (France). It appeared under two titles, *Mano Majra* and *Train to Pakistan*. It also appeared in German as *Briicke am Satledsch*. In this novel, Khushwant Singh gives the horror history of Partition in art form. No novel in English by an Indian about the Partition was written until *Train to Pakistan* (1956) was published. Only after that Atfia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead* (1979) were published.

Khushwant Singh's second novel, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), though not as successful as the first, is one of the significant portrayals of Sikh life and tradition in pre-Independence India. The novel describes a Sikh family caught in the whirlwind of nationalist movements. It also
describes the history of Indo-British relationship represented by the Buta Singh -- Taylor household. The conflict existing within the family is portrayed with skill and understanding. *A History of the Sikhs* in two Volumes (1963, 1966) is his tremendous achievement as a historian. This work is an elaboration of his short book *The Sikhs*. It took him four years of struggle and hardwork to finish the two volumes. For this purpose, he had to visit London, the United States and Canada to gather materials on Sikh Community. These books were later published by the Princeton and Oxford University Presses. This brought him the recognition that he was the authority on the Sikhs. Subsequently the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* commissioned him to write about Sikhism and Sikh history. On his history books Khushwant Singh explains:

The theme of Volume I was the rise of Punjabi consciousness and the establishment of an independent Punjabi state under Sikh auspices. The theme of this Volume [II] is the Sikh struggle for survival as a separate community. It started with resistance to British expansionism; it was continued as resistance against Muslim domination; and after independence, it turned to resistance against absorption by renascent Hinduism. (Preface. *A History of the Sikhs* 2: vii)
Recognition came to Khushwant Singh from various quarters in quick succession. The Spalding Trust of Oxford invited him to deliver a series of lectures on Sikhism. Princeton University invited him to teach comparative religion. By then, several of his short stories and articles had appeared in American, British and Indian journals. He was commissioned by the *New York Times* and the *Observer* (London) to write for them. The lectures which he gave at Swarthmore were published under the title *Vision of India*.

In 1969, he took over as editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (Bombay). Within ten years of his editorship its circulation increased from a bare 80,000 to 4,10,000 the largest ever reached by an Indian Journal. The secret of his success was that Khushwant Singh knew not only where the roots of the people's problem were but also how to expose them. The matter and manner blended so naturally and so aesthetically impressive that the elite and the common man alike began to read his writings. His knowledge of the habits and customs of the people of India—irrespective of the region or religion—was so accurate that the reader was able to get a bird's eye view of the multifaceted culture of India. What is more significant is, Khushwant Singh was able to present it quite interestingly also. The pen of Khushwant Singh was like a magic wand; it could convert the ordinary episode into an extraordinary one, a piece of dull prosaic news into an interesting and thrilling one. This remarkable
ability made him a cult figure in the world of Indian magazine journalism. His writings earned him both popularity and ill fame and he was admired by many, but envied and hated by some of his colleagues. Being an agnostic he wrote a lot against conventional religiosity and the cult of godmen. The editorials of the magazine earned reputation for its bold and convincing presentation of views on all current national and international issues. Khushwant Singh's Editor Page (editorials) 1981 is a compilation of selected editorials. In 1975, Khushwant Singh was honoured by the Government of India with the Padma Bhushan Award (Order of the Lotus) for his distinguished contribution to literature and journalism. His writings were so impressive and popular that he was sought after by politicians, industrialists and socialists. Aldous Huxley who inspired Khushwant Singh most, recommended journalism as apprenticeship to creative writing. But, quite surprisingly, in Khushwant Singh, journalism and creative writing existed simultaneously. In him, both seem to be complementary.

In Indira Gandhi Returns (1979) Khushwant Singh reveals the reasons for his consistent support to Indira Gandhi (after a phase of initial opposition), traces her years in and out of power, and her return to her earlier eminence. Very few Indian journalists had the unique access to Indira Gandhi as Khushwant Singh. So, based on his close knowledge of her and on a series of exclusive interviews, this book
portrays a revealing study of Indira Gandhi as a person and as a leader.

Under all circumstances, Khushwant Singh maintained his individuality and he could not be taken for granted on any issue. When almost the entire elite of the Indians opposed the imposition of Emergency, it was Khushwant Singh who stood alone and found justification in Emergency. This he did with conviction and courage. Of course, this stand cost him heavily in terms of his losing his editorship of the Illustrated Weekly of India. He did not mind this. But he did not turn a blind eye to the things that happened during the emergency. He believed that at the time it was imposed Indira Gandhi had little option in the matter. He believed that it was both necessary and inevitable. But he had strong reservations about the censorship imposed on the press, the detention of people without trial, the misuse of power by many ministers and officials and its prolongation after it had served its purpose. He protested against it as best he could. He spoke plainly to Indira Gandhi: "Till yesterday you were the most loved person in India. Today you are only feared" (Indira Gandhi Returns 71).

Delhi: A Portrait (1983) is a celebration of Delhi by two distinguished inhabitants of the city. The text is by Khushwant Singh, who deftly evokes through poetry and prose the setting, history, monuments, people and character of
this great city from ancient times to the present. The photographs that form a substantial part of the volume are by Raghu Rai, one of India's most talented photographers. Together, the text and the photographs bring Delhi -- both Old and New -- sparkingly alive.

Khushwant Singh analyses the various aspects of Indian character in his We Indians (1982). In his rare effortless writing he discusses nearly all important aspects of Indian life: religion, morality, the characteristics of the Hindu, our love of wealth and power, corruption, flattery, Indian women, sex in Indian life, Indian relations with the British and the Americans. He is frank and fearless and at the same time harmless. For instance, about religion and morality he writes:

If a man was unhappy or if his mind was disturbed, he sought guidance from his guru and under his instruction chanted appropriate mantras, did yoga asanas and meditation to bring peace to his tortured mind. In the West this function came to be performed by the psychiatrist; in India by Godmen. The more mentally sick the society, the more psychiatrists and the Godmen flourished in its midst. (We Indians 51)
Instead of bringing the best out of human beings, Khushwant Singh feels sad that religion now brings out the worst in us.

The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh (1989) is possibly a complete collection of Khushwant Singh's writings in this genre. He first established his reputation as a writer only through this form. The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories was published in London. The Collected Short Stories contains his essay "On the Short Story" which serves as a lively introduction. In this introduction he defines a short story as follows: "... a short story must have, like a scorpion's sting in its tail, a curlicue which sums up the story" (The Collected Short Stories XII). True to his theory, the last line of his short story, "The Voice of God" is like a scorpion's sting in the tail: "The people had spoken. The voice of the people is the voice of God" (The Collected Short Stories 39).

This seemingly insignificant statement contains "the scorpion's sting." It "attacks" the typical Indian electioneering and the inevitable result -- the most notorious of the candidates winning and the highly respected forfeiting his deposit! But it is still believed that, "The Voice of the people is the Voice of God."

Taking George Orwell and Somerset Maugham as his models Khushwant Singh has mastered this genre. His short stories
reveal him as a frank and forthright exponent of contemporary Indian scene. Khushwant Singh is neither interested in a spiritual quest into the disposition of things like Raja Rao, nor is he satisfied with a merely humorous picture of the life about him like Narayan. Though it is the comic spirit that dominates most of his stories, Khushwant Singh is much in earnest exposing the darker, the stupid, and the hypocritical aspects of the Indian scene.

Many Moods Many Faces (1989) is a compilation of pieces taken from his columns, "With Malice Towards One and All," "Gossip: Sweet and Sour", "This Above All" and from his writings in The Illustrated Weekly of India. The editor Rohini Singh has confined this book to three subjects close to Khushwant Singh's heart -- Pakistan, people and places.

As one who was born there, Khushwant Singh's writings on Pakistan are impassioned and emotional. He is "notorious" for his bias in favour of Pakistan and is proud of it:

I go to Pakistan as a Hindu goes to Varanasi, a Muslim to Mecca. It is my teerthasthan where I perform my Haj and my Umra. This is where my roots are. I have nourished them with tears of nostalgia and sheltered them from venomous winds of hate with my bare hands. (Many Moods Many Faces 19)
This emotional alienation is the result of the conviction that friendship with Pakistan must be given top priority; an inimical Pakistan not only retards progress in both countries but also slows the pace of emotional integration of Indian Muslims into the main stream of Indianism. For airing such views, he was dubbed a "Pakistani agent" in some quarters. But a closer analysis would reveal that he is ultimately an agent for peace and communal harmony.

In the novel Delhi (1990) Khushwant Singh tries to tell the story of Delhi spanning several centuries of its history. It is a kind of reconstruction of the city by the artist from records chronicled by eye-witnesses. History provided him with the skeleton and he covered it with flesh and injected blood. The novel has in it love, lust, sex, hate, vendetta and violence and above all tears. Khushwant Singh's love for the city and his ambition to make everybody love the city for its past glory -- not considering its present misery--are the main streams in the novel.

presents a brilliant blueprint for a new practical, ritual-free religion, more relevant today than ever before. Khushwant Singh writes about the lives and works of some of the great authors like Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Aldous Huxley, Dylan Thomas, Oscar Wilde and Hilaire Belloc. Since he has known them personally, his writings on them are very interesting and informative. Paying rich tribute to Aldous Huxley in his essay "Prophet Manque: Aldous Huxley", he refers to Huxley as the writer who inspired him most. Apart from being a great artist, thinker and prophet, Huxley in the words of Khushwant Singh,

... was too well-bred and kindly a person to say anything hurtful on anyone's face: he collected people's foibles like boys collected pebbles for their catapults. In his novels and short stories he spared no one, least of all members of his family, his closest friends and admirers. (Need For a New Religion in India and Other Essays 96)

What he admires in Huxley, is quite conspicuous a facet in Khushwant Singh's writings as well.

More Malicious Gossip (1991) is a compilation selected from Khushwant Singh's two immensely popular columns, "Gossip Sweet and Sour" and "With Malice towards One and All." The first section starts with Khushwant Singh turning
the telescope on himself. There are also candid portraits of people, most of whom have been in the public eye. The second part is a travelogue of Khushwant Singh's visits to various parts of India. The writer's concern for the burning problems of the society like communalism and dowry finds its expression in the third part of the book.

**Sex, Scotch and Scholarship** (1992) is another anthology of Khushwant Singh's writings. This collection highlights the quality of his writing in its depth and diversity and it mirrors his experiences and interests over the years. Yet another aspect of his personality reveals itself in the form of an intense interest in natural phenomena. "The Month of May" found in this selection is a chapter from his book on nature **Nature Watch** (1990). It is interesting to note that his love for nature which was kindled in him by a three year old daughter of his English friend, has endured to this day. Khushwant Singh has been perhaps the most vocal Sikh arguing for a more balanced and humane approach to the Punjab problem. A piece on "Khalistan" is actually a speech made by him in the Parliament in this connection. His comments on life in India - on sex, humour and poverty are thought-provoking as well as enjoyable.

Khushwant Singh has dedicated **My Bleeding Punjab** (1992) To Giani Zail Singh
Who stood for the Khalsa Panth against fanaticism, and for the integrity of India.

This strikes the keynote of the book. The book truly reflects his personal views on Punjab politics and the mess made by narrow-minded Akali leaders on the one side and the dishonest politicians of the Central Government, on the other. It is a tragic story because all the progress of the state has come to a standstill. His responses to the events narrated in this book are emotional, for which Khushwant Singh makes no apologies. The commissions and omissions of both the camps make Khushwant Singh not to identify himself with any group. He, as an artist, takes sides only with truth and ironically truth is bitter. This bitterness has angered everybody allied to the problem. Ultimately he is viewed with suspicion; and the artist becomes an alien. The writer in him condemns the terrorist activities of the Sikhs and points out the impracticable and illogical demand of the Sikhs for a separate homeland. Though it seems that in Khushwant Singh the alien and the artist are at loggerheads, in reality it is not so. Both these aspects reveal his love for humanity at the micro and macrolevel. Moreover, he appears to be an alien both to the non-Sikhs and the Sikhs because of his emotional and intellectual reactions respectively on the Punjab problem. But this goes to prove the impartial attitude of Khushwant Singh, the artist.
There are occasions where even the most objective writers become subjective. For instance Shakespeare who is considered to be the most objective writer, goes to the extent of even distorting historical facts to suit his purposes, namely, glorifying England. Khushwant Singh is not that partial. He is very much upset that the sentiments of the Sikh community have not been cared for. The consequential disquiet has been a shock for him. But again this does not make him emotionally biased. However, this is one of the occasions where the man in the writer dominates the writer in the man. The agony of the oppressed is poetically described in My Bleeding Punjab. The fact is his heart bleeds for Punjab and he does not care to hide it.

The anthology, Not a Nice Man to Know (1993), aims at introducing the "complete Khushwant Singh" to the readers. His weekly columns which had made him popular do not do justice to the range and depth of Khushwant Singh's talents and interests. So the editor has included the writer's selections from other genres. One of them is a play Tyger, Tyger Burning Bright. Excerpts from his translations also find a place in this book.

Over the years Khushwant Singh has done a number of translations from Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi into English. Though he professes to be an agnostic, his interest in religion has resulted in some fine translations -- notably
of Iqbal's dialogue with Allah Shikwa and Jawabi Shikwa -- Complaint and Answer and Guru Nanak's Bara Mah, Land of Five Rivers: Stories from the Punjab (1965) edited by Khushwant Singh contains many short stories translated by him. The book includes his all time favourites Khwaja Ahmed Abbas's "Sardarji" ("The death of Sheik Burhanuddin") and Saadat Hasan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh" ("The Exchange of Lunatics") and they, as Khushwant Singh puts it,

... manage to portray Punjabi character and the tragedy of partition which so cruelly divided Punjabi Mussalmans from their brethren, Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs. No other short story or novel has been able to do so in so short a space and with such poignancy.

(Land of Five Rivers 5)

In the modern Indian society where there is paucity of humour, Khushwant Singh has a rich sense of humour. Perhaps, he considers the sense of humour as a means of defence for the people who are struggling for survival and who are victims of repression and injustice. His psychological make-up, his sense of values and the ability to laugh at others and laugh at himself bring forth the spontaneous humour. The three volumes of Khushwant Singh's Joke Book, published in 1990, 1991 & 1992 respectively have become best sellers. They have gone into many editions. The jokes take people's
minds away from the boring tedium of their daily lives and get them to smile. A large number of jokes found in the three books were sent to him by readers. They have been properly acknowledged. Some others he manufactured or moulded from jokes he picked up from books, magazines and at cocktail parties. But it is no exaggeration that the humour of Khushwant Singh is goodness and wisdom combined.

In general, secondary sources on Indian English writing are quite meagre. It is surprising that not much has been written on Khushwant Singh though he is a voluminous writer. The secondary source materials available on Khushwant Singh are mostly in the form of articles in critical anthologies and in literary journals and book-reviews, concentrating on some specific aspects of the writer.

The article by Stephen Ignatius Hemenway "Popularizers of the Indo-Anglian Novel: Khushwant Singh" in The Novel of India Vol.2 is illuminating. Again the article "The Doomed Hero" by the Australian critic Haydn Moore Williams in Explorations in Modern Indo-English Fiction (1982) speaks of how the doomed hero is a mystic archetype and he observes:

Juggut is indeed a doomed hero; but he accepts his doom with an astonishing cheerfulness that is the very reverse of the existential anguish. (Train to Pakistan 191)
And Shyam M. Asnani's "The Art and Artifice of Khushwant Singh" in Critical Response of Indian English Fiction (1985) argues that Khushwant Singh lacks creative imagination and emotive content and yet he has been gifted with such quite a few rare qualities which accord him an individual status in modern Indian English Literature.


Apart from these, a full-length study Khushwant Singh by Vasant A. Shahane published in 'Twayne's World Authors Series' is a pioneering attempt at presenting a full-length appraisal of Khushwant Singh's multi-faceted literary achievements.

Professor Shahane's study is, as he tells us in the preface, "expository, analytical and interpretative". He begins by describing the background of Indian writing in English and Punjabi creative writing, and thus places Khushwant Singh firmly in both these traditions. This
monograph has been well-organised and the seven comprehensive chapters deal with all aspects of Khushwant Singh's authorship. This is a welcome addition to a series which has the reputation for catering to the needs of both the common reader and the scholar. Yet, as to the demerits of this book, M.K. Naik observes:

One however wishes the critic had instituted comparisons between Singh and other Indo-Anglian realists like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabhani Bhattacharya, so as to pinpoint the individuality of Singh's art. (Journal of the Karnatak University-Humanities 17 (1973): 232)

In spite of the powerful influence of the Sikh consciousness and the presence of comic tone in his writings, Khushwant Singh is an artist - the popularity of Khushwant Singh in India and abroad testifies to the fact that there is something extraordinary in the seemingly ordinary writer. In fact, the real world around him brings in a sense of alienation. But the world he creates reflects his wider perspective which helps him transcend the sense of alienation. This unique dimension of Khushwant Singh is the focus of this thesis, which has not been dealt with in detail by any critic so far.
Khushwant Singh's life suggests that he is not able to stick to one profession for a long period. He is always on the move. His constant moving has moulded and shaped him into a fine versatile personality. Of course, no other Indian writer has so much variety of experience in different fields of human activity as Khushwant Singh. But he is humble enough to say that he has not performed any great deeds that need to be recorded in history. But he has recorded history because he was witness to many historical events and he met and interviewed characters who played decisive roles in these dramatic events. But Khushwant Singh, through the magic power of art has converted the "brazen" world of History into a "golden" world of fiction. The following chapter highlights the lovely metamorphosis of history into fiction in the novels of Khushwant Singh.