CHAPTER TWO

FICTIONALISED HISTORY

... the world of art is a substitute world, devised out of impatience with the "real" world. And that world of art is valuable to us only because its limitations are not those of the "real" one. (West xii)

The well-known historian of the Sikh, Khushwant Singh, could have easily written the history of India also highlighting India's freedom struggle and Partition. But he chose the medium of historical fiction because he wanted to go beyond the "biased" narration of incidents. Instead of illustrating the events, he made an attempt to correct the ideas of communities within which he lived. It is likely that Khushwant Singh is in agreement with what R.L. Stevenson says:

The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction.... They repeat, they rearrange, they clarify the lessons of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web of experience.... (142)
Fiction is not falsehood; it is rather the fanciful and dramatic grouping of real traits around imaginary scenes or characters. In the hands of a master, it portrays more truthfully the essential life than sober history itself. Khushwant Singh felt the inadequacy of history, which in the words of R.G. Collingwood, "is the science of res gestae, the attempt to answer questions about human actions done in the past" (9). The past, which is dull and dead, is rejuvenated and revived and ultimately it transcends the dimensions of time and space.

The historical novel, presents an artistic and not a photographic view of things. It is an imaginative re-enactment of history through art. Sir Walter Scott has been called the father of the historical novel in England. His novels, like Old Morality, Rob Roy, Guy Mannering and The Heart of Midlothian fictionalized the life of the eighteenth century England, Scotland and France. Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities has the French Revolution as its backdrop. Tolstoy's War and Peace in a highly remarkable manner presents a picture of Russian life, set against the background of Napoleon's invasion; it is considered to be the best historical novel in the literature of the world. In the first half of the twentieth century the world witnessed the two World Wars. So the war became the backdrop in the
novenls of Hemingway, Edith Wharton and a few other American novelists.

Indian English novelists tried their hand at historical novel from the beginning of this century. As early as 1903, T.Ramakrishna's historical novel in English, **Padmini** appeared. It is a romance of the sixteenth century leading up to the great battle of Talikote which brought to an end the Vijayanagar Empire. Romesh Chander Dutt's **The Slave Girl of Agra** (1909) and Sir Jogendra Singh's **Nur Jahan** (1909) are also historical romances.

Creative literature cannot keep contemporary events out of its purview. In this connection, Walter Allen observes:

In the literature of an age its conflicts, tendencies, obsessions are uncovered and made manifest to a degree which is continually astonishing; good writers are, so to speak mediumistic to the deeper strings of life of their time while they are still unknown to, or at any rate unsuspected by the public, politicians and current received opinion. The classic novels make the past familiar to us, that is one reason why we read them. But since we are living in the present, immersed in it, it is exceedingly likely that we do not
recognise its real nature, any more than we can see ourselves except in a mirror. (18)

Perhaps extending the concept that literature holds a mirror upto nature, Allen adds:

Contemporary novels are the mirror of the age, but a very special kind of mirror, a mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face, its nervous system, coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it. (19)

True to this view, nationalism became a recurrent theme in Indian English literature after the World War I. Liberty and Independence were great ideals worth fighting for. So, many Indian English novels directly or indirectly had the struggle for Independence as their theme. K.S. Venkataramani's Kandan the Patriot (1932) Raja Rao's Kanthapura, Mulk Raj Anand's The Sword and the Sickle, K.A. Abbas's Inqilab, Bhabani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers, R.K. Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma, Kamala Markandaya's Some Inner Fury and Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale -- in all these, some aspects of the national struggle have been presented.
Quite contrary to the expectation of the leaders, freedom did not bring cheers to India. As Saros Cowasjee explains, "The reckless speed with which partition was accomplished with little regard for an orderly transfer of population between the two states led to a holocaust" (80).

The country was torn asunder and left bleeding for sometime. It was perhaps the darkest period in the history of modern India. It was, in the words of Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre,

... the biggest, the most complex divorce action in history, the break up of a family of 400 million human beings along with the assets and household property they'd acquired in centuries of living together on the same piece of earth. (168)

On June 3, 1947, in a historic meeting, Louis Mountbatten secured the agreement of the Indian leadership to divide India into two separate nations. The political leaders had to agree to this for various reasons and their moods were different. Then followed the gigantic unimaginably complicated property settlement issue between India and Pakistan. Arguments, even fights broke out over the division of goods. The meanness and the petty mindedness displayed by people who had been living together for centuries-over
divisions were staggering. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre explain the sad episode of dividing the books:

Some of the bitterest arguments came over the books in India's libraries. Sets of the Encyclopaedia Britannica were religiously divided up, alternate volumes, to each dominion. Dictionaries were ripped in half with A to K going to India, the rest to Pakistan. (170)

It was not the books, banknotes and bureaucrats' chairs only that had to be sorted out and divided up. Thousands of India's public employees were also to be divided. Each was given a choice of serving India or Pakistan. Then, they were shunted off to one dominion or the other.

The most complex task was India's Partition. It was assigned to Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a brilliant barrister from Oxford. He prepared a set of the new maps of the sub continent and Mountbatten passed them to Nehru and Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaquat Alikhan. After studying them for two hours, both men seemed equally enraged; they exploded in anger. On Radcliffe's appointment both Nehru and Jinnah had agreed to be bound by his decision and to use all their authority to implement it. But now both these leaders condemned those parts which did not suit them.
In a few hours after the publication of Radcliffe's report, the greatest migration in human history began. It added still another dimension to the horror. Villages whose Muslim inhabitants were jubilant over the birth of Pakistan found themselves in India. Similarly Sikhs had to flee for their lives towards Radcliffe's border leaving their hamlets and the fields they had cultivated for years. Radcliff's line had left five million Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan's half of the Punjab, over five million Muslims in India's half. Both the Muslims and the Sikhs wanted to grab at the abandoned lands and properties of the fleeing people. So, in a bewildering frenzy, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims turned on each other. For six weeks, in August-September 1947, like the ravages of a medieval plaque, a mania for murder swept across the face of northern India.

Communities which had lived side by side for generations fell upon each other in an orgy of hate. It was not a war, not a civil war; it was a convulsion, the sudden collapse of a society. Appalled at the naked exhibition of violence, their desperate leaders tried to call them back to reason. It was a hopeless cry; everything had escaped their control. No one would ever know how many people lost their lives during those terrible weeks. Leonard Mosley has given a grim picture of the Partition riots:

... between fourteen and sixteen million
Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were forced to leave their homes and flee to safety from blood-crazed mobs. In that same period over 6,00,000 of them were killed. But no, not just killed. If they were children, they were picked up by their feet and their heads smashed against the walls. If they were female children, they were raped and their breasts were chopped off. And if they were pregnant, they were disembowelled. (9)

It is impossible to answer the question whether Britain had not taken the wrong course and rushed things too much. But one thing was certain. Indian leaders without exception urged that course upon Mountbatten. Even Gandhi, despite his opposition to Partition, still urged the British to get out of India immediately. Maulana Azad explains this predicament:

Partition was a tragedy for India.... Now there was no alternative and if we wanted Freedom here and now, we must submit to the demand for dividing India.... Politically we had failed and were therefore dividing the country. (214)
Thus on a sad and gloomy note, India got Independence on 15 August 1947. Yet this was an achievement for the Indian people who had waged a long-drawn struggle for freedom against the British empire. This historic moment has been immortalised by many of the fictionalists. But the sense of pride in the achievement of freedom was lacking in the post-Independence Indian novels. On the contrary, there are evidences of a pervasive sense of guilt and shame in the novels.

The horror accompanying the transfer of population has been the major theme with Indian English writers. Raj Gill's *The Rape*, H.S.Gill's *Ashes and Petals*, Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead*, Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* are on the insane butcheries committed before and after Partition in the name of religion.

The harrowing incidents of Partition brought great disillusionment and crisis of values in the life of Khushwant Singh also. His *Train to Pakistan* (1956) was the first novel in English on the Partition and in many ways it remains one of the best. The Partition and the subsequent "greatest migration in history" serve as the backdrop of the novel. To Khushwant Singh this sad historical incident
provided the inspiration as Lord Holland's marble urn did to Keats to write "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Thus Train to Pakistan can also be called "history without footnotes".

Khushwant Singh has the art of building up a romantic structure against a historical background. The actual facts of history are mixed up with stories which reveal the underlying human nature and the complexities of life. The novel actually tells humanity what it should do; it is not mere history telling humanity what it is.

The scene of Train to Pakistan is laid in Mano Majra, a small village in Punjab on the Indian side of the border on the eve of the Partition in 1947. The Indian subcontinent is in the grip of communal madness and killings. Nearly a million people are murdered. About ten million people -- Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India are uprooted and are in flight. Only Mano Majra is at this time free from communal frenzy. Sikhs and Muslims have lived here in a friendly and peaceful way for many generations.

The villagers do not know that the British have left and India is being divided into two. Some of them have heard about Gandhi, but they are ignorant of Jinnah. Meet Singh, the Sikh priest, expresses the indifference of the villagers
to the political developments:

Freedom must be a good thing. But what will we get out of it? Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes? (Train to Pakistan 62)

The Muslim priest readily endorses his views saying that freedom is for the educated people who fought for it. This could be easily the view of Khushwant Singh as well.

On an August night, Malli, a dacoit and his gang enter Mano Majra and demand Ram Lal's treasures. Ram Lal, a money lender, refuses and is murdered. The gang leaves the village dropping a few bangles in the house of Juggat Singh who is also known as Jugga. He is a "budmash" who had served several jail terms on many charges. He is at that time out in the fields with his sweetheart Nooran, the daughter of the Muslim priest. Police restrictions were there on Jugga not to leave his house after sun set, but his love for Nooran is too compelling to abide by the rules of the police. Jugga and Nooran return to the village only to find the people gravely disturbed by the dacoity and the murder of Ram Lal.
Almost at the same time, Hukum Chand, the magistrate and Deputy Commissioner, who has arrived at the Officers' Rest Home, is engaged in a sordid affair with Haseena, a teenaged Muslim dancing girl. He hears the noise of gunshots and voices of Mano Majrans and then leaves the girl. The next day, policemen arrive at Mano Majra railway station to conduct an enquiry into the murder of Ram Lal. By the same train, Iqbal Singh, a western educated youth arrives. He has been deputed by the People's party to work among the common folk. He goes over to the village Gurudwara and is welcomed by the kind and hospitable Meet Singh. However, he is arrested by the police because of a misunderstanding. Iqbal and Juggat Singh are taken into custody by the police in connection with the murder of Ram Lal. But no proceedings are started against them. Malli and his gang, the real murderers, are also arrested, but they are later released. The police sub-inspector suspects Iqbal to be a Muslim Leaguer and tells the magistrate that he got him stripped and found him to be a Muslim.

Then the inevitable happens and the fate of individuals in Mano Majra is decisively affected by the catastrophic events of the Partition. The arrival of a train with corpses at Mano Majra from Pakistan "created a commotion." Among the Sikhs and Muslims, who have lived together for centuries, for the first time, the dark clouds of suspicion and fear
appear. A few refugees from Pakistan arrive at Mano Majra to make confusion worse confounded. The situation gradually becomes explosive. Uncle Imam Baksh, the Muslim priest confers with the Sikh population. He asks them to tell the Muslims what they should do. Lambardar answers: "Why ask us? This is your village as much as ours." They assure the Muslim chief: "As long as we are here nobody will dare to touch you. We die first and then you can look after yourselves" (Train to Pakistan 147).

But the communal frenzy has invaded Mano Majra too. The Muslims are advised to go to the refugee camp at Chundunnugger, later to be transported to Pakistan. The Sikhs will look after the cattle and houses till they come back. This meeting between the Muslims and the Sikhs is one of the most brilliantly depicted scenes in the novel.

Imam Baksh cried and broke down. The Lambardar feels a strong sense of guilt and is overcome with emotion. He gets up and embraces Imam Baksh and starts crying loudly. Sikh and Muslim villagers fall into each others' arms and weep like children. It is a long night. Nobody could sleep that night in Mano Majra. Nooran, now with the child of Jugga in her womb approaches his mother to find out whether she would be allowed to stay back as the wife of Jugga. But she is almost compelled to go to the refugee camp.
If one juxtaposes this fictional scene of fear and pathos with that of the wholesale massacre the paradox will be quite evident. The Partition, which was the decision of a few people -- one honestly does not know why they agreed for it -- was not definitely liked by the common people. Whether it is patriotism or not, the people of the Mano Majra are not willing to be divided. It is not what people politically call "religious harmony." It is as natural as breathing. It is the politicians who have instigated the communal disharmony in the name of Partition which has resulted in the shameful massacre of people. The fact and the propaganda are identified to be poles apart, when juxtaposed in the novel. Hukum Chand, the Magistrate, learns that Haseena too would be on the train which carries Muslim refugees from Chundunnugger camp to Pakistan. Jugga and Iqbal are both released at the crucial stage. Jugga goes to Mano Majra only to find that Nooran has been taken to the refugee camp.

The river Sutlej is flooded with dead bodies. Everybody knows that the murdered people are Hindus and Sikhs. That night some militant youths from the town come to the village and they are angry. The leader of the group exhorts them to take revenge. For each Hindu, they should kill two Muslims, for each train load they should send two across. Meet Singh, the Sikh priest tries to put some sense into the young hot heads. He tells the young men that the Muslims of Mano Majra
have not done any harm to them. It would be sheer madness to take revenge on innocent men and women for what some antisocial elements are doing in Pakistan.

But the leader, unmindful of this voice of reason and love, announces his plot:

Tomorrow after sunset, when it is dark, we will stretch a wire rope across the first span of the bridge. It will be a foot above the height of the funnel of the engine. When the train passes under it, it will sweep off all the people sitting in the roof of the train. That will account for at least four to five hundred. (Train to Pakistan 176)

This emotion-based sense of revenge is almost universal and archetypal. A clever leader can turn the minds of the mob towards anything or anybody, provided he has the talent because the "mob" is basically sheepish. One is tempted to compare a similar situation in the history of Roman empire as presented by Shakespeare in Julius Caesar. Caesar has been murdered brutally but the Roman mob is more anxious to know the reason for the murder than sympathizing with Caesar. Brutus ably convinces the mob with his fine rhetoric. But then another emotion-packed speech from the pragmatic Antony turns the mob against Brutus in no time.
The rest is chaos which is rightly anticipated by Antony. The climax is now reached, the mob rushes off to "fire the traitors' houses." And Antony, left alone, exclaims in complete satisfaction:

Now let it work;—Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt! (3.2. 266-67)

In a situation charged with emotion, the behaviour of the mob is unpredictable. This is universally true. The behaviour of the people of Mano Majra is no exception.

Jagga learns of the plot of the fanatics. The villagers, Malli and his men and the young men from the town wait for the train. The train, their target, at last is coming. They see someone with a kirpan slashing at the rope that has been stretched across the bridge. He works vigorously. It is Jugga. They shoot at him. The engine is only a few yards away. The rope is cut in shreds. Only a thin tough strand remains. He goes at it with his knife and then with his teeth. The engine is almost on him. There is a volley of shots. The man shivers and collapses. The rope snaps at the centre as he falls. The train goes over him and goes to Pakistan.

Thus, from the gruesome reality of Partition, Khushwant Singh, has created Train to Pakistan. The novelist in him,
as Philip Sidney says: "... coupleth the general notion with the particular example" (14). Khushwant Singh has combined history and philosophy -- example and precept -- the result being a work of art.

Train to Pakistan has become "a perfect picture" and it goes beyond history and suggests Khushwant Singh's

... optimistic and affirmative world-view
... 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. (Raizada
Common Wealth Fiction 1:162)

It is significant that the Khushwant Singh was a passive spectator to the tragic historical incident in 1947. Perhaps, the tragic incident should have been gnawing at his heart for nine long years till he wrote the novel which was published in 1956. That is why he says:

The Partition theme was born out of a sense of guilt that I had done nothing to save the lives of innocent people and behaved like a coward. ("Compulsions to write." Explorations in Modern Indo-English Fiction 185)
So, like Conrad's Lord Jim, he looked for an atonement for his sin of inaction in times of crisis. In the mass hysteria, Khushwant Singh wanted to do something to save humanity from communal madness. But he did not because he could not. He felt like an alien from the fanatic society of which he too is a component. There is a conflict in him. The artist in him expresses this conflict in Train to Pakistan.

Jugga, though an unheroic hero, from a technical point of view, only redeems the novel from being a documentary. Jugga is an ordinary villager, not spoiled by ideologies or corruption. As Shaharie puts it,

> Although he is compounded of good and evil, he ultimately becomes a power for good. He is neither satanic nor Machiavellian in the Elizabethan sense; he is truly an uncouth Indian rustic.... (Khushwant Singh 102)

It is ironic that the heroic spirit of man is revealed not by men supposed to have innate goodness but by a man like Jugga who is treated as a confirmed ruffian - "budmash number Ten." When all the other institutions like bureaucracy, politics, religion, and police have miserably failed in the crisis -- have failed to evoke in human beings noble action -- the simple love of Jugga for Nooran
motivated him to perform the supreme self-sacrifice. This theme in the novel seems to imply what D.H.Lawrence stresses:

The great relationship, for humanity, will always be the relation between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child, will always be subsidiary. ("Morality and the Novel" 130)

This is confirmed by the comment of the sub-inspector of police about the strong love of Jugga for Nooran: "... What the police of the Punjab has failed to do, the magic eyes of a girl of sixteen has done" (Train to Pakistan 33).

The elaborate rationalisation of Iqbal who is a Western educated intellectual with a communist mission dwindle into intellectual cowardice. Khushwant Singh through Iqbal suggests that political ideologies are excellent in theory and they will not succeed in practice. In the climax of the novel redemption comes only through love for individual and for society.

Balachandra Rajan's The Dark Dancer also confirms this viewpoint. In the novel, Kamala finds meaning and purpose in her work as a nurse in the midst of carnage. This is definitely more than mere intellectualizing and her example
enables Krishnan to redeem himself. Kamala like Jugga exemplifies practical goodness and love. Her martyrdom at the hands of an assassin is the culmination of spiritual struggle and moral courage. Both these novels, thus, attempt to reconcile the horror and inhumanity of historical fact with a singular example of courage, dignity and sacrifice.

Unlike history, Train to Pakistan is a record of individual life, of individual emotion in circumstances and lives of historical interest. In this angle, the historical facts become less conspicuous than the love story of Jugga and Nooran. The novel seems to be an idyllic love story on which the historical theme -- Freedom struggle and Partition -- has been superimposed. Khushwant Singh has juxtaposed the two themes. The fact that the love episode excels and saves the novel from becoming a mere record of historical events proves the hypothesis that Khushwant Singh the artist excels the historian in him.

At Mano Majra everything goes on well; their life is regulated by timings of the arrival and the departure of various trains at the railway station. Nobody is interested in politics. Even Iqbal's political mission -- spreading the communist ideology -- does not cut ice with the people of the village. A Sikh, Jugut Singh is in love with the Muslim
girl, Nooran. But the interference of the various outside agencies, under some pretext or other upsets the smooth sailing of life. So Mano Majra represents the life at microlevel. Things go awry at the microlevel due to influence of forces at macrolevel which is the large society. The novel implies a kind of displeasure over the imposition of political decision on the unwilling and innocent people. Khushwant Singh does not go into the wisdom of the political decision; but he makes it clear that only after the political decision of Partition, the peaceful atmosphere was polluted. But for the political decision, people of Mano Majra will have continued to live peacefully for ever in a spirit of religious tolerance and mutual respect.

Khushwant Singh presents a representative situation in the novel and then examines through the important characters the morally crucial decisions they take in such circumstances. Hukum Chand intrigues to link the murder of the money lender with the communal situation in order to facilitate the evacuation of Muslims. When it becomes certain that at the time of the Muslim refugees' departure, there will be violence, he releases Jugga and Iqbal from jail. He is a typical symbol of an Indian bureaucrat who would bend the law to suit his convenience and to enable him to carry out the orders of his superiors. These superiors
who are far away never take into consideration the ground realities and the views of the subordinates.

As an official of the government, Hukum Chand's immediate problem was to save the Muslim lives from violence. He hopes that either Jugga because of his love for Nooran, or Iqbal because of his communist sense of duty will thwart the plot to attack the train to Pakistan. For him, the end justifies the means. He also has a personal interest in saving the train because he has become attached to the Muslim girl Haseena.

There is conflict in him. That the magistrate's sense of duty clashes with his identification with his non-Muslim Community is evident in the following dilemma: "God alone knows what I would have done to these Pakistanis if I were not a government servant" (Train to Pakistan 32). Khushwant Singh also points out the hollowness of philosophy in the presence of the mighty reality. Hukum Chand has a philosophical belief in the inevitability of death. He has taken the loss of his children with phlegmatic resignation. He has borne with an illiterate, unattractive wife, without complaint. It has all come from his belief that the only absolute truth is death. But the magnitude of the massacre is so overwhelming that his philosophical belief in the inevitability of death fails him.
Hukum Chand's acquaintance with Haseena has a psychological dimension. There seems to be a tug-of-war between his physical compulsions and his conscience. He tries often to dismiss his conscience with whiskey. But everytime he realises that it is not that easy to escape one's own mind. Haseena reminds him of his daughter who "would have been sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen, if she had lived" (Train to Pakistan 121). Finally she becomes a kind of mother-figure for him: "Hukum Chand snuggled against her like a child and fell fast asleep" (Train to Pakistan 108). And he is ready to lay down his life for her safety.

Khushwant Singh implies that Hukum Chand is a symbol of the Government. Hukum Chand, with so much tension, worries and psychological dilemma has been assigned the task of solving the problem of such a great magnitude. It is highly impossible for Hukum Chand to have a clear thinking and positive ideas to deal with the gigantic problem.

Iqbal, who with his political ideology, stands for a typical Indian politician in whom there is a yawning gap between precept and practice. He is fully aware of the plot to massacre the departing Muslims. His ideological commitment should awaken in him the moral obligation to stop the massacre. But his incapacity for action is strengthened by his intellectual despair. This intellectual despair,
perhaps has made him a "coward." Iqbal, perhaps echoing his creator, comments thus:

India is constipated with a lot of humbug. Take religion. For the Hindu, it means little besides caste and cow protection. For the Muslim, circumcision and Kosher meat. For the Sikh, long hair and hatred of the Muslims. For the Christian, Hinduism with a sola-topee. For the Parsi, fire-worship and feeding vultures. Ethics, which should be the kernel of a religious code, has been carefully removed. (Train to Pakistan 195-96)

This sense of alienation, usually, is the expression of anger against the meaninglessness of rituals and against the total indifference of religion towards humanity and human problems. But the tragic aspect in Iqbal is that he never bothers about the human suffering. In times of crisis and chaos, he even rationalizes his selfishness thus: "In a state of chaos self-preservation is the supreme duty" (Train to Pakistan 194). Moreover, he does not deserve one's sympathy because of his mad desire for publicity. His arrest at Mano Majra makes him imagine that he is a hero: "... the party paper would front-page the news with his photograph.... It would all go to make him a hero" (Train to Pakistan 188). He can think of self-immolation only if
there is great public admiration for his act. He is like Hamlet who wishes,

"... that the Everlasting had not fixt
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
(1.2. 131-132)

and finds excuses for his inaction. Thus, while Jugga acts, Iqbal drinks himself into sleep which is akin to moral paralysis. His logic and whiskey seem to be false props with which he cannot overcome the paralysis.

Juggut Singh proves to be a pure being whereas Hukum Chand and Iqbal are mere men of compromise. Even religious people like the Sikh priest beat a retreat when the question of courageous action arises. Meet Singh makes this clear to Iqbal:

My duty is to tell people what is right and what is not. If they insist on doing evil, I ask God to forgive them. I can only pray; the rest is for the police and the magistrates.

And for you. (Train to Pakistan 193)

Khushwant Singh seems to emphasise, that rationalization of the precept, using intellect and non-humanistic religious ethics, is the first step towards moral leprosy in our society.
The arts, as I.A. Richards, in his "Communication and the Artist," has observed: "are our store house of recorded values.... They record the most important judgments we possess as to the values of experience" (110).

Train to Pakistan is a realistic novel and is also a unit of vast store-house of creatively expressed values. It transcends the actual history and asserts the value and dignity of the individual and finally expresses the tragic splendour of a man's sacrifice for a woman.

In the backdrop of the real and the actual happenings Khushwant Singh expresses his point of view -- his deep sense of humanism. The novel is not just a documentary as Khushwant Singh might claim. The events of the Partition have been underlying in the sensitive and committed mind of Khushwant Singh and must have undergone a synthetic process. Khushwant Singh, by creating Jugga, has saved the novel from being just propagandistic. He juxtaposes an individual and the society - a society which is impotent. Hukum Chand, the Deputy Commissioner and magistrate represents the system which is quite strong. But in a crucial crisis, he proves to be impotent. He is not able to take decisions nor could he act. He is a typical example of a government servant whose individuality has been completely destroyed. His love for Haseena is a redeeming factor which makes him human at least
towards the end of the novel. The Sikh priest, who believes only in prayer, and the Communist propagandist, who believes only in preaching ideals are idealistic characters juxtaposed with Jugga. The end of the novel suggests that hope and redemption are always possible only for individuals, though the hostile and brutal society finds pleasure in destroying those individuals. The novel epitomizes this slice of life beautifully.

Like *Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh's second novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is based on a historical event -- the Quit India Movement. It portrays how the historical fact is approached with different motivations by the characters. About the genesis of the novel, Khushwant Singh states in his interview to the researcher:

The novel is really a family story. It is all built on actual incident -- the Quit India Movement. One of my brothers was involved and arrested at a time when my father was expecting to be knighted.... In that sense it was an autobiography. (Appendix)

His comments on the changes he has made are equally worth pondering about:

I've made it in a different setting. The hero of the story really was my father. He was told
by the chief commissioner of Delhi that they had to arrest my brother... When he was allowed to see my brother, he said, "Look, what you have done has done me enough damage. But now, if you mention the name of your collaborators, don't come back to my home." In the novel I gave this credit to my mother - actually it was my father and nevertheless he was knighted. The English Commissioner realised the family difficulties and said "why should I deprive this man of his honour, for what his son has done?" So the story is woven around that. But again the English character is a real man whom I knew. (Appendix)

The action of I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale takes place in Amritsar from April 1942 to April 1943. But the meaning of the novel is shaped in 1959 by Khushwant Singh's flash back of the incidents after a gap of sixteen years. During this interval, apart from the major historical incident -- Indian Independence and the subsequent Partition -- the country was free from the British rule for more than a decade. Khushwant Singh writes about the pre-Independence India as a citizen of the post-Independence India. This has actually placed him in an advantageous position. As the great historian of the twentieth century, Arnold J. Toynbee
says: "Our experience in the past gives us the only light on the future that is accessible to us. Experience is another name for history" (14). But Khushwant Singh is unique; in his case, the experience of the present -- the post-Independence India -- has given him light on the meanings and motivations of the pre-Independence Indians.

The sense of alienation that he experiences with the modern free India finds its echo in the novel I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale which has a pre-Independence background. Perhaps, his caricature of Indian freedom movement with the anti-hero Sher Singh as the key-man, the sycophant-bureaucrat Buta Singh and the glorification of the Taylors who represent the English are pointers to Khushwant Singh's sense of alienation from Indian politics and culture as well as his objectivity in fiction. The usual awakening and the spirit of patriotism which should accompany the people's struggle for freedom are distinctly absent from I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale. As a matter of fact, the novel brings out the author's disillusionment. In this connection, the remarks of S.C. Harrex are apt:

The characterisation of Sher, and his father, Buta Singh -- the novel's main symbols of the New India -- is so condemnatory of the political upstart and the sycophantic administrator,
respectively, that there is no doubt the novel's tone is mainly bitter. ("The Fire and the Offering: The English Novel of India 1: 177)

The novel begins with a group of immature college students under the leadership of Sher Singh planning terrorist-activities to drive out the British. Sher Singh is the son of Buta Singh, a Senior District Magistrate. These pseudo-patriotic youths are taking target practice in a secluded rural area. None of them is propelled by any strong sense of commitment. Sher Singh has never killed anything before. But, as a leader now, he must kill first. He has weak nerves and is unwilling to shoot any bird. Then at last he shoots a crane and it falls; and Sher Singh is torn between a sense of guilt and a feeling of pride for his accurate shooting. He wishes to benefit from his father's position of authority and also from the political power which he thinks he will get after the Independence. He had somehow believed that he would muddle through, getting the best of the two worlds; the one of security provided by his father who was a senior magistrate, and the other full of applause that would come to him as the heroic leader of a band of terrorists. (I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale 15)
Despite all their juvenile enthusiasm, they kill only a bird and make a vain bid to blow up a bridge on the canal. Jhimma Singh, the village headman (Lambardar) and police informer, has been a witness to these activities and subsequently he blackmails Sher Singh. This results in the murder of Jhimma Singh by Sher Singh and his friends. This leads to an explosive situation in the Buta Singh household. Buta Singh who has been working for the British, is looking forward to a decoration as the reward for his service. Mr. John Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner of the District represents the younger forward-looking English element of the Indian civil service. His view of granting Independence to India soon after the war, baffles even Buta Singh who time and again pledges loyalty to British Raj. And Mr. Taylor speaks out thus:

I feel we should pull out of this country as soon after the war as we can and let you Indians manage your own affairs . . . . In fact I am not on the side of Mr. Churchill but on that of Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru.... (I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale 180)

His behaviour towards Buta Singh demonstrates his dignity and decorum and his effort to bridge the gap between scrupulousness for legal justice and a genuine sympathy for the Singhs. Joyce Taylor, an embodiment of benevolence and
moral good, plays an important role in the humanistic chain of events.

Quite curiously both Buta Singh and his son Sher Singh are guided by sheer self-interest. Buta Singh is neither a loyalist nor a nationalist. He looks for only personal gain. The following advice to his son shows his double-faced nature:

... don't say anything which may cause trouble. Remember my position. I do not mind your hobnobbing with these Nationalists -- as a matter of fact, it is good to keep in with both sides -- but one ought to be cautious. (I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale 25)

The only sobering influence on the otherwise sordid situation is Sabhrai, Sher Singh's mother. She is a pious woman in the Sikh tradition. She derives great peace from her deep religious practices.

Sher Singh who has looked forward to a glorious political career is arrested on suspicion of murder of Jhimma Singh. He is lodged in jail. The painful police torture causes him to weep for two days and shatters his noble image of himself. He is about to succumb to the pressure of the police and reveal the names of the young
boys who were involved in that fatal attack on Jhimma Singh. If Sher Singh does not divulge the names of his accomplices, it is only because he is released before his mettle could be proved.

Sabhrai, the illiterate, naive and pious mother of Sher Singh looks to the Guru for guidance in times of crisis. When the agitated Sher Singh in the jail asks for Guru's answer to his very crisis, Sabhrai replies:

He said that my son had done wrong. But if he named the people who were with him he would be doing a greater wrong. He was no longer to be regarded as a Sikh and I was not to see his face again. (I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale 208 - 209)

The Guru's word found new efficacy in the Christmas spirit generated by Mrs. Taylor and the order of Sher Singh's release from jail was a generous Christmas gift of the Taylors to the Buta Singh family. Thus the humanistic approach of the Taylors coupled with the religious approach of Sabhrai ultimately paves the way for the release of Sher Singh. However, before Sher Singh is released, Sabhrai becomes fatally ill. But Sher Singh, true to his nature, is concerned about his sudden emergence as a political leader
and hero. Full of bogus bravado and martyrdom, he hides all traces of his moral and physical cowardice.

The novel, I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale, despite the Quit India Movement as its backdrop, does not glorify the movement at any stage. On the contrary, it exposes the pseudo-patriotism as expressed in the characters of Sher Singh and his friends. It also ridicules the selfish double-standard or hypocrisy as presented in the character of Buta Singh, the Senior Magistrate. Further, the novel condemns the policy of violence for achieving political ends. So taking into consideration these aspects one can say that the novel is a political satire.

The title of the novel "I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale" strikes a negative note and it also implies that "all is not well" in spite of the fact that the novel ends with the Shakespearean maxim, "All's well that end's well." Only the end matters in the case of characters like Buta Singh who has no moral scruples. But to Sabhrai who "has the dignity of an ancient people behind her" (I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale 220), the happenings are not to her liking. She does not seem to approve of the means for achieving the end. This could be one of the reasons why she whispers towards the end, into the ears of Sher Singh "I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale".
Another significant aspect in the novel is the glorification of the English characters. The Taylors are the embodiments of decency, tact and above all thorough human understanding. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh is anglophilic. He has never failed to point out the sense of equality before law and the sense of fairness which are the exclusive traits of the British. With a sense of gratitude, Khushwant Singh remembers:

No Indian can deny British influence in bringing about social reforms in Indian society. They outlawed sati and female infanticide; they liquidated the thugs and abolished slavery; they encouraged progressive elements to raise the age of marriage and allow widows to remarry. (We Indians 132)

By portraying the Taylors in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, Khushwant Singh drives home the point that politically they may be dishonest but "they are nice as human beings" (*Train to Pakistan* 64). This humane approach of the Taylors in the novel pulls the novel out of the gloomy pit and places it on the optimistic pedestal.

Novelists like Kamala Markandaya and Balachandra Rajan also have admiration for the English. They express a sense of guilt for violence against the British rulers. In
Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* Govind resorts to violence during the Quit India Movement. He is partly punished when his own love, Premala, falls victim to the arson indulged in by his group. That which was aimed at the British has cost Govind dearly. But his greatest retribution comes in the trial scene of the novel. Govind is freed by the Indian mob but not acquitted by the British court. Nor is he allowed to free himself of the taint of fratricide. Mira, the narrator of the novel, feels upset over the violence of her own people towards the rulers. After the Indian attack on Richard, she vainly assures him: "Richard the feeling isn't for you. Or-or for people like you" (*Some Inner Fury* 217). This is the precise expression of the guilt and the regret for the destruction of good along with the bad in the ruler. Even though the English fare badly as rulers, as a people they are admired in the novel.

Similarly in Balachanra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* the sense of guilt dominates the sense of pride. The novel expresses shock over what happened before, during and after Partition. This makes him doubt about free India's ability to rule itself. He feels that Indians lose their claim to the right to be a free nation. Rajan is all praise for the British when he compares them with his countrymen:"... but it [the violence] hadn't happened and never could happen in
England, not in that green, cool, soft-toned, decorous civilization" (The Dark Dancer 160).

In I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale Khushwant Singh reveals the possibility of a love for a ruler in the minds of the ruled. This makes it impossible for him to hate the British with a pure unadulterated hatred which is expected of a staunch nationalist. This uncommon love is created in the minds of the readers by Khushwant Singh by his characterization of the Taylors. Their sympathetic understanding of the natives, magnanimity and their preference for the warm humane consideration to the cold and cruel legal consideration make the Taylors noble and remarkable. For instance the following incident in the novel testifies to Kushwant Singh's thorough understanding of human predicament. Buta Singh is a loyal supporter of the British Raj. But he allows his son, Sher Singh, to mix with Indian revolutionaries. Mr.Taylor is not able to understand this contradiction in Buta Singh. In this aspect Mr.Taylor's answer to Mrs.Taylor reveals his sympathy for Buta Singh:

Well! In a way you have the history of Indo-British relationships represented by Buta Singh's family tree. His grand father fought against us in the Sikh wars; his father served us loyally. He has continued to do so with certain reservations. His son is impatient to
get rid of us. Poor Buta Singh is split between the past and the future; that is why he appears so muddled in the present. He is not as much of a humbug as he appears to be.

(I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale 218)

Instead of viewing Buta Singh as a hypocrite and a thorough going villain, Mr. Taylor considers him as a "muddled" person. To look at things in this perspective one needs to have a large heart; and the Taylors do have it. And by presenting the English couple in such a way, Khushwant Singh has revealed his sense of objectivity which is rare among the post-Independence writers.

Sher Singh is a symbol of Khushwant Singh's hatred for political violence and pseudo patriotism. The noblest end for a Sikh is to die for his state and religion. Guru Nanak refers to this as the means to salvation. They are well implied in Jugga's sacrifice. Moreover, it is significant that Jugga goes to the temple to receive the blessings of the Sikh religious leader before embarking on his mission and he fulfils the ideal of self-sacrifice.

And Jugga can be termed as a Sikh code hero. Though I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale lacks a code hero, it has a code heroine in Sabhrai. Her spiritual and passive qualities
complement Jugga's physical and active attributes. They exemplify the highest Sikh tradition. When the whole world is given to hypocrisy, humbug and mere idealogy, the religion of Sabharai puts practice before precept. In all firmness, she conveys the Guru's answer to Sher Singh. In one sense, this deep commitment to the Sikh tradition eclipses the spirit of Nationalism. A closer analysis of the novel suggests Khushwant Singh's hatred for the so-called freedom fighters. His love for the English and his overwhelming faith in the Sikh tradition relegate the theme of Quit India Movement to the background. Perhaps, Khushwant Singh also feels alienated from the movement because of the lack of commitment and sincerity of the leaders and because of the large scale violence and rampant corruption in the post-Independence India. But Khushwant Singh's artistic creation of the Taylors and Sabhrai establishes the victory of humanism and natural justice over the forces of violence and evil; and thereby the pessimism that is born out of realism is effectively countered by the optimism of the artist.

Delhi: A Novel, as Khushwant Singh puts it, tells...

... the story of Delhi from its earliest beginnings to the present times. I constructed it, from records chronicled by eye-witnesses. Hence most of it is told in the first person.
History provided me with the skeleton. I covered it with flesh and injected blood and a lot of seminal fluid into it. It took me twenty five years to do so. ("A Note from the Author," Delhi: A Novel)

Khushwant Singh refashions history through a hundred different voices that punctuate the long saga in human and individual terms. It is a novel without a hero; but it has a protagonist-narrator who is perhaps the author himself. He holds the periods and historical episodes together. From another perspective the real hero is the city of Delhi with its succession of conquerers. The captains and kings have departed, but Delhi continues to stand with all the transformations that history has forced upon it.

The chronicle of Delhi is so long and so varied that continuity is constantly challenged. Khushwant Singh overcomes the difficulty by interspacing the historical story and its varied spokesmen by his own personal contemporary story. This idea is conveyed in the very beginning of the novel:

I return to Delhi as I return to my mistress Bhagmati when I have had my fill of whoring in foreign lands. Delhi and Bhagmati have a lot in common. Having been long misused by rough
people they have learnt to conceal their seductive charms under a mask of repulsive ugliness.... (Delhi 1)

This love-hate relationship is the outcome of the conflict between the artist and the alien in Khushwant Singh. In a sense it is a conflict between the heart and the head—the emotion and the reason. And finally he himself gives a formula for resolving this crisis: "... use your heart not your head, your emotion, not your reason" (Delhi 2).

Things are sickening in India. The menace of mosquitoes, delays at the airport, the manners of customs inspectors, cheating by cab-drivers, the inefficiency of the electric company, Delhi telephones and Delhi water supply are his irritations and frustrations. But his visit to Nigambodh Ghat where he witnesses pathetically the cremation of the body of a young girl and the unfathomable agony experienced by her middle-aged parents makes him cry in despair:

What are my irritations, envies and frustrations compared to the sorrow of the people I have left behind! They will go home and miss their daughter. I'll get home and drink my scotch. (Delhi 12)

The author succeeds in involving the reader in his love-hate affair with the city as it evolves through its undulating
history. But he is less successful in arresting one's attention by his affair with Bhagmati who, though colourful, is a repetitive, parenthetic interruption, between two dashes in a longish historical sense.

The various phases in the city's history are presented in different voices. There is the voice of Musaddi Lal who belongs to the 13th Century A.D. and he describes his life under the rule of Ghiasuddin Balban. Through this chapter float the memorable figures and voices of Nizamuddin Auliya and Amir Khusrau.

The next phase brings all the turbulence of Muslim invaders -- Mahmud Ghazni, Mohammed Ghori and the Tughlak dynasty. The first untouchable appears in chapter 8, to give us Delhi's history under the Mughal Shah Jehan. The untouchable is converted to Sikhism, sees his Guru beheaded, finds the body and he lights the Guru's pyre.

There follows Aurangzeb in his authentic voice as the royal son, discriminated against by the Emperor Shah Jehan in favour of Dara Shikoh. Aurangzeb is shown to brood, and wait for vengence which in time he takes. Nadir Shaw in a swift invading chapter follows. In the Chapter Meer Taqi Meer, we listen with pleasant relief to a poet instead of a conqueror. We see history through his eyes. He speaks of his
love for Begum Sahina and how he could not get her out of his mind when she betrayed him. He wrote a couplet of despair:

'The eye hath ruined me,' the heart complained
'The heart has lost me,' the eye replied.
I know not which told the truth, which lied. Between the two, it was Meer who died. (Delhi 222-223)

Then comes the chapter '1857' with a threnody of voices in swift juxtaposition to one another of Alice Aldwell, the Anglo Indian of the Mutiny years, Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor, and Nihal Singh, the Sikh Sepahi who admires and remains loyal to his British officer, Major Hodson.

The story goes on to the British builders, Lutyens and Baker in Chapter 18 and here the protagonist - narrator reappears to report on his father Sujjan Singh's role in building New Delhi. In due course, we move to 1947 and the Partition of India, the exodus of refugees from the Punjab and their resettlement in Delhi. Then follows the assassination of Gandhi. This is told by a young Hindu from Punjab. Ram Rakha, who has joined the RSS but is horrified when he actually witnesses the assassination. We are brought swiftly up to date with 1984; the assassination this time of
Indira Gandhi, followed by the vengeance of the Hindus of Delhi on the Sikh community.

Through this selective history, the narrator/ Khushwant Singh, depicted as an ageing reprobate, and Bhagmati his mistress persist. She has that alternate inter-spacing chapter to herself that divides great periods of history and history's identifying episodes. Yet she remains at the end of the book an interruption -- an articulate one -- a contrived hinge that seeks to hold centuries of history together. Khushwant Singh's magnum opus is bawdy. Scarcely a page of the Bhagmati chapters is within its record of unrestrained sexual activity and details.

Khushwant Singh has a sense of history, courage, and originality. The gift of understatement is something which is conspicuously absent in him. But he has the political courage; and he is not with the mob in his thoughts and action. He makes it a point always to alienate himself from the mob hysteria to express his opinion courageously. He writes in the novel:

I was out of step with the times. I believed that British rule was good for India: we Indians never had nor ever would be able to run an administration which was just and fair
to all communities. But there was no one who seemed to agree with my views. (Delhi 341-42)

He condemned the attitude of the congress leaders who talked of non-violence and condoned political killings in the same breath. His judgement on the British period of Delhi history is worth quoting:

I have seen the city I helped to build and which Lutyens designed for two centuries become ruined in twenty years. We built magnificent buildings which will last for many centuries; they build shapeless, multi-storeyed offices and jerry houses wherever there is open space and have smothered hundreds of ancient monuments behind bazaars and markets. We laid wide roads; they make narrow lanes on which two cars cannot pass each other. We planted slow growing, long-living trees which will give shade to our great-grand children and their great-grand children. 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. (Delhi 344)
His anger against the Indians is due to his true love for India. There are genuine reasons for his outbursts against the style of functioning in every department of Government. He believes that the Indians have made a mess of everything. For instance in the matter of judiciary, he observes: "There was no justice in India till the British came. There will be no justice in India after their impact has worn off" (Delhi 345).

The disappointment over India's achievement in the first ten years of Independence has led him towards disillusionment. The miserable economic condition, the illiteracy, the failure in controlling population explosion, the corruption and the lack of religious tolerance are the curses of India after Independence.

In an age when everybody speaks about Gandhi myth, Khushwant Singh is highly critical of people going Gandhi-mad. Since the dawn of freedom, hero worship has been encouraged in India. Khushwant Singh does not approve of this. He outrightly condemns the self-righteous and the resultant arrogant attitude of Gandhi. He points out that one cannot put sense into the skull of the man who keeps on saying that he is right and the others are wrong.
But at the killing of Gandhi, Khushwant Singh, quite contrary to historical facts, makes the assassin in his novel feel extremely sorry for the killing. On earlier occasions this very same character in Delhi has described Gandhi as "double fraud" (364), "Old humbug" (366), "the old Fox" (369), "the hypocrite" (370) and "the old lecher" (370). Khushwant Singh, a true lover of freedom implies that there is every right to differ, but there is no right to kill. The novel presents some scientific outlook which alienates him from the people with traditional outlook. He refers to the cremation of dead bodies and says that Delhi's dead consume a sizable forest of timber everyday. If the people start using electric crematorium a lot of wood and time might be saved. But the tradition-bound Indians are not yet whole heartedly ready for the change.

Khushwant Singh condemned the policy of violence followed by Bhindranwale and calls him a bhoot incarnation of Satan. But the Bluestar operation is so haunting his mind that he calls the military action a stupid thing on the part of Indira Gandhi. The following words convey his strong feelings as well as his dilemma:

A deep depression enters my soul. I ask myself over and over again, am I Sikh?.... On the morning of the 6th June I go to the
gurdwara.... There is quite a crowd. Many are in tears. Their tears bring tears to my eyes. I am one of them. (Delhi 384)

The conflict in him is obvious. As an agnostic he has not prayed in 50 years, but now he feels that he is one of the Sikhs who are theists. As is always with Khushwant Singh, he identifies himself with the Sikhs emotionally.

When the Bhai makes a fiery speech seeking revenge, the reason in Khushwant Singh speaks out: "They [The Sikhs] live in the past and refuse to understand that in a civilized society, you don't desecrate mosques or cut off people's heads" (Delhi 384). But after a few days he sees the Bhai and many Sikhs wearing black turbans; and he also starts wearing turbans dyed black and says, "Yes, I am one of them" (Delhi 384). This kind of conflicting reactions implies Khushwant Singh's split personality -- one dominated by emotion and the other by reason; and they maintain a seesaw balance all through.

The novel, unlike the other two novels, ends on an unhappy note - with Delhi in the grip of beastly violence after Indira Gandhi's assassination. Delhi is a symbol of India - it is micro India. The problems of Delhi are the problems of India at the macro level. The violence in the
end of the novel implies the spread of violence in some form or other throughout India.

The principal narrator of the saga, which extends over 600 years, is a bawdy, ageing reprobate. He loves Delhi as much as he does the hijda -- whore Bhagmati -- half man and half woman. Travelling through history, the narrator meets myriads of people -- poets, princes, saints, sultans, temptresses, traitors, emperors and eunuchs. They have all shaped and endowed Delhi with its very special mystique. The first eighteen chapters of the novel speak of the past history of Delhi. The artist in Khushwant Singh excels in it. The last three chapters deal with the post-Independence history of Delhi. Most of the incidents symbolise the disillusionment with freedom; and they have their impact on the Sikh community, the artist in Khushwant Singh takes leave of him and the alien in him gets projected.

In Train to Pakistan one can find the artist in action. Khushwant Singh's recreation of history is so gripping that it becomes history without footnotes. It objectively laments the predicament of India at one level and of humanity at a deeper level. The microlevel presentation of individuals -- the magistrate, the sub-inspector, religious leaders and political agents -- all intellectual impotents juxtaposed against one unheroic hero, namely, Juggut Singh underscores
the fact that it is always the individual who matters, though he makes the society.

The same objectivity is there in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* also. But there is a subtle difference. By making the mother the seminal character, Khushwant Singh makes it clear that it is the woman who is more sincere, more committed and more sensible. By juxtaposing various points of view, Khushwant Singh becomes almost Hegelian in his perspective.

On the other hand in *Delhi*, Khushwant Singh seems to have lost all the patience of an artist. With Delhi as the backdrop, with the outspokenness of a diarist, he makes scathing attacks on men and matters with Swiftian ruthlessness. The iconoclast and the alien are conspicuous in Delhi especially when the narrator is expected to react to contemporary events. While describing the contemporary events which are fresh in his memory, the double-identity of the author helps him to be quite outspoken.

In all the three novels -- though one cannot technically call *Delhi* a novel -- Khushwant Singh tries to fictionalise history. In the process, he becomes a novelist with a purpose. In all the three novels, the backdrop is India with its multi-faceted culture. If *Train to Pakistan*
is about Partition, I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale is about freedom struggle. But then, the real underlying unifying theme is India and its unique mosaic of cultures. In both these novels, the country is the backdrop and people move around to reveal the complexity of the Indian milieu. In Delhi, on the other hand, the people are in the background and Delhi symbolizing India is the real character of eminence.

In all the three novels, one can see Khushwant Singh, the alien, the sensitive Sikh, in conflict with Khushwant Singh the artist, the Indian with the perspective of an Internationalist. It is really puzzling to note that Khushwant Singh is both an Insider and Outsider. He is able to bring out the atrocities during the freedom struggle and the Partition with the minute observation of an insider and with an objectivity possible only for an outsider. Hence the works become unique. They are artefacts, revealing the committed iconoclastic individual with a social purpose behind them.

On the other hand, one can find the writer in a relaxed mood in his short stories where his sense of humour and his penchant for anticlimax serve as redeeming factors, establishing the artist in the alien. A study of Khushwant Singh's short stories forms the perspective of the next chapter.