Khushwant Singh is undoubtedly one of the most reputed and outstanding writers of English among the living Indians. Although he qualified to be a lawyer by profession, he is known all over the English-speaking world as a literary writer and a gifted journalist. So far he has written five novels- 'Train to Pakistan' - published in 1956, followed by 'I shall not Hear The Nightingale' published in 1959. After a long gap, he returned to novel writing with 'Delhi', published in 1990. And at the age of more than eighty he churned out some more books of which, two were the novels- 'The Company of Women', launched in 1999 and 'Burial At Sea', came out in 2004. Besides novels his creative itality is obvious in short stories published in four different volumes, viz, 'The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories' (1950), 'The Voice of God and Other Stories' (1957), 'A Bride For The Sahib And Other Stories' (1967), and 'Black Jasmine' (1971). Later on all these short stories were collectively published in a single volume entitled, - 'The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh' (1989). Not only this, after a long interval he has given vent to his thought by writing yet another volume of short stories in 2004, entitled' Paradise and Other Stories'. It is equally interesting to note that he has been genuinely and vigorously interested in the history of Punjab and Sikhism.
In the year 1962, a very illuminating book based on the life and role of Ranjit Singh as the Maharaja of Punjab was published. Another book entitled 'A History of the Sikh' case out in two volumes in 1963 and 1966. There are several other books, which are collections of his essays written from time to time on different aspects of Indian society and international problems. Also his journalistic articles are in an appreciable number. A large number of these articles have been collected in the form of books. Some such volumes are: Khushwant Singh's India: 'A Mirror For Its Monsters and Monstrosities' (1970), 'Around the World with Khushwant Singh' (1978), 'We Indians' (1987), 'Malicious Gossip' (1987), 'The Best of Khushwant Singh' (1992), 'Sex, Scotch and Scholarship' (1992) and 'Women and Men in My Life' (1995). The number is exhaustive. There are more than hundred books to his credit.

At the age of eighty-seven he wrote his autobiography - 'Truth, Love and Little Malice' (2002), presenting it in a chronological order with honest rendering of the interesting facts of his life. In the prologue to the autobiography he has mentioned that - "this would inevitably be my last book, my swan song penned in the evening of my life... I am fast running
out of writer's ink" and three years later he told, " no one has yet invented a condom for the writer's pen". (Outlook 2004). And he is still writing.

Khushwant Singh, the novelist, he historian and the journalist, all in one, is most widely read columnist in the country. It's a fact that his weekly columns are reproduced by over fifty journals in India and abroad. The most popular column, 'With Malice Towards One And ALL', comes out in 'The Hindustan Times' every Saturday. It is the most liked colonel by readers. Over years he has lectured and written extensively on history, culture and philosophy.

Born in an aristocratic family in Hadali, in Punjab, now part of Pakistan, in 1915, Khushwant Singh got a privileged kind of educational training both in India and abroad. He passed his childhood days in Hadali with his grandmother, and arrived in Delhi at the age of five: His grandfather and father were builders who participated in the construction of New Delhi as the capital of India. After taking his school education in Delhi, he was educated at Government College, Lahore, and at King's College and Inner Temple in London. He qualified finally as a barrister. For some time he practiced at the Lahore High Court before joining the
Indian Ministry of External Affairs in 1947. He joined as Information Officer in High Commission in London in October 1947. He was sent on diplomatic postings to Canada and London and later on to Paris with UNESCO. He began his distinguished career as a journalist with All India radio in 1951.

He also became the Chief Editor of Yolanda published by the Planning Commission for the period 1951 to 1953. He was also editor of the prestigious magazine 'The Illustrated Weekly of India' from 1969 to 1979. He also edited the 'National Herald' (1978-1979) and another magazine 'New Delhi' (1979-1980) and finally he was editor of the 'Hindustan Times' from 1980 to 1983. Virtually he has written for all the major national dailies published in India and abroad. Several interviews have been conducted on him as well as by him on television and radio. He was seen on television conducting interview of famous personalities in a serial entitled 'Not a Nice Man to Know'. Not only this, he was a teacher for some time in Princeton University and Swarthmore College and taught comparative religion.
The rising career graph of Khushwant Singh does not stop here for he became a Member of Parliament from 1980 to 1986. Besides many other honors he was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1974 but he returned the award in 1984 in protest against the Union Governments siege of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. In 2006 he was warded Punjab Ratana, which is Punjab's highest honour.

The above written biographical details of Khuswant Singh reveal that he is not only a novelist with five most popular novels to his credit, one of which (Train to Pakistan) brought him the 'Grove Press Award' and a short story writer but also a historian and a distinguished journalist. With such a wide range of creative vitality, it would be inappropriate to set aside his miscellaneous interest and move on to analyze his fictional art for Khushwant Singh's interest include politics, personalities, nature, history and above all sex. In fact his fiction is an amalgamation of all this.

It is difficult to distinguish the various features of this writer. Nandini Mehta in the introduction to the book 'Not a Nice Man to Know' rightly observes: "But which is the real Khushwant Singh? The inspired
translator of Guru Nanak's hymns or the zestful chronicler of low life in Tokyo and New York? The erudite historian who has written some of the most enduring books on the Sikhs and the Punjab, or the best-selling author of full-blooded novels and short-stories? The sensitive, observant nature watcher or the intrepid reporter on the trail of saints and sinners?" 

A casual look at his columns and various reviews show that he has a vast range of interests and his talent is many-sided. It is therefore all the more imperative to take stock of his non-fictional writings which also reveal his basic concerns, (such as love and compassion for the poor and needy and pets and animals) his unending interest in nature particularly the various moods, the landscapes and waterscapes, his narrative skill and dramatic power and, above all, his warmth hidden, of course, beneath the surface of sense of comedy and sarcasm. It is perhaps best to start with some of the essays Khushwant Singh have written on himself.

There are a few autobiographical essays written by Khushwant Singh. For instance, two such articles are published in the book 'Not a Nice Man to Know' edited by Nandini Mehta. They are entitled "Seeing Oneself" and "Why I am an Indian". Another such piece can be read in
another book entitled 'Sex, Scotch and Scholarship' where he gives, perhaps, a candid evaluation of himself. Indeed it is quite difficult to write on oneself and "looking into the depths of one's own eyes reveals the naked truth. The naked truth about oneself can be very ugly." But what Khushwant Singh in his characteristic humorous and forthright style writes about him is indeed an interesting piece. The autobiographical piece entitled "One Myself" (Sex, Scotch and Scholarship) is perhaps one of the best self-portraits he has ever written. Here he gives in full detail his daily life style, his development as an individual since his early childhood in the light of various influences on his with a lot of humor and amazing candor. He essay reveals the real Khushwant Singh. Khushwant admit that he enjoys debunking himself and also enjoys his reputation as a lecherous drunkard. He admits that he likes dirty jokes. He has also paid a handsome tribute to his wife (Kavita Malik) by telling us that "my wife is quite a formidable character who rules the home with as firm a hand as Indira Gandhi ruled India'. We read the minute details of his childhood days, his family, his school and college life. And the most readable portion is his account of becoming an established writer. He sums-up this
autobiographical piece telling us that he is writing his autobiography and perhaps that will be the last book which he will write. In Seeing Oneself" (Not a Nice Man to Know) he writes that he does not depend on physical looks instead he dwells upon the qualities of head and heart. To the question how he assess himself as a writer he very forthrightly remarks : "Without appearing to wear the false cloak of humility, let me say quite honestly that I do not rate myself very highly". He dislikes self-praise and name-dropping and says that he is not a nice man to know. In another autobiographical note, he tells why he is an Indian. Although he dislikes his country, he admits that he loves it.

Thus after reading these essays on him we find that Khushwant Singh has not faltered while describing himself. In fact the portrait that emerged from his own pen is matched by the accounts of those who know him from close quarters. Khushwant Singh's non-fictional prose consists of not only his own pen portrait but numerous other important public figures and personal acquaintances both in India and abroad. It contains the same note of variety, warmth as well as a provocative analysis of the personalities who impressed him or provoked him. It can be again safely
divided into two categories of people - the people who impressed him with their qualities of mind and heart and above all integrity on the one hand, and people who proved him because of their contradictory trails and follies. In the first category we can take up his treatment of personalities like Nirad C. Choudhary, Manzur Quadir, Prabha Dutt, Rudyard Kipling and Yasunari Kawabata (to name some personalities). While in the second category there are personalities like V. K. Krihna-Menon, A.L. Gauba, Balwant Gargi, Giani Zail Singh etc. Besides, there are some exposures of mysterious characters like Shradha Mata, Swami Anand and Dhirendra Brahmachary. There are a few portraits which stand out because of Khushwant Singh's deep admiration for Mother Teresa and Late Z.A. Bhutto. There is yet another portrait of Phoolan Devi the queen of dacoits. He has also written on Prof. S. Chandrasekhar. All these portraits came out in different volumes, but when brought on one platform, these pen portraits reveal his style of presentation. The essays are informative, rather lively, sometimes presented in the form of interview or at times giving vent to his reactions. One such essay which pen-portrays the controversial figure of Krishna Menon reveals the author's brilliant
attempt to analyse the inspirational personality of Krishna Menon. The weaknesses of this man have been brought forth with amazing frankness and in a very lively and illuminating manner. The essay is a brilliant illustration of the demolishing of a myth. In fact, the shole essay is extremely analytical. In fact even when Krishna Menon is analysed threadbare and his characteristic defects dissected mercilessly, his sharpness of intellect, his commitment and his several other qualities of mind and heart are also brought home in the process. The writer has tried to be as objective as possible and his tone is that of a satirist. V.A. Shahane observes rightly: "Khushwant Singh's portrayal of Menon is one of the most extraordinary and provocative essays I have read." What is really remarkable about the essay is the author's fidelity to facts and his sincere attempts to portray an objective appreciation of one of the most colourful figures of Indian politicians of the Nehru era. The whole essay is an eye-opener of the authors satirical technique which reminds one of the methods of Pope at his characteristic best. Khushwant Singh's last sentence has the touch of finality and the controlled aggression reaches the finale in the last paragraph where he describes how the author's
firmness in sticking to his resignation left him gasping. But the author's resolve was equally firm: "He recounted all that he had done for me; he described me as one of his friends. But my cup of bitterness was full to the brim. 'You have no friends,' I told him. Those were the last words I spoke to him."6

Another remarkable portrait is that of Nirad Choudhuri whom he calls "scholar extraordinary". The account of this great writer (Nirad C. Choudhuri) is yet another milestone. This article was written in 1959 and like Krishna Menon, N.C. Choudhuri too was a controversial figure and by that time had acquired notoriety of an "India-baiter". His books the autobiography of an Unknown Indian and 'A Passage of England' and thereafter 'the Continent of Circe' had created an anti-Indian image. Khushwant Singh has updated his article on this personality which has been published in 'The Best of Khushwant Singh', blended into a single and enlarged tribute. The two articles (one written in 1959 and another in 1988) present a much more comprehensive essay. Khushwant Singh regards him as "one of the intellectual giants India has prod used"7 whom the people of India gravely misunderstood and undervalued. The article is
very intimaie and also a befitting tribute to this grand old man on his ninetieth birthday.

In yet another article, on Rudyard Kipling, Khushwant Singh tries to analyse his (Kipling's) achievements quite dispassionately. There are a few essays which have been written in a rather dramatic presentation. His articles on Shardha Mata, Phoolan Devi and Z.A. Bhutto come in interview form making it rather dramatic. Besides these personalities, he has touched upon some of the women and men in his life in a volume entitled 'Women and Men in My Life : The book became controversial soon after its publication because of provocative information. In this book he reminiscences about the people he had met and befriended and fallen out with. It includes some people like politician's, industrialists, lawyers, civil servants and other personalities. The book is divided into two parts- Part One women, and Part Two, Men. There are twelve women and fifteen men whom Khushwant Singh pays handsome tribute by accepting them as persons who once came into his life. In the introduction to the book Khushwant Singh has very well and quite aptly explained how two categories of people come into the life of a person. He explains - "In the
first category are members of the family into which one is born: grandparents, parents' uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, cousins and other who come into the family by marriage. In the second are others who come close to them in school or college days or later in their careers. Most of these associations are stronger because they are self-acquired and not inherited by accident of birth." And here in this particular book he writes about those people who come under the second category whom he befriended during his sisters and seventies. He tells us how he met Devyani Chaubal, a writer who wrote in film-magazines. He comments that she had no respect for film-stars about whom she wrote. He recollects that he possesses the image of Devyani Chaubal as a malicious, full of life and also a person who has zest for life. Another woman who came into the life of Khushwant Singh was Sadia Dehlavi. We read about her in other articles also. Perhaps she is the one person who mattered much in his life. He tells us that she was emotionally very 'promiscuous' and 'utterly outspoken' who possessed a 'grasshopper's personality'. He has dedicated a book to her entitled 'Not A Nice Man to Know' which he dedicates to her in the following words: "To Sadia Dehlavi who gave me
more affection and notoriety than I deserved." Sadia Dehlavi is a well-known media personality now settled in Karachi. Khushwant Singh has mentioned about another acquaintance Dharm Kumar to whom dedicated the second novel 'I shall Not Hear the Nightingale'. He tells us how she had respect for academic achievements. She was a bit of a reserved person and showed an indifferent attitude towards the writer. And still, admits frankly how he lingered for her friendship. The most lovable women in Khushwant Singh's life was Perma Subramaniam, his rakhi-sister. She was a complete Tamilian Brahmin who has settled in New York. He admits that 'she was the most unlikely woman to come into my life. And the most lovable.'

We also come across some unknown personalities. Women like Reeta Devi Verma his neighbour, whom he calls as his 'current heartthrob", Kamma Prasad, Nirmala Matthan and Ghayoorunnissa Hafeez who changed his attitudes and concept towards Muslims. He also knew the artist Amrita Sher Gil. He states that although he had met her only twice, still she needs his attention for the two meetings with her remain imprinted on his memory. Lastly he mentions onebeggar woman whom he saw in Bombay after taking over charge of
editorship of *The Weekly* while he was living in a flat in Churchgoer. Khushwant Singh shares his view with us - "The vision of Venus arising out of the sea in the form of a beggar maid of Bombay haunted me for many days that I was away in Delhi."\(^\text{10}\)

There are some men with whom Khushwant Singh shared a part of his life of which some are alive and some dead. But while writing he spares none and gives vent to his feelings. Chetan Anand the famous film artist was a classmate of Khushwant Singh when he was studying in Government College at Lahore. While his reminiscences his days spent with him, he concludes that Chetan Anand was 'the biggest taker and sponger I met in my life,'\(^\text{10}\) Another college friend was Romesh Chandra about whom he has written with a pinch of satire, quite an unstable character upon whom he based the short story entitled *The Butterfly*. Romesh Chandra is living in South Delhi. Khushwant Singh reveals that even though he knows Romesh since more than fifty years, he still feels unable to understand him. There are interesting narratives about certain personalities like Balwant Gargi, I.S. Johar, Prem Kripal, A.G. Noorani. One personality who had great impact on Khushwant Singh's life was
Manzur Qadir. To quote Khushwant Singh: "Whenever anyone asks me 'Who was the person you admired most and who influenced your way of thinking?' I answer without hesitation-'Manzur Qadir'."12 Manzur Qadir, a Pakistani citizen, was the eminent lawyer and Foreign Minister and became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Khushwant Singh has written on this personality also as a tribute after his death. The piece reveals emotional attachment the writer had with him. The writer's assessment of Manzur Qadir was that he was a combination of ability, integrity and kindness which is rarely found in any personality. Besides there are a few more persons who adorn the galaxy of people he befriended like Bharat Rani, the elder son of Shri Ram, the richest man of Delhi at the time and owner of Delhi Cloth Mills; Charanjit Singh, N. Iqbal Singh and Satendra Singh. The pictures presented of them are quite episodic and entertaining. All the sketches in this book reveal writer's intimate relationship with those persons and at the same time throw light on the unknown aspects of their lives. And it is because of this cuttingly candid presentation that Khushwant Singh has always been a butt of criticism. What he dislikes' either people or personalities or manners, he loves to vent his anger
against such things. And thus he and his article become controversial. He has criticised with open heart Giani Zail Singh, the President of India, Balwant Gargi, a Punjabi dramatist, K.L. Gauba, a lawyer. His account of Ms. Gandhi (in My Years in Parliament) is another piece of fine objective assessment and it shows his amazing sense of fairness and objectivity. In his last words spoken after the death of Mrs. Gandhi in very tragic circumstances he made it clear that despite his differences, he always loved and respected her. As he observed: "Mrs. Gandhi's place in history is assured ... No monarch ruled over so vast a territory inhabited by so numerous a people as diverse in race, creed, language and ways of living as did Indira Gandhi .... She took the hazards of life with unparalleled courage, and ultimately paid the price for it with her own life." Similarly, his account of Z.A. Bhutto's hanging is breath taking.

Another article worth mentioning is a well written piece of Kawabata first published in Times of India entitled; Why Then, Kawabata?; in 1969 Here he discusses the significance of Yashunari Kawabata against the announcement of the award of Nobel Prize to this distinguished Japanese writer. The essay is lively and was included in the

Besides writing excellent pen-portraits, Khushwant Singh's interest leans towards history for he has written a major work on the history of the Sikhs is two volumes. There are also various stay articles on Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus and a few translations of Sikh scriptures and hymns. Also he has written numerous articles on Sikh politics, on their special problems and their approaches to life, religion and politics. As far as 'A History of the Sikhs' is concerned, it is one of his major works. Khushwant Singh rightly observes that lithe story of the Sikh's is the story of the rise, fulfillment and collapse of Punjabi Nationalism."

Indeed this work in his magnum opus and naturally the book gives a detailed and comprehensive account of the evolution of Sikh religion resulting in national self-expression and their rise and fall. Of course, Khushwant Singh does not present a systematic or a very objective account of the reasons as to why the Sikhs finally moved away from Hinduism and accepted monotheism as against the polytheism of the Hindus. Khushwant Singh has provided an interesting suggestion that if
Bhakti cult was Hinduism’s answer to the argument of Islam, Sufism was Islam's compromise with Hinduism in a bid to win over the Hindus. By the same logic, Sikhism was an attempt to bridge the gulf between the two warring cults without losing the identity of the Punjabis. Only in times of Jahangir, the Sikhs became militant and hostile to Muslim rulers which ultimately evolved into a new panth called 'Khalsa Panth' under the leadership of Guru Govind Singh. Khushwant Singh also advances an argument that Ahmad Shah Abdali's nine invasions of northern India including the Punjab and Delhi turned the Sikhs into hostile enemies of the Muslims and they turned into a militant race with the aim of resurrecting the spirit of Punjabi nationalism. However, recent incidents in post independent India only confirm that Sikhs wanted an exclusive homeland for their own people excluding the Hindus, thereby betraying original faith of the Gurus. Khushwant Singh is, however, right that the Sikhs achieved some glory during the reign of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh who from his early childhood dreamt of building up a powerful sovereign Punjab State. Historians are all agreed on the point that Ranjeet Singh was very able and judicious leader who succeeded in restoring law and order
in Punjab and fostering unity among the Hindus and the Punjabis by participating in each other's festivals. He was even fair to the state and showed religious tolerance and generosity. However historians are also agreed on the point that even Ranjeet Singh was received by the Britishers diplomatic acumen and he agreed to the British occupation of the territory of the Malwa, he could not grasp the full significance of the Treaty of Lahore, which ultimately meant a grievous blowy to the Punjabi dream of unified Punjab. It must be said to the credit of Khushwant Singh that in making Ranjeet Singh his hero he does not romanticise the 'Lion of Punjab'. Khushwant Singh's treatment of the subsequent events in the post Ranjeet Singh phase in the second volume of 'A History of the Sikhs' (1839-1964) is marked by a similar objectivity and he shows how various religious movements such as Radha Swami Cult founded by Shiv Dayal of Agra, Nirankari Cult founded by Guru Dayal Das and the extremist Namdhari Sikhs named as Kooka movement had grown up in Punjab and in course of time yet another powerful movement was the birth of Arya-Samaj under the leadership of Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Another grievous blow to the Sikhs was the spread of Christianity by various
Christian missions. Ranjeet Singh's some Maharaja Dalip Singh became a Christian convert and many low caste Sikhs became Christians in course of time. Thus the Sikhs naturally were facing problems from three different sources: the militant Hindus, the hostile Muslims and the Christian missionaries. The main political movements of the Sikhs were broadly of three kinds: the liberal knowledgeable Sikhs preferred to co-operate with the British powers but during and after the First World War the Sikhs suffered and they were either attracted towards Marxism or towards Indian National Congress. Some sectarian Sikhs remained loyal to Khalsa and Akali faith. Against such a diverse background, the Sikhs continued to suffer both at the hands of the British rulers and militant Hindus led by Arya Samaj leaders. They had stolen a march over the Muslims but after partition along with the Hindus they suffered the most because the vast states and the industrial towns such as Lahore, Rawalpindi, Layalpur and Peshawar were allocated to Pakistan. The numerous religious shrines were also divided and the famous Gurudwara where Nanak preached went over to Pakistan.
Khushwant Singh's book on the rise and fall of Sikhs makes a few important observations about the future of Sikhs in India and blames both the Indian Government and the Sikh community equally for the aggravation of their problems. His first observation is that the Sikhs are scattered, all over India and abroad and hence the Khalsa tradition has weakened and the number of Keshdhari Sikhs is on the decline. His second remark is that the Government of India by following the policy of protectionism towards low caste Sikhs has made the Sikhs a divided community and the low caste Sikhs seem to be lenient towards the Government of India, in the hope of getting preferential treatment in service. Thirdly, the encouragement to Hindi as lingua-franca has adversely affected the study of the Punjabi longitude. Fourthly, the resurgence of Hinduism in various shapes and forms also constitutes a subtle but long term danger to Sikh culture and tradition. Hence, his last conclusion is that if the Sikhs gains a predominantly Punjabi speaking state within the republic of India then only will the Sikh dream of a happy homeland will become a tangible reality.
Certainly, this book on the history of Sikhs is too detailed and, scholarly to be enjoyed by the general reader. Though some contradictions have been found in the book, still it is a true saga of the great people. It would be apt to quote here Joan V. Bondurant's statement that Khushwant Singh's "work is both too detailed for the general reader and too inexact to satisfy the scholar." Khushwant Singh's remarks on Arya Samaj are not fair. And at the same time he has failed to explain how Sikhs will look after the management of their Punjabi state because like the Palestinians, they too want concessions and privileges and what is more like the Hindus, they have their own inner contradictions and social tensions as the Gurudwara politics and militant Sikhs and the Nirankaris seems to suggest. The Sikhs also miscalculated themselves in their assessment of late Jawaharlal Nehru as well as Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Initially the Sikhs were anti-Congress and they seemed to be pro-Mr. Gandhi. But the creation of Haryana and the tangle of Chandigarh made them realise that Mrs. Gandhi was more diabolical in her approach. However when all is said one has no hesitation in agreeing to Shahane's assessment of the work : "Singh's scholarly and comprehensive
presentation of the long and chequered history of the Sikhs is written with passion and power and is characterised by objectivity, equipoise and fidelity to truth."


Khushwant Singh's acumen as an authority is not limited only to Sikh religion, he has attempted to write on religion in general which prove his deep understanding of the essential features of all religions and he is always in favour of a comparative study of the salient features of every religion. This led him to study not only the Sikh scripture but also the Indian epics, Vedic hymns and Upanishads and also the Bhagwat
Geeta and it also enabled him to study and understand Gurubani in its depth and essentials. He also translated hymns of Gurunanak and the Morning Prayer Jap-Jee but as he himself claims that he is basically a self-professed agnostic and his views on religion are somewhat unconventional. For him religion is a matter of faith but certain practices of religious people have left him cold and he has, therefore, tried to find a blend of all good points of different religions. In this context his article 'The Magic Words' is quite revealing. In this piece he starts with certain magical words which are used in different religions and are claimed to have protective and curative value. Thus, for the Hindus, the word Om, the word Ek Onkar for the Sikhs, and the expression Allah-a-Akbar from the holy book of Quoran (Alfatihah) are quite significant. Khushwant Singh with his adequate knowledge of the Quoran refers to some other verses from the Quoran such as Ayat-ul-Qursi; the throne verse, which he claims is engraved on medallions and worn by Muslim ladies in their necklaces. Next to that he refers to another verse which is called Surah Yaseen. Incidentally the verses from this citation are engraved on the Taj Mahal. For comparative importance, he refers to the Gayatri Mantra from the
Yajur Veda which is basically an invocation to the Sun seen as omnipresent; omnipotent and omniscient which can purify and sharpen our mind and intellect. Thus the whole Gayatri mantra is a kind of incantation where earth, sky, heavens and the sun are all claimed to be present in God who is seen as the *Creator* and is yet transcendent and also as the light and source of all intellect and the prayer directs that we should all channelise our energies towards good deeds and thoughts and conduct, Khushwant Singh sums up the meaning of Gayatri Mantra with the following observation. He explains that "this mantra directs the imagination of the mind to a limitless state, it strikes at the very root of our basic desires and instincts, not necessarily of this present life, but also many past lives."\(^1\!\!7\) The writer's opinion is that though all religions preach tolerance still there is something inherent in them which makes them intolerant towards each other and even there are certain inner contradictions with a particular religion and it is because "the spirit of revenge is deeply ingrained in the human psyche."\(^1\!\!8\)  

Khushwant Singh while writing on religion has not only aimed at Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, we find that he has judicious knowledge
of other religions also like Christianity, Judaism, Jainism and Buddhism. He clarifies that while writing or speaking on any religion he does not "mean to blaspheme any faith nor cause any offence to anyone." His speeches and articles reveal that he believes in the religion of kindness and he claims that being a Khalsa and born in an orthodox family, he is still in search of a new religion and sums up his faith in the following words:

"....good life is the only religion .... Happiness is the only good; the place to be happy is here; the time to be happy is now; the way to be happy is to help others'.

His essay 'The Search for a New Religion for India' sets out to explain the need for practical ritual-free religion which is perhaps the need of the present times. Khushwant Singh studied different religions while working on Sikh scriptures. In his own words:

"While working on the Sikh scriptures, I found so many references to the Vedas, Upanishads and the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata including the Geeta, that I decided to study them to better understand the meaning of mown Gurubani." He also says that "at St.
Stephens College I attended Bible classes. Although the emphasis was on the New Testament, particularly the Psalms, the Song of Solomon and the Book of Job that I found myself drawn to."  

Further he asserts that the interest in religion made him" read whatever material he got on Jainism, Buddhism and later developments in Hinduism. "Islam was the last religion I turned to, largely to free myself of anti-Muslim prejudices which had been instilled into me as a child. By the time I was 40, no religion evoked much enthusiasm in my mind." Thus he spoke on his knowledge of different religions. Therefore, we find Khushwant Singh's views on religion are unconventional and as a self-professed agnostic he has pleaded on rationalisation of religion shorn of unnecessary rituals and customs.

Khushwant Singh has also translated besides Sikh scriptures) from other languages and some of his well-known translations from Urdu story like 'Umrao fan Adda' by Mirza Md. Ruswa and Rajinder Singh Bedi's famous noves 'Take this Woman' is well-known. He has also translated from IQbal's Shikwa and fawabe-Shikwa which is in the form of dialogue with God. Khushwant Singh translated Shikwa in 1980 which
is indeed a great effort. Similarly he has translated Guru Nanak's most highly rated *Bam Mah* from the Punjabi language. We also come across translations from Saadat Hussain's Manto and K.A. Abbas' stories, Amrita Pritam's poems and stories too have been translated by him. Almost every reviewer has testified to his competent translations of such classics from Urdu and Punjabi.

Khushwant Singh is a widely traveled man and his likes to write on his trips. His accounts of the trips are really interesting. He insists that he has seen the cathedrals, temples, pagodas, mosques, palaces and famous picture galleries, pyramids, lofty mountain ranges, waterfalls. His travelogues often are published in the 'Malice' column which he writes. Very candidly he says : "I have been round the globe dozens of times and visited almost every country in the world but rarely, if ever, paid for my travel or hospitality."24 His travelogues on Australia, Pakistan, Japan, Madras and Calcutta are worth reading. He calls Australia a lone land of magnificent distances. He gives details of cities in his own inimitable style. His piece on Pakistan is written with quite a bit a sentiment. He writes : "I go to Pakistan as a Hindu goes to Varanasi, a Muslim to Mecca.
It is my teerthsthan 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."²⁵ His emotional attachment with the country and to Hadali, the place where he was born overcomes his trip to Pakistan.

Quite interestingly is written the piece on his visit to New York and Japan. It is one of the best kinds of travel writings. These articles convey the whole experience of going abroad with all its pleasures and perils. He tells every thing as he saw them. He describes the local cuisine art, custom and culture. In doing so he maybe said to become a bit critical for while writing on his visit to Madras and Calcutta, he says Madrasis's are conservative and do not like to change. He is frightened of a city like Calcutta which is unkempt unwashed and with a population was good for its health. But writing on Delhi is perhaps Khushwant Singh's pet obsession. In his numerous articles he has mentioned about this city which is his first love. Although he has written in great detail about the 'origin and development of the city which has risen and fallen over the years, still it continued to evoke the author's admiration. He has even
called Delhi the eternal capital of Hindustan. And in an absorbing essay 'Delhi : Eternal Capital of Hindustan' he has written with authenticity about the city to which he returns periodically after his sojourn in other places. Thus in the article entitled Calcutta, he is obviously writing on his experiences in Calcutta and even there Delhi creeps in as a refreshing point of departure from a dirty congested though, involved and warm city: "I always return to Delhi as a man returns to his mistress when he has had his fill of whoring in other cities." Even in the present article he does not gloss over the negative points of Delhi and yet the whole essay seems to be a personal impression of an admirer who can ignore the faults of his beloved city: "This is Delhi, my home town, the Delhi that I miss when I am away. This is the Delhi that I love." The whole essay seems to be a kind of curious blend of personal preferences and objective historical analysis of the growth of Delhi over five centuries of Muslim rule. One thing rather strikes us as a serious flaw in his account of Delhi that he has not even for once dealt with: the legend of Delhi as the capital of the Pandaya empire and in the middle ages, as the capital of the vast empire of the great king Prithvi Raj Chauhan before falling a prey to Muslim
rulers. However as a personal essay, 'Delhi : Eternal Capital of Hindustan' testifies to the author's emotive response and attachment to the modern capital of India.

In yet another article entitled 'The Romance of New Delhi' he gives detailed description of making of New Delhi as the capital of modern India. How Lutyens designed the city and the experienced contractors like Sujan Singh and his son Sobha Singh, constructed the city of their dream. Every historical fact has been presented with utmost authenticity.

Khushwant Singh's forte as a writer of miscellaneous interest does not cease here for he has given commentaries on various diverse topics of which some include sex, politics and poverty.

It is true one cannot write about Khushwant Singh without speaking of sex. His columns and books are overspread with his three-lettered word. We come across such articles as 'Sex in Indian Life' and 'The Indian Women' Besides there is a book edited by him and Shobha De entitled 'Uncertain Liaisons-Sex, Strife and Togetherness in Urban India' where he welcomes the fact that "in-today's India these issues are being discussed with frankness seldom seen in the past. And as every one is
interested in sex, it can only benefit all of us if more of us are open about it.28

On politics we come across articles on Khalistan where he gives detailed description of the Sikh and Khalsa, and their demand for Khalistan. Khushwant Singh has also 'written a beautiful informative piece on his days in Parliament. He re-enacts the whole scene when he for the first time heard that he has been nominated a Member of Parliament. Then he goes on to narrate the other members' role in Parliament. The whole essay is quite humorously written. He writes: 'Nominated members are Harijans of the House of Elders, treated more as decorative trimmings and expected to maintain a golden silence. When they want to speak; they have to wait their turn till representatives of all the political parties have had their say. This is usually late in the evening when the House is almost empty and the press gallery left with only Correspondent of the two major news agencies.'29 Further, he says: "in the six years I was member of the House, I reckon I made an average of two major speeches and at least half a dozen other interventions during the Question Hour."30 He ends the
article with the following sarcastic remark: "What difference does it make whether or not an M.P. opens his mouth? The caravan marches on."\(^3\)

There are stray articles on Indian poverty and 'Portrait of a Famine: Bihar 1968'. Besides these some of Khushwant Singh's writings refer this warm appreciation of nature particularly the treatment of monsoon in Indian literature and folklore. He has written one whole book on this topic, entitled 'Nature Watch'. This book is patterned after the 'Baramasi' of Indian poets where he describes the trees, the birds, the insects, snakes and animals to be seen during the twelve months of the year. It also tells about the festivals and fairs celebrated during the different seasons of the year. The clouds, the birds all have been described with the utmost of precision. He describes the month of Mayas a month of laburnum along with dust and heat, ” Petals shed by flowers spread golden carpets about their feet; maul saris weave them in beige, papris (pongamia glabra) in pink and white looking very much like a spread of tiny hailstones."\(^3\) A beautiful description of the flora. We also read about the birds like koels and mynahs in great detail. In fact, 'Nature Watch' is
a precious book worth reading which brings to light the writer's ability to write on even flora and fauna in his original artistic style.

Khushwant Singh's novels and short-stories and other articles deal in great detail on monsoon. We come across it in 'Train to Pakistan' and also in his second novel 'I shall Not Hear the Nightingale'. He has written an exhaustive essay on monsoon entitled 'The Mansoon in Indian Literature, and Folklore', "It was not surprising that much of India's art, music and literature are concerned with the summer monsoon. Innumerable paintings depict people on rooftops looking eagerly at the dark clouds billowing out from over the horizon with flocks of herons flying in front."33 He explains the different classical ragas like meghamallhar, Rag Desh and Hindole. There are many poems where the monsoon has been described by India as well as English poets. Thus the essay is absorbing and lively but it can be said that his treatment of nature is only skin deep and they cannot be compared to a Romantic poet's intimate association with the varying moods of nature.

A part from what has been discussed about his journalistic pieces, it is a fact that they are too varied and variegated which makes it
quite difficult to discuss in detail. Yet some of his journalistic articles such as celebrated *Farewell to the Illustrated Weekly, The Haunted Simla Road, Holy Men and Holy Cows, Going Gaga Ovel Yoga* etc. are pieces worth reading. Khushwant Singh, besides being a journalist and translator, had tried his hand at other genres too, which include his lively play *'Tyger, Tyger, Burning Bright'*. The play is a comedy enacted by only seven casts and divided into three Acts. And here us usual the government and the tourism department come under his butt of satire. He mocks at the developmental works done in the country, the famine and the Five Year Plans. The whole scene takes place in the reception hall of a just opened hotel in a jungle. All the casts participate in the lively discussion. The play which is not very long, perhaps it can be called a "skit", is full of humorous discussion son the past of Maharajas and present-day maharajas, the ministers, love and sex. The attempt to write a drama also, is commendable but it cannot be compared with Khushwant Singh's order great literary works. Khushwant Singh enjoys cracking jokes, and his collection of jokes has also been published in book form.
Taken together, these non-fictional works bring out Khushwant Singh's versatility. His diverse field of writing shows the range and depth of his talents and interests. It can be said that he is man of all seasons who is associated with many things of this worldly life. He presents his varied experiences of life along with its variegated problems. His journalistic writings are an outcome of his everyday experiences. His sense of humour, his wide knowledge of different customs, cultures and traditions, all seem to came out in his writings written with a sharp, aggressive attitude towards life, and in the process he becomes a bit "taa much" as we find in his pen-portraits and articles an population and poverty. The most remarkable thing about Khushwant Singh is that he writes from the heart and tells like it is. So, he can very well ridicule himself also. he piece written an Krishna Menon is remarkable and the way the writer reveals the inner working of Menon's mind makes the pen-portrait one of the most trenchant exposures. V.A. Shahane rightly say : "He does not even detract from exposing himself in the process and this is an admirable aspect of the operative farce of the comic spirit in his writing." Thus a casual look at Khushwant Sing's miscellaneous writings
is at once demonstrative of his total lack of respect for the people who are phony, humbug, prude and who have a kind of self-righteous attitude in terms of religious or social importance or perfection. Some of his articles are factual, direct and simple which overpower the ultimate effect.

His love for nature, animals and birds offer an insight into Khushwant Singh's deep attachment to them. He is deeply concerned with animals and birds and plants and all things which are natural like clouds, seasons. His knowledge in this field makes one realise that Khushwant Singh has observed nature in its minutest details. He knows the chirping of birds, the call of animals and insects and the behaviour of Indian monsoon. An really it keeps one astonished that a man with writing as his profession knows nature's language too.

Khushwant Singh, a celebrity, whom most of the people know as "a man in the bulb" is actually the grand and man of Indian journalism who has worn masks to create the feeling of enigma. Indeed he is a man of varied aspects and also a colourful personality. To the question, how he managed to acquire the image of a man with a supercharged libido, who drank all the time and laved to shake people's religious beliefs, he
answers (in his own words) : "I am responsible for the image. I love shaking people. And I am an agnostic. Nothing shakes us Indians more than talk about sex and mocking religion I do bath. And add fuel to it by libations of scotch. But in actually I am bared with sex, bared with religion and can drink very little ................. Similarly, his estimate of himself as a journalist and writer is : "successful though not a very knowledgeable journalist, a second rate hack as a writer and non-existent as parliamentarian."36 Indeed a blunt : forthright in his assessment of himself like he dissects other personalities. Shabha De confirms the fact that his image of a scoundrel is a Jake for "he, more than most of his contemporaries, leads a perfectly ordered life that revolves around writing (prolifically) and meeting people (selectively)."37 This Khushwant Singh has also confirmed while writing On 'Myself'. Although Khushwant Singh claims to be a writer of less reputation, (this is his modesty), in fact, he is the present day most readable and saleable writer and the most successful columnist. And this is because he writes for the reader and not for himself. "He understands the nerve of the reader and speaks to them directly. As the editor of the 'Illustrated Weekly of India' it was due to him innovations
in the magazine which rose in circulation from about one lakh to between 3.25 and 3.50 lakh. There are different factors which help in the rise of any magazine's circulation; for instance, rise in population, the price, organised distribution system, quality of content and competition in the market. But during the nine years as the editor of the Weekly, it was his charishma which mattered most. And while he was the editor of the Weekly, he became almost a national star.

It would be a folly to call Khushwant Singh only a journalist or a historian, or a novelist. He is all in one-a master of his medium. There are critics who reckon him merely as an entertainer and not a serious writer who only fills the book. His articles on certain personalities are malicious and petty and provocative. It is also true that one cannot agree with all that he says as a journalist a historian and as an iconoclast. But still the diversity of his writings attracts us reviews, sketches, interviews, travelogues and miscellaneous commentary on relevant topics - really a vast area to cover. All the pieces display his personality and style of writing. V.A. Shahane rightly observes: "the man and writer are seen in unison: the style is the man. At the same time his style lies in the
objectification of the artist's awareness and in the articulation of his felt experience."  

References


10. Ibid; 'The Beggar Maid', p.95

11. Ibid; Chetan Anand, p.103.

12. Ibid; Manzur Qadir, p.169


18. Ibid; p. 164.


22. *Ibid*.

23. *Ibid*.

24. *Ibid*; p.102

25. *Ibid*; Pakistan : Sweet and Sour, p. 120.


31. *Ibid*; p-94
32. Ibid; *The Month of May*, p.142


34. VA Shahane, "Khushwant Singh", p.150


36. Ibid; p.111

37. Shobha De, *Listen Sweetheart...*, "A Man Called Khushwant Singh", p.100

38. VA Shahane, "Khushwant Singh, p.142."