Chapter-III

Theme of Partition

Khushwant Singh's fiction reveals that he is a writer who has been deeply affected by catastrophe and that he had relied largely upon the direct, forthright and energetic methods of realism to convey his reactions to experience. Singh's short stories in *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* and his two novels, *Train to Pakistan* (1956) (also published under the title *Mana Majra*) and *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), are clearly the work of a sanguine temperament. Circumstances, however, drastically shaped his outlook, for his, decision to become a writer was precipitated by the tragic happenings associated with the Partition of India. 'It was', said Singh, 'a period of disillusionment':

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

The attitude here defined indicates that Khushwant Singh is more than an author of violent narratives, that he is concerned, in fact, with important moral issues. The main theme of his fiction involved consideration of the nature of man and the enigma of human destiny through a juxtaposition of violence with a concept of moral order.

In telling the story of Partition, but Khushwant Singh and Balachandra Rajan tried to reappraise man and to salvage meaning from inhumanity and moral chaos. Khushwant Singh's disillusionment was part of a widespread anxiety, which led to a revaluation of Indian idealism. At the center of Rajan's The Dark Dancer are the hero's suffering explorations of consciousness; his heart is sensitive, his mind complex; the style, accordingly, is polished, articulate, urbane, poetic. In Train to Pakistan 'consciousness' by contract, is confined to what is dramatically
necessary (an inevitable concession to realism since most of the characters are simple peasants); impact on the moral consciousness is made through the unfolding of events; and Singh's language is as direct, unadorned and uninhibited as the story itself. The elaborate rationalisations of Iqbal--the urban Western-educated intellectual with a communist mission are exceptional in *Train to Pakistan* but they dwindle into stupor and intellectual cowardice, and Khushwant Singh proves in the climax of the novel that it is through love, not intellectualised ideology, that salvation is possible.

In the characterisation of Krishnan in *The Dark Dancer* Rajan adduces the plight of a modern intellectual who feels isolated from his traditional heritage. However, the example of his wife Kamala, who finds meaning and purpose in her work as a nurse in the midst of carnage, more than mere intellectualising, enables Krishnan to redeem his Indianness. Kamala exemplifies practical goodness and love, and her martyrdom at the hands of an assassin is the culmination of spiritual strength and moral courage. The 'dynamic philosophy of Righteous Action', to borrow Abbas's phrase, is similarly asserted at the end of *Train to Pakistan* when
Juggut Singh dies saving the trainload of Muslim refugee; his sacrifice marks the transition whereby an act of love achieves concrete goodness. Thus both novels attempt to reconcile a horror and inhumanity of historical enormity with a singular example of courage, dignity and sacrifice. However, this is a long way from Khushwant Singh's starting point: the short.

For some Indian writers the short story has been a vehicle for moral invective. Underlying many stories of communal bestiality is the private cry of utter revulsion and passionate protest. 'Revenge', by K.A. Abbas, is an example. In this story Abbas describes and hysteria of hate that causes a once respectable lawyer, Hari Das, to lose his reason, seeking out some Muslim girl who will serve as murderer in revenge for the hideous killing of his daughter. He chooses as a victim an abducted Muslim who has been forced into prostitution. The climax of the story is a ghastly revelation of the blinding mutuality of suffering: as Hari Das is about to stab the girl, he averts 'his eyes in shame' crying 'Daughter I but does not see that 'where he was going to stab her, there was no breast.... nothing .... but two horrible round scars'.
In some of his stories, Khushwant Singh is similarly an exponent of crude impact. Brutality wears many guise she generally presents such distasteful material objectively. He is not blind to the ameliorating possibilities of life. Thus in the story 'The Rape', from *The Mark of Vishnu* the savage love-making of Dalip Singh, which results in a charge of rape, is complemented by the generous act of the girl concerned who says she was a willing partner; she makes due allowance for human desire, enticing circumstances, and Dalip Singh's genuine remorse. Similarly Juggut Singh's vigorous brutal conquest of Nooran at the beginning of *Train to Pakistan* is the prelude to the growth, in him of a vital and responsible love.

'The Riot' is a short story which exemplifies Khushwant Singh's objectively of technique in writing about communal barbarism; in describing the stupidity, evil and horror of such degrading acts detachment is preserved through irony and satire. Before the riot occurs the town in which the story is set 'lay etherized under the fresh spring twilight', and the disjointed mood of peace conveyed in the Eliotesque image is soon borne out by events which show that for man Spring is a season of hate and fear, the only example of love being provided by the
courtship of dogs. Rani, a pariah bitch, is cared for by the household of the Hindu shopkeeper, Ram Jawaya. Every spring she loiters near the stall of the Muslim green grocer, Ramzan, who owns a burly spaniel, Moti. On this occasion, however, Moti is secured by a leash and Rani is forced to seek another lover. But eventually Moti breaks free and attacks his rival outside Ram Jawaya's shop. The shopkeeper throws a stone at the dogs but unintentionally hits Ramzan, who has come for Moti. The Muslim cries 'Murder!' and both he and the Hindu run back to their houses shouting; fear and rumour magnify the incident into a violent skirmish and this resulted in a rampage of death and the burning of the town. Some months later, when Ram Jawaya is inspecting the ruins of his home, he finds 'Rani with her letter nuzzling into her dried udders' and beside her 'Moti guarding his bastard brood'. The story is an effective parable on the psychology of riot, demonstrating how a trivial or ridiculous incident can spark off fearful ugly imaginings and mass destruction. Mean-while, dogs copulate and life goes on; it is probably significant that Rani and Moti belong to different dog 'communities'. Singh employs a technique of Swift an inversion to satirically imply that the animal can be superior to man at least in the basic matters of life and preservation.
The discrimination and concentration that characterise Khushwant Singh's presentation of his theme in *Train to Pakistan* are qualities which he developed in writing the sketches in *The Mark of Vishnu*. These short stories are confined to the bare narrative essentials with the result that any rhetorical tendency Singh might have to indulge his personal feelings of disillusionment is severely restricted. Indeed, with the exception of portions of *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, he has always preferred to make his points through concrete analogy or action rather than explanatory statement: this is one of the impressive strengths of *Train to Pakistan*. Moreover, he wisely restricts himself to those aspects of India and life which he knows best: in the main, the Punjab and the Sikhs. If Khushwant Singh has any pronounced literary affinity it would be with the so-called 'primitivistic' school of writing.

Certainly, primary sociological observation has provided the initial stimulus for much of Khushwant Singh's work. That he began writing, according to himself, as 'a debunker of Indian pretensions' is evident from *The Mark of Vishnu*. His stated intention to lampoon 'the anglicised Indian who succeeded the English as the new ruling class' results in the sardonic caricature of a wag Sir Mohan Lal-in the first story in he
volume, 'Karma'. Lal is ashamed of his traditional wife and regards his country as 'inefficient, dirty, indifferent'. In imitation of the English elite, he cultivates upper class manners and attitudes and an air of patronage. His insignia of superior breeding are a Saville Row suit (with carnation), perfume, *The Times*, Scotch, a discursive conversation in English, and a Balliol tie which, in the right company, 'would open up a vista leading to a fairyland of Oxford Colleges, masters, dons, tutors, boat races and rugger-matches'. The illusion is rudely shattered, however, when Sir Mohan, anticipating the luxurious company of English officers in a first-class train compartment, is roughly thrown out onto the platform by two uneducated, drunken Tommies.

Another 'illusion' which Khushwant Singh illustrates ironically is 'Indian religiosity and other wordiness', Two crisply-narrated stories, 'The Mark of Vishnu' and 'The Great Difference', are variations on this theme. In 'The Mark of Vishnu' Singh demonstrates the superstitious illogicality of the belief that all life is sacred. Gunga Ram, an illiterate Brahmin, worships Vishnu and, as part of his religious ritual, provides a saucer of milk each day for a giant cobra. The children of the household insensitively deride the Brahmin's belief in the holiness of the cobra; one
day they break the cobra's back and, believing it to be dead, take it to school in a box. The box is opened and the cobra, in making its painful escape, confronts Gunga Ram who bows his head in prayer and craves forgiveness. The cobra furiously bites Gunga Ram on the foe head where he had applied a V mark in devotion to Vishnu the preserver.

'The Great Difference' is a satire tinged with mischievous humour. At the World Congress of Faiths in Paris a voluptuous French autograph-huntress approaches a Muslim, a Hindu, and the Sikh narrator. 'Her steatopygous behind', the narrator observes, 'was an invitation to lustfulness forbidden by the laws of man. We signed our names'. 18 Their response to her desire to learn 'about the tenets and merits of their respective faiths is quite magnanimous. Separate appointments are made so that she can discover the difference between these strange religions. She proves to be a shrewd learner. After keeping the appointments with the Hindu and the Muslim she tells the narrator, 'Je comprends bien la difference': she had applied the infallible test.

Khushwant Singh's stories are lively explicit sketches in which pessimism is balanced by admiration for 'the spirit of adventure' and 'the lust for living'. 19 In Train to Pakistan these qualities are expanded into
full flesh-and-blood natural goodness in the character of Juggut Singh. Khushwant Singh's tragic view of life, accordingly, is conceived in terms of a conflict between the rare individual who embodies the spirit of adventure and lust for living, and man in general, whom Singh regards as essentially evil. Thus, in writing *Train to Pakistan* Singh conceives Jugga as the moral exception:

..... *I thought it was time one exploded this myth of the innate goodness in man. There is innate evil in man. And so I just wrote about it, and I did create one character whom I stuffed with the so-called innate goodness of man, and heirs the only character which is entirely fiction.*

Nevertheless, Juggut Singh is a convincing character partly because of his goodness, and because this quality is a credible manifestation of his rebellious temperament. Even in the turmoil of a collapsing society, goodness is not inconceivable. Sabhrai in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is another innately good character. She is a devout orthodox Sikh mother-digni-fied, gentle, spiritually strong. Similarly in *The Mark of Vishnu* degradation and violence are balanced by affirmations of human dignity and sensitivity in 'The Portrait of a Lady' and 'Kusum'. 'Kusum', a Cinderella story, unpretentiously describes the
healthy joy that is released with the emergence of the natural feminine instincts. 'The Portrait of a Lady' is a warm character sketch of a grandmother who, in her strength and goodness, points forward to Sabhrai. Singh's short stories, in fact, are introductions to his novels and although they suffer from excessive conciseness they are nevertheless sharp-pointed miniatures of life.

However, from 'The Riot' to Train to Pakistan represents a development from a slight story to a forceful novel which deservedly is now quite well known. The action of Train to Pakistan is confined to a few summer weeks (August-September) in 1947 in the village of Mano Majra, situated a mile from the railway bridge that crosses the Sutlej into Pakistan. With very little direct commentary about the history of Partition, the background mass exodus of ten million people, and the colossal accompaniment of violent death, social upheaval and moral anarchy, Khushwant Singh's account of what happens to Mano Majra nevertheless conveys with brutal honesty and fierce concentration the horror, suffering and bestiality of Partition. Singh's historical introduction to the story is limited merely to the two opening paragraphs of the novel where brief biting statements of fact adequately set the general scene:
Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped.

Apart from this short introduction, a few remarks passed in conversation and Iqbal's sparse but astringent sociological ruminations, the frame of outside reference is restricted with harrowing economy to the penultimate scene in which Hukum Chand (the magistrate and deputy commissioner of the district) recollects three acquaintances that made their tryst with barbaric destiny on the 15th August, Independence Day. There was Prem Singh who had gone to Lahore to retrieve his wife's jewellery and was murdered outside a hotel. There was Sundari-returning with her husband to their home, following their wedding when a mob stopped their bus, stripped and castrated her husband before her eyes, and then raped her. And there was also Sunder Singh and his family who were stranded without food and drink in an un-bearably hot, crowded train, when there was not even urine left to drink; he shot his children and wife and was about to put a bullet through his head when the train began at last to move on. 'He heaved out the corpses and came along to India.'
These three accounts are honed with a savage irony that is the only kind of barrier the author erects between himself and the appalling inhumanity he is describing. The atrocious detail is starkly clear, and these three brief episodes convey India's nightmare holocaust far more effectively than pages of full-blown description. The excruciating moral revulsion of the second and third sketches is almost unquote-able. In the first, however, some of the revulsion is absorbed by the descriptive tone which, in other non-violent circumstances, would have been nearly satirical or caricaturing:

*He made his tryst at Faletti's Hotel where European sahibs used to flirt with each other's wives. It is next door to the Punjab Assembly building where Pakistani parliamentarians talked democracy and made laws. Prem Singh whiled away time drinking beer and offering it to the Englishmen staying in the hotel. Over the private hedge a dozen heads with fez caps and Pathan turbans waited for him. He drank more beer and forced it on his English friends and on the orchestra. His dates across the hedge waited patiently. The Englishmen drank a lot of beer and whisky and said Prem Singh was a grand chap. But it was late for dinner so they said 'Goodnight Mr. Did not catch your name. Yes, of course, Mr. Singh*
'...., 'Nice old Wog. Can hold his drink too,' they said in the dining room. Even the orchestra had more beer than ever before. "That would you like us to lay, sir?" asked Mendoza the Goan band leader.... Prem Singh did not know the name of any European piece of music. He thought hard. He remembered one of the Englishmen had asked for something which sounded like 'bananas'. 'Bananas', said Prem Singh. "We'll Have o Bananas Today." Yes, sir: Mendoza, De Mello, De SBva, De Saram and Gomes strummed 'Bananas'. Prem Singh walked across the lawn to the gate. His date is also moved along the hedge to the gate. The band saw Prem Singh leave so they switched to 'God Save the King'.

The three atrocity scenes, superimposed on the narrative as they are immediately before the last scene of the novel, serve to chisel into imperishable relief the moal and humane significance of Juggut Singh's heroic self-sacrifice, in which he dies cutting the rope across the bridge, thus preventing hundreds of Muslims plummeting from the carriage tops onto the knives and guns of the ambush party.

The events leading up to this climax, and the situation in Mano Majra, epitomise the communal catastrophe of Pakistan, while the reactions of various characters in the novel to the happenings around them
typify kinds of moral abnegation and compromise perennial in man and not peculiar solely to the India of 1947. In Mano Majra the Sikh and Muslim communities had lived together with brotherly accord for centuries before the nation-wide separatist hatred 'divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter'. Until the trainloads of corpses arrived at the station, the villagers were not even aware that the British had left and the country had been partitioned. However they had no immunity from the mob psychology of communal fear and prejudice which surrounded them. Each community began looking in the mirror of the other's reflected distortions, and paralleling each other's obsessions. The Muslims prey upon

Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims They had heard of gentlewomen having their veils taken off, being stripped and marched down crowded streets to be raped in the market place. Many had eluded their would-be ravishers by killing themselves.

On the other hand,

Sikh refugees had told of women jumping into wells and burning themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Those who did not
commit suicide were paraded naked in the streets, raped in public, and then murdered.

Similarly, each community feeds its frenzy on parallel, stories of desecration to their holy places. Khushwant Singh is careful to maintain a balanced view, pointing out that the evil Partition precipitated was in the nature of man and that the socio-religious concept of 'community' served abstract functions like moral exoneration or condemnation. Singh makes it quite clear that an the score of massacres no side was less guilty than another. This balanced view is also evident in other directions. Thus, while the two communities in Mano Majra pledge their mutual district, Jugga and the Muslim girl Nooran pledge their love. While at the lowest end of the moral scale are the parasites of Partition who massacre for pleasure and plunder (people like Malli and his dacoits who at the beginning of Train to Pakistan murder the moneylender of Mana Majra and at the end plan to reap a harvest of Muslim death), at the opposite end of the scale, of course, is Malli's enemy Jugga, without whom Khushwant Singh's view would lack a morally-redeeming aspect. Moreover, the author is careful 'not to exaggerate his villagers' characters: while they succumb to mass hysteria, genuine moral bewilderment is also an
important part of this process; they are manipulated by the authorities who want to create sufficient discord to ensure that the evacuation of the Muslims is desired by both groups, but there are mutual demonstrations of affection and regret when it is time for the Muslims to leave.

With respect to the actual narration, an important example of Khushwant Singh's balanced presentation of events concerns the way in which he introduces news of the atrocities. Though brutal violence provides the basis of the story, the restraint with which Singh approaches this subject, particularly at narrative points when excessive or premature description would be at the expense of real-life expectancies, is commendable. Thus Singh so manipulates the point of view that a gradual and refracted revelation of the atrocities is necessary to coincide with the villagers' growing suspicions; psychologically the main interest is in the impact the violence makes on their minds and also on Hukum Chand. Moreover, sinister suspense is a much part of the horror as the evidence of butchered corpses and is certainly a key aspect of the psychology of Partition violence.

Firstly, there are ominous hints outside the village circle of awareness: Humum Chand and the sub-inspector talk about violence in
other places from an anti-Muslim point of view, and comment on the necessity of maintaining law and order in their district; Bhola, the tonga driver, tells Iqbal of an alleged atrocity in which Sikhs were supposed to have opened fire on Muslim refugees. Then there are ominous signs when the train schedules, by which the villagers normally kept tract of the time, go away; 'ghost trains went past at odd hours between midnight and dawn, disturbing the dreams of Mano Majra'. Next, the daylight arrival of a ghost train causes a commotion in the village; there is gossip about sinister activities at the station, and at a meeting of the elders 'uneasiness' results from the mention of a rumour of train 'incidents'... Then soldiers come to buy fuel and kerosene. Shortly afterwards the northern sky is seared with flame' and smoke. Then they know:

_A soft began to blow towards the village. It brought the smell of burning kerosene, then of wood. And then-a-faint acrid smell of searing flesh._

_The village was stilled in a deathly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was. They all knew. They had known it all the time. The answer was implicit in the fact that the train had dome from Pakistan._
That evening; for the first time in the memory of Mano Majra, Imam Baksh's sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the glory of God.

But there are further turns of the screw: the details have yet to be supplied. Literary necessity is indistinguishable from moral necessity: the full impact must be felt. So the point of view is shifted to present the scene first-hand through Hukum Chand's recollecting eyes. His emotions are petrified by images he cannot expunge from his consciousness:

He tried to squash them by pressing his fingers into his eyes. The images only went blacker and redder and then came back. There was a man holding his intestines with an expression in his eyes which said: 'Look what have got I'. There were women and children huddled in a corner, their eyes dilated with horror, their mouths still open as if their shrieks had just then become voiceless.

And then, finally, the villagers see the horror for themselves: when the rain comes and the river floods mutilated bodies float past their bank; a new trainload of corpses is bulldozed into a mass grave.

Implicit in these accounts is the wracked cry of 'Why? Why? and the sense that death on such a vast inhuman scale defies
understanding. Perhaps the combination of climate and generations of suffering, fatalism and resignation, have something to do with it; however Singh does not indulge in pretentious supeculation. What he in fact does is much more important: he realistically recreates a representative situation and then examines through certain characters the kinds of morally crucial decisions men may make in such circumstances.

In this respect Hukum Chand, Iqbal and Juggut Singh are vital to the moral design of *Train to Pakistan*. The specific situation that gives rise to this design, quite simple, is that Hukum Chand intrigues to link the murder of the moneylender with the communal situation in order to facilitate the evacuation of the Muslims, and then, when it is apparent that their departure will spark off violent reprisals, Chand releases Jugga and Iqbal room jail in the hope that either Jugga, because of his love for Nooran, or Iqbal because of his communist sense of duty, Will prevent the locals from attacking the train to Pakistan.

For Hukum Chand the end justifies the means:

*The right and wrong of his instructions did not weigh too heavily on him... There were not many 'ought's' in his life. There were joist the 'is's'. He took life as it was. He did not want to recast it or rebel*
against it. There were processes of history to which human beings contributed willy-nilly. He believed that an individual's conscious effort should be directed to immediate ends like saving life when endangered, preserving the social structure and honouring its conventions. His/immediate problem was to save the Muslim lives. He would do that in any way he could.

With such a self-justifying train of thought Chand rightly calculates that Jugga may achieve his ends for him.

However, if Hukum Chand was nothing more than a dealer in duplicity, his, characterisation would be merely stereotyped or facile; he is both more limited and more sensitive than the above description reveals. Thus Singh indicates in an early conversation Chand has with the sub-inspector in which Chand admits 'God alone knows what I would have done to these Pakistanis if I were not a government servant' that the magistrate's code of duty provides the limited moral constancy he is capable of. On the other hand, he is morally exhausted by the general holocaust. The geckos swallowing moths on his bedroom ceiling can reconcile him to the inevitable destiny of dying. 'But a trainload of dead was too much for even Hukum Chand's fatalism. He could not square a
massacre with a philosophical belief in the inevitability of death'. He also has a personal interest in saving the Muslim train for he has become attached to a Muslim dancing girl who will be on it. All in all, however, Hukum Chand's motivation is morally impure. While his code of duty may at times contribute to the general good, it is too impersonal and expedient to be a satisfactory basis for moral action.

Iqbal's moral inadequacy is of a different kind. When he is released from jail he is fully aware of the planned massacre of the departing Muslims and that, on the basis of his ideological commitments, he has a moral obligation to try to stop the slaughter. However, his genuine feeling of impotence is strengthened by an intellectual despair which is no doubt also a reflection of Khushwant Singh's own disillusionment, particularly when Iqbal bitterly comments to himself:

*Where on earth except in India would a man's life depend on whether or not his foreskin had been removed? It would be laughable if it were not tragic.*

More lover, Iqbal's elaborate cynical rationalisation that Indian religion and philosophy are 'humbug', 'muddle-headedness masquerading as mysticism', may recall the Singh of the short stories who debunks
religiosity; but in Iqbal's care rationalisation serves not merely to justify the view that in 'a state of chaos self-preservation is the supreme duty', but also to hide a guilty feeling of moral defection. One would be far more inclined to sympathies with Iqbal's unenviable moral crisis, however, were it not for his immature desire to be thought a hero:

*If only he could get out to Delhi and to civilisation! He would report on his arrest; the party paper would front-page the news with his photograph: ANGLO-AMERICAN CAPITALIST CONSPIRACY TO CREATE CHAOS (lovely alliteration). COMRADE IQBAL IMPRISONED ON BORDER. It would all go to make him a hero.*

He can only contemplate self-immolation providing his heroics can be guaranteed public acclamation. Thus, while Jugga acts, Iqbal drinks himself into a sleep, akin to moral paralysis, with whisky and logic.

Iqbal, then, is a moral foil for Jugga and serves to put Jugga's real heroism in rue perspective. Jugga, who ironically felt it was his destiny to be a bad character, acts purely from love and therefore from simple moral instinct. In pure heroism duty, imagination, intellect or instinct are not at odds with morality. 'Thus Juggut Singh proves to be a
pure being whereas Hukum Chand and Iqbal are mere men of compromise. Rationalisation, the first step towards human being.

In order to appreciate the impact *Train to Pakistan* makes on the reader, and the greater potentialities of fictional presentation over strict reportage, it is interesting to compare the experience of Partition in Singh's novel with a straight-forward factual narrative for example, Balwan Singh Anand's *Cruel Interlude*, which is autobiographical and relates the tragic story of a refugee camp and of a convoy, the Sargodha Kafla, in transit to India. *Cruel Interlude* is a moving objective memorial to a dark moment in history. It has a coherent narrative structure, while a minimal reliance on novelistic procedures has contributed to the recreation of character, scene and dialogue. However, compared with Singh's fictional presentation of the same historical theme it is clear that whereas in *Cruel 'Interlude* the author's perspectives-moral and otherwise-emerge in uncoloured overt comment, in *Train to Pakistan* the perspectives of meaning are forcefully implicit in the dramatic action. A dramatic situation which has been carefully constructed continues to reverberate meanings when overt reportage and comment has long since ceased to do so. Thus Balwant Singh Anand truthfully comments:
The only redeeming feature was that, in this holocaust, many noble souls had given shelter and protection to persons belonging to other communities and saved them from the fury of their co-religionists at considerable personal risk to themselves.

Juggut Singh enacts all this and more.

In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Khushwant Singh is again preoccupied by the theme of the antithesis between violence and right moral conduct and the notion that the only redemptive feature of a situation which justifies pessimism, or cynicism, of outlook depends on a single demonstration of personal sacrifice, honesty and moral consistency. The implications of the novel's title are pessimistic. When Sabhrai asks her on, Sher, what India will gain with Independence his answer is lyrically optimistic: "Spring will come to our barren land once more... once more the nightingales will sing". Then, when Sabhrai dies she says, "I shall not hear the nightingales, my son", a remark is Singh's pessimistic pronouncement about the outcome of Independence. For, although the action of *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* takes place in Amritsar from April 1942 to April 1943, as in *Train to Pakistan* meaning in the novel is shaped by the author's retrospective disillusionment. 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 story opens on a note of violence that recalls the religious fanaticism, the hallucination of moral self-vindication, which caused and excused the Partition atrocities:

'There should be a baptism in blood. We have had enough of target practice.'

Sher and his companions are training to become anti-British terrorists. Sher has never taken life before but as leader must set an example. This results in the ritual murder of a crane, an act brimming with symbolic overtones. To the group the killing signifies their initiation, in the name of Sikh and country, as missionaries of violence. In terms of the novel's meaning, however, the symbolism is ironically barbarous: instead of shooting a bird of prey-the vulture mockingly beyond the range of Sher's gun he destroys a harmless trusting crane. That this represents wanton abuse of the sanctity of life principle is further amplified by the
crane's emblematic characteristics- holiness, filial devotion, prayerful devoutness, martyrdom.

From this act of slaughter the violent chain of events in which Sher is involved is psychologically precipitated. Jhimma Singh, a local Lambardar and police informer, hears the shooting and deduces the group's subversive intentions. Jhimma's subsequent blackmail of Sher eventually results in the murder of the Lambarder by Sher and his accomplices. Thus the lofty patriotic ideal of violence is reduced to a sordid murder which Sher commits to save his neck. He has been tested and found wanting: he has neither the strength nor the manhood to cope with the 'conflicting emotions of guilt and pride' he felt when he killed the crane and which the same night brought on an insomniac memory of 'the end of its struggle in an attitude of prayer'. Whatever incipient moral sense he has is destroyed by his desire to be what he is not. On the other hand, when Sher is arrested on suspicion of murder a painful physical humiliation causes him to weep for two days and shatters his noble image of himself. By the time his mother comes to see him he is ready to inform on his comrades. However, because of insufficient evidence, Buta Singh's relationship with the Deputy Commissioner, but more particularly
Sabhrai's strength of character, Sher is saved from betraying his friends and himself, and is released. What Sabhrai tells Sher—it came to her in prayer via the Guru is hardly what he wanted to hear, but is nevertheless his saving grace:

'He said that my son had done wrong. But if he named the people, who 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.'

However, before Sher is released Sabhrai becomes mortally ill. But all that concerns Sher is his sudden emergence as a political leader and hero. Full of nauseous bravado, bogus martyrdom and Fascist conceit, he hides all traces of his moral and physical cowardice. Meanwhile his mother is dying a death which is emblematic of the spiritual self-sacrifice she made to save her son, and which contrasts grimly with his co-called sacrifice for the Indian cause. Thus Sher's I symbolic killing of the good and diligent soul when he shoots the crane anticipates his later symbolic matricide. That Sher could become little better than an Indian version of a bloody tyrant like Dyer, the English general responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, is suggested by the fact that he has obsessively come to love his dog Dyer whom he had named after the most
hated person he could think of. That Sher Singh, given power, will betray
the Sikhs and their way of life is a foregone conclusion.

Khushwant Singh can accept, in the case of people like
Jhimma Singh, that Anyone who has had to; live the hard way, literally
fighting for survival at every step, doesn't, set much store by values like
truth, honesty, loyalty, or patriotism.
The people he really savages are the moral hypocrites who disguise under
these 'values' their dishonesty, disloyalty, mendacity and self-interest.
Also Singh is distrustful of the conversion of youth to the idea of political
revolution, and condemns the 'religion of the sword' philosophy as a
rationalisation of violence.

While the political implications of I Shall Not Hear the
Nightingale are cynical, the author's sociological observations though
marred by over-overt and Western-pitched presentation are arresting and
cutting in places. At worst Singh fails to integrate satisfactorily the
sociology and the narrative. Sex and violence in the Western novel, of
course, are often the product of formula writing. Obviously Khushwant
Singh believes that in the Indian novel they are aspects of life which raise
moral and sociological issues peculiar to Indian society. In Train to
Pakistan, as we have seen, violence signifies moral collapse and there is no suggestion that Singh is deviously indulging in sensationalism. But in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, Singh's presentation of the sexual theme, in contrast to his presentation of the violent theme in the earlier novel, suffers from inadequate unification of action, characterisation and commentary. Sher is revealed as a man attempting to impress his wife, Champak, and to compensate for his 'physical inadequacy' by becoming a public figure. Champak is little more than a sexual automation; she spends her days in autoerotic nakedness in the bath and before her bedroom mirror (often trantalising the boy servant) and the nights slanting the conversation with her husband to sexual topics ill' the hope that he will satisfy her before he goes to sleep. (Needless to say she has an affair with Sher's best friend). These scenes are intended to illustrate Khushwant Singh's sociological conentions that 'absence of privacy' in Indian life causes sex to be brutal or brief or inhibited and that consequential repressions seek violent or abnormal outlets:

    Unfulfilled sexual impulses result in an obsession with sex and in many perversions which result from frustration: sadism, masochism, and, most common of all, exhibitionism.
Singh's handling of the sexual theme is too mechanical and so he fails to achieve, in this regard, an artistic synthesis of experience and sociological theory. Other instance of overt sociological comment, to be found at the beginning of Chapters IV and IX, are short dissertations on the monsoon and resignation respectively.

Khushwant Singh's aim to see life in sociological and moral perspective, of course, is an important feature of his fiction. Remaining to be discussed, though, is the most central aspect of Singh's novels-namely the Sikh element. We do not fully appreciate Juggut Singh's stature, for instance, unless we are aware that Khushwant Singh conceives. Jugga (even if partly unconsciously) in the tradition of Sikh Guru martyrs. Just as Nanak, the poet prophet of Sikhism, is a symbol of harmony between the Hindu and Muslim communities, so Jugga's love for Nooran, and the salivation of the Muslims he accomplishes, symbolise the harmony which ought to exist between the Sikh and Muslim communities. In his extraordinary strength Jugga admirably lives up to the Sikh suffix Singh which means lion. He is indeed a virile embodiment of the Punjabi heroic archetype which Khushwant Singh defines in the following way in his book The Sikhs:
Chronic turbulence produced a restive temperament. At the same time the Punjabi became, conscious of being the most important defender of India. He developed a patriotism which was at once bitter towards the invader but benign, and often contemptuous towards his own countrymen, whose fate and fortune depended so much on his courage and fortitude.

The heroic motive that the boldest end for a Sikh was to die for his State, and the idea celebrated by Nanak that action (by contract with Hindu passivity) in a means to salvation, are implied in Jugga's self-sacrifice. Moreover, it is significant that Jugga went to the temple to receive the blessings of the Sikh religious leader before embarking on his mission. The ideal of self-sacrifice in Govind's verse.

\[
\text{With clasped hands this boon I crave,} \\
\text{When time it is to end my life} \\
\text{Let me fall in mighty strife.}
\]

is fulfilled in Jugga's death-in the fallible primitive as saint.

In the above respects, then, Jugga is a Sikh code hero, particularly in the way he proves and fulfils his manhood. Sher Singh, accordingly, is a code anti-hero in terms which explicitly relate to Sikh
moral concepts and value judgments. It is a pathetic irony that Sher surrounds himself with sym-bols of militant Sikhdom- 'emblems of strength' which serve merely to highlight his own incapacities. Sher's failure to achieve manhood in the true Sikh sense is continually alluded to. When he weeps after being kicked by the Anglo-Indian sergeant, the Indian head constable whispers: 'Be a man. Don't degrade yourself these white bastards'. Sher's moral cowardice is thrown into incriminating relief by his mother's spiritual strength which, significantly, was inspired by the picture of the last warrior Guru: 'There was a man'.

But, though I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale lacks a code hero, it has a code heroine in Sabhrai who manifestly 'has the dignity of an ancient people behind her'. The noble verses and spiritual ideals of the Adi Granth, scattered throughout the narrative, are intended to provide not merely insight into the Sikh way of life but also a perspective in the light of which the characters can be morally evaluated: Sabhrai sympathetically, the others ironically. Sabhrai's spiritual and passive qualities complement Jugga's physical and active attributes, and the two together represent a moral order which, in the face of violence and evil, is the article of faith with which Khushwant Singh has prevented his
disillusionment from perverting his observations of life. Moreover, various humanistic aspects of Sikh belief- for example, the emphasis on love and compassion in the *Granth*, and the Sikh aversion to excessive asceticism and renunciation-mellow Singh's otherwise tough outlook.

This toughness of attitude is, well complemented by Singh's tough style which, in many respects, is reminiscent of Hemingway. Singh's characteristic manner is staccato, concise, terse, spare, cinematic in keeping with the behaviouristic view of life as a complex of stimuli, and view of art as the rendering of this uncluttered by superimposed comment. Some of Singh's best stylistic effects depend upon vivid accuracy and immediacy of apprehension. Thus, for example, in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* obsequiousness is summed up in a concrete physical image: 'The manager was still rinsing his hands with invisible soap'. Also reminiscent of Hemingway is Singh's concept of the code hero in whom honour, courage and endurance are the primary virtues; a person who believes (consciously or unconsciously) that the way he conducts himself in his destruction matters greatly. Juggut Singh, then, is not merely a simple primitive: he is the 'outdoor' male who is also sensitive and is honest with himself and other people. Like so many Indians of the Forties,
he is one of Partition's Lost Generation, but unlike many he comes to heroic terms with reality. As a sexually virile child of violence living in the wound of time (his father was hanged), he is a striking Indian equivalent of one of Hemingway's heroic types.

Between writers, affinities of theme and style are often a matter of chance, and the possibility that Khushwant Singh was influenced by Hemingway remains an interesting speculation. In this matter of influence, however, we can be far more specific in the case of Balachandra Rajan's *The Dark Dancer*, a novel which is clearly the work of a particularly well-informed literary consciousness. Indeed, the reader would not be extravagant in detecting in *The Dark Dancer* digested remnants or stylistic echoes of Henry James, James Joyce, William Faulkner, Gerard Manley Hopkins, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot.

The greatness of Khushwant Singh's art lies in the excellent presentation of the theme of partition portrayed on a principle of contract between two different worlds—materialistic world and the spiritual world. Dacoity implies the materialistic world and love symbolizes spiritual world. In the materialistic world destruction and deprivation are dominant factors while in the spiritual world the holiness of heart's desire reign
supreme. In the novel Khushwant Singh artistically alternates the materialistic world with the world of spirit. Thus at the micro level, Mano Majra shows the multifarious and many sided reality of the country, but at the macro level the novel symbolizes the world itself. The massacres of Arabs in Palestine, of Jews in Nazi Germany and of Indians and Pakistanis are examples. In Train to Pakistan, the three scenes taking place almost simultaneously to the refrain of the railway engine's whistle-the Dacoity, the scene at the guest house and love making of Jugga and Nooran—all demonstrate the threefold mode of operation of the principle of contract inherent in Singh's art of fiction. Dacoity is contrasted with love and spiritual love is differentiated from physical passion.

While analyzing the novel, one question becomes quite intriguing: who is the protagonist of the novel? Whose role is important in the evacuation and life-saving of the Muslims? It is Hukum Chand who saves the lives of the Muslims by successfully evacuating them and by leasing Jugga to cut the rope for the safe passage of the train to Pakistan or is it Jugga who sacrificed himself for the sake of his Nooran? Perhaps it would 'not be appropriate to call any individual the protagonist because though an individual is important in the story, actually he is only a part of
the vast cosmos created by Khushwant Singh. Every individual is closely associated with the community, the society of Mano Majra. In fact, the very fate of the individual is linked with the society of the village. The collective destiny of communities dominates individual's fate. Any individual has his own will and his won role to play, but it is only for a time-being. He gradually becomes part of the whole. Thus although Juggut Singh play a very important role in the novel, he cannot be the protagonist of the novel or the true hero. Neither Hukum Chand has a fully dominant role to play in the imaginary world of Khushwant Singh. A close analysis reveals that it would be suitable to say that the chief protagonist of 'Train to Pakistan' is Mano Majra itself. For the central focus is on the village. The small world of personal relations is overcome by the cruel the Britishers were better than Indian successors because it gave them security and stability. Iqbal declared that Britishers were the 'biggest four-twenties'. East-West differences are well interwoven in the texture of the novel.

Overall analysis of this novel proves that it was widely acclaimed and praised as a great work of argon the partition theme which at the same time established Khushwant Singh as a major Indo-Anglian
novelist. But still there are a few critics who do not agree to acknowledgement him as great writer. C.Kulshrestha levels the charge against Khushwant Singh as novelist without vision. In order to project things as they are, the artist in the writer illuminates the facts. In his paper on Khushwant Singh's fiction, Kulshrestha observes that he works without any such 'equipment that enables a good artist to convey beyond the deterministic control of his milieu, a transcendence which invests the whole narrative with a sense of significance.' He further maintains that Khushwant Singh's "limitation primarily comes from an all too exclusive reliance on socio-materialistic interpretation of life of things as they are." He further holds the view that the novelist" considers the facts of ordinary existence incontrovertible and sees little possibility on the part of his characters to shape the oddities of their lives to the requirement of their respective private worlds." All the same, in spite of all these limitations that Khushwant attributes to Khushwant Singh's art of vision, he declares that the last-scene of 'Trane to Pakistan' is "undoubtedly the major tour de force of the novel", that "Jugga's act of love and sacrifice, silhouetted against the backdrop of hatred and violence, towers above
communal differences," and that it "lends a meaning to the general aimlessness of life in the Partition days." 

Even H.M. Williams asserts that the novel "has considerable graphic power, narrative interest and even historical importance as a passionate comment on recent Indian history" but the limitation according to him is that it "suffers from Singh's tendency towards over-coloured writing, violence and melodrama."

It is fact that 'Train to Pakistan' brought laurels and brickbats too, still we can say that the act of violence which was enacted after the independence has been penned in a simple, direct and descriptive tone using eligible words to depict the horror and sentiment and emotions of the characters. The sentiments are frank and sincere: in the process making some of his characters foul-mouthed. And once again C.Kulshrestha comments that the too literal rendering of Indian abuses and modes of address in English appears 'to be odd, like for-instance, 'cherisher of the poor' for Garibparvar and 'Go, the Government sends for you' for Jao, Sarkar tumhen bulate hain.

Still Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan' is constantly coloured by creative intelligence. He has been greatly successful in
presenting his experience in the form of celluloid, although it is only a fiction. The novel involves our mind, heart and sensibility simultaneously. 'Train to Pakistan' can be compared with Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment'. For Dostoevsky shows what a murky business the moral world really is. Like him Khushwant Singh too tries to show the complexities of the Indian society. Dostoevsky makes his criminals remain deeply sympathetic because he knows and makes us know why they are criminals and why they are still sympathetic likewise, we are told about Jugga that he is an outlaw, and in the end our total sympathy is with him. Juggut Singh's character portrayal reminds us of Fielding's 'Tom' in his novel 'Tom Jones'.

In an interview, Khushwant Singh said: "I really don't think it is a very good novel because I think it's a documentary, and I've given it a sugar-coating of characters and a story... I had no animosity against either the Muslims or the Pakistanis but I felt that I should do something to express that point of view. And I did that ....."11

Indeed 'Train to Pakistan' is an exact representation of Khushwant Singh's feelings. In one of the published article, he states that there was nothing to choose between what
the two communities were doing at the time of partition. "I felt ashamed of all of them.... I lost faith not only in humanity but also my faith in religion.... I really thought that whole country was coming to an end." 61 Further, he admits that looking back, he feels that the country started with great hopes and enthusiasm 'to show the world that the land of Gandhi committed to poverty can achieve greatness! Thus the safe passage of the train in 'Train to Pakistan' and the great sacrifice of unheroic-hero, Jugga, show the ray of light in the cruel world of darkness and despair.

References
4. Ibid.; p. 124
5. Ibid.; p. 124
6. Ibid.; p. 127
7. Ibid.; p. 127
8. Ibid.; p. 127
10. Ibid.; p. 76