CHAPTER THREE

THE DEGREE OF THE NARRATOR’S PERCEPTIBILITY

The degree of perceptibility of the narrator ranges from the maximum of covertness to the maximum of overtness. A covert narrator has a largely indistinct or indeterminate voice. He is an inconspicuous narrator, that is, one who fades into the background or camouflages himself, and goes into hiding. Hence a narrator who wishes to be covert avoids the first person pronoun, and also a loud or striking voice. On the other hand, when inclined to speak overtly, a heterodiegetic narrator can speak directly to the addressees, and he can liberally comment on the action, characters and storytelling. A few signs of overtness can be detected even in a text whose narrator is almost purely covert. Seymour Chatman gives a list of six factors to detect overtness in *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (220-52). The list of signs in the mounting order of perceptibility are: (1) Description of setting (2) Identification of characters (3) Temporal summary (4) Definition of characters (5) Reports of what characters did not think or say (6) Commentary. These six signs are slightly adapted to five factors to suit the present study: (1) Specific Setting (2) Character Confines (3) Schematic Compression (4) Unsaid Statements and (5) Discrete Discernment.
Specific Setting

"Specific Setting" is the term used to denote the description of the setting in the short stories and novels. The specification of the setting is helpful for a better understanding of the story. The narrator may give short or long description of the setting. In a play or a film the description can be shown directly, but in a narrative fiction it has to be indicated in the language. The language is that of the narrator. The specification of the setting discloses the presence of a vigilant narrator.

The specification of the setting in the short stories is vivid. In "The Memsahib of Mandla," as the Dysons survey the scene the overt narrator gives beautiful descriptions of the same: "The setting sun lit the house, the lawns, the flower beds, and the teak forest with its creepers in a haze of golden light. It was quiet and peaceful. The distant murmur of the stream in the valley emphasized the stillness of the evening" (60). Subsequently the narrator enters the house and surveys the inside: "The dining table was lit with candles. From the mantelpiece a hurricane lantern spread a sickly yellow light on the grey plaster walls discoloured by age and monsoon rains . . ." (60).

The overt narrator in "The Fawn" gives a description of the natural setting: "The moon was in its last quarter. The countryside was bathed in a soft silvery whiteness. A fine mist lay on the ground. Above the dark line of trees a faint glow of light had begun to appear."
We could just see the outlines of the village. It was an ungainly heap of mud huts and built on high ground.” And again, “The sun came up bright and hot on a vast expanse of undulating countryside. Patches of cultivation were jigsawed with rock and pampas grass. There were no trees or cover of any sort” (89-90). Then the narrator sees a rare sight as he moves on: “I walked on fascinated by the sight of the deer leaping over the corn and scrub. The fluffy plumes of pampas waved us on as they bent to the soft morning breeze” (90-91).

The open-minded narrator in “The Voice of God” begins the story with a description of the setting: “Bhamba Kalan and Bhamba Khurd are two little villages with hardly half a mile between them. As a matter of fact, the littering of mud huts, the tomb of Syed Bulhey Shah and the Mission school almost link Bhamba Kalan and Bhamba Khurd together . . .” (33). In this village, from the morning, men work in the fields and boys graze cattle, while women work at home grinding corn, cooking or spinning. After midday they all relax. The flourmill starts working. It has a diesel oil engine with an exhaust pipe rising above the village roofs. On top of the exhaust pipe the miller has fixed an earthen pot which turns the engine’s puffing into shrill blasts.

In “The Mark of Vishnu” the narrator specifies the setting when he saw Kala Nag: “The earth which had lain parched and dry under the withering heat of the summer sun was teeming with life. In little pools
frogs croaked. The muddy ground was littered with crawling worms, centipedes, and velvety ladybirds. Grass had begun to show and the banana leaves glistened bright and glossy green” (14-15). Another short but gripping description in the story is: “We left him standing speechless, staring at the departing bus” (15).

In “A Punjab Pastorale” the overt narrator gives a short description of his journey with his companion toward the humanitarian errand: “Some fifteen miles east of the city, there was a big canal which ran at right angles to the road. We crossed the bridge and turned off the metal road on to a cart-track” (41). The narrator’s eyes inclined to the beauty of nature describes on a Soorajpur summer afternoon:

Soorajpur was just visible through the thick cluster of keekar trees. All around it stretched a vast expanse of wheat fields. The corn was ripe and ready for harvesting. A soft breeze blew across the golden cornfields like ripples over a lake. Under the trees the cattle and the cowherds lay in deep slumber. . . . The sun went down and the shades of twilight gathered Soorajpur in their fold. The moon was in the first quarter and shed a soft, silky light in the narrow alleys. (42-44)

The narrator in “The Riot” specifies the town which lay etherized under the fresh spring twilight. The shops were closed and
house doors barred, the roads were deserted and the street lamps were lit dimly. The policemen with steel helmets on the heads and rifles slung behind their backs, made sounds with their hobnailed boots which broke the stillness of the town. Nature was calm in the narrator’s words:

The twilight sank into darkness. A crescent moon lit the quiet streets. A soft breeze blew bits of newspaper from the pavements on to the road and back again. It was cool and smelled of the freshness of spring. Some dogs emerged from a dark lane and gathered round a lamppost. A couple of policemen strolled past them smiling. . . .

The dogs ran down the street in the opposite direction and resumed their courtship at a safer distance. (49)

By the end of the story the town becomes busy and the reader understands it as the narrator sees it: The whole night and the whole day the fire burnt houses and people. Ram Jawaya’s home was burnt and he barely escaped with his life. Smoke rose from the ruins for many days. A busy town thus became a heap of charred masonry.

In “A Bride for the Sahib,” the overt narrator specifies the bedroom-setting in the rest house: Two beds were arranged side by side with no space between them. The pillows almost hugged each other. The sheets were sprinkled with the perfume of Khas fibre. They looked
as if they also waited for the consummation of the marriage. Even before that, the narrator stupefied by the beauty of the river describes the scenic setting:

The well-beaten fishermen’s footpath snaked its way through dense foliage of sal and flame of the forest, ending abruptly on the pebbly bank of the river. The Ganges was a magnificent sight; a broad and swift-moving current of clear, icy-blue water sparkling in the bright sun. . . . The shadows of the jungle lengthened across the stream and the cicadas began to call. (134-35)

Later the narrator gives a short but a mesmerizing description: “The sun was streaming through the verandah into the room” (139).

In “The 'Rape,” the overt narrator begins the story with a description of the setting. “Dalip Singh lay on his charpoy staring at the star-studded sky. It was hot and still. . . . The keekar trees stirred. A soft, cool breeze across the rooftops. It drove the mosquitoes away and dried the sweat” (53). The narrator, who neither forgets nature nor his surroundings, describes:

The eastern horizon turned grey. From the mango grove the koil’s piercing cries issued in a series of loud outbursts. The crows began to caw softly in the keekar trees. . . . The sun went down across a vast stretch of flat
land, and the evening star shone, close to a crescent moon. From the village he could hear the shouts of women at the well, of children at play – all mixed up with the barking of dogs and the bedlam of sparrows noisily setting down for the night (54-55).

The setting in the story "Death Comes to Daulat Ram" is specified thus: "It was not as hot as it can be in July. It had rained a little in the morning. The sky was still flecked with bulbous clouds. The humidity had dislocated the air-cooling plant" (77). He describes the walls of the house thus: "The Ixora creeper which had covered the sides with its lush green leaves and bright orange flowers had fallen at places baring large bald patches of anaemic brick and stone" (79).

The narrator in "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia" specifies the setting as the ship cleared the docks: "Hundreds of gulls followed in the wake, diving and screaming in the blue sky. They looked like bits of confetti at a wedding" (146). He adds: "The sea was a sheet of black without a ripple" (150).

In "India is a Strange Country" the overt narrator describes Mr Tyson bringing his dog for a walk: "His dachshund busied itself ferreting for rodents while her master waited patiently by smoking his pipe and twirling the leash in his hand" (166). He observes later, "The
only sounds were the tinkling of ice in the tumblers and the chirping of crickets” (167).

Likewise, the narrator in “The Portrait of A Lady” surveys the grandfather’s portrait: “He wore a big turban and loose-fitting clothes. His long white beard covered the best part of his chest and he looked at least a hundred years old” (29). The same overt narrator narrates his grandmother’s happiest moments: “While she sat in the verandah breaking the bread into little bits, hundreds of little birds collected round her creating a veritable bedlam of chirr uptings. Some came and parched on her legs, others on her shoulders. Some even sat on her head. She smiled but never shoo’d them away” (30).

In “Kusum” the narrator describes Kusum running into a young hawker with a basket of oranges on his head. She fell on him and rolled over on the road. Unfortunately her glasses were smashed. The bicycle was on the pavement. The hawker was just a bit shaken – not hurt. The narrator notes, “His basket of oranges was all right too” (47).

The setting specified by the narrator in “Karma” is a first-class waiting room in a railway station. In a first-class waiting room of the railway station Sir Mohan Lal looked at himself in a mirror. The mirror was obviously made in India because the red oxide at its back had come off at several places and long lines of translucent glass cut across its surface. Outside the waiting room Sir Mohan Lal’s luggage was
piled up near the wall. On a small grey steel trunk Lachmi, Lady Mohan Lal, sat chewing a betel leaf and fanning herself with a newspaper. Afterwards the narrator describes that the coolie flattened his turban to make a cushion, hoisted the steel truck on his head, and moved down the platform. There is another telling description about how Lady Lal opened the brass carrier and took out a bundle of cramped chapatties and some mango pickle. While she ate, the coolie sat opposite her on his haunches, drawing lines in the gravel with his finger. The narrator describes Lady Lal as the train approached:

Lady Lal hurriedly finished off her meal. She got up, still licking the stone of the pickled mango. She emitted a long, loud belch as she went to the public tap to rinse her mouth and wash her hands. After washing she dried her mouth and hands with the loose end of her sari, and walked back to her steel trunk, belching and thanking the gods for the favour of a filling meal. (9)

The narrator in “The Great Difference” gives the specific setting of a vast concourse of Delhi Moslems who came to see the Maulana board the boat train for Bombay. The Maulana was standing in the open door way of his second-class compartment acknowledging the various salams with his hands raised to the level of his shoulders. The narrator gives a description of the compartment as the train reaches
Mathura Railway Station where the platform was crowded with people carrying garlands: “First the luggage came in relays. Steel trunks, bedding, then several canisters and petrol tins. The canisters were full of earth and the petrol tins with water. Small labels pasted on the petrol tins stated in Devnagari script ‘Ganga jal’ (Ganges water)” (67). Later the overt narrator describes the trio including himself entering the great hall for the World Congress of Faiths: “The delegates rose, the visitors rose, and the applause was terrific. The Maulana salamed acknowledgments. The Swamiji folded his hands. I just grinned. There was more applause when we were introduced by our names, religion and nationality” (70-71).

Likewise the scene in “My Own My Native Land” begins: “On a sultry April afternoon, the Stratheden moved into Bombay harbour. In the dining room some three hundred Australians and Englishmen with half a dozen Indians were eating an early lunch and having their last alcoholic beverages before entering the three-mile limit” (206).

In “Black Jasmine” the description is short but telling: “The voice was creamy: unmistakably American Negro. ‘Martha!’ shouted Bannerjee enthusiastically into the mouthpiece. . . . He put the palm of his hand on the mouthpiece, spoke to his wife, and resumed the dialogue. . . . Bannerjee put down the receiver” (110). There is a description of Martha’s room: “It was a small room with a bed, an arm
chair and a table. On the table was silver-framed photograph of Martha’s family . . . On the floor were heaped different kinds of American magazines. Clothes were strewn on the bed” (114). Later, the narrator describes Martha coming in the elevators. He watched the elevators come down, disgorge groups of American tourists and go up for more tourists. They came one with only one passenger. It could not take any more. “Filling the entire cage was the form of Martha” (116).

In the story “The Bottom-Pinch” the unfailing eye of the narrator describes the crowded bit of the bazaar. “There are many roadside book-stalls. The pavements are lined with all variety of smuggled goods: French perfumes, cosmetics and chiffons; Japanese tape-recorders, cameras and transistors playing at full blast. And inevitably a large number of women-shoppers”(120).

The overt narrator in “Man, How the Government of India Run!” gives a short description of the setting. “Sunder Singh hurled this question across the stenographers’ room to his two colleagues sitting opposite him. . . . He (Sambamurthy) blew the dust in the keyboard of his typewriter . . .” (94). The narrator notes as the tea and coffee arrived, “The three gentlemen left their respective tables and typewriters and put their chairs in the centre of the room; a fourth was put in their midst for the tray” (96).
In “The Morning After the Night Before,” the narrator’s “magic carpet mind” transports him from his bed on a Sunday morning to the pleasant world of the evening before, “with its cool green lawns surrounded by trees lit up with coloured lights; with its soft music wafted in gentle gusts of summer breeze; with its lovely women looking lovelier under the influence of alcohol” (180).

In the story “Posthumous,” the narrator is in bed with a slight fever. His imagination becomes wild and naughty and he wonders what would happen if his temperature had suddenly shot up. Perhaps he would die and it would be really hard on his friends. He then wonders what the papers would have to say about his death and what his friends’ reactions would be to the news of his death. The story occurs in the mindset of the narrator. In “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar,” the narrator describes a sea-side resort: “It was almost like a city in itself, with a dozen lounges, dining rooms, beauty parlours, chemists, booksellers and lots of chromium and glass. It had many lifts which worked all hours of the day and night” (178).

The narrator in “The Man With a Clear Conscience” describes the footpath along which he walks; “On one side were the fashionable shops of Chowringhee; on the other, the great maidan, the only open space in the teeming metropolis. The road and the maidan were
deserted. It was as still in the glare of the middle of the day as it is after midnight” (105).

In the story “When Sikh Meets Sikh” the narrator describes the Maple Leaf Garden Auditorium, which was packed with nearly twenty thousand Canadian men, women and children: “A tremendous applause went up as the tall, lanky Pole walked down the gangway. He bowed to his admirers and entered the ring, followed by scores of autograph hunters. A minute later came the Indian, in a yellow turban and green dressing gown. The crowd hissed and booed” (74).

The overt narrator who cannot but depict the beauty of nature, in “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” describes a bright May morning: “A blue sky with a few fleeting clouds ambling along with a gentle breeze” (200). He gives another description as the Minister goes up to the dais to give the inaugural address: “Arc lights were switched on; newsreel cameras whirred; camera bulbs flashed. There was a renewed burst of applause” (201).

The narrator in “A Love Affair in London” gives hints that Kamini is “flying above the clouds which stretched beneath her like a vast sea of fluffy cotton” (184). Later the narrator describes the court scene where Kamini had been taken: “A damp odour of sweat, paper and ink pervaded the court-room. It was dark except for two circles of
light shed by lamps on the magistrate's table, and on the clerk's who sat on one side fumbling with files of yellow paper" (185).

The narrator in "The Interview" drops hints like: "There was a knock on the door... Pam said hello and collapsed into the leather chair... Towers sat down on my desk..." (25). Likewise the narrator in "The Insurance Agent" gives an idea of a dinner party, the host, the guests and above all a stranger who is the focus. The narrator in "The Butterfly" describes a picture, which Charles had been in love with: "The goddess stood in celestial white on a large pink lotus with the snow-clad mountains behind her. In the corners in the foreground, a couple of elephants raised their trunk in salutation" (19).

"The Red Tie" begins with the description of the setting: Chishti leaned back resting his elbow on the mantelpiece above the fireplace. His legs were stretched wide, people stood around him in a semi-circle, some admiring, some amused, some envious. Later the narrator describes: "The train left the city and passed through a number of noisy stations where villagers clamoured to get on the train... His own compartment came to a halt opposite a very crowded third class of the other train. Eager faces leant out to inspect the upper class with its leather seats, its cane chairs, its three fans..." (204).

The narrator in "The Convert" also specifies the setting: "Mr Sethi continued staring at the cards he held in his left hand like a
Japanese fan. With his right hand he beat time on his knee to the tune he was humming. A thin wisp of smoke rose from the pipe in his mouth” (209). The narrator later adds the scene in which Miss Moore visits Sarla; “Sarla Sethi got up from her chair, shook hands with the visitor and shouted to her bearer to bring another chair. The grey-haired woman covered her face with both her hands. Sarla Sethi glanced nervously at her visitor”(211). The Pakistani Consul’s room is described thus: “The Karakul cap hung on a rack behind his chair. On his table were two large silver-framed photographs of the two Pakistanis . . . There was also a miniature green-and-white flag with the crescent-moon emblem”(216). In “Of Friendship and Beyond” Kaamna Prasad comments on Singh thus: “Despite his advantaging years, he has maintained his curiosity and his sense of awe and wonder at life, specially nature. He is keenly aware of nature’s moods, the change of seasons and the rhythm of life around him” (Prasad 86).

*Train to Pakistan*

The overt narrator in the novel *Train to Pakistan* specifies the setting of the village, Mano Majra, which is the place of action of the story. Mano Majra, a tiny place, has only three brick buildings, one of which is the home of the moneylender, Lala Ram Lal. The other two are the Sikh temple and the mosque. The three brick buildings enclose a triangular common with a large peepul tree in the middle. The rest of
the village is a cluster of flat-roofed mud huts and low-walled courtyards. There are narrow lanes that radiate from the centre. The lanes dwindle into footpaths and get lost in the surrounding fields. At the western end of the village there is a pond ringed round by keekar trees. The narrator notes that although Mano Majra is said to be on the banks of the Sutlej River it is actually half a mile away from it. About a mile north of Mano Majra, the Sutlej is spanned by a magnificent railroad bridge. On the eastern end the embankment extends all the way to the village railroad station.

The narrator's description of Mano Majra railway station explices that the bridge has only one track and the station has several sidings where less important trains can wait, to make way for the more important. Shopkeepers and hawkers have grown up to form 'a colony around the station to supply travellers with food, betel leaves, cigarettes, tea, biscuits and sweet meats. This gives the station an appearance of constant activity. The staff assumes an exaggerated sense of importance. The stationmaster himself sells tickets through the pigeon hole in his office, collects them at the exit beside the door, and sends and receives messages over the telegraph ticker on the table. When there are people to notice him he comes out on the platform and waves a green flag for trains, which do not stop. Before daybreak, the narrator says, the mail train rushes through on its way to Lahore, and as it approaches the bridge, the
driver invariably blows two long blasts of the whistle. In an instant, all Mano Majra comes awake. Crows begin to caw in the keekar trees. Bats fly back in long silent relays and begin to quarrel for their perches in the peepul. By 10.30 the men are in the fields. Women are busy with their daily chores. Children are out grazing cattle by the river.

The narrator specifies the setting of the room which was allotted to Iqbal in the gurdwara. Its only furniture was a charpoy lying in the middle. There was a large coloured calendar on one wall. It had a picture of the Guru on horseback with a hawk on one hand. Alongside the calendar were nails to hang clothes. The narrator also gives a short description of the police station. In the reporting room just above the table was an old framed picture of King George VI with a placard stating in Urdu, ‘Bribery is a crime.’ On another wall was pasted a coloured portrait of Gandhi torn from a calendar. Beneath it was a motto written in English ‘Honesty is the best policy.’ Other portraits in the room were those of absconders, bad characters and missing persons (62).

The narrator observes Nature’s sympathy for the village. As the villagers expected something terrible to happen, the narrator says: The sun sank behind the bridge, lighting the white clouds which had appeared in the sky with hues of russet, copper and orange. Then shades of gray blended with the glow as evening gave way to twilight
and twilight sank into darkness. The overt narrator describes a night later:

It was a gloomy night. The breeze that had swept away the clouds blew them back again. At first they came in fleecy strands of white. The moon wiped them off its face. Then they came in large billows, blotted out the moonlight and turned the sky a dull gray. The moon fought its way through, and occasionally, patches of the plain sparkled like silver. Later, clouds came in monstrous black formations and spread across the sky. Then, without any lightning or thunder, it began to rain.

(107)

*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*

In the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* the narrator takes time and space to specify the setting on various occasions. In order to talk about Sher Singh’s marksmanship the narrator describes a tree which was affected by their target practice: “Its bark was torn; in its centre was a deep, yellow gash oozing a mixture of gum and sap” (165). Again when the party reaches the edge of the swamp the narrator says: “There were no birds on the water. On the other side was a peepul tree on which there was a flock of white egrets. Right on the top was a king vulture with its bald red head hunched between its black
sho```shoulders. Beneath the tree were bitterns wading in the mud” (167). Later the narrator describes the sky with an admirable phrase: “. . . the black sky studded with stars” (173).

When the Simla party spends their time in an old rest house in the midst of pine trees the narrator describes it. They lie in the sun, breathing the warm, resinous odour of the pines and listening to the breeze soughing through the trees. There were a few white clouds. Lammergeyers circled lazily, high above in the deep blue of the sky. In the valley below a barbet started calling in its agitated, breathless way. Then a woman started to sing in a plaintive voice, which seemed to fill the valley to the brim.

The narrator describes the Mashobra bazaar and its surroundings: “The twilight was rapidly sinking into the night. Across a range of hills, the lights of Simla sparkled in stellar profusion all over Jacko Hill. Shopkeepers were putting up the shutters of their shops; smoke oozed through the crevices of the wooden planks smelling of wood and spices and tobacco”(253). The narrator describes the monsoon in the Himalayas:

Thunder explodes like firecrackers and lightning illumines the landscape as if flares were being dropped from the heavens. The sky is no longer a mass of shapeless gray; it is an expanse of aquamarine full of
bulbous white clouds which change their shapes and
colours as they tumble away. The mists lift as if waved
away by a magic wand, unfolding rain-washed scenery of
snowcapped mountains on one side and infinity of brown
plains intersecting a thousand golden streams on the
other. (310)

The narrator also describes the scene which Sabhrai and Beena
watch as they travel. The black nothingness outside the windowpane
became a dimly lit landscape beyond continuous waves of telegraph
wires, which rose and fell from pole to pole. The sun came up over the
flat land and lit up the yellow squares of mustard, the solid greens of
sugarcane, and blocks of mud villages. As they came to the suburbs of
the city, mud huts gave way to brick buildings and open fields to evil
smelling ditches where men sat on their haunches, shamelessly baring
their bottoms and relieving themselves.

The overt narrator says that in Sher Singh’s room there was a
mantelpiece and above it a shield with the Sikh sabres crossed behind it.
On his desk was a porcelain bust of the Maratha warrior savage. On the
wall facing him a colour print of Govind Singh showing the Guru on
horseback. His falcon with its wings outspread on his hand. On the other
wall was a panel of photographs pinned on a wooden board. They showed
him with the Student Volunteer Corps. The one in the centre was of him
in uniform taking the salute at a march-past. Another was found receiving Mahatma Gandhi when he had come to visit his college. Two more were found shaking hands with V.I.P.s. Likewise the narrator continues describing Sabhrai’s room: “Sabhrai’s room was warm and dark. A fire smouldered in the chimney. The windows were shut and there was an oppressive odour of mint and eucalyptus. Under the table-lamp beside her bed were an assortment of bottles of medicine, a thermometer, and a tumbler of water” (336).

The narrator describes Peer Sahib’s place also: “There were only a few people sitting under the shade of the jujube tree which was alive with the twittering of sparrows. The tomb was draped in a green cloth on which were strewn rose petals and copper coins. The courtyard was littered with paper and crumpled plates made of leaves sewn together” (273). The narrator describes Simla house as Sabhrai sees it: “The sitting room had not been swept; the dinner table was littered with the remains of the morning’s breakfast . . . The next room was obviously her daughter-in-law’s: on the table beside the bed was a photograph of her son” (267-68).

Delhi

In Delhi the reader gets a picture of Delhi and its people. The narrator’s description says that it is a gangrenous accretion of noisy bazaars and mean-looking hovels growing round a few tumbledown
forts and mosques along a dead river with its narrow, winding lanes and the stench of raw sewage. They spit phlegm and bloody betel-juice everywhere; they urinate and defecate whenever and wherever the urge overtakes them, they are loud-mouthed, express familiarity with incestuous abuse and scratch their privates while they talk. There is another description of the city by the narrator Nihal Singh:

... there was a river as broad as the Sutlej. It went behind the grey wall of the city. This wall was very high and very long. It ran from the river bank right across to the sunset side as far as I could see and was lost behind clusters of trees. It had many bastions and many gates. Behind this grey wall I could see another red wall of a big fort. And domes and minarets and tops of houses. (627)

The narrator in one of the Bhagmati episodes describes the Delhi railway station, which has not changed much after a gap of 50 years. The platforms bear the same numbers they did fifty years ago. The same line of coolies in dark-red shirts and dirty white dhotis, bearing metal brassards with identification numbers on their arms, line up on their haunches along the platform. The same narrator describes the picturesque Ridge Road, on either side of which there were bushes of sesbania, vasicka and camel thorn; huge boulders of red sandstone were strewn
about everywhere. There were flowering trees, flame, coral and the flamboyant gulmohar.

Another narrator, Musaddi Lal gives a detailed description of Qutub Minar: "What a sight it was! The great Sultan on his couch flanked by his Abyssinian bodyguards: black djinns with drawn swords! Hundreds of bearded Turkish generals! On one side of the throne-couch stood five ulema dressed in fine silks. Facing them on the other side was a young man . . ." (418). Alice Aldwell, the only lady narrator in the novel says that Urdu Bazaar had some bookstores and an assortment of shops, butchers, dyers, kite-makers, sweetmeat-vendors, betel leaf sellers and behind these shops were the mansions of the rich nawabs.

Nadir Shah, one of the narrators gives a description of a suburb called Shalimar. He talks about the greenery of massive banyan trees whose branches hung down to the earth. There were orchards of a fruit called the mango, much relished by the natives. At the time, they were in flower barely visible clusters of pale green which attracted a pestilence of flies, bees and spiders. The mango tree was the favourite abode of a black bird of the size of a crow called the koel which screamed incessantly all through the day. Besides mangoes, the orchards had a large number of guavas which were again not in season.
The narrator in the episode, “Lady J. H. T.” gives a description of the nature as they both watch it: “We watch the sky turn a luminescent grey. Flocks of parakeets streak across squawking as they flash by. It is peacock time. They cry lustily from the valley of the date-palms. Two perched on the roof of the rest house return their calls. Then the twilight hush” (390). The narrator in one of the Bhagmati episodes focuses on the evening time when the sun’s rays lose their sting. The sun itself becomes a large, orange balloon. Lines of crows flap their wings towards the city and flocks of parakeets fly across the grey sky. From Tughlakabad village a million sparrows rise, roar over the tops of keekar trees and then settle down on them in a bedlam of twitters. The orange sun goes down in a haze of dust. Village lads urge their buffaloes to get out of the pond. Their shouts mingle with the chirruping of the sparrows and the forlorn barking of dogs. Then an eerie silence descends on the ancient ruins.

The Company of Women

The overt narrator in The Company of Women describes the scene at the India Gate: “In the east rose the dark-grey walls of Purana Qila, built by Humayun, the second Mughal Emperor. Blocking the lower half of the view was the sports stadium built on the orders of a half-crazy Vicereine, Lady Willingdon, to perpetuate the name of her dynasty” (19). The narrator’s descriptions continues: “The days had begun to shorten; daylight faded away sooner than in the summer
months. By half past six the brief twilight had given way to the dark. The evening star twinkled in the darkening sky beside a half moon" (44). Later the narrator notes, "As we were leaving the ghat, a half-moon rose in a clear blue sky. And beside it the evening star, Hesperus, sacred to lovers. The part moon and the star were reflected in the calm river" (130). The narrator gives a beautiful picture of Shivalik Hills and the sight from the hills: The village bazaar had a few shops and huts of farmers. This commanded a panoramic view of the plains below. The narrator and company perched on top of the world looking down on the hills and valleys spread beneath their feet. As the monsoon was almost over, the forests of pine, fir, deodar and rhododendrons were washed away. The mountains were of different shades of green and blue. Here and there mists nestled in the hollows of hillsides like gossamer caught between branches of trees. The setting sun lit up white clouds on the western horizon in different colours of red, pink and gold. The moon, still young, wandered into the deep throbbing silence, till the cicadas took over. The narrator wandered around for a while till the twilight faded into night and the pale stars twinkled in the vast sky.

Standing on the bridge, the narrator describes the Ganga. To the north was a range of hills covered with thick forests. To the east, low hillocks. To the south, the plains through which the river ran. To the
west was a mountain wall overlooking the city. And under the bridge flowed a very fast-moving river. Along the banks was an endless stretch of temples of no architectural value. Well-fed, good-looking cows roamed along the ghats looking for pilgrims offering them bananas. Every few yards there were conclaves of ash-smeared sadhus sitting around smouldering fires and smoking chillums. There was nothing very sacred about the riverfront except the clear blue water of the Ganga sparkling in the sunshine. Specifying setting is Khushwant Singh’s forte as P. S. Kasture certifies in “Trapped in Sexuality: An analysis of The Company of Women”: “In Company Khushwant Singh seems to stick only to the surface level, giving a factual account of each encounter with all possible details. It seems that he revels in the very act of description” (Dhawan 217). The specification of the setting is the least proof for the narrator’s presence in the novel. Nonetheless Khushwant Singh’s novels have many descriptive passages showing the presence of a narrator. It is an undeniable fact that the narrator is overt in all the four novels of Khushwant Singh.

Character Confines

“Character Confines” is the term improvised for the present study to refer to two signs of overtness listed by Seymour Chatman – “Identification of Characters” and “Definition of Characters” (220-52). Both these signs of overtness are taken together, and the characters are
identified and defined side by side. The narrator’s role of identifying the characters, as well as defining them is an important aspect in the study of a narrative, because the gaps left by the novelist have to be filled in. The narratee tries to do it but in many significant places there is the need for a narrator to serve the narratee in grasping the narration in its totality. This is exactly what the narrator does. To prescribe the confines of a character, the narrator needs to have prior knowledge of the characters. The narrator also suggests a generalization or summing up in an authoritative manner. Thus confines of characterization is the prerogative of the narrator as much as the novelist’s.

In the short story “Posthumous,” the narrator Sardar Khushwant Singh identifies his young wife, two infant children, his close friends and a large number of admirers who mourn his supposed loss. First of all the narrator identifies his lawyer friend Qadir, who is not an early riser. To quote: “As a matter of fact, hardly anyone stirs in the house before 9 a.m. But Qadir is a great one for principles and he insists that the paper must be available early in the morning even if it is not looked at” (2). The narrator’s knowledge of Qadir is extensive: “He had worked very late at night. He believed in sleep anyhow. . . . Qadir sipped the hot water between intervals of cigarette smoking. He had to do this to make his bowels work” (2). And like the icing on a cake the narrator says: “He always won the arguments” (2).
The narrator identifies his another friend, Khosla. An early riser, he rises early because that is the only time he has to himself. During the day he works in the courts. In the evening he plays tennis – and then he spends some time fussing with his wife and children. He has a large number of visitors as he is very popular and enjoys popularity. But being ambitious Khosla fancied himself as a clever boy. In his early youth his hair had begun to fall off and uncovered a large bald forehead. He looked upon it as nature’s confirmation of his opinions about himself. He considered himself a genius and so he worked hard. He won scholarships and rounded off his academic career by topping the list in the Civil Service Examination, the stiffest competitive examination in the country. For some years he lived the life of a contented bureaucrat, working and writing side by side. In order to write well he took to reading. He amassed a large library and regularly spent some hours in it before going to work.

The narrator identifies two other friends too. One was a tall, slim writer who looked like an artist. Funerals were distasteful to him and so he smoked incessantly to make a cigarette smoke-screen between him and the rest of the world. The other friend, according to the narrator was a short, slight man with wavy hair and a hawkish expression. His approach to everything was volcano-like and coldly Marxist and so sentiment found no place in him. Deaths were
unimportant events for him, whereas the cause of the death was a matter of concern. The narrator identifies yet another friend who came on a bicycle. Dark and flabby, he carried several books on the carrier and had the appearance of a scholarly serious-minded professor. He had great respect for the dead and was particular to express it. Fond of platitudes, he uttered them with freshness and vigour. The narrator does not forget to add that the professor was a kind man.

In the story, “Karma” the omniscient narrator identifies and defines clearly the two principal characters, Sir Mohan Lal and Lachmi. Lachmi was fond of gossip and but had no one to talk to at home. Her husband never had any time to spare for her. She lived in the upper storey of the house and he on the ground floor. He did not like her poor illiterate relatives hanging about his bungalow and so they never came. He came up to her occasionally at night and stayed for a few minutes. He just ordered her about in anglicized Hindustani and she obeyed passively. The narrator confides in the reader that these nocturnal visits had, however, borne no fruit. The narrator notes, that Sir Mohan was eminently well-bred and Oxford-educated. He wanted everything ‘tickety boo’ and orderly. During his five years abroad, Sir Mohan had acquired the manners and attitudes of the upper classes. If at all he spoke Hindustani, it was properly anglicized. He was fond of conversation, and like a cultured Englishman he could talk on almost
any subject – books, politics, people. The narrator adds that he never showed any sign of eagerness to talk to the English as most Indians did. Nor was he loud, aggressive and opinionated like the Indians. He went about his business with an expressionless matter-of-factness.

The narrator in “The Butterfly” introduces Charles as “Romesh Chandra.” The narrator knows that Charles came to the University from a mission school in Simla, with a batch of Anglo-Indians. Charles’ appearance and dress was a complete challenge to any suggestion of his being a Romesh Chandra, says the narrator. There was the invariable ‘Yes mun’ or ‘No Mun’ or ‘Say Mun’ before each sentence of Charles. There were ‘Chips’ for rupees and ‘flicks’ for cinemas and the college principal was ‘old Prinny’ for him. Again the narrator notes that Charles was true to his loyalties.

The narrator in the story “The Insurance Agent,” identifies the main character Mr Swami as a new comer to the city. But he was seen everywhere – at public receptions, private parties, political meetings, religious meetings, social gatherings, at weddings, christenings and funerals. He was always the centre of attraction. The narrator describes him: “He occasionally dropped in on people’s offices – just dropped in while passing. . . . He could talk on practically every subject under the sun. He was also a bit of a philosopher” (87). Subsequently, the
narrator adds that Swami was a sensitive type who wanted to share the sorrows of other people.

The ever-watchful narrator in “Man, How the Government of India Run!” defines the three main characters together: “What appeared to be an entangled cobweb of red-tape to the outside world was playing cat’s-cradle to these three. They knew the rules and regulations of bureaucracy by heart; understood the importance of notings, minutes and memoranda . . .” (94-95). Identifying Sambamurthy, the narrator notes: “Sambamurthy was full of English quotations and clichés” and adds that he was not the sporting kind (96). The narrator identifies Sunder Singh as the most energetic of the three and a person who is too modest. The narrator identifies Ghosh Babu as a person who is from Bengal, and one who reads a great deal and was politically inclined.

The narrator, who observes men and their motives, clearly identifies the characters in the story “The Voice of God.” Sardar Sahib Ganda Singh, Honorary Magistrate is a big landowner who lived in and owned the neighbouring village, Ganda Singh Wala. The narrator also adds that the Sahib had never been to Bhamba before. He had helped the Government and had been granted lands, titles and Honorary Magistracy. He was a well-known patron of thugs. His men robbed with impunity and shared the proceeds with the police. His liquor stills worked in broad daylight, and even excise staff were entertained to
many varieties of liquor fermented in dung heaps. Ganda Singh’s hospitality was lavish. The narrator adds that Ganda Singh was the most hated man in the district. The narrator identifies the next principal character, Seth Sukhtankar. A well-known Nationalist leader who had been elected to the Punjab Assembly unopposed, Seth was also a millionaire, owning a chain of cloth mills. He had made his fortune during the movement. In the five years of the war the Seth’s wealth had gone into astronomical figures. He had no sympathy with the government, so he bought and sold in the black market with a clear conscience. He was passionately anti-British. The narrator next defines Baba Ram Singh who had been arrested several times in peasant movements and had spent the best part of his life in jail. All his property had been confiscated and he was homeless. Yet all the homes of the countryside were open to him. People touched his feet wherever he went and mothers brought their children to be blessed by him. He was popularly known as Babaji, because of his age and piety.

The thoughtful narrator in the story “The Mark of Vishnu” identifies Gunga Ram clearly: He, like all good Hindus, believed in the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, the creator, preserver and destroyer. Of these he was most devoted to Vishnu. Every morning he smeared his forehead with a V mark in sandal wood paste to honour the deity. Although a Brahmin, he was illiterate and full of superstition. To
him all life was sacred, even if it was of a serpent or scorpion or centipede. Whenever he saw one he quickly shoved it away before the others killed it. The more dangerous the animal, the more devoted Gunga Ram was to its existence.

In "The Man With a Clear Conscience" the narrator certifies himself as a man with a clear conscience. In his own words, he is one of the types of good men who understand evil. In his own opinion he is neither intolerant nor the sort of puritan who goes about passing judgement on people. He does not judge but he knows well that God's ways are infinite. He also adds that he is shrewd and his nights are never disturbed because he sleeps the sleep of the just. He also admits that he is a Sikh who is neither big nor burly nor brave. At the same time he is not that timid. Later the narrator identifies him as a habitual thief and a menace to the society.

In the story, "When Sikh Meets Sikh" the narrator describes the principal character, Narinjan Singh as a farmer in the Punjab, a domestic servant in Shanghai, a fruit picker in San Francisco, an accountant in Vancouver and a wrestler in Toronto. He was apparently quite a figure in the Canadian wrestling world. He was known as Nanjo, the Villain, and promises to be an interesting character.

The two principal characters in the story "Death Comes to Daulat Ram" are Daulat Ram and his son Ranga. The narrator does not
define them elaborately. Ranga, he says, was in the habit of going to the restaurant everyday. And the narrator stresses that, “Ranga was a regular” who had strong views on begging (77). The narrator is aware of more details regarding Daulat Ram. He had trouble with his gall bladder, and had to take medicine and rest for a couple of weeks when he had acute stomach pain. He told his family members that the source of all disease was the food one ate. He used to say with the conviction of a penitent that man kills himself with the food he eats.

The overt narrator in the story “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” defines the major character, Mr Singh very briefly: “Mr Singh had been in the country only a couple of weeks but he knew a great deal about its people and had examined the problem of race prejudice minutely” (175). The narrator is also aware of Mr Singh’s genius for repeating old jokes and emphasizing platitudes with an air of originality. In between the narration, the narrator adds that Mr Singh loved the word ‘decent.’ The narrator announces that Mr Singh had become a bit of palmist and in fact he had all the esoteric learning of the orient with its glamorous facade.

In “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture,” the narrator notes that the Director, Langford, had become famous for brevity and commonsense. In between the narration, he adds that Langford was not
the one to lend an ear to irresponsible gossip. The narrator also notes that the Director addresses Smith by his Christian name, "John" (194).

In the story "A Love Affair in London," the narrator's knowledge of Kamini, is revealed and the narrator knows that her family had suffered at the hands of the English. Her father and brothers had been imprisoned during the passive resistance movements and had been beaten in jail. She herself had done a spell of seven days' detention while she was still in her first year at the University. She had never met an Englishman, unless her encounter with the Magistrate, Robert Smith, could be described as a meeting.

In the story "Black Jasmine," Martha and Bannerjee are first shown as young and then as old people after thirty years. About the young Martha and Bannørjee, the narrator notes that they were the only coloured students in the group. About Martha, the narrator says, "Martha attracted attention from the very first day. She sat away from the others. She was taller than most of the men, coloured and uncommonly attractive" (111).

The narrator in the story "Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle" defines the Kanjooses: "They are a most thoughtful couple. They drop in to call when we are having our pre-dinner drink... And then since it is dinner time, it doesn't take very much to over-rule Mrs Kanjoos's
protest that ‘everything is ready at home’ and get her to ring up her servant to say that they will be dining out” (169).

The narrator in the story, “The Convert,” defines the couple, Mrs and Mr Sethi. The narrator says that Mr Sethi would not apologize for his day dreaming at bridge game. He would not even realize that he had done anything wrong. On the contrary, he would sulk as if it was he who had been wronged. She loathed the man very much. She wanted to divorce him and finish the business one for all. But divorce was not easy. There was the problem of money and there were the children. Most of all, Sethi’s sister, who had opposed the marriage would feel vindicated, if it came to a break. It had taken Sarla many years to free her husband from the influence of his sister. She had put the woman in her place and put a stop to the comings and goings between the families. And now Sarla was able to take her in her stride because she no longer cared about what the woman said or did.

In “The Riot” the narrator identifies one of the principal characters Rani, a pariah dog. She was a thin specimen, typical of the pariahs of the town. Her white coat showed patches of raw flesh. Her dried-up udders hung loosely from her ribs. Her tail was always tucked between her hind legs. She moved about in fear and servility. The narrator also notes that she had many rivals and year after year, with advent of spring, Rani’s fancy lightly turned to thoughts of Moti and
she sauntered across to Ramzan’s stall. The narrator’s knowledge of the other dog, Moti is also revealed; “Moti was a cross between a Newfoundland and a spaniel. His shaggy coat and sullen look were Ramzan’s pride” (49).

In “The Rape” the narrator shows his knowledge of Dalip Singh’s uncle who is Dalip’s father’s brother and murderer: “His womenfolk found time to sit and gossip into the late hours of the night while his own mother scrubbed the pots and pans with ash and gathered cow dung for fuel. . . . His black-eyed daughter Bindo went about doing nothing and showing off her Japanese silks” (53).

In “A Bride for the Sahib” the narrator defines Mr Sen: “His father had not been a particularly an orthodox Hindu and had sent him to an Anglo-Indian school . . . Thereafter he had gone to Balliol. He had entered the Administrative Service . . . His inability to speak an Indian language hadn’t proved a handicap” (129). According to the narrator Sen’s main contact with his country was his mother. He was her only child so they both did the best they could for each other.

The narrator in “Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia” clearly shows his prior knowledge of the ship: “. . . it wasn’t really her maiden voyage. As a British ship she had carried cargo across many seas. She had been bought by an Indian firm of shippers and converted into a cargo-cum-passenger vessel” (144). Later the narrator identifies Dr
Chakkan Lal, the laughingstock in the story: "Then there was a dapper little man, barely five feet high, wearing thick horn-rimmed glasses, darting forward and backward in the crowd, introducing himself and handing out his visiting card" (145).

The narrator in "The Portrait of A Lady" says that his grandmother, like everybody's grandmother, was an old woman. From the time he knew her, that is, for the past twenty years she had been wrinkled. The narrator adds: "She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a crisscross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere. . . . She hobbled about the house in spotless white with one hand resting on her waist to balance her stoop and the other telling the beads of her rosary" (29).

Likewise the narrator in "A Punjab Pastorale" gives information of Peter Hansen, his companion as a young American from Illinois. His father was a Swede who had settled in the United States and become successful as a stockbroker. Like the best of American youth, Peter received good schooling and university education, and in due course he joined his father's firm. The narrator adds:

His spirit of adventure felt cramped in horizons clogged with sky-scrapers. He yearned for the wide-open spaces and wanted to serve . . . Hansen was a missionary, but with a difference. It was reform he was after . . . He did
not believe in preaching or proselytizing but in reform by example and personal contact. . . . he was a bit of Socialist himself. (40)

The narrator in “Kusum” describes Kusum Kumari as a good girl with a capital G. It was not an effort for Kusum to be good. Although she was only eighteen she looked twenty-eight, and her manner was that of a middle-aged woman, in her forties. Short and somewhat fat she had a dark oval face, spotted with darker small pox marks. On her stubby nose, the narrator was a pair of gold-rimmed glasses whose thick lenses magnified her eyes. Her hair was short and sparse. The narrator’s knowledge also includes facts like: “She worked hard and had a string of first classes to her credit. Her glasses and her figure bore testimony to the many hours spent over books. Kusum was no trouble to her parents. . . . She had no engagements. She had no distractions and she did not distract anybody” (46).

The narrator in “The Great Difference,” defines Haji Hafiz Maulana as a man above all his titles, and as the pride of the faithful. Short and plump, he had a closely trimmed beard which made his oval face, glossy black. “He wore glasses the thickness of whose lenses bore testimony to his prodigious erudition” (66). The narrator further describes the Maulana as a man of learning, undoubtedly. The Maulana was also known for his righteous living. He himself observed prayer
and the traditions of the Hadith and exhorted others to follow the right path. He checked many Moslems from going astray and he could do it with confidence because he was a gifted orator.

Likewise his knowledge of the other character is also extensive: He describes Shri Swami Vasheshvra as symbolic of all that the Hindu religion stood for. Born in Brindaban, the haunt of the romantic Sri Krishna, he frequented temples and spent many hours learning Sanskrit and the Vedas by heart. The narrator defines Swami Nanda thus: “From his early childhood Vasheshvra Nanda was of a meditative bent of mind” (67).

The narrator in “The Red Tie” clearly depicts his familiarity with the major character in the story: “Wherever Chishti went conventions had to be overlooked. . . . Whenever life came, there were no moments of silence . . . At the slightest sign of an approaching silence one heard Chishti’s voice . . .”(202). Later the narrator says that stories of his miraculous seductions were enviously narrated by men and hungrily listened to by women.

The short stories are attractive and true to life because of the narrator’s role. Khushwant Singh has willingly given a major share of the narration to the narrator. In Kaamna Prasad’s Khushwant Singh: An Icon of Our Age, V S Naipul comments in the foreward about Khushwant Singh’s vision: “His vision was many-sided and rounded.
He always had a feeling for what was glamorous, photogenic and exciting."

\textit{Train to Pakistan}

The novels of Khushwant Singh have a great scope for characterization. In \textit{Train to Pakistan}, the narrator’s prior knowledge of certain characters is revealed as the narration progresses. The narrator’s knowledge of Juggut Singh is more comprehensive than what is revealed by him or the characters around him:

He had been arrested before. He had spent quite as much time in jail as at home. His association with the police was an inheritance. Register number ten at the police station, which gave the record of the activities of the bad characters of the locality, had carried his father Alam Singh’s name while he lived. Alam Singh had been convicted of dacoity with murder, and hanged. Juggut Singh’s mother had to mortgage all their land to pay lawyers. . . . His name was entered in register number ten and he was officially declared a man of bad character.

(54)

The narrator’s knowledge of Hukum Chand is also extensive. The narrator notes that death had always been an obsession with Hukum Chand. As a child, he had seen his aunt die, and he had spent
many hours at a cremation ground near the university. Though he got over the immediate fear of death, its terror was always present in his mind. It made him kind, charitable, tolerant, and cheerful in adversity. He had taken the loss of his children with phlegmatic resignation and had borne with an illiterate unattractive wife without complaint. All this came from his belief that the only absolute truth was death. The rest – love, ambition, pride, and values of all kinds – was to be taken with a pinch of salt. He did so with a clear conscience. He was not corrupt. Occasionally, he attended parties, arranged for singing and dancing and sometimes sex – but he was not immoral. “What did it really matter in the end?” That was the core of Hukum Chand’s philosophy of life, and he lived well (77). The narrator defines Hukum Chand’s character, more clearly saying that he was not in the habit of losing his temper or of being rude. Though he was a magistrate, the decisions of right and wrong did not weigh on him heavily. He was aware that he was not a missionary and so he had to find answers to day-to-day problems. He was not bothered about an unknown absolute standard. “There were not many ‘oughts’ in his life. There were just the ‘is’s. He took life as it was. He did not want to recast it or rebel against it” (87). The narrator adds that Hukum Chand believed that an individual’s conscious thought should be to save life when it is in danger, to preserve the social structure and to honour conventions.
Ironically the narrator adds: "He was known for never saying a thing straight; he considered it stupid. To him the art of diplomacy was to state a simple thing in an involved manner" (136).

The narrator's portrayal of Banta Singh, the headman who was only a collector of revenue – a lumbardar – is revealing. The post had been in his family for several generations. He did not own any more land than the others. A modest hard-working peasant like the rest of his fellow villagers, he had no airs about him. He had an official status because the government officials and the police dealt with him. Nobody called him by his real name. He was known as "O Lambardara."

The narrator describes Imam Baksh as a weaver. Though weavers are considered cuckolds and effeminate and cowardly, and the butt of ridicule in the Punjab, Imam Baksha commanded respect. It is true that a series of tragedies in his family had made him an object of pity and then of affection. His wife and only son had died within a few days of each other. His eyes which had never been very good, suddenly became worse and he could not work his looms any more. He was thus reduced to beggary, with a baby girl, Nooran, to look after. He began living in the mosque and teaching Muslim children the Quran. He wrote out verses from the Quran for the village folk to wear as charms or for the sick to swallow as medicine. Small offerings of flour,
vegetables, food, and cast off clothes kept him and his daughter alive. He had an amazing fund of anecdotes and proverbs which the peasants loved to hear. The cataract in his eyes gave a misty philosophical look. Despite his sixty years, he held himself erect. All this gave his bearing a dignity and an aura of righteousness. He was known to the villagers not as Imam Baksh or the mullah but a _chacha_ or ‘Uncle’ (70).

The narrator defines Meet Singh as one who inspired no affection and respect. He was only a peasant who had taken to religion as an escape from work. He lived on the little land of his own, which he leased out, and also the offerings at the temple. He had no wife or children. In spite of the fact that his appearance was against him Meet Singh was a man of peace. He knew no scripture, he had no art of conversation and yet envy had never poisoned his affection for Imam Baksh.

_I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale_

The narrator in _I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale_ identifies Buta Singh as one loyal to the British Raj. Like his ancestors loyalty was a matter of faith. Like them, he mentioned the English King or queen in his evening prayer. The narrator describes Buta Singh’s way of getting down to business straightaway and the humility which comes from a man of his status. In recent years Buta Singh had begun to think in terms of bargaining with the British. The narrator adds, “Buta Singh’s
zeal in collecting war funds was a popular subject of discussion in magisterial circles. Words like ‘freedom,’ ‘our leaders’ were new in his vocabulary” (232). The narrator convinces the reader that for Buta Singh creating an impression of loyalty was more important than loyalty itself.

The narrator portrays Buta Singh’s son, Sher Singh as one who had never killed anything before. He had turned cold even at the sight of a headless chicken spouting blood. He hated the cook for cutting off the fowl’s head, and had given up eating meat for some months. The narrator notes that he was neither religious nor superstitious. In fact he was non-committal on political topics when talking to his father. The narrator also knows that Sher Singh did not like the after-dinner conversation turning to sex. The narrator notes that being the only son, Sher Singh had been pampered in his childhood and allowed to have his own way in his adolescence. Despite this, the two things he hankered after were affection and esteem. The one he sought through popularity amongst friends and the other through leadership. The applause that came from his family and his colleagues was offset by his early marriage. The narrator defines the character of Sher Singh thus:

To impress Champak became an obsession. The form it took was to hold out visions of a successful political career by which he would take her to dizzy heights of
eminence along with him. The more his physical inadequacy gnawed his insides, the more daring he became in his political activity... Sher Singh came to believe in his own future and his power. (317)

The narrator also notes that 'pin-drop silence,' was a favourite among his list of clichés. 'Packed to capacity,' 'sacrifice our all,' 'eschew all differences' were some of the others which figured frequently in his conversation (200).

The narrator defines Champak as one who added 'my God' or 'by God' whenever she wanted to emphasize something. She also had the habit of turning the conversation to herself. It was either some compliment paid to her, a pass made at her in the street or someone looking at her lecherously.

The narrator was very close to Buta Singh's family. The narrator says the family considered studies sacred enough to excuse the members from going to the temple. The cinema was still associated vaguely with sin. The only time the family went to the pictures was to see the life of some saint or other or some story with a religious theme. The narrator identifies Dyer, the dog at the Buta Singh's: "He was always the first to greet members of the family returning home and had to be restrained from putting his paws on their shoulders and licking their faces" (314). The narrator defines Madan and Beena
simultaneously – He was bold and easy with strangers, while she was
tongue-tied and shy. His obsession for games was matched by her
aversion to any form of sport. He avoided books, while she spent all
her time with them. He had barely scraped through the exams he had
passed. She had won the highest scholarship for girls in the University.
The combination of the athletic achievement of Madan and the
academic distinction of Beena and the looks of both had made them the
most sought after couple in the University circles.

The narrator identifies Shunno, the maidservant at the Buta
Singhs, as a peasant woman who had not changed her way of living in
the city. Although she was fat and nearly fifty, she could work fourteen
hours a day without any sign of fatigue. Shunno was the despair of the
male servants employed there. Since she could run the house single-
handed, she soon reduced them from being fellow servants to her own
personal slaves. The narrator continues the definition saying that she
loved to talk, like most women of her age and frustrations. Her sexual
instincts had been sublimated in hard work, religion and gossip. She
spared no one, not even members of the family for which she had
worked for nearly thirty years. Shunno was a God-fearing woman. She
said her prayers, went to the gurudwara, to the Hindu temples and
bathed in the river every Tuesday morning. Even Islam was not alien to
her. She visited tombs of Muslim fakirs left offerings with their
guardians, and consulted them on her imaginary ailments. Shunno’s only grievance with life was that no one took her seriously. The narrator adds later, “Shunno did not believe in Western-trained doctors and their bitter medicines. She had faith in vaids and hakims brought up on ancient Indian and Arabic systems. She had more faith in the prescriptions of holy men who combined spiritual ministrations with medicine” (272).

The narrator’s preknowledge of Wazir Chand’s home is also clear. The narrator notes that Wazir Chand’s home was very much like Buta Singh’s except that it was Hindu instead of Sikh and not so concerned with religion and ritual. In fact, the only evidence of religion in the house was a large colour print of Krishna on the mantelpiece of the sitting room. Wazir Chand’s wife occasionally put a garland of flowers round it and touched the base of its frame as a mark of respect. There is a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi kept discreetly away in the bedroom. The mantle piece of every room in the house displayed an assortment of silver trophies which Madan had won.

The narrator identifies Wazir Chand thus: “He had a way of talking to people which made them feel small or stupid” (184). The narrator identifies Wazir Chand’s son Madan as a strong man of the university. He had won his colours in many games and had played cricket for his province. His performance against a visiting English
side had made him a local hero. Madan was the backbone of Sher’s group. The narrator adds that the real ‘God’ in Wazir Chand’s home was the son, Madan Lal. He was a tall, handsome boy in his early twenties. Being the only son, he had been married as soon as he had finished school and had become a father in his second year at college. The narrator adds that the only thing in common between the tall and broad Madan and his slim, small sister Sita was their good looks.

The narrator identifies John Taylor as an Englishman and a member of the Indian Civil Service. These two qualifications led to his being made the Deputy Commissioner and the virtual ruler of an area larger than two English counties, with a population of nearly a million natives. The narrator notes that Taylor did not belong to the class which had produced the builders of the empire. He was the son of a schoolmaster. His wife, Joyce had been a nurse. He had met her at the hospital where he had been sent for a medical check-up before joining the service. From the very start, they found themselves isolated from the English community. They found the snobbery of the senior English officials a little irksome. They did not share their views about the role of Englishmen in India. They spent their after-office hours together — going out riding, taking long walks, or just being at home. They disliked people invading the privacy of their home. He kept his
subordinates waiting, who tried to be familiar. At times he was just
abrupt, sometimes even rude in giving a reply.

The narrator identifies Jhimma Singh whose only failure in life
was the inability of any one of his three wives to produce a child. After
the first had remained barren for five years, he married her niece. After
that a young widow. Both of them let him down. So his fabulous
property was there to give away or squander. This prosperity hurt his
fellow villagers, particularly his relations. Although everyone feared
him and some even sided with him in his lawsuits, not one of them
loved him.

The narrator's knowledge of Peer Sahib is also extensive: Peer
Sahib was a young man under thirty years of age. He had inherited the
guardianship of the tomb of an illustrious ancestor. Like his
predecessors, Peer Sahib spent most of the day praying and giving
spiritual guidance to the men and women who flocked to the tomb. He
did not know much about medicine, but since most of the people who
came to consult him were more sick in mind than in body, he was
about to minister to their needs. The narrator adds that with the vows
of celibacy to which he was committed, sex got little chance of natural
expression in him. He had to be satisfied with his own devices or
occasionally take liberties with little boys sent by their mothers to learn
the scripture.
Delhi

The narrator in the Bhagmati episodes in the novel *Delhi* identifies the character Bhagmati as “the worst-dressed whore in Delhi,” “the plainest-looking whore in Delhi” and “the coarsest whore in Delhi” (392). “She is dark and has pock-marks on her face. She is short and squat; her teeth are uneven and yellowed as a result of chewing tobacco and smoking beedis. Her clothes are loud, her voice louder; her speech bawdy and her manners worse” (365). The narrator adds that Bhagmati is not a woman like other women. She believes in the wisdom of clichés. When she is in the nagging mood, it is best to say nothing. The narrator also knows that sometimes even his silence provokes her to go on and on. Bhagmati’s great passion other than himself is mangoes.

The narrator identifies Budh Singh, the night watchman as a crazy fellow who never created trouble. The narrator in one of the “Bhagmati” episodes identifies Carlyle’s niece Miss Georgine: “She was very young, gawky, freckled, pimpled, snub-nosed – but also large-bosomed and even larger-arsed. . . . she spoke very fast and dropped the g’s at the end of most words . . . she interspersed her speech with noises like unh, shucks, crikey – and was constantly sticking out her red tongue” (468).

The narrator, Musaddi Lal, identifies Ghiasuddin Balban as one whose very name made people urinate with fear. He had a terrible temper
and was known to execute anyone who raised his eyes to look at him. He kept two huge Negroes beside him to hack off the heads of people he sentenced to death. The narrator in the episode “The Builders” identifies Lord Reading, the Viceroy:

He had no picchha (breading) being the son of a fruit seller and a deck-hand on a ship. Being a Jew, he had brains. Also being a Jew he wanted to prove he was more British than the English. . . . Reading was that kind of man: he only befriended Indian politicians to know their minds. However, he couldn’t do much to stem the Congress tide. (687)

*The Company of Women*

In *The Company of Women* the narrator identifies the’ lady professor: “She was petite and reasonably attractive: skin the colour of old ivory, dark brown hair, broad forehead with a bindi, diamonds in her ear lobes, a diamond nosepin, soft, sensuous lips with a dab of fresh lipstick, a pearl necklace which went well with her white sari” (32). Later the narrator identifies Jessica Browne: “Tall, slender and chocolate-brown. A big bosom, narrow hips, protruding buttocks and long athletic legs. She sprinted about the court like a panther” (91). The narrator identifies Yasmeen too: “Like many Kashmiri women Yasmeen was as fair-skinned as Caucasian Women. She had nut brown
hair, large gazelle eyes and was fighting a losing battle with fat. She had a double chin, her arms had sagging flesh and there were tyres developing about her waist” (100). Later the narrator identifies Susanthika: “High cheek bones, thin dark lips, small breasts and a smaller behind. . . . She was highly intelligent and animated” (257). The narrator defines Sonu to a certain extent: “Sonu was quick-tempered, possessive and wanted attention all the time. She was jealous, though she herself had no love to give him” (5). The narrator continues later, “She was . . . a bitter woman, incapable of happiness and determined to make him unhappy” (6). The narrator defines his father: “Father was a God-fearing and self-effacing man who never raised his voice against anyone” (185).

Schematic Compression

Compression is used as a narrative technique to indicate the passage of time. As a narratee reads through a narrative, many questions trigger up in his mind about what happened between one action and another. Obviously, it is not possible to account for a large number of years. Naturally there is the need of a narrator who has to use the technique of compression to present a well thought out schema. Schematic compression is the condensation of a plot to show the main features or relationships without going into details.
In the short story “Posthumous,” the narrator gives elaborate descriptions of the reactions of some of his friends towards his supposed death. But he sums up the rest: “The Khoslas did not come. Nor did many others for whose sorrow at my demise I had already felt sorrowful” (4). Again, the narrator sums up the retrieval of his friends who accompanied him. Some of his lawyers had left when they reached the High Court. His author-friend had branched off to the coffee house, still smoking. The Professor at the local college gave him a last longing, lingering look and went quickly to his classroom. The remaining six or seven disappeared into the District Courts.

The narrator in “Karma” compresses the conversation between the bearer and Lachmi thus: “She had been talking to the bearer until Sir Mohan had summoned him inside” (8). Likewise the narrator sums up Mohan Lal’s life in England; “Those five years of grey bags and gowns, of sports blazers and mixed doubles, of dinners at the Inns of Court and nights with Piccadilly prostitutes. Five years of a crowded glorious life” (10). The narrator in “The Mark of Vishnu” sums up; “The teacher pretended to be indifferent and set us some problems to work on” (16). The overt narrator in “The Butterfly” sums up an incident in Charles’ life on a cold December evening when he happened to be out, walking along the canal bank: “He was out of cash and had been angling for a safe bet to get some. Ultimately he
announced that he would jump into the canal with his clothes on if we
gave him five rupees. Charles won the bet and returned to the hostel
wet and shivering with cold, but triumphantly flourishing a five-rupee
note.” (19)

In “A Punjab Pastorale” the narrator compresses Hansen’s
meeting with the people; “Every one who saw him came around to
greet him. He knew the names of all of them. In the traditional fashion,
he shook them by both hands and put his hands across his heart” (42).
The narrator later sums up; “Hansen’s enquiries about him (Moola
Singh) evinced no answer from the crowd walking along with us
towards his courtyard” (43).

The narrator in “Kusum” tries to condense the change in Kusum
after her nineteenth birthday: “Kusum hardly ever laughed. After her
nineteenth birthday, she seldom smiled. She became more earnest,
grimly earnest. She knew it made her uglier, but she could not help it”
(47). In “The Rape” the overt narrator rounds up the situations in both
Dalip’s and his uncle’s home. The narrator notes that womenfolk at his
uncle found time to sit and gossip into the late hours of the night. But
the narrator does not elaborate on them. Later the narrator sums up the
past: “Bindo was always willing – even begging. Dalip was
condescending, even indifferent” (54).
There is a fine example of compression in the story, “The Memsahib of Mandla”: “He (Dyson) lit his pipe and kept up a continuous conversation till it was time to go to bed” (62). The narrator does not elaborate on the topic of conversation. Likewise the narrator in “The Great Difference” sums up: “So the Maulana preached Islam to Mlle. Dupont, while I heard the Swamiji propound the philosophy of the Vedas at the Congress. Then the Swamiji preached Vedanta to Mlle. Dupont, while I heard the Maulana expound the gospel of the Prophet” (71). In “When Sikh Meets Sikh” the narrator condenses his meeting with the wrestler; “I introduced myself and shook several sweaty hands. Nanjo’s vocabulary of English words came to an end with ‘Jeezez it’s good to see you’” (76). The narrator in “The Insurance Agent” sums up the actions of ‘Mr Swami: “On regaining his composure he was soon busy comforting members of the bereaved family. He talked philosophically of the transitory nature of life and how everyone had to die one day” (87).

The overt narrator in “Man, How the Government of India Run!” summarizes the activities of the three stenographers: “The three friends discussed the matrimonial conventions of their respective provinces and their own eligibility if given another chance . . . This was a part of their daily routine in office – and perhaps the most absorbing part of it for they never missed it. The friendly banter
continued till it was mid-day” (98). About the match also the narrator sums up: “The match was closely contested and came to an impasse at two games all. There was a short break and then the fifth and final came to decide the fate of the two most vital ministries of the Government of India” (100).

The narrator in “The Bottom-Pincher” sums up his experience of trying to contact Mr Pesi Lalkaka over the phone. He saw Pesi Lalkaka return to the office by different routes. So he tried to get him on the phone in his office. He never picked it up himself. His secretary tried to communicate to him. But he did not want to talk to him. Then he tried Pesi Lalkaka at his home. There also it was his servant, wife or daughter who took the call. Every time they asked him who he was, the narrator replied that he would ring later. Then the narrator comments: “It never occurred to me that the fellow might get Bombay Telephones to keep a check on his incoming calls” (124).

In “A Bride for the Sahib” the overt narrator elaborates on the couple’s honeymoon trip, but he condenses their return journey into just one sentence. “Half an hour later they were on the road to Delhi; a little before sunset, Sen drove into his portico” (140-41). The narrator once again sums up: “Days went by – and then weeks. Kalyani came over with her mother a couple of times to fetch her things. She came when her husband was in the office and only met her mother-in-law”
(140). Again the narrator sums up how Sen treats his old friends: "One round followed another till it was time for the bar to close" (142).

In "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia" the overt narrator uses the technique of compression to indicate the relationship between the couple: "The Professor ignored all the witticisms about his size and the bawdy jokes about a monkey in love with a she-camel. The blonde also cultivated a sense of protection towards her diminutive admirer and turned down other people's invitations" (148).

In "Mr Singh and the Colour Bar" the narrator condenses the story thus: "Mr Singh had been in the country only a couple of weeks but he knew a great deal about its people and had examined the problem of race prejudice minutely" (175). Without going into much détail, the narrator sums up; "It was resolved that a school to teach European etiquette should be set up in Bombay . . ." (175).

The overt narrator in "India is a Strange Country" uses the technique of summary: "The years passed without Tyson taking his home leave" (166). In the story, "A Love Affair in London" the narrator sums up; "After a month of agonizing indecision about her scholarship, followed by difficulties in getting her passport, visas, foreign exchange and income-tax clearance and health certificates, there she was actually flying into London!" (185). The narrator also compresses the life of Kamini in England into a single sentence, "Her
life fell quickly into a routine of penny-half-penny bus rides to the underground station, strap-hanging in an over-crowded train for half an hour, another bus ride, lectures, lunches in the cafeteria, more lectures, and once more the bus rides and strap-hanging back home . . .” (187).

The narrator rounds up the story, “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” thus: “It (the ‘rats’ file) had been started almost two years ago – in the time of the French director. And in between there had been an Italian. Both had written long notes on the subject . . .” (189). Later, the narrator sums up: “Langford opened the conference with a short address stressing the importance of a cultural rapprochement between the East and the West. He invited the delegates’ comments on the proposals drawn up by the secretariat which had been printed and circulated earlier” (193). Likewise the narrator in “The Red’Tie” sums up Chishti’s character thus: “Stories of his miraculous seductions were enviously narrated by men and hungrily listened to by women. How he had just held a woman’s hand under the dinner table and started an affair; how he had enticed rich men’s wives, bureaucrats’ wives . . .” (203).

The overt narrator in “My Own My Native Land” uses the same summarizing technique: “He went over to the inspector and an argument with much gesticulation followed. Apparently the inspector triumphed” (207). The narrator in “The Convert” sums up Sarla
Sethi’s activities thus: “Mrs Sethi took the accounts of yesterday’s shopping from her cook, and gave him money to buy vegetables . . . She told the ayah to take the children to the park. She took a cane chair out into the garden. She put her head back, shut her eyes and tried to empty her mind of all thoughts” (211). The narrator condenses again: “Mrs Moore came to see her and the two discussed the tenets of the Love Group. The books and the talk were largely an elaboration of the theory that hate destroys, while love creates. Three days later Sarla Sethi put her signature on the form of membership” (214).

In “Black Jasmine” the narrator properly condenses into a short paragraph Martha’s visit to Bannerjee’s home: “She handed out gifts: her own lipstick to Bannerjee’s daughter, a ball point to the son, a compact to Mrs Bannerjee . . . The evening passed off well” (116). In the story “The Riot,” the narrator sums up the effect of fire: “All night and all the next day the fires burnt – and houses fell and people were killed. Ram Jawaya’s home was burnt and he barely escaped with his life. For several days smoke rose from the ruins. What had once been a busy town was a heap of charred masonry” (51).

The overt narrator in “Death Comes to Daulat Ram” sums up the overeating of Daulat Ram and the consequent illness: “Then the inevitable attack with its agonizing bellyache and loud groaning to drown his wife’s ‘You will not listen to me.’ This was followed by the
routine of nurses, doctors, morphia injections, telegrams to relations . . ." (79). In "The Man With a Clear Conscience" the narrator condenses his experience: "I took the second whisky and the third and the fourth and signed a chit for Rs 16. I had no appetite for dinner and went to my air conditioned bed room" (108).

The overt narrator in "The Portrait of A Lady" uses the method of summary: "As the years rolled by we saw less of each other. For some time she continued to wake me up and get me ready for school. When I came back she would ask me what the teacher had taught me. I would tell her English words and little things of western science and learning, . . ." (30).

In "The Voice of God" the narrator uses the same technique of summarizing: "Bhambā like all neighbouring villages went to the polls. Smelly, dirty Sikh peasants tumbled out of Seth Sukhtankar's lorries drunk with Ganda Singh's liquor. But they knew who to vote for. Thousands went in and being illiterate, named their candidate — and walked back home" (39). The narrator in "Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle" rounds up: "While they sipped their Scotch, the Kanjooses told me of the many parties they had at their house and of the many people who had got drunk on their whisky" (170).

Thus in all these stories the overt narrator's presence is an unquestionable fact.
Train to Pakistan

Schematic compression is sparingly used by the narrator in *Train to Pakistan*. The narrator sums up Iqbal’s one week imprisonment in his cell: “His only companions were the piles of newspapers and magazines. . . . He had to lie in stifling heat listening to night noises – snores, occasional gunshots, and then more snoring” (92). Again the narrator condenses: “On the first two evenings, some constables had taken Jugga out of his cell. They brought him back after an hour. . . . his repartee with the policeman became more vulgar and more familiar than before” (92).

In the beginning of the chapter “Mano Majra” the narrator sums up: “People barricaded their doors and many stayed up all night talking in whispers. Everyone felt his neighbour’s hand against him, and thought of finding friends and allies. . . . The whole village was on the roofs looking toward the station” (103). The novel being “a grim and pathetic tale of individuals and communities caught in the swirl of partition” the narrator condenses matters for the sake of the reader, says Harish Raizada in “Train to Pakistan: A Study in Crisis of Values” (Dhawan 128). The people of Mano Majra “. . . went from house to house – talking, crying, swearing love and friendship, assuring each other that this would soon be over” (116). Likewise the narrator sums up Malli’s doings after he had agreed to take care of the Muslim property: “Malli’s gang and the
refugees then unyoked the bullocks, looted the carts, and drove the cows and buffaloes away” (120).

The narrator compresses events in Mano Majra: “Many could not sleep at all. Others slept fitfully and woke up with startled cries if a neighbour’s leg or arm so much as touched them. Even the ones who snored with apparent abandon dreamed and relived the scenes of the day” (127). Warren French’s comment is quoted in “An Interview with Khushwant Singh” by Malashri Lal and Vijay K. Sharma, “Singh is a brilliant, sardonic observer of a world undergoing convulsive changes; and his novels provide a unique insight into one of the major political catastrophies of this century” (Dhawan 26).

_I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale_

In _I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale_ the overt narrator makes use of condensation very often. For example, the conversation between Beena and Lila: Beena picked up the child once more and hurried to Lila’s room. Lila explained that she was not really ill; the feeling of nausea came on only in the mornings. When Beena persisted in her inquiries, Lila patted the back of her hand and said she would understand better when she was married. Likewise, the narrator sums up the conversation of Madan and Champak: “They sat and talked of many things: Sher Singh’s election, the growing friendship between the families, the hot weather, films and film stars” (219).
The narrator sums up Sher’s phone call to Mr Taylor: “When Sher Singh rang up the Deputy Commissioner’s office, Taylor himself answered the telephone. Sher Singh’s English crumbled to a breathless stutter punctuated with many ‘sirs.’ Taylor brusquely ordered him to come on Tuesday which was the visitors’ day” (240). When the narrator depicts elaborately what goes on between Peer Sahib and Shunno, the narrator compresses other women’s dealings with Peer Sahib thus: “The women asked what they wanted, got the Peer Sahib’s blessings, and departed with their children and men folk” (274). After giving a detailed picture of the first visit the narrator sums up: “Shunno repeated the visit several times with several shining silver rupees. Her temper improved: she stopped nagging or beating Mundoo. Instead she brought him sweets from the bazaar” (277). The narrator once again condenses the passage of time: “When the exam results were announced, there was an exchange of telegrams. Both the children had passed: Sita as expected in the first division and Beena in the third. From then on there was little communication between the family” (278).

The narrator summarizes the conversation of the characters once again: “All that afternoon and evening and the next day, till it was time to take the taxi, they talked nothing but politics” (280). The narrator, instead of elaborating on the news, sums up: “At the breakfast table he
read out the headlines to his father. They were discussing the consequences of the action taken by the Government when an orderly came . . .” (285). The situation when Sabhrai asks Buta Singh what happened to Sher, the narrator sums up the answer: “Sabhrai regained her composure and asked her husband to explain what had happened. Buta Singh did so in a bitter voice, mincing no words. He ended on a note of self-pity” (315).

Delhi

In Delhi, one of the narrators, Musaddi Lal, sums up his past years: “The years drifted by. Despite the thousands of conjugations in which our hips met to pump ecstasy into each other and the Jamna-flood of semen which I poured into her – none of these efforts bore more fruit in Ram Dulari’s womb” (436).

The narrator, Alice Aldwell, sums up what went on between her and Mr Atkins, her husband’s boss, when he invited the narrator to dine with him: “I knew what he wanted. And I knew what I wanted. After supper we got down to business: I gave him a real nice time” (591). The same narrator sums up later:

We toasted her Majesty the Queen on the lawns of his mansion beyond Kashmiri Gate. That evening we had a few bachelors join us round our Christmas tree. Everyone got very drunk: Alec was quite blotto and had to be put
to bed. The men flirted with me – mind you nothing very serious! Just a lot of Christmassy kissin’ and cuddlin.’

(594)

The same narrator sums up the effect of brandy upon the people: “The brandy loosened their tongues. One recited a poem of Saadi. Mirza Abdullah replied with lines from some court poets called Zauq and Ghalib. The third fellow quoted lines composed by the old king Bahadur Shah. Then they talked of the glories of Mughal rule . . .” (609).

The narrator, Ram Rakha, in the episode “The Dispossessed” sums up the train journey of the family: “In the train my father talked of the days when he and this Sikh had played together on the sand dunes around Hadali. The closer we got to Delhi, the more my father’s childhood memories came back to him” (699). In “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of Delhi,” the critic, Rajendra Prasad notes that while unravelling the saga of Delhi and its people, Khushwant Singh makes his best to remain as a detached observer (Dhawan 170).

*The Company of Women*

In the novel, *The Company of Women*, the narrator sums up the days which Mohan spent with Sarojini: “The first few days went by pleasantly. However, Mohan sensed growing resentment among the servants. . . . Dhanno turned positively hostile” (57). Later the narrator
sums up an event in one sentence: "Once when I invited her (Jessica) to come and watch me play a tennis match for freshmen, followed by a dinner dance for which I had bought two tickets, she flatly turned down my invitation" (95). The narrator also condenses his life at Princeton: "During those years I had also bedded scores of women of different races and ages and enjoyed every one of them. . . . I had earned and saved up a lot of money coaching students and from lectures I was invited to deliver in colleges all over the country" (114).

Unsaid Statements

The phrase "Unsaid Statements" refers to what Chatman calls "Reports of what characters did not think or say." There are several thoughts or statements not articulated by the characters. Such articulations are necessary for the narratee to understand the narration better. The one who gives expression to such unsaid thoughts is the narrator. "A narrator who can tell things of which the characters are either unconscious or which they deliberately conceal is clearly felt as an independent source of information," says Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in Narrative Fiction (99). Only a narrator can provide this information, and the narrator is an overt one. The overtness of the narrator may differ from story to story and from novel to novel in the degree and kind of overtness. The unsaid statements of the characters are vividly stated by the narrator.
In the story "The Insurance Agent," Swami, unaware of the details of the characters asks several questions which are answered by the narrator. The comments made by malicious people in the story may be taken as the reports by the playful but wise narrator. According to the narrator there is some kind of telepathic contact between Mr Swami and the press photographers. As soon as Mr Swami curls his drooping moustache a cameraman enters the room. Next Mr Swami adjusts his tie: "When he lost interest in the conversation he was having, you knew that a secret message had flashed an S.O.S. in his brain: ‘operation photograph’" (84). The narrator also reports that although Mr Swami protested that he had no time for clubs, he was seen in three or four every evening.

In "Black Jasmine," the narrator reports what the characters, Martha and Bannerjee are unable to. About Martha the narrator says, "She walked slowly, her hips swayed rhythmically" and about Bannerjee he says, "During the lessons Bannerjee’s eyes would stray to his neighbour: her broad, powerful wrist adorned with a bracelet of gold coins which jingled as she wrote, her dark, brown arms and then her breasts – large for her bony frame but taut as unripe mangoes" (111). About the couple’s trip the narrator comments: "They got to their destination without getting any closer to each other" (113). Later the narrator reports about the effect of the couple’s physical contact:
“Passion welled up in Bannerjee’s frame and drained out of his system. He went limb in Martha’s embrace. Her breath and the odour of her body began to smell unpleasant to him” (115). The narrator also reports how Martha smiles, “Her gums showed like red rubber,” about which the character is fully unconscious.

In “The Butterfly,” the patient narrator describes Charles when his companions behaved rudely. “He stuttered and stammered and shook like an aspen leaf. Then someone laughed. Romesh went home much humbled” (21). Again when Charles’ cousin behaved against his will the narrator says: “That hurt Romesh very much. He hadn’t expected it from her. It was like Saraswati throwing away her dignity and poise and cocking the snook. But his Saraswathi was to let him down again” (21).

The truly observing and participating narrator in the story “The Great Difference” says that when he raised his hand to greet Maulana Sahib, “Maulana was too full of emotion to acknowledge. . . . The thought filled his entire being, and there was no room for me in it” (67). Once again the narrator gives a similar report: “For an hour or two my illustrious companions were too engrossed in their thoughts to bother about each other or me” (69). About Swamiji the narrator says: “God was a whole time job for him. Human beings rarely mattered” and “At a small wayside station the Swamiji, who was determined not
to enter the latrine used by the Maulana hurriedly filled his brass jug . . . ” (70). As Mlle. Jeanne Deupont shows eagerness to learn about the difference in religions, the narrator reports: “She did not know there were so many religions. She would soon get to know the difference” (71).

The narrator in the story “Man, How the Government of India Run!” gives a realistic report of the three stenographers: “There was a sense of complete abandon. The little conscience at their having left their offices early had vanished . . .” (100). After the match, he reports about Sunder Singh’s state of mind: “Only the clock kept ticking in his mind and making him uncomfortable” (100-01).

The thought-provoking narrator in the story “The Convert,” states the difficulties behind the divorce of the couple: “There was the problem of money. There were the children. And their so called friends and relations who would love to gossip about why the Sethi’s marriage had gone bust” (210). As Sarla Sethi had a hearty laugh after exorcizing hate from her system, the narrator reports: “Sarla Sethi could not recall when she had last had a hearty laugh” (214). About the principal characters in the story the narrator says: “Neither had ever learnt to apologize to the other. They both sulked and used servants or the children as bouncing boards to communicate with each other” (215). When Sarla Sethi tries to conceal facts, the narrator reveals it to
the reader: “Nobody had used this maternal tone with Sarla: and her mother had been dead more than ten years” (212).

The narrator in “A Bride for the Sahib,” comments on Sen conceals: “The Director left but his betel-stained smirk lingered on like the smile of the Cheshire cat and his last remark began to go round and round in Sen’s head with an insistent rhythmic beat” (132). There is another report on Sen: “The native’s desire to make physical contact galled him” (132). After Mr Sen’s marriage the narrator reveals the thoughts which he conceals:

If he had married one of the English girls he had met in his University days how different things would have been. They would have kissed a hundred times between the wedding and the wedding night; they would have walked hand-in-hand through the forest and made love beside the river; they would have lain in each other’s arms and sipped their Scotch. They would have nibbled at knick-knacks in between bouts of love; and they would have made love till the early hours of the morning. (135-36)

The narrator imitates Mrs Sen’s language, when she invites her husband for dinner – “Do you want to shit inshide or outshide? The deener ees on the table” (sic) and wonders “What would his English
friends have said if she had invited them in this manner! The invitation to defecate was Mrs Sen's first communication with her husband” (136). Depicting the sight at Gymkhana Club, the narrator says what Mr Sen wishes to conceal: “This surely was where he belonged – where the east and the west met in a sort of minestrone soup of human limbs of many pigments, black, brown, pink and white” (142).

With a piercing look, into the principal character in “Kusum,” the narrator reports Kusum’s reaction on receiving the birthday gift: “Kusum took this (the present) as a personal insult. She hid the things in a corner of her drawer and coldly announced that she had thrown them out of the window. She turned the face of her mirror towards the wall and decided to squash the desire to see herself” (46-47). The narrator comments on the hawker who came across Kusum: “The hawker looked around. The road was deserted. His smile became roguish” (47).

The narrator in “The Bottom-Pincher” reports what the Bottom Pincher desires to conceal: “Then I noticed that as he passed a group of three women bending over some article at a stall, his left hand brushed the bottom of one of them” (120). The narrator says that each time the Bottom Pincher passed a woman the narrator turned back to find out if he was being followed. The Bottom Pincher used his “Right hand to give alms to the needy, left-hand to stroke or finger unguarded, unwary
female bottoms” (120). Later “Whenever he came to a woman looking
the other way his pace slackened. He inclined his head, gave her
buttocks a brief, mournful look and proceeded on his way” (124). What
Novy Kapadia observes about one of the Khushwant’s novels is
applicable to this story also. Khushwant Singh implies that many men
have the same desires as this ‘Bottom Pincher,’ but are unable to fulfill
them. Due to social restrictions, many young Indian men and women
curb their passions and they give it a cloak of respectability by making
it with taboos of religion and tradition. So it is a story of exposure
(Dhawan 223).

In “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” the narrator says that Narinjan
Singh dug his fingers in his adversary’s eye, pulled his hair and bit
him: “In fact, he broke all the rules of wrestling and everyone saw him
break them barring the umpire . . .” (75). The narrator in “The Fawn,”
vocalizes his companion’s thoughts he conceals: “He was obviously
wanting me to ask him to carry on” (89). Again, “He paused for an
encouragement. He did not need much” (89).

In the story “Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia,” the narrator
reports the posture of Professor Chakkan Lal and the blonde: “He held
her hand while she counted: . . . He did not let go her hand. She
seemed to have forgotten that he was holding it. He entwined his
fingers in hers. The declaration had been made and not rebuffed”
As the Professor makes his way to the first class deck to the blonde’s room the narrator reports, “He tried to look as casual as he could” (150). Again the narrator verbalizes the Professor’s condition when he saw Mrs Tyson, an exquisitely beautiful nude lying on one of the lower berths: “He gaped in speechless wonder. His feet lost their mobility, his heart its amorous pursuit” (152). When the blonde wanted to get the doctor’s service for the Professor, the Englishman extricates himself from the circle voluntarily about which the narrator says: “The Englishman, who had almost hit the Pakistani diplomat, utilized the opportunity to get out of his predicament” (154). The narrator reports about the effect of the fancy dress ball announced by the Captain: “With one stroke the Captain dissipated the racial ill-will that had poisoned the atmosphere aboard the ship” (150).

The narrator in “The Voice of God” comments on Seth Sukhtankar: “He had no sympathy with the Government, so he bought and sold in the black market with a clear conscience. While people starved and went naked, the Seth bought stacks of wheat and hoarded it. He sold this at fabulous prices” (37). About Kartar Singh, the narrator says: “Kartar Singh was not too prosperous for a lawyer” (38). The narrator also reports on Baba Ram Singh: “One day before the polling was to take place, he was arrested on a charge of making a seditious speech” (39).
The narrator in “The Mark of Vishnu” vocalizes what Gunga Ram wanted to prove but could not. He just proved it by leaving the saucerful of milk by the snake hole every night and finding it gone in the mornings. Later when the boys hung around Gunga Ram and enquired about giving milk to the snake that is already under their custody, the narrator reports the predicament of Gunga Ram: “He did not want any more argument on the subject” (15). By the end of the story the narrator reports the state of Gunga Ram, who collapsed with his hands covering his face: “He groaned in agony. The poison blinded him instantly. Within a few minutes he turned pale and blue and froth appeared in his mouth. On his forehead were little drops of blood” (16). Malashri Lal and Vijay K. Sharma in “An Interview with Khushwant Singh” comment that in many of his short stories, Singh exposes so-called religious and superstitious beliefs, expressing disillusionment about man’s rationality (Dhawan 26).

In “The Rape” the narrator describes Dalip Singh: “Dalip Singh’s eyes were shut but they opened into another world where Bindo lived and loved, naked, unashamed and beautiful” (54). Then the narrator verbalizes Dalip’s state of mind: “Dalip Singh was possessed with a maddening desire” (56). And after the encounter with her, the narrator reports, “He had never intended hurting her” (56). The
narrator's comment on Bindo as she stares at Dalip Singh is: "There was no hate in them, nor any love. It was just a blank stare" (56).

In "The Memshib of Mandla" the narrator is able to give information like: "Jennifer was fidgety" (60). "There was nothing eerie and nothing to be frightened of" (61). "Dyson was shaken but did not change his tone" (63). The narrator in "The Portrait of A Lady" describes his grandma: "To her, music had lewd associations. It was the monopoly of harlots and beggars and not meant for gentle folk" (30).

The narrator in "Posthumous" says, "Every time he (Khosla) brushed the little tuft at the back of his head and ran his hands across his vast forehead he became conscious of unrealized expectations" (3). The narrator comments on his writer friend: "He did not 'believe in attending funerals. . . . It was distasteful to him. There was something infectious about a corpse -- so he smoked incessantly and made a cigarette smoke-screen between himself and the rest of the world" (4). The narrator in "The Man With a Clear Conscience" describes the thief: "He certainly did not look famished. . . . He was a habitual thief and a liar . . . He was a menace to society and obviously the best thing to do was to put him away somewhere" (107-08).

In "India is a Strange Country," the narrator gives information on Tyson at his back; "Tyson preferred to stay in the one part which
had many rat holes. His dachshund busied itself ferreting for rodents while her master waited patiently by smoking his pipe and twirling the leash in his hand. There they stayed long after sunset” (166). In “Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle” the narrator talks about the meanness of Mr Kanjoos: “When the bearer came with the bill, Mr Kanjoos had gone to make an urgent telephone call. And on our third drinking encounter when the bill arrived Mr Kanjoos was busy talking to a friend. I turned mean and began to avoid the Kanjooses. I began to suspect the Kanjooses of sponging” (171).

The narrator in “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” says: “Mr Singh would repeat his joke in any case. He had a genius for repeating old jokes and emphasizing platitudes with an air of originality”(176). The narrator in “A 'Love Affair in London” exposes Kamini’s innermost thoughts; “Ever since she had left India, Kamini had harboured a vague hope that she might run into Robert Smith. She knew it was silly. For all she knew he might be living in Africa or America. . . . And if she did meet him, would he recognize her? What would she say to him? Or he to her?” (187).

In “The Convert” the narrator explicates on Mrs Sethi’s attitude: “Sarla Sethi’s temper rose to a pitch she herself dreaded. . . . But she was determined not to lose her temper. She took a couple of deep breaths and called out as coolly . . .” (209). The narrator comments on
the effect of Mrs Moore's catechism thus: "By evening she was in a
daze - like one who has had a heavy dose of antibiotics. And what she
had heard and read that day was very much like a shot of antibiotic in a
body diseased with hate. The internal battle was on" (213).

*Train to Pakistan*

The unsaid statements of the characters in the novels are stated
picturesquely by the narrator. In *Train to Pakistan* the narrator talks
about the summer before 1947. Making the readers conscious that both
Muslims and Hindus blamed each other, the narrator reports, "The fact
is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed.
Both tortured. Both raped" (3). On another occasion the narrator
comments that Nooran could not struggle against Juggut Singh's brute,
and then he adds: "She did not particularly want to" (14). Later the
narrator reports that Jugga "had no malice or ill will toward the
policemen: they were not human, like other human beings. They had
no affections, no loyalties or enmities. They were just men in uniform
you tried to avoid" (52). It is rather a report on the police than a report
on Jugga. The narrator also exposes what the police conceal:

They knew that they had made a mistake, or rather, two
mistakes. Arresting the social worker was a blunder and a
likely source of trouble. His belligerent attitude
confirmed his innocence. Some sort of case would have to
be made up against him. That was always a tricky thing to do to educated people. Juggut Singh was too obvious a victim to be the correct one. He had undoubtedly broken the law in leaving the village at night, but he was not likely to have joined in a dacoity in his own village. (53)

About the arrest of Iqbal and Juggut Singh, the narrator says: 
“The situation was too ludicrous for words” (53). Juggut was the only one in the party who did not seem to mind: “Behind his back everyone referred to him as a ‘number ten’” (54). Later when Iqbal and Jugga were taken to Chundunnagger police station, the narrator reports, “It was a long and dusty drive on an unmetalled road which ran parallel to the railway track. The only person at ease was Jugga. He knew the policemen and they knew him. Nor was the situation unfamiliar to him” (59).

About the arrival of Iqbal the narrator comments: “The stationmaster quickly took the ticket from him, but the young man did not move on or make way for the subinspector” (31). The narrator also hints that Iqbal’s urban accent, his appearance, dress and holdall had the stationmaster holding back his temper (31). The narrator continues commenting on Iqbal: “Not many people said ‘thank you’ in these parts. Most of the ‘thank you’ crowd were foreign-educated. They had
heard of several well-to-do young men, educated in England, donning peasant garb to do rural uplift work” (31).

The narrator reports on the actions of Hukum Chand very vividly when he had touched the lizards and made his hands dirty, he rubbed his hands on the hem of his shirt: “It was not the sort of dirt which could be wiped off or washed clean” the narrator says (23). Hukum Chand’s hidden thoughts are revealed:

He would be left alone in the bungalow with its empty rooms peopled by phantoms of his own creation. No! No! He must get the orderlies to sleep somewhere nearby. On the verandah perhaps? Or would they suspect he was scared? He would tell them that he might be wanted during the night ’and must have them at hand; that would pass unnoticed. (77)

Later the narrator comments: “Hukum Chand looked a tired man. One week had aged him beyond recognition” (135). Haydn Moore Williams rightly observes in “The Doomed Hero in the Novels of Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar”: “With effective satirical irony Singh shows the failure of various key characters to solve the appalling dilemma presented by the Partition crisis. The police are corrupt. The magistrate Hukum Chand is clever, but he is also corrupt and very lecherous” (Dhawan 56).
I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale

The narrator in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* comments on Sher Singh as he aims at the bird: “Missing a bird of that size would be bad for his reputation” (168). As he shot the bird, the narrator once again reports: “He was a jumble of conflicting emotions of guilt and pride” (168). And again, “In his excitement he forgot to pick up the empty cases” (169). About his fears the narrator says: “His fears were purely imaginary” (173). Once again the narrator reports that he felt ashamed that the simple killing of a bird should have upset him. He shrank in his own estimation. He tried to recover his faith in his own courage and his future. He tried to seek solace from Madan’s assurance that all the headman could tell was that Sher Singh had used his father’s jeep and shot-gun – nothing more. Later the narrator exposes what Sher hides: “If no one was looking, he would stretch his hand sideways and like Hitler clutch his belt with his left hand. Thereafter he looked at himself again in the mirror as each garment came off” (220).

The narrator exposes Buta Singh and reveals what he is unconscious of: “His reaction to a similar indiscretion by a fellow Indian would have been a little more emphatic” (185). About Buta Singh’s attitude to the Hindus who approached him for getting a permission, the narrator reports: “He had reasoned that if he failed, it would not do him much damage; if he succeeded, his prestige amongst
the Hindus of the city would greatly increase and that of Wazir Chand suffer. He was beginning to doubt the wisdom of his venture” (214).

The narrator reveals what Beena conceals: “Beena did not dare to sulk or even hint that Champak and Madan travelling together might cause people to talk. It seemed reasonable to mention such trifles” (280). About Sher and Champak the narrator says: “Sher Singh and his wife were too full of themselves to listen to each other’s tales” (201).

The narrator notes Mundoo’s playful act which was done very secretly: “. . . he took all the gum and red ink from Beena’s table and emptied it into Shunno’s jug of water” (272). The narrator reports what the characters are unconscious of: “In the excitement that prevailed in the house no one realized that this was the crucial ninth day” (345). Again the narrator comments on Sabhrai: “Neither her intuition nor her shrewd insight into human character gave Sabhrai a clue as to what had passed between Beena and Madan – or between Madan and Champak” (277).

Delhi

In Delhi, the narrator in the episode “Lady J. H. T.” reports that he will punish the lady “till she says sorry” (379). Likewise the narrator in “Bhagmati” describes the hijda, “Horrrible bitch! She will give me no peace till I dowse the fire I have lit in her body. She must cool off and I must re-warm myself” (464). The narrator adds:
“something has happened to Bhagmati. She is becoming jealous and possessive” (465). Later he adds: “she has not yet forgiven me for fucking Kamala, the Brigadier’s wife” (520). The narrator, Mussadi Lal, gives a long report on Khusrau:

Khusrau knew the art of spreading stories about himself.

. . . Khusrau who was darker than I and had more Indian blood than Turkish in his veins talked of Turkey as his ‘home.’ The poetic pseudonyms he had chosen for himself were designed to convey nobility of birth, power and wealth. At first he was Sultani (drop the i at the end and it becomes sultan). When he became Khusrau he added Ameer (rich) to it. God had given him brains and talent but had forgotten to temper His gifts with modesty. (434)

The narrator Taimur says of the Turks: “In order to gain their support and to tie up their tongues, it is necessary not only to excite their zeal for Islam but also their greed for gold” (457). Likewise the narrator Aurangzeb comments on his brother: “The ambition to be Emperor of Hindustan possessed Dara Shikoh like a fever; his ambition had been fed by assurances given to him by a mad charlatan, Sarmad . . .” (510).
The narrator, Nadir Shah, exposes Mohammed Shah: “Since kindness failed to kindle the flame of friendship in his breast we thought it best to give him some plain words of advice” (530). He says about the people of Hindustan: “They were cunning in the way they had invited us to come to their help. They were double-faced in the way they continued to protest their loyalty to their monarch . . . We had seen how timid they were in the field of battle and how abject in the hour defeat” (540). The narrator Alice Aldwell in “1857” comments on Atkins: “My only fear was that Atkins might want to keep me in Cal. But you know what men are! Within a week he fixed Alec with a job in Delhi” (592).

*The Company of Women*

The narrator in *The Company of Women* portrays the private moments of the characters. The relationship of Mohan Kumar and Professor Sarojini Bharadwaj was devoid of love, says the narrator. As Mohan Kumar introduces himself as a member of the Golf club to the doctor the narrator comments: “Mohan thought this would establish his credentials, that he was no ‘aira-ghaira’ but belonged to the elite of Delhi society” (286). Several unsaid statements of the characters have been stated admirably by the narrator for the narratee.
Discrete Discernment

The term "Discrete Discernment" is used to mean the independent ability to show good judgement. Seymour Chatman's list of overtness includes "commentary" with a tripartite division: interpretation, judgement, and generalization (220-52). Interpretation is commentary on the narrative or the character. Judgement reveals the narrator's moral stand. Generalization applies not to a character, or situation but to a society or humanity in general. Chatman's interpretation, judgement and generalization are together clubbed under an umbrella heading, "Discrete Discernment." Commenting on the narration is also possible. This is not concerned with the world shown in the narrative but with the problems of narration. The narrator's discrete discernment, that is, his ability to show good judgement is conspicuous in the short stories and novels of Khushwant Singh.

The discrete discernment of the narrator in "Karma" is seen in comments like: "The mirror was obviously made in India" (8). "Whisky never failed with Englishmen" (10). "Excitement, bustle and hurry were exhibitions of bad breeding" (10). The narrator in "The Mark of Vishnu" assesses the nature of Gunga Ram: "It was no use arguing with Gunga Ram" (13). The narrator also comments, "It was the lot of a servant to be constantly squashed" (14).
In "The Insurance Agent" the narrator delineates the person of the Insurance Agent and judges him by giving various comments supposedly made by the "malicious people." The insurance agent is described as "a gate-crasher," "a man who loved publicity," "a snob," a man who pretends and whose work is "of no importance," "a bit of a philosopher," one who is interested in "sales talk" and at last "as an insurance agent." Talking about Mr Swami's little paunch, the narrator discerns, "Only prosperous people have paunches of that sort." Seeing Swami clasping his bosom and weeping loud and long the narrator says: "He really needed more consoling than the man who had lost his wife" and "This man was on positively amorous terms with everyone" (84-87).

The narrator in "Man, How the Government of India Run!" comments on the stenographers, "what appeared to be an entangled cobweb of red-tape to the outside world was playing cats-cradle to these three" (94). The thoroughly intellectual narrator in the story comments, "If typists and stenographers did not put sense and order into the minutes of meeting which had little of either, decisions taken by the big-wigs would remain completely unintelligible" (95). Another comment by the narrator is: "... one thing the English had taught and the Indians had learnt was the sanctity of afternoon tea" (101). Yet
another: “Success dissolves envy and breeds charity towards everyone” (101).

The ever-watchful narrator in “Black Jasmine” comments: “That’s what marriage does to people; they have to lie about the most innocent relationships” (111). The same narrator also comments, “In any case it was a bit silly to come all the way to Europe and bed a woman blacker than yourself” (112). The narrator comments on Martha: “Her body seemed to be made of whip-cord. And she had the grace and power of Artimis” (113). Later the same narrator comments on her in a different way: “She was like the picture of Aunt Jemima advertising good, wholesome, instant pudding” (116).

In the story “The Bottom-Pincher” the narrator comments: “And the garments in which Indian female bottoms are draped are infinitely more varied than anywhere else in the world; . . .” (119). The narrator ironically pictures the suffering of the hero: “No wonder our hero had such an obsession with bosoms and bottoms. Constant exposure to such temptation! Constant frustration because of not being allowed to touch them!” (121). When the narrator himself was caught for the same crime for which he was finding fault with the bottom pincher, he comments on his condition: “I went like the proverbial lamb, to the slaughter house” (125). He also comments “I had put the noose round my own neck” (126).
The narrator in “Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia” generalizes on the time: “It was midnight, the trysting time for lovers” (150). The narrator assesses the occasion: “... an auspicious beginning for an Indian ship to be carrying people of diverse races and religious creeds” (145). The narrator judges Dr Chakkan Lal; “He was too much of a gentleman to take notice of vulgarity” (148). Looking at the sea the narrator breathes in the beauty of the sea: “The calm sea and balmy air were loaded with romance, particularly for those romantically inclined” (148). Later when the blonde tries to step back into the anonymity of the crowd, the narrator notes, “but the Professor’s eyes transfixed her, like the pin through a butterfly” (155). About the Professor, the narrator says: “Professor Chakkan Lal was embarrassed and he blushed like a woman” (160).

The narrator in “The Great Difference” verbalizes his opinion of Maulana Sahib: “The Maulana was obviously the best choice for a representative to the World Congress of Faiths meeting at Paris” (66). The same narrator gives his opinion of the Swami: “... his reputation for learning accumulated prestige as a snowball collects snow” (67). The narrator comments on the girl who wanted to meet the religious leaders: “Her steatopygous behind was an invitation to lustfulness forbidden by the laws of man” (71).
The narrator in “A Bride for the Sahib” gives information on the behaviour of Sunny Sen, “He had behaved with absolute rectitude – exactly like an English gentleman” (131). In “A Punjab Pastorale” the narrator judges his companion: “Hansen was too well-bred to lose his temper” and “Hansen was a missionary, with a difference” (40-3). Hearing Peter Hansen’s talk, the narrator suggests: “The burden of the world’s woes seemed to have descended on him and he looked miserable and woebegone” (44). The narrator in “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” comments, “Just saying God is truth is as pointless as the European habit of referring to the time of the day and prefixing it as good” (73). In “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” the narrator says: “... a good cause breeds courage even in a timid man...” (106). The narrator in “The Rape” adds a consolation in connection with Dalip Singh’s trial; “The machinery of justice was fully oiled” (57).

The narrator in “The Convert” pronounces a judgement on the character of Sarla Sethi: “It wasn’t right to corrode her entire life wedded to this moron” (210). The narrator comments on Sarla Sethi when she got ready to speak to Mr Ali, Consul-General, Pakistan, “It almost sounded as though she was announcing readiness for a wrestling bout” (217). The narrator also interprets the way Sarla Sethi accepted the advice of Mrs Moore, “Sarla Sethi drank in the words like nectar specially brewed for her” (212). Sarla Sethi’s condition after the
love-group influenced her changed: “Life became a challenge. Sarla Sethi accepted the challenge with a zeal of a new convert...” (214).

The narrator in “The Portrait of A Lady” describes his grandma beautifully: “She was like the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity breathing peace and contentment” (29). In “A Love Affair in London” the narrator surmises: “The age of miracles had not passed” (184). The narrator mocks on the meeting of Kamini with the magistrate, Robert Smith: “It had been a curious affair” (184).

The narrator in “The Voice of God” is full of opinion. Regarding the visit of Forsythe and Ganda he says: “Their visit was like a stone dropped in Bhamba’s placid pool whose ripples would take several days to subside” (36). He terms Ganda Singh’s look as “a lecherous look,” and Baba Ram Singh’s mare as “a mare as white as his turban and the long beard that covered the best part of his chest” (38). He explains Baba’s visit: “He went alone from village to village and in his own peaceful way he blew away the might of Forsythe’s Government and the corrupting cash of Sukhtankar like fluffs of thistledown before a gust of wind” (38-39). He winds up the story with a comment: “The voice of the people is the voice of God” (39).

In the story “Death Comes to Daulat Ram,” the narrator throws light on the barman’s search for Ranga: “His eyes went round like the
 searching beam of a lighthouse and stopped on Ranga” (77). The day on which Daulat Ram died, “even the house looked widowed” (19). The narrator gives vent to Ranga’s feelings when the old man stares at him: “Ranga felt as if he had been fixed in a picture frame” (80). Seeing Ranga’s brother and sister at home even before they are informed about their father’s sickness, the narrator discerns the occasion: “This was ominous” (81).

The narrator in the story “Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle” gives a picturesque account of the nomination of the narrator along with the Kanjoos to an international conference: “Fate had ordained that the Kanjooses and I should tread the same path” (171). The narrator in “The Butterfly” focusing on the change that occurred in Charles, narrates: “The Hindi-reading chrysalis burst its shell and blossomed into a Marxist butterfly, Sriyut Romesh Chandra was dead. Comrade Romesh Chandra – or comrade Charlie – was born” (21).

While Khushwant Singh’s short stories are generally narrated by overt narrators, there are some narrators who are not fully overt. The stories like “The Interview,” “Kusum,” “The Riot,” “The Memsahib of Mandla,” “The Fawn,” “India is a Strange Country,” “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar,” “The Morning After the Night Before,” “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture,” “The Red Tie” and “My Own My Native Land” do not reach up to the fullness of overtness according to Chatman’s
measurement. Subhash’s article “Women and Men in My Life: Autobiography through Cameos” rightly says: “Khushwant Singh seems to have a keen sense observation, which enables him to capture the total personality of the subjects he writes about and the innate sense of humour and wit he is endowed with is reflected in his judgement and evaluations of people” (Dhawan 306).

**Train to Pakistan**

In the novel *Train to Pakistan*, the narrator notices Iqbal’s manner of walking: “he just walked on like a soldier” (31). When he was in the prison: “His mind was like the delicate spring of a watch, which quivers for several hours after it has been touched” (64). As he put his plates, knife, fork and tins back into the haversack: “He felt a little feverish, the sort of feverishness one feels when one is about to make a declaration of love” (147). Later as Iqbal ponders over the pros and cons of the sacrifice the narrator comments: “In a state of chaos self-preservation is the supreme duty” (147). And the narrator judges Iqbal: “What could he – one little man – do in this enormous impersonal land of four hundred million? Could he stop the killing? Obviously not” (46). In the presence of police: “Iqbal was in complete possession of the situation” (49) but, “Reference to his physical appearance always put him off” (49).
Iqbal’s and Juggut Singh’s journey, the narrator says, was like a procession of horses with an elephant in their midst. It was “taller, broader, slower, with his chains clanking like ceremonial trappings” (53). As Jugga muses upon whether his clandestine meetings have become publicly known or not, the narrator comments: “The last to learn of gossip are the parties concerned” (62).

The narrator’s judgement of Hukum Chand varies from time to time: “He was a magistrate, not a missionary” (87). In bed: “Hukum Chand snuggled against her (Haseena) like a child” (79). When taking another whisky he felt uneasy and dismissed his conscience saying: “Life was too short for people to have consciences” (26) and again: “Life was like that. You took it as it came, shorn of silly conventions and values which deserved only lip worship” (26). The head constable, the narrator says, had the smug expression of one ready to protest against any commendation of his efficiency. He had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter.

The narrator’s comments on educated people is noteworthy: “One could never be sure about educated people; they are all suspiciously cunning” (105). About the Sikhs in general, the narrator discerns: “Logic was never a strong point with Sikhs; when they were roused, logic did not matter at all” (107). The narrator comments generally on the Punjabis: “The Punjabis love people they can pity”
(70). In particular, the narrator comments on the youth of the Punjab, "the youth of the Punjab were as alike as the news. The qualities they required in a wife were identical" (64). In "Train to Pakistan: A Thematic Analysis" S. P. Swain ascertains: "Unlike a critical realist, his approach is definitively concrete, since he looks at the society from the inside, not from the outside" (Dhawan 116).

The narrator's question: "Where in India could one find a place which did not teem with life?" is striking (41). As India had followed caste distinctions for many centuries, inequality had become an accepted concept. Even if caste is abolished by legislation, it would come up in other forms of class distinction. In modern and westernized circles like that of the civil servants in government secretariat in places Delhi, cars are parked according to their seniority. Thus life is sectionalized and graded according to social status of the people. The narrator's judgement that people who were charged or convicted of the same offence did not appear incongruous is a generalization that any reader would like to accept.

I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale

In the novel I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale the narrator's discernment of people and places are noteworthy: "At some time or the other in their lives, men had to gamble with fortune. Those that won, became great; those that lost, lost; those that refused to take the chance,
made up the mass of mediocrity" (286). The narrator is surprised at the Muslims: "... with Muslims it was not wise to be honest about politics. They pretended to be against the idea of Pakistan when they were with non-Muslims but gave it their support in every way they could" (289).

The narrator comments on values too: "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" (301). The narrator notes, "slight inaccuracies did not vitiate a substantial truth" (215). The narrator generalizes on the effect of kind words: "A kind word from anyone one fears or hates has quicker and greater impact than it has from another..." (242). The narrator also notes how applause can intoxicate and go beyond: "There is no wine in the world as heady as applause; and it has the same effect. It temporarily subdues anxiety and restores confidence" (193-94). The narrator’s question "what use are doctors when one’s time is up?" is enlightening (349).

Judging some of the characters and their actions, the narrator comments on Buta Singh’s waiting for his son: "the vigil was in vain" (295). Appreciating Joyce Taylor, the narrator says: "Joyce had been a nurse – a very pretty nurse" (213). The narrator’s observation on John Taylor when he appeared very cool during a tense situation: "... he
was keeping up the tradition of the British Civil Service of appearing calm in times of crisis” (290). About Gandhi also there is a comment: “Gandhi had made loyalty to the British appear like disloyalty to one’s own country and traditions” (182). The narrator criticizes the inconvenience at the Wazir Chands: “It wasn’t such a quiet place to study after all” (217).

The narrator discerns the crowd at the cinema: “Around the ticket-booths men were clustered like bees on a hive” (193). About Peer Sahib’s contemptuous act with Shunno, he diagnoses: “It was like an itch which begs to be scratched till it draws blood” (277). On the lambdar’s reaction to the attackers he says: “He shook them off like a wounded wild boar shakes off pye-dogs at the end of a chase” (299). Later, the narrator understands Sher’s conditions: “He was like a’ hot-house plant blossoming in a green house. The abuse, beating, and arrest were like putting that plant out in a violent hailstorm” (317). About Sabhrai’s posthumous presence the narrator discerns: “She seemed to pervade the Gurudwara like the incense which rose spirally from the stick and then scattered lazily all over the room” (354). The narrator describes Madan’s face as the Buta Singh’s enter: “... his face looked like a lawn, only half of which had been mown” (231).

Appreciating the hill woman’s song the narrator says: “Once more her soft, plaintive voice rose above the roar of the stream and the crying
of barbets and flooded the valley like the sunshine” (251). Similarly he observes the chirping of cicadas: “The chirping of millions of cicadas was like the deafening roar of a waterfall” (253). Later, he notes the honey suckle: “Its acid-sweet smell was heavy in the dark, leafy tunnel” (254). He also criticizes how simple mechanical failure can disrupt meetings: “... in nine cases out of ten, meetings ended because of mechanical breakdowns” (195).

Delhi

In one of the Bhagmati episodes, the narrator discerns, “It does not take long for the men of Hindustan to switch their minds from fawning flattery to deadly hate” (460). The narrator in one of the other Bhagmati episode comments on Indians thus, “Indians have a very poor sense of humour and treat farting as a topic of jest. Since they eat highly spiced tamasik foods, they are the world’s champion farters and have much occasion to laugh at each other” (589). On white people, the narrator says, “White people are not used to flattery and succumb very easily” (472). He comments on girls too: “Girls are more easy to seduce when they are sixteen than when they are a year or two older. At sixteen they are unsure of themselves and grateful for any reassurance you can give them about their looks or brains – either will do” (472). The same narrator later adds: “Any experienced lecher knows that one should not waste words with a teenager because when
it comes to real business she gets tongue-tied or can only say ‘No.’ It is best to talk to her body with your hands. That excites her to a state of speechless acceptance” (475). The narrator also comments, “... old habits die hard” (478).

The narrator in another Bhagmati episode comments on people’s memory: “It is curious how the first encounter remains so indelibly printed on the mind while the affair that follows is soon blurred” (396). The narrator in the same episode notes that when there is only one ear, one eye and half-a-mind to spare for sex and there is need to keep the other ear, eye and half-of-the-mind to face anyone who makes an advance, there is no fun. Discerning the cry of people at Nigambodh Ghat the narrator in one of the “Bhagmati” episodes comments: “It stabs through the heart like a needle” (375). He also describes the three acts of sex he had with Bhagmati: “the three acts of sex were like the scala menti of a mystic’s ascent to union with the Divine. The first rung in the ladder was the purgatory; the second, the seeking; the third, the final act of destruction of the self (fana) and the merging of two lights into one” (404-05). The narrator in one of the “Bhagmati” episode judges women, “Usually women who write letters to men they do not know turn out to be serious-minded bores” (494). The same narrator judges the lady, Kamala, on the basis of her use of language: “The ‘itsel’ is her first Indianism” (495). The narrator in
another “Bhagmati” episode judges on *The Hindustan Times*—“Delhi’s worst paper with the largest circulation” (723).

The narrator, Musaddi Lal, discerns: “It is true that as soon as someone achieves success, people vie with each other to discover new facets of his genius” (434). The narrator also notes: “strange are the ways of God!” and “... the ways of God are mysterious” (438) and “God is the author of the Book of Destiny in which are written the past, the present and the future” (443). The narrator comments, “When a man’s instincts are evil, repentance has a short lease and brief is his gratitude towards those who have done him good” (439). The same narrator judges the nature of God: ‘Allah is indeed the greatest of plotters and the strength of the feeble!” (443). The narrator comments on Delhi as Khwaja Sahib went away to the Punjab: “... Delhi became like a woman whose husband has gone abroad” (425). Again the same narrator comments on the Khwajas Sahib’s words: “The Khwaja Sahib’s words were like nectar cooled in mountain streams of paradise” (429). When the sultan forbade the supply of provisions to the hospice of Khwaja Sahib, the quantity of food was increased miraculously as the Sahib wrote the name of Allah on a piece of paper and stuck it on the entrance of the hospice. About that the narrator comments: “This was like a cup full of chillies in the already hot curry of the sultan’s temper” (438). The same narrator comments on the
crowd who came to be blessed by Nizamuddin, the Sufi dervish of Ghauspur: "People buzzed round him like bees round a crystal of sugar" (421). Later the same narrator says that Nizamuddin became a strong support for the narrator in all the ways: "Nizamuddin was our umbrella against the burning sun of Muslim bigotry and the downpour of Hindu contempt" (424).

Meer Taqi Meer's poetic comments are noteworthy: "Happy was he who had no wealth; poverty was the only wealth" and "A heart on fire needs a stream of tears to put it out; a drop or two only makes it burn more fiercely" (572-76). He believes: "Envy slays friendships quicker than the sword" and "Love is an affliction which spares no one, neither the old nor the young, neither married nor single" (573-77). The narrator appreciates the effect of Begum Sahiba's words upon him: "Her words were celestial music in my ears" (554). Understanding the character and nature of the Begum, the narrator comments on her rightly: "Once Begum Sahiba made up her mind to get something she spun a web of intrigue that ensnared everyone concerned: she was the master puppeteer with all the strings in her fingers; they the puppets to act out her commands" (557). His own condition was "like a fly stuck in a pot of honey" (562). Once again he recalls his liaison with the Begum: "we were carried away by our infatuation like paper-boats cast on a powerful stream" (573). Once again, he says: "In a mehfil of fair women, she had shone like the full moon
amidst a galaxy of stars; her smile was like a rose-bud burgeoning into full bloom; her tresses lent their fragrance to the morning breeze . . ." (574). The narrator came to know the Begum’s affair with the new teacher she had hired for her children from his stepbrother’s words: “His words pierced my heart like arrows” (574). As hunger and insecurity drove him from Delhi to Lucknow, he was not understood by the Lucknowis: “Tears flow like rivers from my weeping eyes; my heart like Delhi lies in ruins. The fresh bloom of the rose gives me no joy; its piercing thorn no pain” (583). As he left Agra he pens down his thoughts: “At first I felt like a bird let out of a cage and wanted to sing with the joy that freedom brought me” (565). The narrator comments on Nawab Samsamuddaulah, his patron, protector and the royal paymaster: “He was like a rain-cloud of generosity above my head” (573). The same narrator comments on Hakeem Alavi Khan’s harsh words: “His words were more bitter than his medicines” (543). Meer Taqi Meer comments on men and women in general, “A man can get away with his affairs with women, but a woman known to be promiscuous can be ruined for ever” (564).

Aurangzeb Alamgir observes the kingdom: “A Kingdom is like a scabbard which can hold only one sword at a time” and “It became clear as daylight, that if the reins of the empire were left in Murad’s hands, the empire’s chariot would soon be wrecked” (510-12). The narrator, Taimur, is sure that, “whenever the tablet of our mind was heavily over-writ with
our designs, we were wont to dream about them” and that “nothing happens in this world save as Allah wills it” (455-56).

Once again the narrator in “The Builders” judges the power of the Indians: “If a yellow race of dwarfs like the Japanese could defeat the mighty empire of the white Tsars of Russia surely a nation of hundred-and-fifty million Indians could make mincemeat of the handful of Englishmen in India!” (669). He knows that “Sudden wealth creates its own problems” (685). He observes that, “The sahibs were slow to anger but once their temper was roused their wrath could be terrible” (677).

The narrator, Nihal Singh, comments, “A peacock dancing on a house-top with black clouds rolling behind is a sight worth a hundred thousand rupees” (632). And, the narrator in “The Untouchables” verbalizes, “When a person is busy making money he forgets his God. As soon as he has made ninety-nine rupees he wants to make a hundred” (484). The same narrator generalizes, “Silence is the best friend of the poor” (490).

The narrator in the episode “The Last Emperor,” Bahadur Shah Zafar says that, “Bakht Khan was as big and as black as a rain-cloud. His eyes flashed like lightning; his speech was coarse like thunder” (638). Later he notes, “Foul vapours of suspicion continued to float over Delhi. We came to the conclusion that fate itself had loaded the
dice against us and we could not win. . . . The hand of fate struck the drum of departure” (642-43). The narrator comments on his past: “There was a time when the world seemed like a flower garden where the afternoon sun warmed the buds to unlock their treasure chest” (660).

Ram Rakha comments on the fate of times: “The Ganga has begun to flow in the opposite direction – upstream from the sea towards its source in the mountains” (713). In the final episode of the novel the narrator judges Indira Gandhi’s order to blast the Akal Takht as a futile attempt: “. . . to kill a rat, she pulled down the house” (731). *The Company of Women*

The narrator in *The Company of Women* makes a general statement regarding a child’s growing up in a peaceful atmosphere. A man or a woman had only one life to live. As a result no one should waste the best years of his life with someone with whom he had little to share besides occasional, loveless sex. It would definitely be advisable for both of them to end their marriage. In such a case of divorce the only ones to be hurt would be the children. The narrator finds a remedy for this situation also. A child’s life is safer in a peaceful home run by a single parent than in a home run by bickering parents. “They (children) would grow up and understand why the divorce was good for everyone concerned” (7).
Some of the findings of the narrator appear unbelievable: "It was silly to condemn adultery as sinful; it often saved marriages from collapsing..." (8). The narrator ascertains that only the first few days of separation would be difficult for people whose marriage or a similar long-term relationship has ended. After the passage of time they come to terms with themselves, their parents, parents-in-law, children, brothers and sisters. More difficult is the need to satisfy the never-ending and piercing questions of their close circle of friends.

The narrator’s assessment of married people is revealing: “Married women could sense their husband’s extra-marital affairs without having any tell-tale evidence to substantiate their suspicions. Married men were so absorbed in themselves that their wives could cuckold them for years without being suspected of infidelity” (36). About women the narrator adds: “Women were much the same in their essentials but enchantingly different in detail” (23). Once again he says “women have a sixth sense which warns them when their security is threatened” (178). The narrator also notes that, “a woman’s buttocks excite a man more than any other part of her body – more than her lips or breasts or her pussy” (245). About the monthly periods of girls, the narrator comments: “... many girls are out of sorts when the curse is about to come over them...” (163). About men he notes, “Men were not discriminating, they took whatever was available” (51). In “The
Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*” Novy Kapadia gives an assurance regarding Khushwant Singh: “He is exposing cant, hypocrisy, double speak, double standards and pomposity in the attitudes to sex in predominantly patriarchal urban India” (Dhawan 225).

The narrator assures that, “The body’s needs come above religious taboos and notions of morality” (177). In the episode “Dhanno” he says that there is no better antidote for sore eyes than sex with a sweeperess. Mohan Kumar comments: “Love is an elusive concept and means different things to different people. There is nothing elusive about lust because it means the same thing to all people: it is the physical expression of liking a person of the opposite sex. . . . Lust has no time-limit and is the true foundation of love and affection” (137-38). Novy Kapadia observes in “The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*” that such scenes of lust are not just shocking pornographic details, but a technique to tumble sexual taboos and chauvinistic attitude towards man-woman relationships (Dhawan 238).

In the episode “Susanthika” the narrator Mohan Kumar comments: “while there is life, there is hope” (275). He comments earlier, “Nobody bothers about marriages which hold; everyone is deeply interested if things go wrong” (191). Thoroughly stupefied by the audacity of Dhanno the sweeperess, the narrator comments, “. . .
working class people did not believe in dropping hints or being tactful: they were direct and blunt” (17). Commenting on the people who are working abroad the narrator wonders: “What had they left their countries for? To wash white men’s dishes and mop up their urine splattered around urinals?” (117-18).

The narrator’s observation on nationalities is a bit too harsh: “Americans were money oriented and money was what mattered to young Oriental millionaires, regardless of how it was made” (79). Again, “jealousy is something Americans disdain as a medieval emotion” (95). There are comments on Indians too: “Indians regarded marriage as a sacrosanct bonding for life” (26). Later he comments: “Indians do not believe in privacy; they are a nosey people and the one thing they will not do is mind their own business” (138). Referring to Sarojini, the narrator, notes an Indian tradition: “She would throw back her arms over her head to stretch herself; it was the traditional Indian angdaee, exposing her bosom with languor and wantonness” (57-58).

The narrator’s comments in general are: “when you run into an unsolvable problem, use grease liberally; it opens all doors” (144). “The world had so much more to offer than we are taking from it: beautiful places, beautiful people. Beautiful paintings and sculptures for the eyes to behold. Beautiful music and songs” (195). As Sarojini prays in the temple the narrator makes a judgement of Lord Krishna:
“He was the one deity above all others in the pantheon of gods and goddesses who understood the physical compulsions of human beings and forgave them by setting an example” (71).

About Mohan Kumar’s love-making the narrator comments: “Each time Mohan made love to a new body, it was like exploring a new landscape” (23). Commenting on the change that took place in Sarojini within twenty-four hours, the narrator notes: “... last evening he was the pursuer and she the frightened little doe dreading the hunter’s dart; this evening she was Diana, the huntress, pursuing the boar into its den” (56). About the narrator’s father’s interview of the would-be matrimonial family members, the narrator surmises: “Father interviewed them like the chairman of the Public Service Commission” (125). About Jessica Browne, the best woman tennis player the narrator notes: “She sprinted about the court like a panther” (91). And about the first coaching she gave to the narrator, he says: “She stood in the middle of the court and gently patted the ball from side to side and made me run like a rabbit till I ran out of breath” (92). Later he discloses his condition when they began to drift apart and both of them found new partners: “So I wrote Jessica off my list of dates and went on the rampage like a stud bull in a herd of cows on heat” (95).

The narrator describes Sonu as he saw her for the Shagun: “She looked radiantly happy; as if she had passed the most important exam
in her life with flying colours” (142). The narrator portrays Achint Ram’s wife thus: “His wife was as fat as him and decorated like a Christmas tree with heavy gold jewellery . . .” (136). And about their daughters, the narrator adds: “Achint Ram’s daughters-in-law sat like dumb painted dolls without any expression on their faces” (137).

By the end of Mohan Kumar’s life, he discerns his own condition: “I became like a rudderless boat adrift in an endless ocean” (276). Perhaps, in the words of Mohan Kumar, there is an echo of many a life, like rudderless boats, being adrift in an endless ocean.

I think the secret of my longevity is that I keep young company. I don’t go beyond that. But they enjoy calling me a womanizer, a drunkard, fornicator, law breaker everything. It doesn’t bother me one bit. They also know that a man who started writing in his 30s and has over 80 titles to his credit could not be spending all his time in debauchery and drinking. He has at least to be disciplined. I think most people realize that I keep a punishing schedule of work from 4 in the morning right up to 7 in the evening. So I have very little time either for drink or for flirting. I do drink every day, but a very limited quantity.

Khushwant Singh