CHAPTER II
IMAGINATIVE REFLECTION: WOMEN'S SENSIBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY NOVELS
Khushwant Singh is a writer who has gained popularity both in India and abroad, only by the publication of four novels. He has a deep knowledge of various people engaged in various problems and circumstances. Mr. Singh has the strength to bring about the real instances in front of his readers. His imagination is therefore realistic. Most of his novels show the real picture of society of that time through stories, sequences and action and line of thinking of characters. He has used language and style in his novel, which help to bring readers to the scenes of the time. Aristotle in his poetics has mentioned that the character must possess four qualities; firstly the character must be good, and secondly they must be appropriate, thirdly they must have likeness and fourthly they must have consistency. By appropriations Aristotle means that they must be true to type i.e. they must have the characteristics, which are common to the type, or they should have characteristics, which are common to the profession, rank or class, to which they represent. Mr. Singh qualifies these characteristics in his two earlier novels i.e. *Train to Pakistan* and *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, here in his novels. Mr. Singh has portrayed his characters as a real type who act and speak as the people of that particular time, spoke and acted. He has made his character believe, their type, and are well
representation of their time. But in last two novels Delhi and The Company of Women do not show these characteristics.

‘Fiction’ the word itself defines its meaning, as imaginative or creative story, imagination therefore plays an important role in creating or writing fiction. The word ‘Imagination’ means “Power of Imaging”, in which the mind of the individual plays an important role. Imagination may be mythical, realistic, emotional, impressionistic etc. Mythical imagination is which a writer imagines on religion and God and creates fiction, which is based on mythical theme. Realistic imagination is which a writer imagines all realistic things without any falsehood or fictitious element in it. Emotional imagination is which deals with the recollection of things of the memory. Impressionistic imagination is which reveals or bring about impression through the work to the writer. “There are many writers of English who write novels on various themes. Some of the twentieth century novelist like ‘Joseph Conrad’s’ romantic imagination found best expression in themes which were capable of adventure in an unusual or exotic setting.........”16 The settings of his novels are romantic but they are described with meticulous accuracy. They are also Indo-Anglian writer, whose work finds expression of their deep imagination. Indo-Anglian novelist of twentieth century like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and also women novelists like Bhavni Bhattacharya, Kamla and Jhabvara’s work reveal their thoughts.

16 Satish Kumar, A History of English Literature, Laxmi Narain Agrawal, Agra, 2001, p 477
which are possible only through imagination. They have written on various themes, related to their age.

A. SAGA OF TERROR AND ENDURANCE:

TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

This novel brings about the situation of men and women during the time of partition. Mano Majra, a remote village in Punjab, serves as the fictional setting of Train to Pakistan. Before partition the people of all religions like Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs lived in relative harmony. They are all far away from selfishness, cruelty etc. for other religions. Thus this novel deserves a high position in Indo-Anglian literature.

Though the transformation of history into art form the author shapes and orders an event, which, in its over-powering reality, is different to grasp. The effects of such a complex and heartfelt situation thus assume new meaning by creative and imaginative intensification. The author’s objectivity in the treatment of theme and event, his skill and insight in the delineation of character, and his vision of humanity, the power and the glory, the weakness and the defeat all align him with the finest novelist.

This novel is praised for its well thought out structure, artistically conceived plot, an absorbing narrative and imaginatively realised characters. In this novel we find Mr. Singh’s realistic imagination. The predominant quality of this novel is its stark realism. Mr. Singh’s art is
revealed in not merely probing deep into the real but in transposing the actual into symbol and image. This novel brings out Mr. Singh's care of creative endeavor in which he expresses the tragic splendor of a man's sacrifice for a woman.

The novel as a genre evolved out of romance though a continual cultivation of realistic thoughts, use of irony and exploration of the evolution of any novel as a 'form' from romance, which is essentially a literature of the enchanted world of adventure, to realism, which aims to depicting the world with all the materialistic and naturalistic. Concomitants are the process of the historical growth of the English novel in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

This novel brings out the realistic imagination of Mr. Singh. The incidences, scenes and characters also represent as the real ones at the time of partition of India. The novel reveals the traumas of the partition, which were faced by every Indian whether Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs all faced the problems of that time which occurred due to partition.

Mark Schorer believes that, "As the novel becomes more thoroughly comic or more thoroughly tragic, it passes beyond irony and beyond realism into a new era of fictive expression open to more cosmic and more reflective visions of the world". 17 Realistic fiction has changed its meaning now-a-days and it is no longer today confined to the

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nineteenth century form of Emill Zola or Flaubent or Charles Dickens and Thackeray but has transcended its frontiers by moving towards what L. M. Forster calls “Prophetic fiction”\textsuperscript{18} as seen in the work of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Mr. Singh’s \textit{Train to Pakistan} is surely part of the march of the novel towards realism, but it also goes beyond it in the area of values, the field so subtly and superbly explored by great novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. It embodies the exploration of new concepts of reality. \textit{Train to Pakistan} inspite of its predominately realistic moves tends toward prophetic fiction. Paradoxically, it is prophetic because it is so innately realistic. The exploration of the human world and its related values in \textit{Train to Pakistan} is more profound and more moving than perhaps the most erudite and expert commentary on aspects of twentieth civilization.

Khushwant Singh has evolved a real view of the society and finds out the standard of living of the people of that time, he himself has passed through the traumas of partition and has seen the sufferings, agonies and sorrows of people, which left deep impact on his mind, that he tries to bring about in his novel \textit{Train to Pakistan}. This novel depicts the life of people residing at Mano Majra, a small village, which is left free from communal frenzy and fractional strife, even at the time of partition in 1947. It shows how people of all religion lived in harmony with each other.

The title of the novel itself suggests the terror, which disturbed the life of people. Author first named the novel as Mano Majra (1956). Mano Majra is the place where the action takes place, but later the name was changed, it was not due to mere chance or casual choice. The change is from the static to the dynamic. Mano Majra is the name of the small village which is static or fixed point in space, whereas the train is a symbol of movement. The word ‘Train’ has many contextual associations like the train signifies multitudes of people leading for various destinations. At the time of partition there were millions of people from either side of the dividing boundary who were in midway and were forced to leave their native place. This was due to terror, which was created by the people themselves, Muslims were asked to move to Pakistan, many men were killed by Muslims who were not of their religion. For these religious matter women became victims in the hands of time, they were killed, raped and were made slaves. This period of partition was full of terror both for Muslims and Hindus. Author in this novel has brought the matter that partition was the tragic point; as in Mano Majra people of all religions mainly Hindus and Muslims lived in harmony, they respected the feeling and sentiments of other religion; but it was due to partition that in that village also the difference existed between Hindus and Muslims.

‘Saga of terror and endurance’, in the sense that the novel is a tale of terror which was prevalent at that time, people of one religion were
the brutal enemies and acted as terror for other religion and vice-versa; and endurance is that people acted accordingly, they became victim they came across the hatred for them by the other religions. This was not the end, people who did not believed in religion and discrimination also had to suffer.

One can recall the strange atmosphere of the Train to Marabar Caves in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, yet the quality of disaster in *A Passage to India* is very different from the quality of destruction of humanistic values in *Train to Pakistan*. Man becomes the butcher of his fellowmen; genocide has become a gruesome characteristic of certain phases of twentieth century civilization. The massacres of Arabs in Palestine, of Jews in Nazi's of Germany and of Indians and Pakistanis in the sub-continent are an ironic commentary on mans proclaimed endeavor to cultivate brotherhood, equality and justice.

This can be identified by the characters like Nooran and Sundari. The novel ends with a moral note, a dacoit who was responsible for so many murders and killings, laid his own life for the sake of his beloved Nooran. Nooran is found with sordid affairs with her beloved Jugga, he ever did not follow the laws but he crosses all the limits; once he goes to meet Nooran even after the orders of the police who asked him not to leave the village after sunset. The mode of introducing Juggat Singh aims at bringing out the essential duality in the nature of character. Juggat Singh, a confined criminal had several jail term on various
charges; at the time of dacoity, he had been released on the guarantee of good behaviour. He was notoriously known as "Jugga, the Budmash", but at moments he shows a degree of deep self-awareness. He embodies the rare combination of the criminal and the lover, which is a baffling aspect of the realities and complexities of life. He embodies the traits of moral values. But, the change in his actions that is from a criminal to a noble act became possible only by the deep love of Nooran for him or in other words it was only Nooran who changed his attitude. Nooran was a Muslim and Jugga a Hindu, but love seeks no boundaries of religion, this is clearly reflected in the love of Jugga for Nooran.

While Jugga was in jail and the Muslims were preparing to leave their home, Nooran who was bearing Jugga’s child faced a lot of terror, she neither wanted to go without meeting Jugga nor was allowed to stay back. The queries in her mind can be easily thought of. She visited Jugga’s house and met his mother but she compelled her to go to the refuge camp. From there she was to be sent to Pakistan. At the same time Iqbal and Jugga were released from the jail. When Jugga went to Mano Majra he came to know that Nooran was to be sent to Pakistan by the train, which was to be blown by the dynamite by the Hindus. Then Jugga for the sake of her beloved climbed the steel spans of the bridge and slashed the rope connecting the explosion material with a sharp instrument ‘a Kirpan’. Suddenly the leader of the Hindu saboteurs fired at him, but Jugga clinged to the rope with his hands and cut it to pieces.
The engine of the incoming train “was almost on him” thus the train “went over him, and went to Pakistan”.

A very stark reality of the time is shown through the character of Sundari, the daughter of Hukum Chand’s orderly, who was married to Mansa Ram only four days back, she had not even been slept with her husband faced such a tragedy which leave the readers in the state of shock. Her husband was made naked in front of her and publicly, and one man cut his penis and gave it to her. Then she was made to lay on road and was raped by one man and another and another. This type of incident was common to that time. It shows the sufferings, terror, turmoil’s, which even women had to face. Thus it brings the realistic view of Mr. Singh. It also brings about the picture of such a society, which faced terror and endurance.

Thus this novel is considered as a tale of terror and endurance, as is clearly depicted by the life of women characters and has been discussed above.

B. TALES OF RELIGIOUS PROPENSITY:

I SHALL NOT HEAR THE NIGHTINGALE

Khushwant Singh is the writer who believes in quality. He through his novels tries to bring out, what he has seen, felt and what he wants to bring to his readers knowledge. He has knowledge of various languages like Urdu, Hindi, Gurumukhi etc. but he prefers to write his
novel in English because he himself says, “I write in English because it is the only language I can express myself in and it gives me the widest readership”.19 His writings are therefore world famous and gained popularity only by publishing four novels.

Mr. Singh stayed in foreign for a long period of time. Therefore his work finds a deep impression of west. Mr. V. A. Sahana admits, “Khushwant Singh’s mind and personality have been moulded by western education and culture, but he is at heart a Sikh and an Indian”.20 His work is therefore full of his knowledge about West and East. He himself says, “I am the product of both East and the West”.21 His novel I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale also reflects western influence on Mr. Singh’s mind. Mr. Singh always had a western reader in mind, while writing this novel.

Mr. Singh was born in a Sikh family and when his parents shifted from Hadali to Delhi, he remained there in Hadali with his grandmother. It is because of her he came to know about his religion. He is a good reader; he has read various religious books of different religions. He had deep knowledge of various religions like Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh etc. He lived his childhood days in Punjab and therefore he describes the ways and modes of expression of the Punjabis. He in the novel I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale describes a Sikh family their tradition

21 Khushwant Singh’s India, Bombay 1970, p.213.
and customs. In the beginning of the novel Mr. Singh has provided a note in which he has mentioned the meaning of various words and phrases, which he has used in the novel. The words and phrases like “Pershad”, “Adi Granth”, “Sat Sri Akal”, “Wah Guruji Ki Fatah” etc. The novel deeply reflects the view and faith of Mr. Singh in Sikhism.

In a brief and notable reference to Singh Anthony Burgess comments on the high quality of his creative work: “The most notable writer from Punjab is undoubtedly the Sikh Khushwant Singh, whose I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale is a fine chronicle of life in a Sikh community in the period of 1942-43. We have here a formidable novelist who writes too little”.  

Religion forms the substratum of the novel, Khushwant Singh does not wear moral blinkers with which to view all the characters; but he does establish a scale of values to judge various characters. In evaluating the characters religion in its format aspect and in the sense of a practiced morality forms an important consideration.

Sikhism is interwoven in the plots of Nightingale and it is reflected in the character of Sabhari. Rosanne Archer says, while pointing sense feeling of the novelist, “The book is saved somewhat, however by an easy style and by the charm and interest of its picture of Punjab land and the Sikh people”. There are only women characters that are religious in the novel. In India also we find that women are more

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23 Rosanne Archer, Saturday Review, Dec. 12, 1959
religious than men. The percentage of religious women is more than the religious men. It is the tradition and culture of Indians, to believe in God a lot. Women in their old age become more religious, they spend most of their time in reading holy books, praying to God, attending religious ceremonies etc. The same type of realistic woman is portrayed in the novel who is named Sabhrai, she is a middle aged woman who has a son Sher Singh, a daughter-in-law Champak and a daughter Beena and her husband Buta Singh, she is only one who holds every member of her family together.

Sabhrai, is the moving spirt of the family. Other religious characters of the novel are Shunno, a maidservant of Buta Singh’s family. Sabhrai is deeply religious lady, and the sacred Granth Sahib is the source of all knowledge and enlightenment for her. Although she is uneducated woman, even though she has an extra ordinary profound and instinctive understanding of life. Religion is one aspect of her life, which gives her a sense of security in the odd days of her life, when she faces different crises of her life. Mr. Singh himself admits that Sabhrai feels that God has special concern for the well being of her family. “She had infinite faith in the Guru and was sure of his special interest in her husband and children.”

Due to this she has deep faith in God and performs all rituals of her religion. Every month she arranges, the-first-of-the-month ceremony, in which after the reading of Granth Sahib,

‘Pershad’ is distributed to all the members of the family and servants. Shunno, the maidservant of Buta Singh’s house help to clean the place where Granth Sahib is kept and also prepares Pershad for the Pooja. Charanjit Kour says rightly, “Rituals are not mere ostentations for her, but the are part of the deep faith which forms the source of her strength and moral force, and which sustains her during the period of crises in her life.”25

Mr. Singh also provides Sabhraí with sixth sense, which goes to people of deep religious convictions through which she saves her family from crises. At the time when her daughter Beena and her daughter-in-law Champak were in Shimla with Madan, and it was a time of Sawan (monsoon), she realises that Sawan is the month of lovers, she feels that it is a time when her daughter needs God’s care. She senses the danger and notes the messages of Guru for the girls, she opens the Granth and finds this verse;

“O Black Buck, why lovest thou,

The pastures of friend-in-fields?

Forbidden fruit is sweet but for a few days

It entices and enshares

The leaves are sorrowing”26

It makes her uneasy and she is worried much about her virgin daughter and she goes to Shimla as a guard angle.

It is Sabhrai who appears as a three-dimensional character in the novel. She is the female sprit who becomes the savior of all the lost souls, she embodies the instinctive understanding of life and the wisdom of the race. She has closer resemblance to Ruth Wilcox, in Forster’s Howards End, who is great redemptive character and represents the value of old English country. Ruth embodies the Indian culture of her time. By virtue of her moral rigor and deep faith in her religion she becomes a towering figure of the novel.

Shunno is other character who believes in religion but has less faith then Sabhrai. She is the maidservant in Sabhrai house, she assists Sabhrai for religious rituals. She cleans the place where Granth is read on every first day of the month and prepares ‘Pershad’. She has much faith in religious curing of distress than medicines.

Shunno is fat middle-aged woman, once in the absence of Sabhrai bossed over the servant boy Mundoo. Mundoo becomes angry due to Shunno bossing and as a clever trick pours a strange mixture in her drinking water vessel, when she afterwards comes to know about her mysterious ailment, she decides to speak to Peer Sahib, a Muslim divine, to get a cure of the disease.
Peer Sahib is a young man of thirties, he seduces her by just calling her "daughter", and he had sexual relationship with Shunno. This love episode of Peer Sahib and Shunno comes as a shock to the readers who have deep faith in religion and Godman, who are after all men, he writes,

"The two lay on the hard brick floor of the starlit courtyard till the early hours of the morning with only the slumbering sparrows, the winking oil lamps on the Hazrat Sahib’s tomb to witness the goings on. Not a word of affection or explanation passed between them."\(^{27}\)

This episode shows Mr. Singh’s irony for religion. According to V. A. Sahana, “In moments of infatuation and physical passion, neither religion nor God commands reverence, and unholy alliances are contrasted and formed in the temple of the omnipresent and omniscient God. This naked and bitter fact of human existence is effectively exposed by Khushwant Singh in the scenes between Shunno and Peer Sahib”.\(^{28}\)

When Sabhrai was at Simla, she received a telegram from her husband Buta Singh asking her to return back home. This telegram itself made her to think that everything was not in order at home, it was due to her intuition, she realises that something has gone wrong back at home, and it invades her serene and religious world of moral values. After her

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\(^{27}\) Ibid, p.141

return she comes to know about her son’s arrest; in the murder case of Jhimma Singh. She at once wants to meet her son in the jail, but before that she reads the Granth, which she reads nonstop.

Sabhari thinks that reclamation of the lost souls is only possible by the suffering and self-denial and therefore she decides to spend the long cold winter night in the precincts of the Gurudwara in search of the word of God. She spends the whole night in the holy place where Granth was kept wrapped on a low cot. After the passage of night she speaks to herself and questions herself, had she lost faith? At the same moment she recalls that she has seen divine hawk perched on the pinnacle of the golden dome of the temple. She recollects her vision of Guru Govind Singh, the great martyr who had lost his four sons in the crusade against fanaticism and religious bigotry. She recites the following verse,

“External God, who art our shield,
The dragger, knife, the sword we wield
To us protection there is given
The timeless, deathless Lord of Heaven…”\(^\text{29}\)

After finishing her prayer Sabhrai gains hope and confidence to her anguished heart and then goes to the jail to meet her son Sher Singh.

Another religious character of the novel is Mrs. Joyce Taylor, wife of the deputy commissioner. She is a devoted Christian lady; this

character shows Mr. Singh's knowledge about Christian religion. When Shabrai returns from Simla after receiving the telegram from her husband Buta Singh. Mrs. Joyce Taylor goes to receive her at the station and prays to God to give her light and hope in that dark, depressing hour. John Taylor and his wife Joyce Taylor both carry the spirit of Jesus Christ in them, and Mr. Taylor tries to release Sher Singh. This release of Sher Singh comes as a Christmas gift to Buta Singh and his family by Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. This Christmas gift was the efficacy of Guru's word. V. A. Sahana says, "The Guru's word thus proved extremely efficacious in the most intangible and incompassensible manner, baffling all rational predictions. The mystical power of Sabhrai triumphed over the country, mundane powers of administrators, and in a curious and unpredictable way, good resulted from the interaction of the forces of violence and evil on the one hand and humanity and natural justice on the other."

These characters of the novel I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale are religious and moral. They are portrayed without any repugnance towards them. They behave in the way, a person with ethical and moral values behave. Mr. Singh has presented these characters with religious values in mind. Sabhrai brings out the solid and religious values of a pious and religious Sikh woman. On the other hand Mrs. Joyce Taylor brings out the religious values of Christmas and norms of British

society. Though she is a Britisher and at that time they hated Indians, even though she helps Buta Singh’s family at the time of crisis and consoles Sabhra when her son was in jail. In the end when Sabhra dies, she comes to her family to console them and praises Sabhra for her good work. When Buta Singh asks her advice to erect memorial for Sabhra she promises to help him and assures him to let him know what is needed in the city so that the object of charity not be lost.

This novel is thus a propensity of religions. It brings out Mr. Singh’s love for religion, and also his knowledge for different religions.

C. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

DELHI

Khushwant Singh’s third popular novel is Delhi which is a historical novel. This novel took twenty years to be completed, in this novel he has tried to tell the story of Delhi from its earliest beginnings to the present times. He has constructed it from records chronicled by eyewitness whose records are well preserved. But the novel also contains humorous and sensual elements. As Mr. Singh himself says: “I had no illusions about my being a good teacher or a great writer. But I always managed to raise a laugh whenever I spoke. I am a born jester. And whatever rubbish I wrote, got published”. 31 And secondly about

31 Khushwant Singh. Sex, Scotch and Scholarship, p.32
using the sensual elements he writes, "History provided me with the skeleton, I covered it with flesh and injected blood and a lot of seminal fluid into it."  

The description of sex in the life of the real characters, in the sense the known people of Indian history brings the unpleasant aspect of human behaviour, which leaves the readers with a feeling of disgust and revulsion. Delhi brings out the physical aspects of Indian life. One must remember that Khushwant Singh is a Punjabi and Punjabi literature is earthy, most dealing with the physical aspects of life. So it is natural that sometimes Singh makes sex and other bodily functions a subject of his humour, but for historical characters he should not have included the involvement of sex in their lives to introduce humour in the novel and to entertain his readers as it defames the personality of real Indian historical characters. But another reason why Singh writes about such taboo topics is that he wants the hypocritical Indian society to do away with some of his pretentiousness. Our society usually feels shy on such topics, not having the courage to tackle them. But Mr. Singh takes the courage and plunges in them head on. And is able to make his readers according to it.

Delhi is a historical novel and history is always real, and it is defined as, "Realism is three dimensional—an independent life,

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characters and human relationship". Thus this novel also brings out the real characters with human relationships but Mr. Singh has added unnecessary elements to make it popular, some incidents are harmful in their respectability and honour.

The demand for a realistic creation of types is in contrast to the trends in which the biological being of man, the physiological aspects of self-preservation and procreation are dominant and to the trends, which sublimate man into purely mental and psychological processes. Mr. Singh has tried to blend these characteristics with other entertaining elements only to make it popular and appreciating.

Mr. Singh is the writer of metropolis he wrote he has mostly about the lifestyle of people of Delhi.

There are many historical characters whose description about their lifestyles and personal life’s forms the foundation of this novel and certain incidences are mentioned to make it humorous to catch the undivided attention of the readers.

The first historical character of this novel is Mussadi Lal who was the son of Lala Chagan Lal, Hindu kayastha of Mehrauli, in the city of Delhi. He was married to Ram Dulari only at an age of 9 years and she was only 7 years old. One of his Muslim friends suggested him to adopt Islam in which he could have more wives at lest four at a time.

33 Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction. Westminster Review, 10, 1858, p.493
After coming to know about this conversion, his wife’s parents refused to send her to him but after complaining to the Kotwal her parents sent Ram Dulari to him.

In this chapter of Mussadi Lal he is describing his personal experiences with his wife, which cannot be in any case known to the writer, that is Mr. Singh. As it is mentioned, “Even after one month I did not know what she looked like because she kept her face veiled with the end of her dupatta.”34 Also “she cooked her food on a separate hearth and ate out of utensils she had brought with her. For her I was unclean, Muslim Maleecha.”35

Mussadi Lal, used to force her to sleep with him, beat her up, but is could not force her for anything. She said she would only go from his house if she was taken on her bier.

Her reaction when Mussadi Lal took her to see the mutilated temples of Hindus and Jains, she put her head against a pillar and cried. Mussadi Lal had to pretend as she was not feeling well and pushed her along in order not to draw the attention of Muslim crowds starting to gather around them. In Mussadi Lal’s own words he say, “I was exploited by the Muslims who disdained my company. Indeed I was like a Hijda who has neither one thing nor the other.”36

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34 Khushwant Singh, Delhi, Vikings Publications 1989, p.52
35 Ibid, p.53
36 Ibid, p.55
Another historical woman is Hira Bai who was a slave girl in the services of the Nawab of Burhanpur, the uncle of Emperor Aurangzeb. This beautiful lady is with the voice like a nightingale and due to these two qualities Aurangzeb made an offer to the Nawab of Burhanpur for an exchange of all the women in his haram with Hira Bai. She is described in the novel as, “Her fame as the comeliest of woman and a nightingale amongst singers is the talk of the Deccan”.\footnote{Ibid. p.148}

Another historical woman character of this novel is Jahanara begum, she was the sister of the Emperor Aurangzeb and she was the daughter of Emperor of India Shah Jahan and Mumtaj.

Another historical woman character is Begum Sahiba, who was the second wife of Nawab Rais. She hailed from a poor family and was married to the Nawab at an early age of sixteen years even when the Nawab was fifty years old and the father of many children from his first wife.

As Meer Taqi Meer a famous poet in Nawab Rais’s darbar describes her as, “She was short stocky woman about thirty years of age, she was fair round faced with raven black long hair. The only other things I noticed about her were her taut blossom and big rounded buttocks which almost burst out of her tight fitting pyjamas”.\footnote{Ibid. p.201} Due to the wide span of age difference between Nawab Rais and his second
wife Begum Sahiba, Begum Sahiba was attracted to other men in order to satisfy her physical desires, of which Meer Taqi Meer was one.

Next woman character is Saleema who was the wife of the famous poet Meer Taqi Meer. She belonged to a poor family whose father was a distant relative of Begum Sahiba and was appointed as the chare-taker of one of Nawab’s orchards. Begum Sahiba purposely chose Saleema to be poet’s wife so that she could continue seducing the poet. As Saleema was, “No how she was as thin as a bamboo rod I could grasp her waist between my hands. Her breasts were hardly perceptible. Her front teeth stuck out even when her mouth was shut; but her being my wife tempted me to take the path of infidelity”. This was Meer Taqi Meer’s version of her wife. These qualities of his wife forced him to allow Begum Sahiba seducing him.

Naseema is another historical character who was the maidservant of Begum Sahiba through whom Begum used to send the messages and letter to Meer Taqi Meer.

Alice Aldwell is another historical character who was the wife of Alexander Aldwell (Alec) who retired from ‘Her Majesty’ Post and Telegraph services. She was only eighteen years and Mr. Aldwell was going in the fifties when they got married. We see that Mrs. Aldwell laid down her self-respect by agreeing to sleep with an English George Atkins who promises to get Mr. Aldwell a good job in the country.

ibid, p.202
Next historical character is Begum Zeenat Mahal the favourite wife of old King Bhadur Shah, was on good terms with the elites of English in order to get her only son John Baksh nominated as the next king of Delhi.

These above described woman historical characters are made much popular to the readers by adding much sex and sensual elements and incidences in their life. Another element is humorous which is added to the novel in order to make it popular among his readers.

As Ruby Gupta says, "The historical chapters are mostly devoid of humour; perhaps to maintain their solemnity. However, Singh has given explicit details of the romantic and the abnormal sexual relationships. So a certain amount of humour would also have been welcomed. Especially in those chapters that read like the chronology of the historical events that occurred during that specific time. Like the latter half of the chapters on Meer and Aurangzeb."

D. PSYCHO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ALTITUDES:

THE COMPANY OF WOMEN

Mr. Singh started to write this novel at the age of eighty and finished its manuscript at the age of eighty-five that is he wrote this novel only in the time period of two years. Whereas, he took 15 years to

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complete his third novel Delhi. He himself admits, "As a man gets older, his sex instincts travel from his middle to his head, what he wanted to do in his younger days but did not because of nervousness, lack of response or opportunity, he does in his mind." This shows that Mr. Singh has written about his feelings, his wishes, which were not fulfilled at their appropriate time, therefore, he says that they are fulfilled in mind and these wishes are in mind and find expression in this novel. Mr. Singh has hidden his identity behind the character of Mr. Mohan Kumar. This novel does not qualify the norms of realistic novel, the novel does not reveal the general people of the age, it deals with aristocratic society, the protagonist himself belong to aristocratic society. A realistic novel should be common to general people. It also lacks the real psychology of Indian women. In this novel various women come in the life of Mohan Kumar and are always ready for sex, this may be true with some women but not all. Every Indian woman either rich or poor does not like to indulge in sex with a man who is neither related to her nor will be related to her in future. The protagonist views that by simply paying money handsomely to the woman one can gain indulgence in sex with her, does not seem to be real at all, there may be some who sell their body for money but they are exceptional. The novel does not clear the boundary of relation, it seems that Mr. Singh has overviewed all the norms of Indian society in the portrayal of woman characters in their novel.
There are total nine women characters in the novel. All belong to different social class and maintain a different profession. There are only two women who belong to lower class society; they are Dhanno, Jamadarani (Sweepers wife) and Bai who seem to be a prostitute, to whom Mr. Kumar meets in Bombay. This is the last woman with whom Mr. Kumar had sex and after it he suffers from a fatal disease and at last dies of it. Other woman characters are Sarojini Bharadwaj, a professor in English in a local college at Rewari in Haryana. Jessica Brown, a student at Princeton. Yasmeen Wanchee, a student at Princeton in the department of religion and philosophy, she is Muslim by religion. Sonu is wife of Mr. Kumar. Mary Joseph a nurse by profession, who is appointed to take care of Sonu and her child, she is catholic, but enjoys sex with Mr. Kumar. Other is Molly Gomes, she is also a nurse by profession specialising in physiotherapy, who responded to Mr. Kumar for a companion. Next is Susanthika from the high commission of Srilanka. This novel is treatise on the psychology of woman and the cultural altitudes. It shows that Mr. Kumar came across the women in his life which were all lovers of sex or in other words were anxious for having sex without any relation with him and it is clear that none of them were having sex for the first time except Sonu, wife of Mr. Kumar, each has copulated with some or other man, even then they are interested in Mr. Mohan Kumar. This shows a misinterpreted idea of Mr. Singh. Any Indian woman does not allow herself for such
indulgence. Mr. Singh has presented all women with same nature and psychology, which is not possible at all. There may be many women with same psychology of life but it is not possible at all that they together meet a particular man, who is presented as Mr. Kumar while writing this novel. Mr. Singh seems to had western audience as characters in mind and has placed them in Indian context, therefore the novel loses the realism, it cannot be on any ground be named as a realistic novel at all.

The novel begins with an introduction of life of Mr. Mohan Kumar. After a married life of twelve years his wife leaves him and get shifted to her parents with her children. Mr. Mohan Kumar wanted a divorce at any cost, he was ready to give his anything she needed in return, but what she wanted was only custody of her two children. Only after a very short period of time when his wife left him he placed an advertisement in two leading national dailies i.e. The Times of India and The Indian Express. His advertisement was:

"Forty years old product of an Ivy League college (USA) living separately from his wife and two children. Divorce petition filed; seeks a live-in companion for mutually agreed time duration. Willing to pay airfare to Delhi and back and Rs. 10,000/- per month for expenses. Free board and lodging in comfortable home with three servants and chauffeur driven car. Religion no bar. Relationship to be without strings
attached on either side. If interested, enclose photograph and biodata. Correspond Box no....."

In Indian society, no woman would like to respond to this advertisement, but Mr. Kumar received many responses for his advertisement.

He had sex with all sort of woman, he need not care for the quality of woman, he had experienced sex with Shunno, a Jamadarni - the sweeper’s wife. The author describes the view of Mohan Kumar, "He noticed she was also full bosomed and had a narrow waist. She was dark and not attractive". This shows that he was not concerned neither of his status nor his conscience, but only interested in having sex at any cost and with any woman. Thus the sentence mentioned in the advertisement about biodata and photograph was only superfluous. He enjoyed sex with Shunno a woman of lower class. He gave her some money in return of it, and she took money for her children.

Jessica Brown is the first woman with whom Mr. Kumar had sex, he himself says, "This was my first time and I spent myself, moaning helplessly almost as entered her, she had sex with other men and was an experienced one, she aroused the sexual instinct in Mr. Kumar, she slowly drifted apart from Mr. Kumar, after having sex with her he had sex with many girls at Princeton but even did not bothered to remember their names."
Here Mr. Singh has failed to portray the women in its realness and ethical and moral values. Jessica Brown is an American girl, who is an year older to Mr. Kumar, and is described by Mr. Singh as, 

"...beautiful in the African way, jet black fuzzy hair lustrous eyes, and protruding breasts with large black nipples." Though it is said that Africans are frank and don’t hesitate in doing anything but its not true with everyone. Here Mr. Singh fails to unveil the realism, he has taken this woman character for granted. She neither had any interest in Mr. Kumar nor was sorry for her conduct; she closed her relationship with Mr. Kumar and made friendship with other boys at Princeton. This shows the mean quality of a woman character. Mr. Singh has not taken interest in bringing out her quality.

The first woman character to respond positively to Mr. Kumar’s advertisement was Sarojini Bhardwaj. Though the first response was from his wife Sonu who wrote only a word, which was printed as ‘BASTARD’, which Mr. Kumar crumpled and threw saying ‘BITCH’. The second letter was the first genuine response of Sarojini Bhardwaj, a divorced mother of eleven-year-old boy. She was professor in local college of Rewari and wishes to spend a month with Mr. Kumar by taking leave from her college. Mr. Kumar thought that he could take her to clubs, restaurants etc. and then decided to respond to her. She thought of making a visit to Delhi and spend couple of hours with Mr. Kumar.
and when she met him promised him to make herself available very
soon after taking a month leave from the college.

Here Mr. Singh has portrayed a professional lady who holds a
respectable post but behaves like a cheap and unpractical woman. She is
so much in need of sex that she applies for a month leave from her work
and places her son to her parent’s house. She could have fulfilled his
desire there itself in Rewari, but she traveled a large distance from
Riware to Delhi only to fulfill her desire of sex. Mr. Singh has failed in
describing the human psychology of the woman characters. Here
Sarojini does not qualify the qualities in her present position. Mr. Singh
fails to portray the realistic woman characters.

Some of the woman characters are from different countries and
most of them are Indians; Indian woman characters belong to different
religions. Jessica Brown is American, Yasmeen Wanchoo is Pakistani
and Susanthika Goonatilleke is Srilankan and Buddhist by religion.
Other women characters are all Indian Dhanno, Sarojini, Mary Joseph,
Molly Gomes, Sonu and a Bai of Bombay.