

# **THE OBSERVER AS SERVER**

A STUDY OF THE SHORT STORIES AND NOVELS OF

## **KHUSHWANT SINGH**

*Thesis Submitted to  
the University of Calicut  
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## DECLARATION

I, **A. PRINCY ANTO**, hereby declare that this dissertation **The Observer as Server: A Study of the Short Stories and Novels of Khushwant Singh** has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled **The Observer as Server: A Study of the Short Stories and Novels of Khushwant Singh**, is a record of the original studies and research carried out by **A. Princy Anto**, Research student, Department of English, Vimala College, Thrissur-680 009 (Calicut University), under my guidance and supervision and, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Ph.D. in English Language and Literature.



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## PREFACE

In the midst of hectic work in September 2005 I wrote a letter to Khushwant Singh. In no time came the reply: “*Thanks. I hope you are not so disappointed with my fiction. I wish you the best of luck in your venture.*” I need not explain how happy I was with this postcard, which gave a fresh impetus to expedite my work. Nevertheless, working on Khushwant Singh, though seemingly simple, was a tremendous amount of work in reality. Applying narratology to the works was a greater challenge. As I started with the short stories and moved on to the novels I developed a liking for the narrators in the works. And thus the angle of study chosen here is that of the narrator. A superficial reader of Khushwant Singh doubts his characters’ morality, his narrators’ morality and his morality. Only one who has attained a bird’s-eye view of the housetops, can estimate a work of art and enjoy its beauty in its totality. This perception of Khushwant Singh I could fathom after going through his autobiography. Never patient with pretences, he lashes out with vigour and vitality, a quality liked and disliked alike. Thus the dissertation, **The Observer as Server: A Study of the Short Stories and Novels of Khushwant Singh**, observes Singh’s observation, and assesses his service to the reading public.

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A PRINCY ANTO

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The oral story form hails from an ancient time, but the written short story is a modern invention. The form was, no doubt, established with the publication of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* in 1837. Edgar Allan Poe comments that the short story has peculiar advantages, which the novel does not admit. He is also of the view that the short story is a far finer field than the essay, and it has points of superiority over the poem (Lane "Short-History"). The short story is, no doubt, the child of the American magazine. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the growing number of pulp magazines, like *Argosy*, *Shriek*, *The Literary Digest* and *The All-Story* needed short fiction to fill their weekly and monthly pages. Editors were eager to satisfy their audience with cheap entertainment. Thus fiction occupied pages in "Slick" magazines like *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. Even though the price and contents were geared toward middle and upper class readers, the magazines captured the hearts and minds of all classes and creeds.

The power of the written short-story form has been brilliantly paraded for nearly two centuries, by writers like Anton Chekhov, James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, Sherwood Anderson, Franz Kafka

and Dorothy Parker. *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* shows Ernest Hemingway's terse style at its best. In 1966, Katherine Anne Porter was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for her *Collected Stories* and she was noted for her accomplished style, form and language. Fascinated by the grotesque, Flannery O'Connor introduced a Gothic sensibility to her work, combining brutal comedy and violent tragedy in her collections *A Good Man is Hard to Find* and *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. Among short-story writers Raymond Carver is considered a master for he exhibits the ordinary and the extraordinary of everyday life. During its history the short story had to undergo various transformations. Daniel Halpern, Ecco Press founder and editor, observes in *The Art of the Story*, that writers born in the early twentieth century have cited Anton Chekhov as an influence, whereas the younger writers appear to be more influenced by popular culture, obviously.

The emerging writers need a set of leaders to emulate and admire. Today's younger writers make a wide selection than ever before by spanning the realist, the minimalist and post-modernist eras of the short story. However this particular genre is not without competition at the present time. By the turn of the present century the short story came to stay in England. Kipling, with his Indian tales and tales of the jungles, achieved great fame. A memorable achievement in

this field is the world famous Sherlock-Holmes series. Writers like Oscar Wilde and W. W. Jacobs also wrote several short stories of great artistic standard. D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Galsworthy and James Joyce were great novelists and excellent short story writers.

The short story is now accepted as a regular and enchanting literary form both in America and in the Commonwealth countries, and it will continue to attract readers because of its brevity, concentration and immediate impact. Edgar Allen Poe defines the short story as a form requiring only half an hour or one or two hours in its perusal. This aspect of the short story is its main attraction and no other form of literature, except perhaps, the lyric can excel it in this respect. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly certifies: "Like other artists the short story writer too holds the mirror up to nature and life, but he tilts the angle now this way now that, now uses a plain mirror and now a somewhat curved one; and so the reflected images seem to acquire a strange, eerie or tantalizing quality, though still obviously deriving from nature and from life" (186).

## II

Indian writing in English also has a good collection of short stories, and Khushwant Singh holds a covetable position as a short story writer. Born in 1915 at Hadali in West Punjab, now in Pakistan, Singh attended St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, and later on King's College, London. For a while, he worked as a Professor of

Hindu Law at the Lahore Law College. It is believed that he felt a sudden urge to throw away his law books and he bravely did it, to his advantage, of course. Fortunately enough, the partition of India helped him to move on to a new path, his cherished path of writing. Both traditions affected him – the Indian and the Western. Though firmly rooted in the soil and in his own culture, he was moulded by the western education he received in England. Naturally his writings contain a smattering knowledge of the English traditions.

In the year 1950 there was a major breakthrough in Khushwant Singh's literary career when he published his remarkable collection, *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories*. Most of the stories were based on real experiences or those related to his colleagues and friends. These stories reveal Singh's craftsmanship and his mastery in fusing theme and plot. In 1967, he published another short-story collection entitled, *A Bride for the Sahib*, which also attracted the attention of the public.

With the publication of his first novel *Train to Pakistan* in 1956, critics declared the arrival of Khushwant Singh on the contemporary literary scene. The novel originally entitled "Mano Majra" brought Singh recognition and fame. This novel won for him the Grove Press India Fiction Prize for the year 1956. Singh was compelled to write this novel, deeply moved by the partition of India. In "Compulsions to

Write” Khushwant Singh confesses, “The partition theme was born out of a sense of guilt that I had done nothing to save the lives of innocent people and behaved like a coward” (Dhawan 24).

*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, Singh's second novel, published in 1959, also has a historical backdrop like the first one. Singh here depicts the "clash between, two sets of values – the old and the modern" (Dhawan, *Indian Lit.* 198). Singh's third novel *Delhi* appeared in 1990. In it, the novelist is not merely interested in reproducing the past of Delhi, but he admits in his foreword to the paper-back edition of the novel, "All I wanted to do was tell my readers what I learnt about the city . . . my aim was to get them to know Delhi and love it as much I do." In “Khushwant Singh: The Man and the Writer” R. K. Dhawan rightly comments that the novel *The Company of Women* (1999) focuses on "the individual's search for the truth of existence within society" (Dhawan 16).

Singh has a considerable body of writing to his credit besides the novels. At present he is probably one of the best-known personalities in India. He is also, India's most widely read columnist. But the really serious side of Singh comes from his in-depth study of history and religion, particularly Sikh history. After writing a short history of his community in his early years, in the 1960's he was able to convince the Rockefeller Foundation to give him a grant to write

about the Sikhs. And this turned out to be the definitive history of the Sikhs.

A knowledge of Khushwant Singh is complete only with a knowledge of Sikh history, for Sikh culture peeps in and out of his writing. He is one with the Sikhs, and so he feels with them. At times he takes a stand outside them objectively, so much so he is able to laugh with them and laugh at them too. Some Sikhs live in villages and hamlets, but most of them in comfortable homes with expansive courtyards where their cattle are taken care of. Families of sons of the same father usually live under one roof until their land is divided. Almost every Sikh home today has a transistor radio and a television set as well. The more prosperous among them have their own tractors and tube wells. A Sikh village invariably has a gurudwara which can be recognized from a distance, because of its tall flagpole draped in yellow and the triangular flag bearing the Sikh emblem consisting of a quoit with a double-edged dagger in the centre and two swords in crossed position beneath.

In general, the Sikhs, love eating. Although not vegetarian, they seldom eat meat except on occasions like weddings. Then their preference is for goat meat which they honour with the name 'mahaprasad' meaning 'the great offering.' The staple diet of the Sikhs consists of wheat, buffalo milk and milk products like curd, buttermilk

and butter. During the winter months their favourite food is mustard leaf mash, capped with fresh homemade butter, eaten with bread of chickpeas or millet. All this is washed down with gallons of buttermilk. Their diet is both wholesome and nourishing and this explains the Sikhs' excellent physique, vitality and stamina. An English dietician, who experimented with the diets of different Indian communities by feeding rats on the food eaten by Pathans, Rajputs, Marathas and Gurkhas, found that the 'Sikh rat' was healthier than the rats of other martial communities. Even by outward appearance the Sikhs are judged a healthy sort.

The male Sikh bears the name 'Singh,' while the female Sikh is 'Kaur.' Although all Sikhs are Singhs or Kaur, all Singhs and Kaur are not Sikhs. The word 'Singh' means 'a lion.' 'Kaur' means both 'princess' and 'lioness.' Both terms were common among Hindus, especially in the martial classes like the Rajputs, Jats and Gurkhas, even before Guru Gobind Singh made them obligatory for his followers. The Guru had two objectives in doing likewise. In India, a person's caste may be denoted by his name. Thus by making Sikhs 'Singhs' or 'Kaur' he made them one casteless fraternity.

It is true that the vast majority of Sikhs abide by the Guru's ordinance. They are also content to remain plain and simple Singhs. But a growing number of them now attach their caste or village names

to themselves. Thus those belonging to Guru Nanak's caste describe themselves as 'Bedis.' Those belonging to the caste of the last six Gurus add 'Sodhi' to their names. As a consequence, most Hindu caste names can be found among Sikhs. The lower castes often take on surnames of higher castes. It is also common to add the name of the village, e.g. Harchand Singh Longowal, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Parkash Singh Badal. Sikh poets often follow the convention common among Urdu poets and add their pseudonyms to their names, and also take pride in the fact.

Khushwant Singh took over the editorship of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* in early 1970's and managed to raise its circulation from 80,000 to more than 400,000 in eight years, making it the most influential and the most widely read publication in India. He introduced an element of daring and sex in the magazine, which upset a considerable number of people. By 1979, when Indira Gandhi was re-elected to Parliament, Singh became the editor of *The Hindustan Times* and also a nominated Member of the Upper House of Parliament. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan, one of the highest honours bestowed on a civilian but he returned the award after a period of time.

Khushwant Singh's autobiography *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* "is of a piece with his life and work." It is unbelievably loyal to the genre. The cover page of the autobiography states:

Writing of his own life, too, Khushwant Singh remains unflinchingly forthright. He records his professional triumphs and failures as a lawyer, journalist, writer and Member of Parliament; the comforts and disappointments in his marriage of over sixty years; his first, awkward sexual encounter; his phobia of ghosts and his fascination with death; the friends who betrayed him, and also those whom he failed.

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The objective of this dissertation is to present a narratological interpretation of Khushwant Singh's short stories and novels. Of the several angles of narratological study – the narrative, the narration, the narratee and the narrator – the narrator's angle is the one viewed from, in this thesis.

The term 'narratology' is a translation of the French term 'narratologie' introduced by Tzvetan Todorov in *Grammaire du Décaméron* published in 1969. The theory of narratology falls in line with Russian Formalism and French Structuralism. The roots of narratology may be traced back to Plato (428-348 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC) who distinguished between 'mimesis' and 'diegesis' or in other words, 'imitation' and 'narration,' two theories which still hold good. All kinds of narratives have (1) a story that involves

characters and action, and (2) a storyteller, who is called the narrator. A narrator who does not participate in the story is called heterodiegetic whereas the one who takes part in it is homodiegetic (Genette 255-56).

In *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative* Manfred Jahn states that a heterodiegetic narrator is never a character in the story. He has a position outside the story, having unlimited knowledge and authority. This makes it easy for the reader to accept what he would not accept in real life:

Heterodiegetic narrators typically assume the power of omniscience – knowing everything – as if this were the most natural thing in the world. When inclined to speak overtly, heterodiegetic narrators can speak directly to their addressees, and they can liberally comment on action, characters, and storytelling itself. Homodiegetic narrators can do that too, of course, but owing to their specific 'human limitations,' especially their lack of omniscience they tend to do it differently. (N 1.15)

According to the *Encyclopedia of Literary Critics and Criticism* there are three types of narrators: Autodiegetic, Homodiegetic and Heterodiegetic. An autodiegetic narrator tells his own story. The homodiegetic narrator takes part in the narrative like an onlooker who is present in person, but does not talk about himself. Being a witness to

the events in the story, he poses to have a kind of control over the narrative. The heterodiegetic narrator is not a character in the narrative. He does not participate in the action, but he can move on as he likes, and be present in some places and absent in others. He can also fly to varying periods of time and go beyond the events in the narrative. He is in a way omniscient, and hence has an authoritative voice for he knows the 'what' and 'how' of the characters and 'how' and 'when' the narrative will begin and come to an end.

The concept of the three types of narrators is explicated by Susan Sontag in *Barthes: Selected Writings*. As an answer to her own question, "Who is the donor of the narrative?" Sontag explains:

There are various conceptions seem to have been formulated for this question. The first holds that a narrative emanates from a person. This person has a name, the author, in whom there is an endless exchange between the "personality" and the "art" of a perfectly identified individual who periodically takes up his pen to write a story: the narrative then having simply the expression of an *I* external to it. (282)

According to this specification, the narrator is an autodiegetic one. Sontag moves on to a second type of narrators: "The second conception regards the narrator as a sort of omniscient, apparently

impersonal, consciousness that tells the story from the superior point of view, that of God: the narrator is at once inside his characters and outside them” (282).

The third type according to Sontag is a recent concept: “The third and most recent conception decrees that the narrator must limit his narrative to what the characters can observe or know, everything proceeding as if each of the characters in turn were the sender of the narrative” (282). It may be referred that the first refers to the autodiegetic, the second, to the heterodiegetic and the third, to the homodiegetic.

The presence of the author behind the narrator is an interesting factor to be reckoned with, in a narrative. There need not be a coincidence between a narrator and an author. In fact, “The narrator is a carefully stage-managed effect. . . . no narrative is in essence the voice of an author; no narrative necessarily takes us back to an author’s experience and attitudes” (Tambling 34). The author’s values may be presented through the narrator, but the narrator’s thoughts and feelings may not be that of the author. Jeremy Tambling observes in *Narrative and Ideology*: “The narrator’s ideology may be at a distance from the author’s in cases where the narrator is presented for criticism: or where the narrator is presented as unreliable . . . . But the narrator should never be given more status than that of a character in the text” (34).

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne C Booth states that the author's judgement is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it. Whether its particular forms are harmful or serviceable is always a complex question, a question that cannot be settled by any easy reference to abstract rules. It should not be forgotten that though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear (20). The umbilical cord connecting a narrative to the author is always intact whatever critics may claim down the years. Rimmon-Kenan endorses the same opinion in *Narrative Fiction* when she says: "An author may embody in a work ideas, beliefs, emotions other than or even quite opposed to those he has in real life; he may also embody different ideas, beliefs and emotions in different works" (87).

About Khushwant Singh narration it may be said that he assumes the roles of the autodiegetic, homodiegetic and the heterodiegetic narrator in accordance with the need of the narrative. Gillian Dooley observes in the article, "Attitudes to Political Commitment in Three Indian Novels: Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, and Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*":

Each writer has an idiosyncratic way of revealing his or her own ideals and opinions, and from each novel we can

learn something about the underlying attitudes the author holds to the difficult question of the individual's place in history, and whether loyalty to a particular ideal or system of political thought is desirable or useful. (Dhawan 32)

This dissertation is based on the typology of narrators deduced by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. The concepts have been slightly adapted to suit the present study. The areas chosen are (1) The Extent of the Narrator's Participation (2) The Degree of the Narrator's Perceptibility and (3) The Reliability of the Narrator's Rendering. The study, focusing on the narrators in Khushwant Singh's short stories and novels, is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is divided into three sections: (a) the first section traces the brief history of the short story form and the novel. (b) The second section of the same chapter introduces Khushwant Singh in the light of his life and works. (c) The third section gives a brief explanation of narratology, in general, and the narrator, in particular. This section also lays out the description of the chapters of the study. The second chapter, "The Extent of the Narrator's Participation," deals with the three types of narrators – autodiegetic, homodiegetic and heterodiegetic – and attempts to find out the extent of the narrator's participation in the stories and the novels: *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, *Delhi* and

*The Company of Women*. Chapter Three, “The Degree of the Narrator’s Perceptibility,” analyses the role of the overt and covert narrators in the works. There are many overt narrators and a few covert ones sprinkled here and there. This chapter makes a study of the overt narrator from five angles: (a) Specific Setting (b) Character Confines (c) Unsaid Statements (d) Schematic Compression and (e) Discrete Discernment. Chapter Four, “The Reliability of the Narrator’s Rendering,” deals with three levels of reliability. The narrators may be fully reliable, partly reliable and unreliable. None of the Khushwant Singh’s narrators is totally unreliable. All the same, the irony and exaggeration mingled in the works make the narration appear unreliable but endearing. Nevertheless, the dash of unreliability is negligible in comparison with reliability. Chapter Five “The Narrator as Observer and Server” concludes the probe into the narrator’s role and functions. The difference between the narrator and the author in all these cases is hairline. In fact their observations overlap. Thus the works of Khushwant Singh reveal his own observation as that of the narrator. To put it in other words, these chapters probe into the author’s power of observation and the service he renders to his reader. Singh’s power of observation has three important qualities – concentration, respect and self-discipline. The service offered to the readers can be measured at

four different levels – aesthetic pleasure, emotional appeal, intellectual awareness and enlightening delight.

One of India's celebrated authors, and the most widely read journalist, apart from being an outspoken public figure, Singh has established himself as a distinguished Indian writer of English.



*Everyone has a story. It's often told to great  
roaring laughter at dinner-parties and rolled  
eyes and groans at family gatherings.*

*Julia Kamyz Lane*

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EXTENT OF THE NARRATOR'S PARTICIPATION

As the title suggests this chapter analyses the narrator's participation in the narratives. The attempt here is to study the narratives and find out how far the narrator participates in each story. He may participate in the story fully, partially or not at all. Some times, he may be fully personified and portrayed on a realistic level, and at other times, he may recount a story without personal involvement. That is, the narrator may be either absent from or present in the story he narrates.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Literary Critics and Criticism* there are three types of narrators: Autodiegetic, Homodiegetic and Heterodiegetic. An autodiegetic narrator tells his own story. The homodiegetic narrator takes part in the narrative in a way. He is a sort of onlooker who is present in person, but he does not talk about himself. Being a witness to the events in the story, he poses to have a kind of control over the narrative. The heterodiegetic narrator is not a character in the narrative. He does not participate in the action, but he can move on as he likes, and be present in some places and absent in others. He can also fly to varying periods of time and go beyond the events in the narrative. He is in a way omniscient, and hence has an

authoritative voice for he knows the 'what' and 'how' of the characters and 'how' and 'when' the narrative will come to an end.

An autodiegetic narrator is the one who tells his own story. He plays a central role in the stories he narrates, and so he is the protagonist narrator. When the narrator is a character in a narrative, it is clear that he can narrate only certain things. As a rule he cannot narrate directly what goes on in places where he is not present. He cannot also narrate what is inside other people's heads, what they think about and what they dream. However in this type of narration the reader is very close to the narrator, and may have access to the mind of the narrator. Homodiegetic narration also allows the narrator to show the reader how the narrator thinks, feels and reacts. One of the pleasures of the first person narration is that the reader can experience how the world looks at somebody else. Thus the homodiegetic narration has made an inside view of the narrator possible.

The homodiegetic narrator does not demand the power of the all-knowing, the omniscient. He exists in the same world as those of the characters and he may be, more or less an important character in the story. Anyway the scope of a homodiegetic narrator is unduly limited compared to that of a heterodiegetic omniscient narrator.

Quite contrary to the narrators mentioned, the heterodiegetic narrator who is absent in the narrative narrates the experience of others.

He has a position outside the world of the story, and he assumes the power of omniscience. He comments on characters, their actions and even on the story-telling. The heterodiegetic narrator is very powerful because he can order events as he pleases. In addition, he can find out what he wants to know about the characters' minds. The heterodiegetic narrators may be classified into the omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator and the partially omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator. An omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator who has a wide scope, can give information not only regarding the characters' outward expressions and utterances but also their thoughts and feelings. The word "omniscient" is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as, knowing all things, or infinite in knowledge. The heterodiegetic narrator is considered omniscient, but in the act of representation he is forced to select certain areas of knowledge for narration and to deselect others. He is able to allow some characters' voices to be heard and other voices be suppressed. As Rimmon-Kenan certifies:

An omniscient narrator . . . can go where s/he likes: to some scenes and not others; to different time periods and not others; inside characters' heads; and to Olympian positions, above and beyond the events in the narrative.

An omniscient narrator can use a narratorial voice to say what s/he likes without fear of it being out of

character . . . The omniscient narrator also tends to know how and where the narrative will end. (94)

Thus the omniscient narrator can comment on whatever he likes, can analyze the character's motives, or describe situations which none has watched. The omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator has familiarity with the character's innermost thoughts and feelings, has knowledge of his past, present and future, is present with the character in secret places, and is aware of what happens side by side at several places.

On the other hand, the partially omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator is not omniscient in principle. Yet, while narrating the story he knows everything about a character's problem and also the solution to his problems. But curiously enough, he is able to step into the shoes of a character at times and participate in the story.

The short stories of Khushwant Singh have all types of narrators mentioned above. "Posthumous," "The Man With a Clear Conscience," "The Morning After the Night Before," and "My Own My Native Land" belong to the autodiegetic type of narration. Fifteen stories out of thirty-two belong to the homodiegetic narration type. They are "The Mark of Vishnu," "The Butterfly," "The Interview," "The Portrait of A Lady," "A Punjab Pastoral," "The Great Difference," "When Sikh Meets Sikh," "The Insurance Agent," "The Fawn," "The Bottom-Pincher," "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia," "India is a Strange

Country,” “Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle,” “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar,” and “The Red Tie.” The stories which are narrated by the heterodiegetic narrators are “Karma,” “The Voice of God,” “Kusum,” “The Riot,” “The Rape,” “The Memsahib of Mandla,” “Death Comes to Daulat Ram,” “Man, How the Government of India Run!,” “Black Jasmine,” “A Bride for the Sahib,” “A Love Affair in London,” “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” and “The Convert.”

“Posthumous,” a homodiegetic story gives an account of the narrator himself. So the story is generally homodiegetic and particularly autodiegetic. It gives pleasure and delight to the reader as the narrator attempts to view the happenings just after his death, especially before the burial of his body. While he imagines the reaction of his close friends on his death, he sets the readers enjoying themselves at the ordeal. The narrator’s observation turns into a service for the humankind. The end of life is an important concern for everyone and yet it is the most avoided subject. The thought of death produces a series of shocks, for it exposes the truths one tries to evade usually. The narrator presumes that his friends and dear ones had put him on a pedestal and glorified him as a great hero. But in his posthumous glory, Singh understands his position more realistically, for the experience was contradictory to his presumptions. There is a stripping off and a coming-to-terms with the stark realities of life. So

there is beauty and joy in the story. The narrator reveals himself happily as none other than Khushwant Singh. The homodiegetic narrator assumes omniscience as he reads about his own death in the paper, as he sees the people visiting him and as he assesses matters in posthumous glory:

In the morning I get the paper before my wife. There is no chance of a squabble over the newspaper as I am downstairs already, and in any case my wife is busy pottering around my corpse. The *Tribune* lets me down. At the bottom of page 3, column 1, I find myself inserted in little brackets of obituary notices of retired civil servants – and that is all. I feel annoyed. (1-2)

Pradeep Trikha rightly observes in the article, “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property”: “Apart from having craftsmanship and perception, Singh has a sense of self criticism which he uses to reveal comedy of life” (Dhawan 317).

In “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” an autodiegetic story, with the narrator as a protagonist, identifies himself as a Sikh man. In the beginning he gives a full-page description of himself and then with the help of an incident continues to elaborate on what he said. The narrator’s observation is beneficial to the readers to help them to withdraw from hypocrisy and make-believe and to come to terms with

reality. As Pradeep ascertains in the article, “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property”: “He comprehends human nature with sympathy and ironic humour in his stories . . .” (Dhawan 319).

Another autodiegetic story “The Morning After the Night Before” provides hilarious laughter. The story is humorous and joyful, especially the delightful narration at the very outset of the story. Very soon the narrator's escapade is described elaborately and that provides pleasure to the readers. The narrator's improper behaviour after being drunk makes the audience and the readers enjoy a hearty laugh. The narrator enumerating an escapade lends his eyes to the reader to see what he went through. The narrator’s frankness is appreciable: “Cold sweat mounted my forehead. Had I really gone that far in drink? What would my wife say when she discovered it? She had warned me that the one thing she would never condone was physical disloyalty. Had I ruined my home life by one senseless fling?” (182). The reader has access to the narrator’s mind, shares the writer’s observation that the separation between conscious and unconscious levels of human mind is hairline thin. In “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property,” Pradeep Trikha comments on the author: “He uses the genre to reveal comedy of life, which makes him an ‘intelligent,’

‘shrewd’ and ‘exciting’ short story writer” (Dhawan 320). Ashok Chopra rightly observes on the writer in “A Publisher’s Dream”:

He worked with simple gut feeling of what the ordinary man in an ordinary workday life wanted to read at the end of the day. And this meant using a language close to the spoken one and writing on the topics that mattered most: entertainment, even if it was often a little bawdy, information that few had, and education which all loved to acquire. (Prasad 137)

In the autodiegetic story “My Own My Native Land,” the protagonist as the narrator talks of his experience as he reaches Bombay harbour. He does not depict the characters’ thoughts or feelings but just witnesses and reports events. The narrator depicts here the lowly condition at the customs office in his native land. His long waiting in the queue, the maladjustments at the office, the appearance of the guardian angel, battling with the hordes of coolies, are all ‘glorified’ as the typical features of his native land. By talking about the peculiar scenes at the customs office, the narrator enlightens the reader on the loving bond between the patriot and the country despite all its unworthiness. Khushwant Singh once uttered in his article “Why I am an Indian”: “I can scarcely breathe, but I yell, ‘Yeah, this is my native

land. I don't like it, but I love it'" (Mehta 7). A striking quality of the narrator is that he is fully conscious from the beginning. The story, which is hardly three pages, takes into consideration a few hours of an afternoon. In the first quarter of the story the narrator notes that they arrived at the Customs shed at 1.30 p.m. (206). In the second quarter the narrator notes, "The Customs clock stood at 2.30" (207). As the narration progresses the narrator uses expressions like, "forty minutes later" (207), "in twenty minutes" (207), "in half an hour" (208) and so on. The narrator notes that when he left the customs officer, "the clock struck five" and "the clock struck six" when they shot out of the pier (208). In this connection one remembers Khushwant Singh's own words in "Why I am an Indian": "My head tells me it's better to live abroad, my belly tells me it is more fulfilling to be in "phoren," but my heart tells me "get back to India" (Mehta 6).

The homodiegetic stories, in which the narrator is a witness, are equally marvellous. "The Mark of Vishnu" is a homodiegetic story in which the narrator "we" is identified in many ways – as "youngsters" (13), as "students" (16), as "the children of the household" (14) and as "a set of four brothers" (16). Sometimes the narrator refers to himself as "we" and at other times "I." His prior knowledge of Gunga Ram the servant, is clearly revealed from his comments on Gunga Ram's beliefs and superstitions. At the same time the narrator admits his limit of not

being omniscient: “He picked up wasps we battered with our badminton rackets and tended their damaged wings. Sometimes he got stung. It never seemed to shake his faith” (13-14). The narrator depicts an illiterate and superstitious Brahmin, Gunga Ram who is in conflict with the younger generation. For Gunga Ram, “Kala Nag” is divine and holy, but the youngsters cannot approve of what Gunga Ram believes. There arises the conflict. For the youngsters “Kala Nag” is only a snake and a specimen to be taken to the laboratory to be experimented. The narrator suggests the truth that superstitions do not have any redemptive value. Further more they are helpful only in sowing destruction. The narrator takes his stand against Gunga Ram and hints that if he had faith in God and love for his fellow creatures he would have been saved. The narrator’s toughness is clear as he himself admits. The narrator has the most appropriate words in order to build beautiful word pictures: “Outside the classroom stood Gunga Ram with a saucer and a jug of milk. . . . With hands folded in prayer he bowed his head to the ground craving forgiveness. In desperate fury, the cobra hissed and spat and bit Gunga Ram all over the head . . .” (16).

“The Portrait of A Lady” belongs to the homodiegetic group of stories. The narrator, identified as “I,” talks about his past experience with his grandma. In fact the narration resembles a memoir. As the narrator winds up the story there is a melancholic feeling or a tinge of

sadness in the reader. The death of the pious old lady and the reaction of the sparrows to that loss, agitate the mind of the reader. The narrator describes, "All over the verandah and in her room right up to where she lay dead and stiff wrapped in the red shroud, thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirping" (31-32). And while the narrator's mother threw crumbs of bread towards them, they took no notice of them. When the corpse was taken off, they flew away quickly. Such a description warms up the soft feelings of the reader.

"The Butterfly" has a homodiegetic narrator "I" which changes to "we" at times. The narrator does not have a major participation in the story as such, except his active witnessing and clear reporting. However he gives an elaborate description of Charles. In fact the story began with the end. A circle is completed at the end of the story. The narrator takes the reader to the past life of Charles and allows him to travel with the narrator and then ends the story where he has begun. As the narrator unfolds the story, the readers come to know how Charles has transformed himself – an Indian who was anglicized by circumstance, shows courage to strip off all Anglicanism from his body and spirit. The narrator depicts the aloofness of Charley at the time of peril and this makes the story emotionally demanding. However, the end of the story is marked by a romantic turn.

The story, "The Interview" has a homodiegetic narrator who is identified as a Public Relations Officer (25). The narrator's keen observation helps him to discuss everything in detail. The readers are capable of viewing the whole scene as they read through. The narrator is an active participant in the story. The ever-observing eye of the narrator takes heed of the trap set for him being the Public Relations Officer and portrays his inability to escape from it. The uninvited guests just rush into the P. R. O.'s office illicitly. The way the intruders choose their seats and their behaviour at the P. R. O.'s office cause laughter and mirth to the readers. The narrator also mocks at the intruders' language. The dilemma in which the narrator is involved in, the limit of the narrator's knowledge in the field of Numismatics, his frankness in admitting it to the readers, are all depicted here.

The homodiegetic narrator in "A Punjab Pastoral" is one of the two principal characters involved in the story. The narrator along with his philanthropic errand depicts the scenic beauty of Soorajpur: "All around it stretched a vast expanse of wheat fields. The corn was ripe and ready for harvesting. A soft breeze blew across the cornfields like ripples over a lake. Under the trees the cattle and the cowherds lay in deep slumber" (42). The narrator seems to suggest that revolution is not an easy task and it cannot be done within a day or two. It's a long process and it needs always a backing up or a follow up. Such facts are

illustrated in the story through the description of a particular incident. The narrator emphasizes the impossibility of bringing people to the path of truth and light if they have been already trapped into a troublesome and superstitious way of life. The narrator, the witness observing the occasion reports it to the readers. His language and style add beauty to the story and make it capable of imparting the intended message.

In the story, “The Great Difference” the narrator “I” is named: Khushwant Singh. The narrator pokes at the religious leaders who do not understand the meaning and essence of religion. Khushwant Singh says that the great difference and the only difference in religion is in the outward manifestation. All people are the same at the core – loveless and hard-hearted. Outward manifestations, mannerisms and some such matters decide the difference between the religions. Singh disdains religions that neglect the individual. At times, the narrator assumes omniscience. The beginning of the story reads like an omniscient narration. The narrator, a participant, witness and a reporter, adopts an ironic and satirical style, and juxtaposes himself with two god men. S. B. Shukla observes in the article “Khushwant Singh”: “The two religious fanatics . . . who though fiercely antagonistic to each other, mis (behave) in an identical fashion towards

the young French girl, Mlle. Dupont, whose steatopygous behind was an invitation to lustfulness forbidden by the laws of man” (Dwivedi 93).

In “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” the narrator identified as “a bearded and turbaned Indian,” gives a detailed picture of the Sikh and about their professions (76). The narrator says that there is nothing racial or hereditary about the professions the Sikhs chooses. In order to prove this point the narrator tells a story of his encounter with Narinjan Singh, the wrestler. The narrator does not have a major role, except that of a witness, an active witness. The narrator’s presence is not prominent. At times he reminds the reader about his presence. The narrator depicts everything he sees, accurately and descriptively. In “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property” Pradeep Trikha observes, “how Indians abroad misrepresent India so much that they often become a butt of ridicule” (Dhawan 317). The story is informative about Sikhs. The narrator states: “As a matter of fact, in India itself other communities belittle the Sikhs as an odd people and have lots of stories making fun of them” (73). Nevertheless the Sikhs ignore such jokes and have a lordly sort of superiority. Singh comments, “Sikhs are not just a crude fighting type” (73). Despite their participation in many battles, “they are essentially a peace loving

people" (73). They were, in fact, the first community to prove the efficacy of passive resistance as a political weapon and paradoxically the first to organize a planned insurrection against the British rule. Their spirit of pioneering is also noted: "There is hardly a country in the world without a Sikh – except perhaps Saudi Arabia and now, Pakistan" (73). The Sikhs occupy various professions such as sentries, policemen, taxi drivers, farmers, artisans, doctors, peddlers, fortune-tellers, and so on. There is nothing racial or hereditary about the profession the Sikhs choose, but they are preferred posts that demand strength, confidence and valour.

"The Insurance Agent" has a homodiegetic narrator "I," identified as "a respectable bachelor having false teeth" (83). Though "I" changes to "we" at times, the narrator's main role is to pour ridicule on the character of the Insurance Agent, Swami, but at the same time putting the responsibility on the malicious people who rated him. In fact "malicious people" is an opportune mask worn by the narrator:

Malicious people said the man was a gate-crasher. But that, as I have already said, is what people with malice said.

.....

Malicious people said Mr Swami loved publicity and paid press cameraman for the photographs that appeared in the papers.

.....

Malicious people said Mr Swami was a snob. But that, as I have already said, was what people with malice said.

.....

Malicious people said Mr Swami was putting it on and his work was of no importance.

.....

Malicious people said this was only sales talk. But that as I have already said is what only people with malice said.

.....

Malicious people said that Mr Swami was an insurance agent and had sold the old man a life insurance policy. But that, as I have already said, is what malicious people said. (84-88)

The narrator increases the satirical effect of the story by the technique of repetition. There is no emotional involvement of the narrator in the story. Like the narrator in "The Interview," the narrator here talks about people who intrude into the privacy of others. The story is a hit at the Life Insurance agents. Without prior information they barge in,

wearing the mask of a friend. Though uninvited they continue to pretend until the truth of the matter is revealed by the comment of “malicious people.”

“The Fawn” is a story of two characters of which one is a homodiegetic narrator. He is involved in the story. The story is depicted as the narrator’s own experience. The narrator is an active participant who takes the readers along with him. His main role is that of a reporter. The insightful narrator understands his own faults as well as his companion’s, whereas his companion is negligent of his defects or unaware of it. The narrator’s ever-observing eye, looking deeply into people’s actions and intentions, sees what they are in reality. He serves them by opening their eyes towards reality, however impure or unwholesome it may be, and helps them to come to terms with it.

“The Bottom-Pincher” has a homodiegetic narrator, identified as a person who likes to pinch the bottoms of people, and who is a law-abiding citizen, a respectable member of the community, and an office goer. In the beginning, the narrator gives a short introduction about himself and reports the positive and the negative aspects of the Bottom Pincher. The narrator’s role is varied – first as an observer, then as a detective, and again as a culprit and, at last, as a guilty one, caught unawares. In the end he surrenders like a little lamb. The narrator points out to inclinations and desires which are not always healthy.

Some people appear gentle and honourable in outward manifestations but succumb to their petty and vulgar desires like bottom pinching. The account turns out more interesting when the narrator corrects the Bottom Pincher through his ceaseless observations and phone calls. It is doubly hilarious when the narrator himself is caught by the police for bottom pinching. Finally he admits, "I had put the noose round my own neck" (126). Though Singh does not warn his reader against bottom pinching, the hint is obvious. Considering the laughter the story provides, in "A Publisher's Dream" Ashok Chopra rightly observes: "More than any other journalist before and since, Khushwant realises the value of lighter moments in the lives of most of us and he realises, above all, that language has to be simple and close to the bone" (Prasad 138).

In the story "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia," the narrator "I" witnesses the action. A traveller in the ship, the narrator does not have an active role in the story as such. But being a co-traveller he reveals the highly funny situation during the journey. The main object of joy is Dr Chakkan Lal, a learned man, who in his search for a blonde girl in the ship after midnight was caught by Mr Tyson, another traveller, and attacked nearly to death. This exciting incident causes a great commotion in the ship at midnight, but slowly through the intervention

of Mrs Tyson, peace and harmony were regained. The end of the story heightens the jubilation by a fancy dress ball, enjoyed by all the travellers. From the beginning to the end Dr Chakkan Lal and the blonde girl amuse and gladden the co-travellers as well as the readers. S. B. Shukla comments in “Khushwant Singh” about the story thus: “What are we to do when we run into men like Dr Chakkan Lal? Just to smile as broadly as we can without any bad taste in the mouth” (Dwivedi 89). As the story moves on, the narrator hides in the background and his role overlaps with that of a heterodiegetic narrator and he assumes an omniscient pose.

“India is a Strange Country” has a homodiegetic narrator “I” is identified as a Sikh (166). Here the narrator’s attempt is to show the reaction of foreigners when they visit India. From the sixteenth-century Mongol invader to the present-day European “box-wallah,” the invaders differ in their opinion and attitude towards India. Some do like India, others do not. Indians usually divide foreigners into three categories. Some hate both India and the Indians. The second category consists of half-haters who dislike Indians but who admire the Indian landscape and the conditions of living in big bungalows with servants, shikar, polo, and so on. The third category loves everything about India and Indians. Singh adds a fourth category, a group whose reactions are uncertain. Moving from the general to the particular, the narrator acts

as a detective in the story and finds out the reason behind the foreigner, Mr Tyson's staying back in India even after most of the Europeans had left. The narrator reports his search and finds the possible answer of the search.

The homodiegetic narrator "I" in "Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle" is one among the participants of the story. The main role of the narrator is that of a witness and a reporter. The narrator painstakingly depicts the character of Mrs and Mr Kanjoos, a description thoroughly enjoyed by the readers. Describing Mr Kanjoos's readiness to accept everyone's hospitality, the narrator tells the reader to be on the look out for people who pretend to be generous. At close quarters such people prove themselves first class "kanjoos." Instead of giving help, they grab every single opportunity to accept it. Pradeep Trikha's comment in "Khushwant Singh's Short Story: Our Exciting Literary Property" appears apt: "Perhaps, the writer zeros in on covetous nature of Indians" (Dhawan 318).

In "Mr Singh and the Colour Bar" the narrator is identified as "we" (175) as no other individual identity is given to him. He becomes one among the listeners of Mr Singh. Later, the narrator appears to practise Mr Singh's advice. The story is supposed to educate and enlighten. Nevertheless it turns out funny. Though Mr Singh waxes

eloquently about colour prejudice and ill mannerism, by the end of the story, he proves himself living against his own word. The story draws a line of demarcation between the educated and the uneducated. The educated can talk effectively about behavioural patterns but they cannot behave well. With absolutely no qualms, the narrator asserts that the educated misbehave and cheat others more than the uneducated.

The narrator “we” in “The Red Tie” is identified as “an anglicized Indian” (202). One among the party of Mr Chishti’s listeners, he has a prior knowledge of Chishti. As he reports Chishti’s experience in the train, he also proves his expertise in mimetic representation. Chishti's meeting with a lady who travels in another train in the opposite direction, his long winking at her, her disappearance from her seat, his anxiety while he hides in the lavatory, and the hearing of the footsteps in the compartment, provide immense pleasure for the readers.

Some of the homodiegetic stories are comparable with each other. In two stories in this section, the narrator is identified clearly as Khushwant Singh himself: “Posthumous” and “The Great Difference.” In other stories the narrators have different roles. He is “a Sikh” in “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” “a bachelor” in “The Insurance Agent,” “a Public Relations Officer” in “The Interview,” “a respectable

member of the community” in “The Bottom-Pincher,” “a bearded and turbaned Indian” in “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” “an anglicized Indian” in “The Red Tie” and so on. It is not possible to believe that all such qualifications exactly refer to the writer, Khushwant Singh.

The narrator in “The Fawn” and “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” talks about characters who possess no clear conscience. The title “The Man With a Clear Conscience” is ironical like “The Fawn” in which after killing the innocent being, the narrator’s companion says to himself, “I feel happy at the end of a day like this, . . . Good exercise. Good sport. No backbiting, no bickering, no hatred, no unkindness” (93). Likewise, in “The Man With a Clear Conscience” the reader is provided with an occasion to judge whether the narrator is just or not. Though the reader agree that the narrator does not have so clear a conscience, the narrator stresses repeatedly, “My conscience was clear” (109). S. B. Shukla’s comment in the article “Khushwant Singh” is apt: “His structural strategy consists in the juxtaposition of contrasts and contradictions. Irony and muted satire are his instruments . . .” (Dwivedi 93).

“The Man With a Clear Conscience” is comparable with “The Bottom-Pincher” for a different aspect. The introductory part of the two stories is exclusively meant for the narrators to talk about themselves. In “The Man With a Clear Conscience” the narrator

introduces himself as a good man, tolerant, sufferable and merciful. Only after describing himself he initiates the narration of the event. Likewise, the narrator in “The Bottom-Pincher” begins the story talking about himself, his desires, his qualities and his precautions against bottom pinching but later succumbs to the indecent practice himself.

In the stories “When Sikh Meets Sikh” and “India is a Strange Country” the narrator moves from the general to the particular. In the beginning of “When Sikh Meets Sikh” the narrator gives information about the Sikh in general (73). Slowly, the narrator moves to a particular Sikh, Narinjan Singh and narrates an incident, which he witnessed. Likewise, in the beginning of “India is a Strange Country” the narrator talks in general about foreigners and their different kinds of reaction to the Indian situation and to Indians. Then the narrator concentrates on a particular person, Mr Kenneth Tyson and his attitude to India.

The protagonists in “A Punjab Pastoral” and “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” are parallel in a way because they aim at reform and renewal. The narrators in both stories show that both Mr Hansen of “A Punjab Pastoral” and Mr Singh of “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” are not redeemed from their human frailties even though they have ideals and advices to impart to others. “Hansen’s eyes were fixed on her. His

mouth was wide open . . . Hansen was trying hard to give his emotions a poetical form. ‘I’ve got it,’ he exclaimed, snapping his fingers and looking up at the sky” (“A Punjab Pastorate” 45). “The *devi* closed her eyes in ecstasy. ‘He took me out dancing and we used to have drinks in his room after that’” (“Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” 178). Shukla observes the righteous anger of the writer in the article “Khushwant Singh” thus: “His ire rises against hypocrisy and pretentiousness, corruption and ineptitude, superstition and bigotry, anything which comes in the way of healthy and humane living” (Dwivedi 91).

“Karma” has a heterodiegetic narrator, whose prior knowledge of the characters is undisputed. He is able to speak about Lady Lal thus: “She was fond of a little gossip and had no one to talk to at home. Her husband never had any time to spare for her” (9). Being omniscient, the narrator is capable of viewing Lachmi and Mohan Lal simultaneously even though they are seated poles apart. Even though the narrator depicts the thoughts and the mind of both characters, his quizzical projections of Sir Mohan Lal is obvious. Though he supports Lady Lal, he juxtaposes Sir Mohan Lal and Lachmi for the reader to decide. According to the reader and the narrator Sir Lal stands for all that is pompous and artificial, whereas Lachmi, in her natural goodness, is without any shade of artificiality. The title of the short story is very apt as it shows the reward for each one’s Karma. The story

gives the awareness that pride goes before a fall. Sir Mohan Lal becomes the prey in the hands of the two English soldiers who hardly know him. This story is based upon the doctrine of Karma:

The Indian people believe that whatever one does consciously will, sooner or later bring upon him the result he merits, and that there is no escape from it. What we sow we must reap. The Karma doctrine signifies not merely that the events of our life are determined by their antecedent causes, but also that there is absolute justice in the rewards and punishments that fall to our lot.  
(Chandra 15)

Focusing on the character of Sir Mohan Lal, Pradeep Trikha comments in the article, “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property”: “The crux of the matter is that anglicised Indians unnecessarily ape the West, they must respect their own culture otherwise they are left with a handful of dust in their endeavour to imitate others. This they do at the cost of losing their self-respect, individuality and identity” (Dhawan 317).

The heterodiegetic narrator in “The Voice of God” reports and summarises his prior knowledge of the village Bhamba, its people and their daily affairs. The narrator in the story views corrupt electoral

practices and serves the society by revealing it to the people so that they might take steps to correct themselves. On the day of the election in Bhamba, the narrator notes that 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. The Seth's lorries did not take them back nor did Ganda Singh give them more liquor for sustenance" (39). The narrator opens the eyes of the reader towards such political intrigues and malpractices. The result of the polls was in the expected order: Ganda Singh, Kartar Singh and then Baba Ram Singh. Singh draws attention to such malpractices and the deceitful behaviour of the authorities.

The narrator in the story "Kusum" begins to talk about Kusum's outward features, her academic performances and her beliefs. He then focuses on her nineteenth birthday, the presents sent by her friends and her reactions to them. The narrator is able to depict even the posture of her mind; "Kusum cycled home with her mind a complete void" (47). He notes that none of her family members or friends had come to the scene, and conveys the message that there are no human beings devoid of the desire to be attracted and to be loved. But the narrator's

omniscience is limited when it comes to the case of the hawker: “He seemed to be enjoying the situation” (47)

“The Riot” has a heterodiegetic narrator who talks of the atmosphere of the town. His focus is on two dogs, Rani and Moti about whom he talks elaborately and with a cinematic effect. The narrator’s omniscience helps him to read Rani’s fancies, her thoughts and disappointments: “. . . with the advent of spring, Rani’s fancy lightly turned to thoughts of Moti and she sauntered across to Ramzan’s stall. . . . She was disappointed” (50). Regarding this story, S. B. Shukla comments on Khushwant Singh in the article “Khushwant Singh”: “He offers a bitter comment on communal riots in “The Riot” by showing how a petty incident of the mating of a dog and a bitch engulfs the whole city in communal conflagration. While the humans loot, burn and kill, the real cause of the riot lives in love and peace” (Dwivedi 92).

The heterodiegetic narrator in “The Rape” gives an elaborate description of what Dalip Singh, lying on his charpoy, sees and feels. Supportive and sympathetic towards Dalip, the narrator watches and witnesses what Dalip sees externally and goes through internally. Following Dalip wherever he is, the omniscient narrator seems to know even his pulse rate: “Dalip Singh was wide awake and his heart beat wildly. The loathsome figure of Banta Singh vanished from his mind.

He shut his eyes and tried to recreate Bindo as he saw her in the starlight. He desired her and in his dreams he possessed her” (54). Aware of the past related to Dalip, the narrator is able to know his desires and intentions as well. In a way he also opens the eyes of the reader to the malpractices in the court:

Banta Singh had hired a lawyer to help the government prosecutor. . . . He introduced the court orderly and the clerk to Banta Singh and made him tip them. He got a wad of notes from his client to pay the government prosecutor. The machinery of justice was fully oiled.

Dalip Singh had no counsel nor defence witnesses. (57)

In “The Memsahib of Mandla” the heterodiegetic narrator is on the side of the Dysons. Extending his view to the tropical jungle, the birds, and the variations in the living world as the twilight turns to night the observer-narrator reports what Dyson sees and says. Keen on observing the surroundings, the narrator watches the footprints of the figure, which frightens the characters in the story. He builds up suspense focusing on the externals of the characters.

In the story “Death Comes to Daulat Ram,” the narrator’s attempt is to read the mind of Ranga. The story, which is the report of an event as it is recalled by Ranga, gives a crisp and clear description

of the setting. The narrator knows the manners, the feelings and even the family tradition of Ranga:

It had been a family tradition to die surrounded by friends and relations. No one in Ranga's family had died alone or suddenly. There was an uncanny something which brought people together – sometimes by letters and telegrams; sometimes it was just intuition which drove them to the bed of a departing relative. (81)

In “Man, How the Government of India Run!” the heterodiegetic narrator begins the story, reporting the dealings in the stenographers' room. The narrator throws light into the happenings of a typical government office. One of the characters in the story, Sunder Singh, comments on the government officials thus: "All they do is attend meetings, drink cups of tea, dictate a few memos and then go home to their memsahibs pretending they are tired because they have been so busy" (94). When the employer warns the employee on being late, he gets the answer: "You don't talk mister. You never come to office before 11 a.m. Today for the first time you are punctual and I for reasons beyond control am five minutes late and you give me a lecture to drink!" (95). The employees understand the limitations of their superiors and they mimic them in their private groups. After misusing

time according to their whims and fancies, the employees pretend to be busy. Singh notes it in the voice of an employee, "Don't you know how to appear busy? Always go late for lunch even if you have nothing to do so that your wife at least thinks you have been working very hard" (97-98). The tricks played by the employees are many. When Sunder Singh goes out to play he keeps an incomplete letter on the typewriter and says to the chaprasi, "If the Sahib rings for me before 12.30 just tell him that I must have just gone somewhere – to the bathroom or for some work, say my coat is there and things on the table. If it is after that, say we've just this minute gone for our lunch" (99). The employees spend hours reading newspapers during office time. They also discuss news for long hours and the narrator reports on it; "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 midday" (98). The employees understand the employers well enough. The narrator notes that some employees know how to be successful at work. Mr Singh, one of the characters in the story, gives tips regarding the secret of success in government service:

You only have to get on with the man just above you and forget everyone else. It has nothing to do with work or ability or anything like that. Say "Yes Sir, Yes Sir" to everything he says; call at his house on festivals with

garlands or sweets for his family; play with his children, if he has any, or flirt madly with his wife if he hasn't; do little jobs for his household like getting the electrician or carpenter when required – and you will get A+ for everything. Then nobody can touch you. Promotion after promotion. You may even become an Under Secretary.

(102)

Even when the employees waste the whole day, they put up an outward show of dedication and pose like they are the great ones who work for the running of the government of India. At times the narrator talks for them, supporting them. Displaying his prior knowledge of the three stenographers, the narrator talks about their inclinations and feelings. Following Sunder Singh, the narrator is able to read the mind of the characters and their time-consciousness: “The little conscience at their having left their offices early had vanished with the beginning of the official lunch-hour break of 1-2 p.m. and the knowledge that bosses who left for their lunches late seldom returned before 3-4 p.m. after having their afternoon siestas” (100). The story is enlightening as it gives the joy of truth. In “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property” Pradeep Trikha rightly observes, “He is one of the few writers who observe, record and analyse people and place freshly without recourse to hackneyed situations” (Dhawan 320).

The heterodiegetic narrator in the story, "Black Jasmine" understands the condition into which Bannerjee was thrown and reads his mind: "Visions of the Martha he had known in Paris came back to him and a forgotten passion warmed his limbs" (118). The narrator is able to see through clearly the frozen memories of Bannerjee. He summarises beautifully Martha's visit to Bannerjee's house and observes that Martha had taken initiative earlier but now it is Bannerjee who takes the lead. There is not much description of the surroundings except where they are absolutely necessary. The story is a dig at lustful emotions. The illegal relationship of Bannerjee and the Negro girl, Martha, during and after their college days arouses excitement in the readers. The narrator seems to warn the readers against such lusty emotions which may overrule reason and thus bring about unpleasant after-effects. In the article "Khushwant Singh" Shukla comments, "Stories such as these are by and large stories of humour, humour which is the natural outcome of an untamed, unsophisticated passion for life" (Dwivedi 91).

The heterodiegetic narrator in the story, "A Bride for the Sahib" is one of the superb stories with an educative and enlightening quality. The narrator talks about an "un-Indian Indian" namely Mr Sen who is a Hindu by birth and was taught in an Anglo-Indian School. His accent and mannerisms have been transformed into English. The narrator

depicts the incidents on the day of his marriage and also the following days. The root cause of his problems arises from the day of marriage, probably because he marries a girl of his mother's choice, not his own. So the bride and the groom are at two poles, in thoughts, words and deeds. As the conflict begins, they are unable to spend the honeymoon according to their hearts' desire. The girl who is more sensitive leaves her husband and after a time returns to her husband's house, just to take off her life. On the other hand, Mr Sen, irritated and angered by his wife, spends his time uselessly, quite unable to cope up with his life partner and the new life. The observer-narrator's underlying message is that marriage is the beginning of a new life in which one enters after a long-term preparation and careful thoughts. There may be differences between the bride and the groom in many matters, but in the union of their hearts and minds these disparities have to come to a halt. Sen's tension arises because he belonged to one world before his marriage, but he had to live in another world after his marriage. Within the grasp of a strong ego, he had to struggle hard for a married life. In fact there was promise of a successful married life because Sen's mother and uncle had consulted a pandit who declared that the stars of the would-be pair were ideally suited to each other. Auspicious dates for the marriage were chosen. But reality proved that the pandit was wrong. Singh perhaps voices his opinion through Sen's mother's words, "love

and patience conquer all" (142). The fact remains that the marriage could have been a success, if Sen had been loving and patient with his wife. Well aware of Mr Sen's past, the narrator is always with him, reporting what Mr Sen speaks, what he watches, and what he thinks. The story begins soon after the wedding day of Mr Sen, and then the narrator takes the reader to Sen's past and then comes to the present, and reads his thoughts and feelings: "Would his wife be a Memsahib, he mused as he drove back home for lunch" (132). The narrator moves very fast, giving picturesque descriptions and delving deep into the conversation and secret thoughts.

The heterodiegetic narrator in the story "A Love Affair in London" focuses on Kamini, and follows her wherever she is. There are particular spots where aesthetic joy is very explicit. For example, the narrator notes the first time when Kamini was complimented for her looks: "Thereafter, every time she looked at herself in the mirror, the words came back to her and she had the odd sensation of Smith staring at her, making her embarrassingly conscious of her young womanhood" (186). Kamini believed that if she had willed it ardently, somewhere she could run into Mr Robert Smith I. C. S. with whom she had had a curious affair once. And the narrator affirms that people who were attracted to the same thing were drawn often together. Assuming her past he says: "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!” (184). The narrator talks of her beliefs, her thoughts, hopes, decisions, obsessions, daydreaming, apprehensions, resolutions and feelings (184-87). Looking through her eye he hears what she says to herself and is thus able to read her mind and memory.

The narrator in the story “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” seems to know Langford long before, and is able to depict the psyche of the characters: “He (Langford) recalled the fiasco of the meeting and thought how much more embarrassing it would be if the same thing were to happen in the plenary session” (197). Generally the narrator focuses on the outward expressions.

The heterodiegetic narrator in the story, “The Convert” provides matter for serious consideration. He portrays the picture of a woman who is courageous enough to forgive and forget all those whom she hates. Though it was a praiseworthy act, when people around the woman refused to understand her motivation and started to gossip, she could not withstand the accusation. A remarkable point made by the narrator here is that when people change their past way of life, the society is not ready to accept them with their new faces and their new way of life. He highlights the calamities sown by the gossipmongers,

but he also suggests that if Mrs Sethi's conversion was deep enough, no obstacle would have hindered her from being good and doing good. The narrator's observation is the result of his acquaintance with Mrs Sethi and his omniscience regarding her whereabouts and hence he is a good judge of her character.

In "Karma" and "A Bride for the Sahib" the respective narrators focus their attention on the couples and the differences in their attitudes. Sir Mohan Lal and his wife Lachmi in "Karma" are seated at two poles like Mr Sunny Sen and his wife Kalyani in "A Bride for the Sahib." Both bridegrooms are Sahibs and they are real wogs; meaning, "westernized oriental gentlemen." The narrator seems to imply that the brides are not up to the Sahibs and the bridegrooms are inefficient to accept the typical Indian ladies. Both couples do not get on well. The narrator depicts the characters' inner thoughts clearly. In "Karma" the narrator shows the couple's inability to adjust, thus keeping themselves apart. But in "A Bride for the Sahib" the narrator proves the same, by bringing the couples together and showing their disparities. In "Karma" the narrator depicts Lady Lal as more understanding and adjustable than Sir Lal. But Mrs Sunny Sen is too young and strange to the ways of the Sahibs.

The narrators in "Kusum" and "A Love Affair in London" are very keen on reading the mind of the characters. In both stories the

narrators focus on single characters – Kusum in “Kusum” and Kamini in “A Love Affair in London.” The narrators talk of a single incident which deeply influenced the character in consideration. After narrating the incident, the narrator in “Kusum” depicts Kusum’s condition: “The wrath disappeared but the picture of the rascally hawker winking and making lewd suggestions stuck in her mind. Nobody had ever done that to her before. Did the hawker find her attractive?” (48). Likewise in the story, “A Love Affair in London,” the narrator depicts Kamini’s mind: “Kamini had not quite understood what the lines meant except that they were some sort of compliment to her looks. . . . Thereafter, every time she looked at herself in the mirror, the words came back to her and she had the odd sensation of Smith staring at her, making her embarrassingly conscious of her young womanhood.” (186)

The narrators in “The Voice of God” and “Man, How the Government of India Run!” open the eyes of the readers to view the malpractices prevalent in the political and social spheres. The narrator in “The Voice of God” depicts how the politicians try and gain their ends making the illiterate people blindfolded. Likewise the narrator in “Man, How the Government of India Run!” is too confident to depict how the Government employees as well as employers misuse their duty time and how they cheat their authorities, family and themselves.

Khushwant Singh's observation of political and moral anarchy provides the theme for these short stories.

“Death Comes to Daulat Ram” and “The Memsahib of Mandla” have ghost-figures in them. In “Death Comes to Daulat Ram” the narrator talks of an unusual old beggar, his similarity to Ranga's grandfather and the coincidence of his disappearance and Daulat Ram's death. Likewise, in “The Memsahib of Mandla” the narrator talks of a figure in white dress which appears during night and whose footprints are seen on the lawn. In both stories the figures are the ghosts of the people who are dead and gone. In both stories the writer deftly weaves an eerie atmosphere and brings the mysterious and the supernatural to life. According to V. A. Shahane, Khushwant Singh's “treatment of the intangible, inexplicable, and supernatural elements of human experience and its differentiation from the activities of experience and its differentiation from the actualities of experience brings out his view of the complexity of life and the danger of over simplifying it” (qtd. in Dwivedi 93).

In “Black Jasmine” and “The Rape” the omniscient narrators are too outspoken while depicting the characters. They try to read the characters' emotional and feeling levels, and depict their past and present actions. Considering the end of both stories S. B. Shukla comments in the article “Khushwant Singh”: “Interspersed with some

lively descriptions and minutiae of manners, the tales of Khushwant Singh keep screwing up the note of suspense while they move towards the probable but unexpected climactic end” (Dwivedi 87).

Three Stories, “The Memsahib of Mandla,” “Death Comes to Daulat Ram” and “The Mark of Vishnu” show that the characters are influenced by different kinds of superstitions. In “The Portrait of A Lady” and “The Convert” there is the portrait of a lady. The former is a story about the narrator’s grandmother, a solemn but a beautiful good old lady. The lady in “The Convert” is a lady who took the risk of changing for the better, but the society was not willing to accept her new face. According to Suresh Kohli in “A Writer and His Niche,” the story demonstrates “a distinct change in narrative style, greater freedom in the use of language, more confidence and maturity” (Prasad 142). Suresh Kohli is also of the view that there is never a dull moment in his stories. He adds: “His terrific sense of humour, inventiveness, precision, use of irony, deployment of pathos, sentiments and emotions, attention to environment – all find adequate place in his shorter fiction, and in craftsmanship can be compared with the best anywhere in any language of the world” (Prasad 141- 42).

The narrators in the short stories have one major point in common. The heterodiegetic narrator yearns to cross the border to peep at the homodiegetic, while the homodiegetic shows an inclination

towards the omniscience of the heterodiegetic. In the same way, the autodiegetic often leaps over its fence to enter the area of the homodiegetic and vice versa.

*Train to Pakistan*

The novel *Train to Pakistan* belongs to the heterodiegetic type of narration. The locale of the novel is Mano Majra and the time, a few weeks of the fateful days of August and September of 1947. The main action of the novel takes place in the village, Mano Majra, which is described as one of the “oases of peace” (*Train to Pakistan* 4). The village embraced all Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians in one clasp. The omniscient narrator of the novel, who is not a character in the story, takes an authoritative stand and dares to depict the mental state of the people. Written in the background of the partition of India, the novel clearly portrays some of the painful aftermaths of the same. Along with the partition of the land, values of greater concern were also shattered. Peace, love, unity, cooperation and nonviolence were wiped off and animosity, inhumanity, hatred, horror, violence and revenge, were planted. In other words, the evacuation of people led to evaporation of values. If the novel is divided into two, the first two paragraphs form the first part of the novel, and the remaining whole, the second. In fact, the second part of the novel displays elaborately what the narrator condenses in the first two paragraphs.

The narrator being omniscient, peeps into the life of the characters and unearths all the truths for the sake of the reader. Iqbal's anxiety to save his life is revealed in the lines: "Iqbal realized that it was the company of Jugga and the constable, who were known Sikhs, that really saved him from being stopped and questioned. He wished he could get out of this place where he had to prove his Sikhism to save his life. He would pick up his things from Mano Majra and catch the first train" (143). Similarly the narrator exposes Jugga's hope that Nooran would stay back even if all the Muslims left Mano Majra. He wished that her father would also stay back with her: "Even if he had left with the other Muslims, Nooran would be hiding somewhere in the fields, or would have come to his mother" (143). The narrator's omniscience is also seen in the portrayal of Hukum Chand's guilt feelings: "Hukum Chand felt a little foolish. The girl had been there two nights, and there she was sleeping all by herself in a chair. . . . He felt old and unclean. . . . He felt a pang or remorse" (83).

As the narrator talks about Jugga's and Hukum Chand's past experiences, he gives details of the punishments Jugga had gone through: "Hands and feet pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policemen sitting on them. Testicles twisted and squeezed till one became senseless with pain. Powdered red chillies thrust up the rectum by rough hands, and the sensation of having the tail on fire for

several days” (67). The narrator delineates the past of Hukum Chand thus: “Death had always been an obsession with Hukum Chand. As a child, he had seen his aunt die after the birth of a dead child. . . . He had got over the immediate terror of death, but the idea of ultimate dissolution was always present in his mind. It made him kind, charitable and tolerant” (76-77).

The omniscient narrator depicting the inner conflicts of characters, reveals Iqbal’s agony related to the gangsters’ plan to derail the train: “Should he go out, face the mob and tell them in clear ringing tones that this was wrong – immoral? Walk right up to them with his eyes fixing the armed crowd in a frame – without flinching, without turning, like the heroes . . .” (147). The narrator drops hints here and there about the events, which are to be followed in the course of the novel. This makes each incident believable and realistic. For example, on the day Iqbal reaches Mano Majra, he sleeps dreaming a peaceful life in jail and early next morning he gets arrested.

The omniscient narrator uses the flashback technique to depict Iqbal’s train journey. After his arrival at Mano Majra he tries to sleep since he had spent the previous night sitting in a crowded third-class compartment. As he tries to sleep, all the past events in the train disturb his mind, and the omniscient narrator faithfully records all of them. The same technique of flashback is used to describe the horrible

scenes witnessed by Hukum Chand in panoramic succession. He saw women and children huddled in a corner, with their eyes dilated with horror, and their mouths still open as though their agonized cries had made them speechless:

Some of them did not have a scratch on their bodies. There were bodies crammed against the far end wall of the compartment, looking in terror at the empty windows through which must have come shots, spears and spikes. There were lavatories, jammed with corpses of young men . . . The most vivid picture was that of an old peasant with a long white beard; he did not look dead at all. He sat jammed between rolls of bedding on the upper rack meant for luggage, looking pensively at the scenes below him. (75)

In contrast to horrific scenes, the omniscient narrator is able to bring in a kind of harmony – a harmony of opposites and thus provide aesthetic joy in the novel. On one side, the narrator describes the dacoity in Mano Majra, followed by killing, firing, wailing, and so on: “On the roof of his house, the moneylender was beaten with butts of guns and spear handles and kicked and punched. He sat on his haunches, crying and spitting blood. . . . In sheer exasperation, one of

the men lunged at the crouching figure with his spear” (10). As such atrocities happen on one side, the narrator focuses on another part of the same village where the situation is a love-scene between Juggut Singh and Nooran. And the omniscient narrator witnesses it: “Juggut Singh started with the hand on his eyes and felt his way up from the arm to the shoulder and then on to the face. He caressed her cheeks, eyes and nose that his hands knew so well. He tried to play with her lips to induce them to kiss his fingers” (12). Both these disparities are described one after the other and so the description attains the height of relief.

There are other harmonious occasions too. For example, when a group of people plans for massacre and revenge, some others sacrifice their lives for the good of thousands of people. The strange boy and his group who appears all of a sudden at gurudhwara, challenge the assembly gathered there, to join him in his revenge: “For each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. . . That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them we also play this game of killing and looting” (130). When Iqbal hears this from Meet Singh of gurudhwara, he is moved and concerned about the coming calamity. He feels awfully bad for the lives of the many. Though he thinks in terms of self-preservation first, the point of sacrifice also strikes him: "The doer must do only when the

receiver is ready to receive. Otherwise, the act is wasted" (148). While his meditation ends without any action 'budmash number ten' acts in time so that he becomes the saviour of a whole lot. Even though Juggut Singh was counted as a budmash, he is not devoid of humane qualities. It is clear from his words to Iqbal: "Kill my own village bania? Babuji, who kills a hen which lays eggs? Besides, Ram Lal gave me money to pay lawyers when my father was in jail. I would not act like a bastard" (93).

The omniscient narrator changes over to the partially omniscient while he introduces the characters. Juggut Singh and Nooran are first introduced to the reader through the dacoits. The reader is given more details about Juggut Singh through the conversation of the subinspector and the magistrate: "You must remember Juggut Singh, son of the dacoit Alam Singh who was hanged two years ago. He is that very big fellow. He is the tallest man in this area. He must be six foot four – and broad. He is like a stud bull" (22). The magistrate answered: "Oh yes, I remember. What does he do to keep himself out of mischief? He used to come up before me in some case or other every month." With a leer on his lips the subinspector said: "Sir, what the police of the Punjab has failed to do, the magic of the eyes of a girl of sixteen has done." Hukum Chand enquired: "He has a liaison?" The subinspector revealed the identity of the Muslim weaver's daughter: "She is dark, but her

eyes are darker. She certainly keeps Jugga in the village. And no one dares say a word against the Muslims. Her blind father is the mullah of the mosque” (22).

Another remarkable thing about the partially omniscient narrator is that from the beginning of the novel he is careful enough not to reveal the identity of Iqbal. Bhai Meet Singh enquires whether Iqbal is Iqbal Singh. No answer is given. Bhai continues with his next question. Then playing with the name of Iqbal, the narrator opines that Iqbal could be a Muslim, Iqbal Mohammed or a Hindu, Iqbal Chand or a Sikh, Iqbal Singh. It is one of the few names common to the three communities. Thus the narrator builds up suspense in the story. The partially omniscient narrator who takes so much care from the beginning not to reveal the identity of Iqbal, exposes the truth towards the end of the novel: “The situation was different now, and in any case it was true that he was born a Sikh” (144). This leap from the partially omniscient narrator’s role to the omniscient narrator’s is quite unexpected but thrilling. The police too play a dubious role in declaring Iqbal ‘a Muslim’ at first and then ‘a Sikh’ later. V. T. Girdhari in “Historical Text, Human Context: A Study of *Train To Pakistan*” agrees that the novel is “not just a political novel but a social one – a politics-polluted society, played with by the bureaucrats for

their personal private ends, under the pretensions of executing the so-called policies of the so-called Government” (Dhawan 83).

The heterodiegetic narrator who is also active in the novel, states that with the advent of new events and happenings people are likely to forget the past events and incidents, however painful or joyful: “By evening Mano Majra had forgotten about its Muslims and Malli's misdeeds. The river had become the main topic of conversation. Once more women stood on the rooftops looking to the west. Men started going in turns to the embankment to report on the situation” (122). S. Ravindranathan and R. K. Jacob in “Khushwant Singh Writes at Home: A Postcolonial Reading of *Train To Pakistan*,” rightly point out that the tone of the book is set by the peculiar mixture of sympathy and bitterness in the author's attitude. He is simultaneously inside the action as a participant and outside it as a dispassionate observer (Dhawan 77).

The narrator notices that the innocent people of Mano Majra are ignorant of the political situation of their country. The subinspector's words, “I am sure no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan” (21). The people accept the fact that they know nothing and they are also ignorant of the reason why the English had left India. But they desire

to know more about the world, and so when they know that Iqbal is an educated man they demand information. Singh comments: "Independence meant nothing or little to these people," and they think, "freedom is for the educated people who fought for it" (43-44). They consider themselves slaves of the English in the past and now the slaves of the educated Indians. According to them "the only ones who enjoy freedom are thieves, robbers and cutthroats" (45). They are also aware that they "were better off under the British. At least there was security" (45).

Politics and political chaos are painful points for the narrator. The village, Mano Majra, according to him, was a single whole family but its wholeness is shattered by the political and judicial intrusion. The narrator has much to say about politicians and judiciary. They use their power according to their whims and fancies. They have neither any regard for the prestige of the persons concerned, nor for the reality of the matter. Their interpretation of facts varies with time and place. For example, when they arrested Iqbal, they themselves determined he was Mohammed Iqbal, a Muslim Leaguer, and not a social worker. But by the end of the novel they change his name, "Mr Iqbal Singh, social worker" (140). Hearing that, Iqbal retorts, "Not Mohammed Iqbal, member of the Muslim League? You seem to fabricate facts and

documents as it pleases you” (140). The police intensify the youth's resentment but Iqbal has to surrender. The narrator invites the reader to think, “Where on earth except in India would a man's life depend on whether or not his foreskin had been removed?” (143). As S. Ravindranathan and R. K. Jacob point out, “the authorial point of view is effectively communicated without the reader feeling it as intrusion” (Dhawan 80).

The heterodiegetic narrator notes that the magistrate and the police manipulate the lives of the common folk and drag them towards their end. They first make the people uncertain and unsteady, by a lot of brainwashing. When the police try to evacuate the Muslims from Mano Majra they had no authentic reason. The narrator says that the head constable's visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter. But cruelty and inhumanity prevailed as the Muslims were sent off first to the camp, and then to Pakistan. Even the common folk dread the injustice of the police. While the villagers noticed the unfavourable occurring in the river somebody thought of informing the police. Then a small man commented bitterly, “What will they do? Write a first information report?” (125). This helpless situation faced by the common man was aggravated by the calamity and destruction sowed by the authorities. For instance, Malli's Gang and Jugga were released in Mano Majra,

and not in Malli's hometown; and that too without a trial and acquittal. Knowing fully well that Malli's group housed the culprits, they were let loose deliberately, in the place where the murder occurred: "I see the trick now. That is why the police released Malli. Now I suppose Jugga will join them, too. It is all arranged" (146). K P S Gill's observation on the essence of Singh in "The Quintessential Sikh," is striking:

As an Indian, he has spoken without fear and with complete honesty in each of the nation's great crises over the past decades, even as he has ridiculed the false posturing and pretence of the political leadership, the prejudice and the narrow-mindedness of the many castes and sects and divisions that proliferate endlessly among us, the rejection of the values of modernity, and the lack of vision and intellectual depth that has marked so many among the most eminent in every walk of life. (Prasad 96-97)

The heterodiegetic narrator uses the technique of juxtaposition to make the narrative more effective. The educated and well-mannered Iqbal is juxtaposed with the uneducated and ill-mannered Mano Majrans. As Iqbal takes rest on the very first day at Mano Majra, the villagers come to visit him. Hearing their voices Iqbal gets up and pushes the air-mattress aside to make room on the charpoy for the

visitors. Meet Singh does not bother to introduce the visitors and the lambardar ignores Iqbal's well-mannered protests against accepting the milk. He removes his dirty handkerchief from a large brass tumbler and begins to stir the milk with his forefinger. To emphasize the quality of the milk, he picks up a slab of clotted cream on his forefinger and slaps it back in the milk. The narrator also uses the same technique when he delineates other characters like Iqbal, Juggut Singh and the police.

{The heterodiegetic narrator emphasizes the importance of the train in the life of Mano Majrans. The punctuality of the train shows the order and the peace of the time. When the morning passenger train from Delhi reaches Mano Majra at 10.30 a.m., the people there, have already settled down to their daily dull routine.

Men are in the fields. Women are busy with their daily chores. Children are out grazing cattle by the river. . . . As the midday express goes by, Mano Majra stops to rest. Men and children come home for dinner and the siesta hour. . . . When the evening passenger from Lahore comes in, everyone gets to work again. The cattle are rounded up and driven back home to be milked and locked in for the night. The women cook the evening meal. Then the families foregather on their rooftops where most of them sleep during the summer. (6)

And the narrator takes care to show that the trains become irregular when there is disorder and disturbance in the life of Manjo Majrans. It was in early September that the time schedule started going wrong and then the punctuality of the train also became conditional:

Trains became less punctual than ever before and many more started to run through at night. Some days it seemed as though the alarm clock had been set for the wrong hour. On others, it was as if no one had remembered to wind it. . . . People stayed in bed late without realizing that times had changed and the mail train might not run through at all. Children did not know when to be hungry, and clamoured for food all the time. In the evenings, everyone was indoors before sunset and in bed before the express came by – if it did come by. Goods trains had stopped running altogether, so there was no lullaby to lull them to sleep. Instead, ghost trains went past at odd hours between midnight and dawn, disturbing the dreams of Mano Majra. (68)

The heterodiegetic narrator who is also an observer uses the technique of summary at the beginning of the section “Karma” in *Train to Pakistan*. This technique helps him to condense many events in one paragraph. For example: “All that morning, people sat in their homes

and stared despondently through their open doors. They saw Malli's men and the refugees ransack Muslim houses. They saw Sikh soldiers come and go as if on their beats. They heard the piteous lowing of cattle as they were beaten and dragged along" (121).

Another technique, which the heterodiegetic narrator uses, is the mingling of the comic and the serious as seen in the conversation between Iqbal and Meet Singh: "Tell me, was there any killing in the village?" "No" said the bhai casually. He was more interested in watching Iqbal inflating the air-mattress: "But there will be. Is it nice sleeping on this? Does everyone in England sleep on these?" "What do you mean – there will be killing?" asked Iqbal, plugging the end of the mattress. "All Muslims have left, haven't they?" "Yes, but they are going to attack the train near the bridge tonight. It is taking Muslims of Chundunnugger and Mano Majra to Pakistan. Your pillow is also full of air." They continue in the same vein for some more time: "Yes. Who are they? Not the villagers?" asked Iqbal. "I do not know all of them. Some people in uniforms came in military cars. They had pistols and guns. The refugees have joined them. So have Malli budmash and his gang – and some villagers. Wouldn't this burst if a heavy person slept on it?" asked Meet Singh tapping the mattress (145-46).

In between the serious narration of events, the narrator does not forget to provide some lighter moments for the reader. For example the

conversation between Iqbal and Juggut Singh and the one between Hukum Chand and Haseena:

‘How old are you?’

‘I don’t know. Sixteen or seventeen. May be eighteen. I was not born literate. I could not record my date of birth.’ (89)

The narrator observes animals and plant kingdom as part of nature. A description of nature goes thus: “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” (74). Even the description of small creatures appears attractive: “A moth fluttered round the chimney and flew up in spirals to the ceiling. The geckos darted across from the wall. The moth hit the ceiling well out of the geckos’ reach and spiralled back to the lamp. The lizards watched with their shining black eyes” (76). Similarly the narrator describes a mangy bitch with a litter of eight skinny pups yapping and tugging at her sagging udders (40).

The Indian’s attitude towards the subject of sex is also a significant point for the narrator:

It was not possible to keep Indians off the subject of sex for long. It obsessed their minds. It came out in their art, literature and religion. One saw it on the hoardings in the cities advertising aphrodisiacs and curatives for ill effects of masturbation. . . . One heard about it all the time. No people used incestuous abuse quite as casually as did the Indians. . . . Conversation on any topic – politics, philosophy, sport – soon came down to sex, which everyone enjoyed with a lot of giggling and hand-slapping. (94)

The novel justifies the title, *Train to Pakistan*. At the end of the novel, Juggut Singh unfortunately offers his life. Fortunately it was for a noble cause.' The cruel plan of derailing the train is shattered without any harm to the passengers of the train. Thus jugga's death becomes a glorified act. The heterodiegetic narrator at the end sums up the self-effacing act thus, "The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan" (157). The novel gives credit to the writer's sense of values. In "*Train to Pakistan: A Study in Crisis of Values*" Harish Raizada gives an admirable comment on the writer's enduring faith in morals and values:

*Train To Pakistan* is, however, a classic in the post-independence Indian English fiction not only because of the bold, brutal and unrelenting realism with which it tears asunder the mask of hypocrisy and exposes the sordidness and savagery of human life, but also because of the author's optimistic and affirmative world-view that emerges from it, his enduring faith in the values of love, loyalty and humanity and the unconquerable spirit of man in the face of the mighty forces of wickedness and savage cruelties. (Dhawan 127)

With love and confidence in his heart, Khushwant Singh's 'train' is capable of going on, not only to Pakistan, but also to the world beyond.

*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*

At the deeper level, the book turns into a clash between and evaluation of two sets of values, two ways of life: conventional, non-violent, staunch faith in religion and God and pure, ascetic, unostentatious but dignified and moral life on the one hand and the modern, sexually promiscuous, morally loose, hypocritical, opportunistic and violent ways on the other. (Dhawan 164)

So says Subhash Chandra in “*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale: A Re-evaluation.*” This clash between the two sets of values and the two ways of life is clearly portrayed by Khushwant Singh in the novel. As Basavaraj Naikar says in “The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale,*” “Khushwant Singh presents a microscopic picture of the strange mixture of attitudes to the alien rule through the depiction of life in Amritsar district” in the novel (Dhawan 147-48). In the presentation of such a conflicting life, the novelist uses the narrator to portray both sides of the issue. Basavaraj Naikar lays bare the fact that the narrator delineates the “conflict between the pro-British and the anti-British” in the novel (150).

The novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* belongs to the heterodiegetic type of narration. Being omniscient, the narrator knows the ins and outs of the characters, their past, their present, their future hopes, their families and their relationships. So the narrator is able to impart his knowledge of the characters, more than they know or more than they reveal themselves. The novel delineates “the paradoxical picture of the colonial encounter between the Indians and the British including the positive and negative aspects, the submission as well as rebellion simultaneously involved in it,” says Basavaraj Naikar in “The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*” (160).

Naturally, the omniscient heterodiegetic narrator digests the situation and emphasizes the change that has come over Sher Singh after assuming the leadership of the rebel group: “He had never killed anything before. Even the sight of a headless chicken spouting blood as it fluttered about had made him turn cold with horror. . . . But this was different. They were training to become terrorists. They had to learn how to take life – to become tough” (*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* 166). Sher Singh’s accomplice, Madan, the backbone of the group is introduced as the chief supporter and rival of Sher Singh, and one whose presence was an encouragement and a challenge at the same time. The narrator’s knowledge of Sher Singh is comprehensive as he exposes his thoughts and actions, his beliefs and grievances, his past and his state of mind on different occasions:

He was angry with his father for having sent him (to Taylor) and angry with himself for having come. He felt angrier with his wife – he always felt angry with her when he could not find reasons for his temper – for not having stopped him from coming. And of course he felt angry with Taylor for having suggested his calling on a Tuesday and belittling him by keeping him with the crowd of sycophants. (241)

The omniscient narrator is able to figure out the conflicting emotions of guilt and pride in Sher Singh. His companions also considered him a jumble of conflicting emotions of guilt and pride. His feeling of remorse was temporarily smothered by his companions. On the whole, Sher was tortured by the visions of his mind, which the narrator exposes: "The figure of the crane flying in the dark and its crying came back to his mind. Then the picture of the wounded bird kicking its legs, the deafening reports of the pistol shots . . . He began to feel tired and depressed" (174). Then again: "Four figures kept going round and round in his tortured mind. . . . Then he began to dream. He saw himself crossing railway lines" (177).

The minds of the characters lie bare before the omniscient narrator's eye and so he lets out secrets wherever it is suitable. He reports Sabhrai's botherations on several occasions: "But death was far from Sabhrai's mind on the morning she died" (348). On another occasion when the narrator depicts her it is the time of her prayer at the Golden Temple. The narrator notes that even when the clock struck two in the morning, the tumult in her mind was not stilled. She tried to dismiss all other thoughts and bring the picture of the last warrior guru to her mind: "He came as he was in the colour print on her mantelpiece" (327).

The omniscient narrator traces the rebellious mind of Beena as she decides to go for a film. By the time she left the house with Madan and Sita, her mind was a muddle of fear and rebellion. And as she watched the film the narrator notes: “Beena’s mind was still uneasy about the consequences of the escapade” (191). In the same way, the narrator notes that it was only in recent years that Buta Singh had begun to think in terms of bargaining with the British. Before that he was loyal to the Raj to the point of faith, just as it had been for his father and his grandfather who had served in the army. Both of them had mentioned the English king or queen in their evening prayer and Buta Singh too did the same.

The heterodiegetic narrator gives a remarkable reading of the psychology of Sher’s thought-content. Sher Singh had been pampered in his childhood and allowed to have his own way in his adolescence. He hankered after affection and esteem, and he sought them through popularity amongst friends and through leadership. The narrator informs the reader that, to impress Champak became Sher’s obsession at a particular stage. The omniscient narrator tells us that the more his physical inadequacy gnawed his inside, the more daring he became in his political activity. He also knew that Sher Singh had never been beaten before in his life. For the narrator, Sher’s line of thought is vivid. What Sher Singh dreaded most was a visit from his father,

whose career he had ruined and who would have no chance of getting an extension of service or a title in the next Honours list.

The heterodiegetic narrator is able to be present at two different places and report the happenings simultaneously. For example, the narrator is in the midst of the procedures in the gurudwara, for some time, and then suddenly he talks about what is happening outside: "On the verandah outside, Mundoo bullied little children from the neighbouring houses into keeping quiet and sitting in a row. Behind him, whining impatiently, was Dyer" (179). The narrator is able to see what happens on both sides. The thick walls of the gurudwara do not hinder his sight. Similarly, on another occasion in the novel though Peer Sahib is conscious of the privacy of the courtyard as he assures Shunno that the door of the courtyard is shut, and that no one would enter the place after sunset. But the narrator gleefully watches the couple till the early hours of the morning, and then to the reader's satisfaction reports, "Not a word of affection or explanation passed between them" (277).

The omniscient narrator depicts even what the characters have neglected or ignored. For example, when Sabhrai's time of death approached, she asks Shunno to send for the family members. Shunno rushed out of the house to the sentry and asked him to get the Sardar and other members of the family together. The narrator notes, "Neither

she nor the sentry thought of the doctor” (349). Again, the narrator notes what the doctor does not. For instance, Sabhrai had high fever for a fortnight. The temperature going up to 105, which came down and shot up again. It began to tell on her heart. But this fact “was not noticed by the doctor,” the narrator says (346).

The political situation is made known to the reader through the presence of the partially omniscient narrator. He informs that a war is on and the police are armed with powers to arrest and detain at will. Mahatma Gandhi is also dragged in by the narrator who says: “Gandhi had made loyalty to the British appear like disloyalty to one’s own country and traditions. Larger and larger numbers of Indians had begun to see Gandhi’s point of view. . . . Loyalty became synonymous with servility, respect for English officers synonymous with sycophancy” (182). The novelist does not explain how the change took place in the attitude of Buta Singh and his family towards the Wazir Chands. But through the narrator’s partial omniscience the reader comes to know that, “The attitude of Buta Singh and his family to the Wazir Chands had undergone a change” (230). The narrator’s keen observation provides hearty laughter at the sight, which the Singhs witness as they enter the house of Wazir Chand. The Singhs watch a servant vigorously massages Wazir Chand’s buttocks and legs and Madan shaving himself in front of a mirror. To quote the narrator’s words,

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“Madan wiped off the lather with a towel and stood up; his face looked like a lawn, only half of which had been mown” (231).

The narrator leaves certain parts for the imagination and the enjoyment of the reader. For example, the narrator does not mention when Sabhrai, Champak and Beena start their journey to the Wazir Chands or how they went. All of a sudden he talks about their conversation in the tonga. Thus the narrator’s technique of condensing and summarising becomes useful to the novel: “‘I am not at all lonely here,’ she (Champak) said in the dutiful tone she adopted in speaking to her mother-in-law. ‘But if you want me to go with Beena, I will.’” And the very next paragraph begins thus: “There wasn’t much conversation in the tonga. Sabhrai made some feeble attempts to make up but Beena continued to reply in gruff monosyllables” (217). The same technique is applied later. After receiving Buta Singh’s telegram, the narrator talks about Sabhrai’s and Beena’s travel back home: “She sat up in her bed and prayed all through the night. Next day on her way down to the plains and again all night in the train, her thoughts and prayers were for her Shera” (313).

The heterodiegetic narrator notices the change of tone of the characters: The narrator notes Madan’s “tone of authority,” Sabhrai’s “sharp tone” at first, and later her “sarcastic tone,” Buta Singh’s “tone

of finality,” at first and then his “tone of righteous indignation.” The narrator particularly notes, Buta Singh’s accent and change of diction when he speaks to Englishmen and Beena’s frequent use of ‘hai’ to show her exaggerated concern. When Sher Singh addresses the student corps, the narrator notes that he started in “a tone of humility” and gradually he switched on to exhortation: “‘Comrades, we meet at a critical time. The enemy is at our gates.’ He paused to let his words seep in then he lowered his voice to a confidential whisper. . . . He raised his voice . . . He paused for applause. . . . Sher Singh worked himself into a fury and let his voice rise to a crescendo” (194-95). Not static by nature, the narrator is not seen with any particular person or group or family or place. Instead, he is on the move, narrating the events, and reporting matters as he moves along.

The narrator appears concerned over the lack of emotional involvement among the English. They reduce human relationships to a set of rules. For example they believe that it is important to know the name of the person to use it as often as possible, and to know the interests of people, and to talk about their interests. According to the narrator a great feature of India and her people, is the experience of the monsoon. Reading about it in books, or see it on the cinema screen or hearing people talk about it, all contribute to the knowledge regarding

the monsoon. Only a personal experience of the monsoon can really convey the feeling of the monsoon.

The narrator observes that in a country of 400 million people, events like birth and death have no proper significance. After the first child is born, a birth is simply looked upon as a nocturnal pastime. On the other hand, the case of death is dealt with differently. There is sorrow expressed at every death but there is the simultaneous relief that there is one mouth less to feed.

The narrator elaborates on privacy and its absence, a phenomenon that pervades life in India, urban and rural, rich and poor. The narrator reminisces that in the olden days the rooms of Indian palaces did not have any doors and those rooms that had doors could not be bolted from the inside. Among the poor, the shortage of living space had made privacy a luxury. Indian practices have not changed very much over the years.

The narrator notes that the art of making love, which requires privacy as well as leisure, is almost unknown in India, the land of the 'Kama Sutra' and phalus-worship. The practice of the honeymoon is known only among the anglicized upper middle class. The newly married girl's first experience is often soulless, because it is an unpleasant subjection to men's desires. The narrator observes that

Indian women are not aware of sex and sexual advances: “To the mass of Indian womanhood, the sixty-five ways of kissing and patting, the thirty-seven postures of the sex act so beautifully portrayed in stone on temple walls make as much sense as a Greek translation of the treatise 'Kama Sutra' itself” (197).

The narrator observes that the absence of privacy has encouraged a new language among married couples. Those who have shared a common past, get to know each other's reactions to particular situations and have an instinctive knowledge of each other's attitude to people events and ideas. At times forgotten tunes come to their minds and without any reason they find themselves humming the same notes. Even in behaviour, they communicate perfectly well. All these observations indicate that the narrator in the novel is as much the observer, Khushwant Singh himself.

The narrator in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is by and large Khushwant Singh himself. The narrator plays hide and seek in the novel, only to come out in the end to be declared the winner. Basavaraj Naikar's words on the writer in “The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*” is true of the narrator as well: “. . . he is a realist and modernist in the sense that he has the courage to look into the face of harsh reality and describe it precisely

and objectively without any sentimentalism or exaggeration” (Dhawan 161).

There is no need for the narrator-writer to hear the nightingale again, for he is himself the nightingale that sings as in Keats’s Ode to Nightingale:

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains . . .” (1-3).

### *Delhi*

In Khushwant Singh’s *Delhi* the history of six-hundred year period is wonderfully portrayed from the Muslim invasion in 1265 up to the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The assassination followed by the massacre of the Sikhs remains a painful memory for Indians in general and Sikhs in particular. This indelible mark imprinted on the mind of the author and of the narrator has given flesh and blood to the novel. G. R. Taneja in “‘Time and Tide’: History in Khushwant Singh’s *Delhi* and Ivo Andric’s *The Bridge on the Drina*” states:

*Delhi: A Novel* is not a dirge sung over lost empires. It is a celebration of the unique power of a culture and civilization: the power to generate some of the finer values of life; the power to ensure the survival of these values in the face of a nation’s collective debasement; and

above all, the power to ensure that when all is lost an awareness of that loss remains. What makes the novel an enduring work of art, and lifts it above the deep despair that pervades the whole narrative, is the testimony that it provides to a haunting sense of that loss. (Dhawan 186)

The narrator explores the beauty of his beloved city in flamboyant colours. According to him “Delhi’s history is presented through a rich pageantry of variegated colours. The time is shortened, tampered, broken and finally disjointed, but with immaculate balance and proportion. The protagonists are misplaced and replaced, comprising a ‘backstairs’ view of Gandhi’s role as a politician,” says Anita Singh in “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of *Delhi*” (Dhawan 203).

The novel is divided into twenty-one episodes, under the titles: “Delhi,” “Lady J. H. T.,” (Lady Jane Hoity-Toity) “Bhagmati,” “Musaddi Lal,” “The Timurid,” “The Untouchables,” “Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan,” “Nadir Shah,” “Meer Taqi Meer,” “1857,” “The Builders” and “The Dispossessed.” The episode “Bhagmati” alone is repeated ten times, thus making the episodes total number of twenty-one. The chapters titled “Delhi,” “Lady J. H. T.” and “Bhagmati” have the same homodiegetic narrator whose identity is not revealed except for the fact that he is a Sikh (368). The novel awakens

the reader to an alert perspective of mind. In “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of *Delhi*,” A. Rajendra Prasad comments: “the novelist lets the history of Delhi ‘relive’ and ‘speak’ for itself. This ‘reliving’ of past at times borders upon ‘fact and fiction combine’ as the novelist does not mean to maintain fidelity to ‘facts’ only” (Dhawan 169). The aspect of the romanticizing the past is admitted by the novelist himself: “History provided me with the skeleton. I covered it with flesh and blood and a lot of seminal fluid into it” (“A note from the author” *Delhi* 364).

The first paragraph of the episode “Delhi” reveals that the homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator is uninhibited in talking about his attachment towards Delhi and Bhagmati, his mistress. He knows how they both react to their lovers and to their strangers: “It is only to their lovers, among whom I count myself, that they reveal their true selves” (*Delhi* 365). A participant in the episodes, the narrator notes that the people of Delhi love their city as bees love flowers. But they are ungrateful and cowardly, cunning and double-faced.

It is the homodiegetic narrator of the episode “Delhi” that narrates the episode “Lady J. H. T.” With a knowledge of the historical background and acting as a tourist guide to the foreigner, Lady J. H. T., the narrator describes her as one who is capable of quick decisions.

The episodes named “Bhagmati,” devoted to Bhagmati, portray the narrator’s lifelong, love-hate relationship with Delhi and Bhagmati.

Thus “the narrator tries to have an overview of the movement of certain fragments of historical time, returning to the present and to his beloved Bhagmati, a *hijra*, after every such foray” observes O. P. Mathur in “Amrinder’s *Lajo* and Khushwant Singh’s *Delhi*: Sikhs in a Crisis of Identity” (Dhawan 193). In the first few episodes the narrator reveals that when Bhagmati was born, how she happened to be among the hijdas, how she entered his life and so on. “Khushwant Singh prizes humaneness, tolerance, compassion and fellow feeling, and is against bigotry of all types, and more so against the violence that follows in the wake of bigotry. All these values are invested in the persona of Bhagmati in the novel *Delhi*,” says Subhash Chandra in “A Note on Bhagmati in *Delhi*” (Dhawan 179).

After a long chapter “1857,” the episode “Bhagmati” talks about the narrator being uninterested in Bhagmati: “I am beginning to tire of Bhagmati as I am of Delhi” (664). At the same time he understands that he can’t escape from them both: “I told you – once you are in their clutches there is no escape” (664). The novelist winds up the novel with another episode “Bhagmati” in which the narrator is more serious and involved in the story. Describing himself as an old man, he exposes his nightmares and thoughts of death. The narrator allows the readers to know his internal talk as well. The narrator has no opinion about people celebrating the death of Indira Gandhi: “Celebrating the

murder of a frail, little woman! What have the Sikhs come down to?”(731).

Commenting on the episodes “Bhagmati” A. Rajendra Prasad observes in “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of *Delhi*” that perhaps the novelist attempts to tone down the seriousness of the theme by creating highly hilarious situations involving the narrator and Bhagmati, a hermaphrodite (Dhawan 170). In “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of *Delhi*,” Anita Singh is of the view that Delhi, trampled, destroyed, dismantled and divested of all her precious possessions, is equated with Bhagmati having met with the same fate (Dhawan 199). The narrator notes: “Having been long misused by rough people they have learnt to conceal their seductive charms under a mask of repulsive ugliness. It is only to their lovers, among whom I count myself, that they reveal their true selves” (365).

*Delhi* contains nine historical chapters and the chapters, except one (“1857”), are named after the concerned narrators. They include historical personages like Taimur, Aurangzeb, Nadir Shah and ordinary men like Musaddi Lal, Meer Taqi Meer, The Untouchables, The Builders, and The Dispossessed.

Musaddi Lal, the narrator in “Musaddi Lal” reveals his identity as the son of Lala Chagan Lal, Hindu Kayastha of Mehrauli. The narrator who is homodiegetic and autodiegetic as well tells his own

story using fine imagery. His birth, his ancestors, his marriage and the difficulties which he faces, are all interesting details for the reader: "I was disowned by the Hindus and shunned by my own wife. I was exploited by the Muslims who disdained my company. Indeed I was like a *hijda* who was neither one thing nor another but could be misused by everyone" (418). The narrator supports the Muslims and looks down upon the Hindus. Recalling his ancestors who had been scribes and had served Raja Anangal, Prithvi Raj and Sultan Qutubuddin Aibak, the narrator assimilates historical facts with incidents from his life. He foresees a time of great transition and perhaps a time of bigotry, and delineates the perversities of degenerate rulers, King Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah and Khusro Khan. A. Rajendra Prasad's opinion in "Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of *Delhi*" is relevant in this context: "Through a fictitious character, Musaddi Lal, a new Hindu Kayastha convert to Islam, the transitional times of Delhi are poignantly viewed at" (Dhawan 171).

The episode "Timurid" is the memoirs of the old Taimur who confesses a deformity in his foot. The homodiegetic- cum-autodiegetic narrator talks about his invasion of India and his ascension to the throne of Delhi. Rajendra Prasad rightly observes in "Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of *Delhi*," "It is aptly suggested that behind the façade of holy wars, there lies the question of personal ambitions and

interests who take precedence always. It is also made clear that most of the rulers and the people, irrespective of their religious affiliations, are simply men of their times only” (Dhawan 172). The narrator refers to the year of the Mouse, the year of the Tiger, the year of the Ox with a dash of exaggeration. For instance: “By rapid marches we overtook birds in flight . . .” Again “. . . the skies were as blue as the tiles of our palace roof and the breezes as balmy as those during spring in Samarkand.” And yet again, “The minds of Turks are as narrow as their eyes” (457-58). And about the men of Hindustan the narrator notes, “It does not take long for the men of Hindustan to switch their minds from fawning flattery to deadly hate” (460). In “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of *Delhi*” Anita Singh comments on the narrator, “One may identify the tongue-in-cheek attitude of the narrator reporting the event” (Dhawan 201).

The episode “The Untouchables” is narrated by an untouchable and named Jaita Rangareta. One of the “Sikhs of Nanak,” the narrator imparts his knowledge of the new badshah Shah Jahan, as it was conveyed to him by his uncle Reloo. For the sake of livelihood, he takes a job in the executioner’s yard attached to the kotwali. And the narrator shares his difficulties in his job: “This was really dirty work: first I had to get used to seeing a man’s head being hacked off; then see his arms and legs cut off. After this had happened it was my job to put

the pieces together and lay them out for the people to see. As I worked I could hear the onlookers avoiding me as if I were a murderer” (485).

In the episode “Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan” the homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator, Abdul Muzaffar Mohiuddin Mohammed, pens down a brief account of the ninety years of his life and forty years of his reign. In the beginning of the episode, the narrator addresses himself as a “sinner full of iniquities” (501) and talks about his birth, his star, and his life at home. The narrator’s sharp memory enables him to depict his past. The reader gets to know that his greed for power and wealth together with his religious fanaticism goaded him to undertake a long and arduous journey to gain victory. In “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of *Delhi*” Rajendra Prasad is of the opinion, “the novelist aptly captures the highly complex and multi-faceted personality of Aurangzeb Alamgir who remained to a large extent shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding, in the annals of history of Delhi and India” (Dhawan 172).

The homodiegetic narrator Nadir Shah in the episode “Nadir Shah” turns out to be autodiegetic. The narrator shows how he and his companions defeated the Mughals. When he visits Delhi for the first time, he describes the places with minute care. His destruction of lives and his atonement for the same are also dealt with in the episode. He

dislikes Delhi and says that even Noor Bhai, the child of a courtesan prefers to live in Delhi than the palace at Iran:

. . . though we had heard so much in praise of Delhi there was little that pleased us about it. We did not like the people or their manners; we did not like their food or their wines. Their watermelons were without flavour and produced wind in our stomach. . . . And Delhi's climate produced only laziness, prickly heat and bad temper.  
(546)

The homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator Meer Taqi Meer in “Meer Taqi Meer” is a poet who spans a life from his childhood to the age of eighty-eight. A lover of Begum Sahiba, the narrator uninhibitedly talks about the sexual encounter and the pre-arrangements done by Begum Sahiba. He builds up close relationship with the reader and shares his dilemma, his thoughts and mind. He says, the Begum made and destroyed him. In “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of *Delhi*,” Anita Singh says: “In the gradual unwinding of the novel we watch the drama of love and passion, laughter and tears of puny figures whom history has not cared to remember” (Dhawan 200).

The episode “1857” is different from all the other episodes. First of all, the episode is not given the narrator's name as its title, but the

year in which the incidents narrated occurred. Secondly the episode is further divided into ten sections, which are named after the narrators. And in arranging these episodes the narrator follows the pattern of the novel's major divisions. There are three narrators such as Alice Aldwell, Bahadur Shah Zafar and Nihal Singh. Alice Aldwell narrates two chapters, Bahadur Shah Zafar, five, and Nihal Singh, three. About the narration Rajendra Prasad notes in "Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of *Delhi*": "It is clearly proved that what is ultimately significant is the manifested 'inherent evil' in man" (Dhawan 173).

Alice, the narrator in two sections, is the only lady-narrator in the novel. The reader is thus provided with a female point of view. In the first episode, she is Alice Aldwell and, in the second, she is renamed Ayesha Bano Begum. Alice Aldwell addresses herself as "yours sincerely" (591). The homodiegetic narrator shows no inhibition in revealing her extra-marital sexual acts. As the narrator focuses on personal matters it turns out to be autodiegetic. The narrator gives a clear picture of Indians: "I narrate what happened to me so that the world knows how rotten, villainous; treacherous, degraded and lecherous these Indians are! The entire nation deserves to be put against a wall and their carcasses thrown to pye-dogs!"(608). In "Inscription of the Repressed: Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*," Anita Singh observes: "The account of a white woman's molestation is not found in

history and Alice's revelation could be seen as the suppressed, tabooed issues in history" (Dhawan 202).

Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last emperor, talks about his plight in five episodes. From the time he became emperor, to the painful days in the dungeon, the narrator gives a short account. Unlike the other narrators in the other episodes, here the narrator does not picturize his private moments; instead condenses them: "Thus like young lovers we lay in each other's arms with nothing save the hairs of our bodies between us. We were roused from our slumbers by the firing of cannon" (616). Very often, the narrator quotes other people. For instance, he quotes Saadi: "Ten dervishes may sleep under the same blanket but no country can hold two kings" (620).

Nihal Singh, the homodiegetic narrator in the episode "Nihal Singh" identifies himself as a Punjab police, and explicates the opportunity that took him to Delhi. As the narration continues, the narrator becomes autodiegetic. Nihal Singh, a member of the group and the orderly of Hodson Sahib, is also a participant in the activities and a witness and a reporter. The narrator here uses present tense for the narration. In the third section narrated by Nihal Singh he focuses on how the rebels were treated in the hands of the sahibs:

In batches of six the wretches would be hauled up, their hands tied behind them, and nooses would be put round



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their necks. . . . It was easy to tell who would die first – the one who struggled most, strangled himself quickest. Their eyes would pop out, blood pour out of their nostrils. Some died quickly; others had to have their legs stretched to finish them off. (651)

“Nihal Singh’s version subverts the popularly revered notions of the freedom struggle,” observes Anita Singh in “Inscription of the Repressed: Khushwant Singh’s *Delhi*” (Dhawan 203). According to her, the narratives of Alice Aldwell, Bahadur Shah Zafar and Nihal Singh in “1857,” “provide a panorama of the time synthesizing the great entities with non-entities” (202).

The narrator in the episode “The Builders” talks about his lineage, his father and his work and how he was forced to take up his father’s work. The narrator’s appreciation of Delhi is noteworthy: “I asked myself where in India you could see such an orderly, well-behaved crowd except in Delhi! White soldiers were directing people to their allotted seats; no one dared to question them. No shouting. No squabbling” (667). The narrator’s ridicule of Delhi is equally striking: “Though the white soldiers would frighten Indians into staying in their places, no power on earth can stop Indians from talking all the time” (668). The narrator openly talks about his attitude towards the British rule. He believed that British rule was good for India, because Indians

themselves would not succeed in being just and fair to all communities. But Indians hoped beyond hope that a just administration would be possible. And the narrator confirms it later by comparing the two nationalities:

We built magnificent buildings which will last for many centuries; they build shapeless, multi-storeyed offices and jerry-houses wherever there is open space . . . We laid wide roads; they make narrow lanes on which two cars cannot pass each other. We planted slow-growing long living trees . . . They plant quick growing gul mohars and laburnums which blossom for a fortnight or two and yield neither fruit nor shade. All they want is something to show in the shortest possible time. They have no sense of the past or the future. (691)

All for the British, the narrator talks of the general change in the attitude of the people towards the British by the coming of Gandhi. But the narrator stands apart and gives his individual outlook upon the reign of the British.

The episode, "The Dispossessed" is narrated by the homodiegetic narrator, Ram Rakha, who explains how his family left Hadali and came to Delhi. The autodiegetic narrator shares his past dreams and nightmares. After the murder of the Mussalman shop

owner and the looting of his store, the narrator describes his own condition; “My hands and knees shook as if I had fever. My heart thumped against my chest – *dhug, dhug, dhug*. I could not talk” (707-08). The narrator’s emotional involvement in the story is seen as he talks about Gandhi’s assassination. In “Fact and/or Fiction?: A Study of *Delhi*” Rajendra Prasad notes: “In the caricature of Mahatma Gandhi and in the fictionalization of assassination, the novelist points out the corrupting influence of evil of bigotry and violence on the young minds . . . and also the ultimate and undying victory of Mahatma over violence, and the sustenance of the voice of sanity” (Dhawan 173).

However, the novelist has skipped over important events and personages of the past and contemporary India. Yet he has chosen the events and personages in such a way as to give a suitable message for the future generation. The book also serves as a guide for the tourists. On the whole it may be said of *Delhi*: “The novel embraces a large number of autonomous, dissonant voices unintruded by the anonymous narrator, a Sikh. Travelling in time, space and history he discovers his beloved city Delhi: her invasions and possessions are revealed through the network of intricate metaphors” says Anita Singh in “Inscription of the Repressed: A Study of *Delhi*” (Dhawan 199).

*The Company of Women*

In *The Company of Women* Khushwant Singh cleverly shows “how older values have subsided and display of material success becomes paramount as a new hedonistic entrepreneurship has taken India by storm” notes, P. S. Kasture in “Trapped in Sexuality: An Analysis of *The Company of Women*” (Dhawan 235). E. M. Forster says in “The Duty of Society to the Artist” “The novelist seems to say: “I want to experiment, I want to extend human sensitiveness through paint. . . . Perhaps when I have finished, the picture will instruct and inspire people. Perhaps it will amuse them” (qtd. in Sharma 106).

*The Company of Women* has two types of narrators: the heterodiegetic and the homodiegetic. The novel is divided into three parts of which, the first and the last are narrated by the heterodiegetic narrator and the second by a homodiegetic narrator, Mohan Kumar. As Novy Kapadia puts it in “The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*,” the narrator talks about “a society that believes largely in externals and glamour” (Dhawan 233).

In the first part, “The Secret Life of Mohan Kumar” the heterodiegetic narrator’s omniscience enters Mohan Kumar’s psyche and thoughts: “Mohan thought over the relationships he had had with various women before he married Sonu” (*The Company of Women* 7); “Mohan toyed with the idea of getting out of Delhi for a few days, then decided against it”(18); “When he retired for the night, he fantasized

about what the lady professor would be like in bed” (37). In fact the conflict between Mohan and Sonu is one of tradition versus individualism.

The narrator has a sharp eye for details. His omniscience also encircles characters like Dhanno, Sarojini and other minor characters: “Dhanno sensed what was on the Sahib’s mind” (22). “For the second time that morning she (Sarojini) felt ashamed of herself. But the feeling soon died” (43). About the servants he says, “The servants sensed that the sahib and his lady friend were upset” (64). Present during the private moments of Mohan Kumar and Dhanno the narrator says: “He kissed her on her lips . . . Dhanno slipped her shirt off over her shoulders and coyly looked down at her feet. . . . Dhanno was stark naked. . . .” (23). Novy Kapadia in “The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*” comments: “With his sharp eye for detail and piercingly accurate characterisation, Khushwant Singh explores the world of passion, romance, fantasy and hard reality of each character” (Dhawan 240).

Section three, also narrated by the heterodiegetic narrator, describes Mohan Kumar’s last days. The narrator’s prior knowledge of Mohan Kumar is obvious in the narration. Being omniscient, the narrator depicts Mohan Kumar’s private moments. In this section too, he depicts a lady without a name and Mohan Kumar’s clandestine

moments with her. At last he ends his life taking thirty sleeping pills along with thirty Gayatri mantras. The narrator is omniscient in the first and third sections, but his omniscience becomes partial later. For example, when the narrator shows that Sarojini's mind was agitated, he could only say that she was too disturbed. But he was not sure of the reason behind the agitation.

The novelist's observation on ethical standards invites a questionable response from the reader. Mohan Kumar, a respectable gentleman, and the lady professor, an educated person, try to satisfy their emotional and sexual urge without any thought of morals. The narrator draws the reader's attention to the ill-formed conscience of Mohan Kumar: "Occasional adultery, Mohan was convinced, did not destroy a marriage; quite often it proved to be a cementing factor . . . It was silly to condemn adultery as sinful; it often saved marriages from collapsing" (8). Ironically enough the lady professor tells Mohan Kumar as he offers a drink, "I live in Haryana where there is a strict prohibition; a woman seen smoking or drinking is looked upon as a whore" (33). To the lady herself she is not a whore, but to the reader she is nothing else. Mohan Kumar's ads were responded mostly by women who were divorced or living separately from their husbands. All of them were attractive and educated, and working as teachers or nurses or steno typists. In spite of all that they had, they were unable to

lead a contented life. Novy Kapadia in “The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*,” comments “such outrageous suggestions are used as shock therapy by Khushwant Singh to expose sanctimonious attitudes towards sex, arranged marriage and adultery in modern urban India”(Dhawan 224). In “Lust for Life or Zest for Life: A Study of *The Company of Women*” D. K. Pabby observes, “. . . very briefly the novel basically celebrates a strong passion for life as also life’s vagaries in all its variety” (Dhawan 270). The author’s vision is made clear as the narrator comments; “The word love had made lust profane” (70). Later the novelist notes “Sarojini left the temple light of heart” (71). There is a suggestion that the prayer had a soothing effect, on her aching mind.

Part II of the novel, is narrated by Mohan Kumar who is both a homodiegetic and an autodiegetic narrator as well. He is also the protagonist in the first and third part. Mohan Kumar narrates his own life, his first sexual encounter with Jessica Browne an athlete, his relationship with one of the home nurses, Mary Joseph, the failure of his marriage, his relationship with the physiotherapist Molly Gomes, and Susanthika, the second Secretary to the High Commission of Sri Lanka. This section is divided into ten chapters. Very frank about himself, his emotions and feelings the autodiegetic narrator is clearly puts them into words. When he saw Jessica Browne going out with

another boy, he says, he felt a stab of jealousy in his heart. Again he admits, "I was fuming with rage" when Yasmeen launched into a furious monologue with Dr Ashby after his lecture on Hindu Religion (99). At times he dated with two or three girls at the same time, and there was no time to take all the girls to bed. He was clever enough to put a full stop to his relationship whenever he sensed that a girl was getting emotionally involved with him. The narrator is determined that none of his liaisons had lasted very long. He preferred shorter durations because he discovered that safety lay in numbers.

Prayer, the narrator notes, is a good beginning and a good end for a sexual intercourse. For example, Yasmeen prays before she asks Mohan Kumar to make love to her. She went to her bedroom and put her prayer mat on the floor and stood faithfully facing Makka. Then for a long time she squatted on her knees with the palms of her hands open in front of her face. Then she brushed her face with her hands and stood up. After the sexual act she continued her prayer dutifully. When the narrator woke up in the morning he saw her saying her morning namaaz on the prayer mat by the bed. In "Lust for Life or Zest for Life?: A Study of *The Company of Women*," D. K. Pabby aptly observes: "Several layers of the thematic meaning, undercutting satire, subtle irony, stylistic experimentation in narrative strategies, etc. start unfolding themselves once the reader looks at the protagonist Mohan

Kumar's sex adventures with uncoloured vision and unbiased mind" (Dhawan 263).

As Mary Joseph gets ready to surrender to her lustful desires, she takes off her gold necklace first, and kisses the cross and lays it reverently on the table. After the sexual act, she wears the necklace and kisses the cross once again. There are similar occasions in the novel. The narrator's visit to Haridwar and the banks of the Ganga are preceded by a sexual encounter with Susanthika. The novelist does not resist the temptation to talk to the reader through his character: "I thought you went to the holy river to cleanse yourself of libidinous thoughts" (264). Another example is, Sarojini keenly going through her ritual of lighting agarbatties and invoking the blessings of goddess Saraswati before waiting for Mohan Kumar to enjoy sex with him. Thus the autodiegetic narrator becomes the true server of the society.

The narrator's piercing eye falls on physical characteristics too. He notices that Achint Ram had dyed his hair and moustache, but the roots of the hairs were still white. He notices Achint Ram's sons' wealthy clothes, ties and red handkerchiefs sticking out of their front pockets. They wore their gold-chained wristwatches with dials facing inwards. He also notices how Sonu and daughter resemble: "A little more fat round the face, bottom and belly and the two would be like twins, though over thirty years apart" (165).

The narrator considers love and lust the be-all and end-all of life. He believes that sex can drain out whatever anti-Muslim or anti-Pakistan prejudices one had imbibed in the early years of life. He rates sex higher than love and companionship:

To me sex was the more pressing need than love or companionship. For too long have we been fooled into believing that the basis of a happy man-woman relationship is love. 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: . . . Love cannot last very long without lust. Lust has no time-limit and is the true foundation of love and affection. (137-38)

The narrator's bonding with the ladies was based on sheer lust. And he admits that lust loses its frenetic pace as soon as the partners slip wedding rings on each other's fingers. The narrator's opinion is that when two people want to get close to each other, sex should be their priority: "Sex is the greatest thing in human's life. The more varied it is, the more enjoyable"(267).

The narrator justifies his act of adultery. Sex is important for him because he believes that there is only one life to live and it has to be lived well. The need of the body he considers is above religious

taboos and notions of morality. However Mary Joseph and Susanthika put forward their doubts regarding this aspect. But as they gulp down ecstatic joy, they wish to believe that adultery is not a sin. D. K. Pabby observes in “Lust for Life or Zest for Life?: A Study of *The Company of Women*” that Khushwant Singh is indirectly raising some significant sociological questions that are relevant in the evolving of such a society, shorn of sham-morality, double dealing, deception and confidentialities and above all the general hypocrisy may actually usher the society into a newly-defined era of healthy relationships without any hang-ups and guilt-complexes (Dhawan 266).

The narrator is conscious of the loss of human dignity in a man or woman who craves illegal sex. The narrator who desires sex on a regular basis, with a change of partners every few months understands that his normal human dignity is lost by the practice. He also recognizes himself as “a social outcast” (252). He arrives at the conclusion that a man or a woman can have either sex or human dignity. They cannot have both. By the end of the second part, the narrator is seen as disgusted with his past.

A sad fact that the narrator makes the reader conscious is that, many young girls are seduced first by their own elders or the friends of their elders. For example, Mary Joseph was a prey once to her husband’s younger brother and later to the padre of the village church.

She remembers “the padre made her to pray with him to Jesus to ask forgiveness, kneeling still naked” (181). Novy Kapadia points out in “The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*” the author, “ridicules and upsets the apple cart of many patriarchal institutions and conventions” (Dhawan 238).

He also notes that boys are seduced by their aunts or older maidservants: “When the sexual urge becomes too strong in young people and it’s obvious that they can barely contain it, an experienced older person finds it easy to exploit them”(267). In Khushwant Singh’s words “the book reflects what is happening around us. At one level people are earning quick money and indulging in ostentatious living and a lot of pretence about moral standards that no longer exist” (Dhawan 244-45).

The narrator surmises that whatever be the religion there is not much difference in people’s lustful emotions and feelings. A good observer as well as a good reporter, the novelist creates ironical situations. To describe a simple example, after making love three times with Molly Gomes, the narrator says in the morning that he had the sleep of the just during night. Another ironical situation is with regard to Mary Joseph’s gold ornament in the shape of the cross: “The gold cross dangling between her breast was proof that she was a devout Christian and would not have sex with anyone besides her husband”

(177). The novel celebrates a strong yearning for life and for life's vagaries and a passion for lust. The experiment of using the first person and the third person narrative alternately distances the author from the protagonist. Dr. D. K. Pabby's words in "Lust for Life or Zest for life?: A Study of *The Company of Women*" with regard to the conclusion of the novel is: "The concluding part of the novel does seem to make a definitive statement in favour of the need for balance and moderation rather than excesses and obsessions in all walks of life and more particularly with reference to physical indulgence and reckless qualification of sensual desires" (Dhawan 270).



*I have known total strangers ring me up to discuss their personal problems. They tell me of their inhibitions, their love affairs, their extra-marital relationships. When it comes to women, I am a patient as well as an interested listener because I love to hear tales of marital discord, the number of times married people had sex, how and where they met, their married paramours and the precautions they take against being discovered and becoming pregnant.*

*Khushwant Singh*

## 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 chirrupings. Some came and perched 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 trunk 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-Pincher" 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 explicates 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 gurudwara. 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

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 sighing 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-smearing 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 Bannerjee, 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 Pastorage" 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 he 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.”

### *Train to Pakistan*

The novels of Khushwant Singh have a great scope for characterization. In *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 lambardar – 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 Singhs: “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 vaidis 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* (breeding) 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 nose-pin, 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 hawkker who came across Kusum: "The hawkker 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”

(149). 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" (160).

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 Memsahib 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). Hayden 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 treasonable 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, “Horrible 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 Artemis" (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 Pastoral" 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 lambardar’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 Singhs 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 'itself' 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 Ghiaspur: “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*

## CHAPTER FOUR

**THE RELIABILITY OF THE NARRATOR'S RENDERING**

Reliability, a crucial factor in the understanding of a work, is a vital characteristic of the narrator. Narrators may be grouped according to their reliability. "A reliable narrator is one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it the reader is supposed to take as an authoritative account of the fictional truth," says Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (95). On the other hand, an unreliable narrator, is one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it "the reader has reasons to suspect." Reliability varies in degree and kind. Therefore it is easier to define unreliability. Says Rimmon-Kenan: "Signs of unreliability are perhaps easier to specify, and reliability can then be negatively defined by their absence." The main sources of unreliability, according to Rimmon-Kenan, are: (1) the narrator's limited knowledge, (2) his personal involvement and (3) his problematic value-scheme. It is not possible to find out whether the narrator is reliable or not. It is also not possible to know, to what extent he is reliable or unreliable. Moreover a narrator can be reliable in one part of the text but unreliable in another.

The present study on Khushwant Singh's short stories and novels reveal that the narrators vary from story to story and novel to novel and, accordingly, reliability too. But most of the narrators are

highly reliable. There are parts of certain stories and novels which seem to be unreliable to the ordinary reader but there is not a single story which could be labelled as totally unreliable, except the first one in *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh*. Even there the reader finds reliable situations. Unreliability in the stories and novels is often the author's conscious doing for the sake of readability and enjoyment. This chapter is concerned with the reliable narrator and the consequent reliable narration and also the partly reliable and the partly unreliable narrators and their narrations as well.

“The Interview,” one of the shortest stories of Khushwant Singh is narrated by a reliable narrator. Being a Public Relations Officer, the homodiegetic narrator talks about the particular situation he was pushed in, his lack of knowledge on certain topics, the trick he played to head off the discussion of Mr Towers, and so on. Though he is involved in the story, the narrator and the narration are both reliable. He provides matter for a hearty laugh at his own expense and that of the Towers. The narrator depicts the characters as they are without commenting on them. The judgement and the interpretation are left to the reader.

The trustworthy homodiegetic narrator in “A Punjab Pastoral” is involved in the story because he depicts what he witnesses. The narrator, who is one of the two characters of the story, describes his

friend's humanitarian errand. As he accompanies him, he understands the difficulties involved better. Both the rendering of the story and the commentary are reliable. There are no double-edged images or contradictions in the narrator's language. The observer-cum-participant narrator proves that revolution is not an easy task, though it may apparently seem to be so.

The reliable narrator in "The Riot" shows that a silly matter could cause a major riot. The heterodiegetic narrator assumes the power of omniscience and watches the moments, the thoughts and the disappointments of the two dogs Moti and Rani, the principal characters in the story. As the narrator reports that the town is paralyzed with communal riots and curfews, he also laughs a painful laugh at the situation.

The reliable narrator in "When Sikh Meets Sikh" portrays the Sikhs in general, and widens the reader's knowledge about the Sikh community. Following that, the narrator depicts an event where he meets another Sikh who is a wrestler. Though involved in the story, the narrator is detached and so there is no emotional involvement on his part.

The narrator in "The Fawn" gives a normal rendering of an ordinary situation. Though the narrator is involved in the story, he does not over-rate himself or look down upon his friend. Instead he gives a

mimetic narration of the scene, and it appears a reliable one. The homodiegetic narrator reliably portrays his own experience as well as that of his companion and explains the difficulty of getting away from time-bound life. Though the narrator is a participant in the story he does not take undue freedom while narrating, and so there is no unreliability in the story.

“Man, How the Government of India Run!” is one of the most beautiful and reliable stories. Through the reliable portrayal of a government office, the narrator educates and enlightens the readers and thus renders excellent service to the society. The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator supports the stenographers in the beginning of the story. But as the story progresses the narrator takes an objective stand, and depicts the scenes at a typical government office. The narrator truthfully accounts how the authorities, hiding their pitfalls, trump up cases against the employees and how the employees play tricks to cheat their employers. The reader does not find any incongruities or contradictions from the part of the narrator. The writer serves the society by capturing “a wide range of themes, aspects and comic ironies of Indian life including bureaucracy, democratic election procedures, anglicized Indians and Indians abroad” observes Pradeep Trikha, in “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting Literary Property” (Dhawan 316).

In “The Rape,” the omniscient heterodiegetic narrator gives a clear picture of Dalip Singh, his mother, his uncle, his daughter Bindo and other womenfolk in his house. Exposing Dalip’s mindset and the relationship between Bindo and Dalip, he says: “Bindo was always willing – even begging. Dalip condescending, even indifferent” (54). The narrator serves as an eye-opener to the reader in two ways: (i) He conveys the idea that the fault was more on the part of the girl than the boy. (ii) The machinery of impartial Justice degrades itself and indulges in partial dealings. The reliability of the narrative proves the unjust ways of the world.

The narrator in “Karma” gives a reliable portrayal of Sir Mohan Lal and his wife Lachmi Mohan Lal. As the narrator portrays them as persons belonging to two different classes, they appear reliable. But when he says that the lady lived in the upper storey of the house whereas Mr Lal on the ground floor, and they travel in two different classes – Lady Lal, in the Zenana inter-class and Mr Lal in the first class, the reader becomes sceptical. The narrator does the narration very consciously and with care. Mohan Lal is thrown out of the first-class compartment while Lady Lal has started her journey in the train. Showing the two types of people, who are supposed to live and share together, the narrator, invites the reader to think and act.

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in “Kusum” portrays a young girl, Kusum, who is very conventional and orthodox and different from other girls of her age and time. The narrator speaks of the changes that take place in her life as the result of some trifling events. Though Kusum was not pleased with the birthday present of the college girls, the narrator notes that it had a ripple effect on her: “After her nineteenth birthday she seldom smiled. She became more earnest, grimly earnest” (47). Likewise, the meeting with the hawker also had a lasting effect upon her. After a few hours of wrath her mood changed to tenderness and regret: She got up, opened the drawer where her lipstick and rouge lay hidden, patted her cheeks with the rouge, turned the face of the mirror towards her and pointed her lips to put on the lipstick. Then she undid her hair and shook her head to loosen it. The hair fell in profusion about the shoulders. The narration appears reliable because the change is depicted as gradual.

The reliable narrator in “India is a Strange Country” is also informative. The narrator talks about different types of foreigners who come to India and the attitude of the two parties to each other. Being homodiegetic in character, the narrator does not focus on himself, but on another character, Mr Kenneth Tyson, an Englishman, who dared to forego his home-leave year after year. The narrator finds out the answer for this and portrays it reliably. Talking of his personal

experience with Mr Tyson the narrator gives a new light – the reason behind the Englishmen’s retrieval may be manifold, but an Indian may not succeed in guessing it. The reader does not see any incongruities or contradictions in the narrator’s rendering.

In “A Bride for the Sahib,” the narrator describes a bride and a Sahib belonging to two different cultures. Consequently they face a lot of adjustment problems. Mr Sunny, being a westernized oriental gentleman, gets irritated if anything goes against the western culture which he cherishes. Suppressing his mounting anger, he appears a dissatisfied person. Every point like the matrimonial advertisement, the consequent steps and the honeymoon shows this point clearly. The narrator portrays vividly the discord between the couple and then a befitting climax.

The narrator in “Death Comes to Daulat Ram” takes into consideration a superstitious issue but he portrays it with confidence. One may not agree with such a coincidence in real life, but the rendering of the story and the commentary remain reliable. The narrator, being omniscient heterodiegetic, demarcates the usual and the normal, and the unusual.

In “Black Jasmine,” the omniscient heterodiegetic narrator mingles the past with the present in a credible ratio. With proper emotions and feelings, and the addition of apt words and phrases, the

narrator renders the story in a reliable manner. R. K. Dhawan rightly comments in “Khushwant Singh: The Man and the Writer”: “By depicting such scenes Khushwant Singh wants to shock and provoke existing norms of Victorian morality, which have always discomfited him” (Dhawan 14).

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in “A Love Affair in London” travels from the present to the past and then back to the present. His reliable comments on Kamini’s curious affair with the magistrate, Robert Smith, reveal clearly their relationship and how such a relationship sprouted. The narrator’s depiction of Kamini’s day-dreaming, anxieties, sense of loneliness and the vague hope of meeting Robert Smith is reliable. The narrator’s major focus in “The Convert” is on Mrs Sarla Sethi, who according to him has changed for the better. The boldness behind her actions is appreciable but she is unable to take up the “sniggers” and “elbow nudging” behind her back. The omniscient narrator renders all these facts in a reliable manner.

The homodiegetic narrator in “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar,” delineates Mr Singh’s mission, his jokes, the way he practices the advice he gives to others and so on. At the end there is a hint that Mr Singh himself does not act according to the advice he gives others. The narrator knows that it is easy to preach for or against topics like racial prejudice, respect for women and so on. But when it comes to real

living, all these advices are overlooked, and a person is more prone to act according to his inclinations or his whims and fancies.

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” knows the past regarding the house of culture, and so he gives a long account of the same. He is in a lighter vein as he speaks of the House of Culture, the general conference, the Indian Minister of Education and so on.

“The Mark of Vishnu” is a highly reliable story in which the narrator focuses on the attitude of the older generation and that of the younger generation. When the elders are entangled in superstitious beliefs of various sorts, the modern youngsters are enthralled by scientific movements. The narrator talks of Gunga Ram thus:

Although a Brahmin, he was illiterate and full of superstitious. 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 lest we kill it. He picked up wasps we battered with our badminton rackets and tended their damaged wings. More dangerous the animal the more devoted Gunga Ram was to its existence. (13-14)

About the youngsters the narrator notes that they never read their scriptures, they do not know what the Mahatma said about nonviolence. They thought only in terms of shotguns to kill birds and

jars of methylated spirit to drum snakes. The last part of the story, the scene in which Gunga Ram appears with a saucer and a jug of milk outside the classroom, and the following drama are possible in the countrysides of India. At the climax the narrator adds, "On his forehead were little drops of blood. These the teacher wiped with his handkerchief. Underneath was the V mark where the Kala Nag had dug his fangs" (16). In spite of the dash of unreliability towards the end, the story is credible.

Likewise, the narrator in "The Voice of God" appears reliable but the concluding part of the story says that on the day of polling, "thousands went in and being illiterate, named their candidate and walked back home" (39). This situation seems ludicrous for the present generation, but people who are familiar with such situations in certain remote parts of India, certify that the account is reliable.

The homodiegetic narrator in "The Great Difference" is reliable, especially when he talks about the Maulana and Swami Vasheshvra Nanda. Though the narrator is a participant in the story, he already knew the twin companions very well: "He (the Maulana) was a gifted orator and his speeches were echoed in the heart of many a faithful who heard him spellbound. . . . He was going to carry the message of Islam, the only true message to the people of the West. The thought filled his entire being, and there was no room for me in it" (66).

Similarly the narrator comments, “from his early childhood Vasheshvra Nanda was of a meditative bent of mind” (67). At certain points the narrator overrates himself. For example, “we entered the great hall together, I in the middle to keep peace. The delegates rose, the visitors rose and the applause was terrific” (70). It seems incongruous that, being merely a guest, the narrator was also introduced along with the Maulana and the Swami, who are supposed to address the Assembly of World Congress of Faiths. One more incongruity is seen in the story – when the young girl, Mlle. Jeanne Dupont approaches the trio and asks them whether she could discuss some of her spiritual problems with them, the twin companions turn to the narrator for a translation. From that it may be inferred that both the Maulana and the Swami both do not know the girl’s language. Again the narrator continues: “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). The reliability of the account is left to the reader.

“Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle,” a highly interesting story, gives the typical picture of the Kanjoos. The narrator passes an ironic comment on Mr Kanjoos: “How absurd that a man as generous should have a name like that!” and again about the Kanjoos couple, “they are a

most thoughtful couple” (169). The story provides good reading matter, but the reliability of the narrator is doubtful. When the Kanjooses stayed in Germany, the narrator says that he bought a car at diplomatic rates and parked it on the road, outside the hotel to save money. The children spent the day in the hotel and slept in the car at night to save money. The narration regarding the Kanjooses’ entry into the cocktail reception is unbelievable too. Ironically the narrator comments that everyone came to know the Kanjooses. This is because they readily accepted hospitality and also because of the beauty of their eighteen-year old daughter, Bhooki Kanjoos. The narrator claims to be reliable in all that he says: “Papa Kanjoos spent a considerable sum in having the wedding invitation cards printed” (174). Naturally the reader wonders why Papa Kanjoos did not think of getting it done in some tricky manner. The narrator adds, on the day of Bhooki Kanjoos’s wedding: “there were so many presents that Master Kanjoos had to be bribed with money to stand guard on the pile” (174). This is the climax of unreliability and yet the narrator is able to keep the reader roaring with laughter.

The narrator in “The Red Tie” gives a fictional account of Chishti’s behaviour at a dinner party and one of his travel experiences. The end of the story is baffling. Chishti heard a sound from the lavatory. The narrator does not make it clear who the person behind the

sound of the feet was. But the narrator notes, “His coat and attach case were gone. His red tie still hung on the peg but saliva trickled down its broad end . . . Someone – a woman – had taken his wallet with its contents” (205). As the truth of the matter is fogged up the narrator’s reliability is unconvincing.

The homodiegetic narrator in “My own My Native Land” narrates his own experience at the Bombay harbour, especially at the customs shed. Being very time-conscious, the narrator describes briefly how the time passed from 1.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. The narrator does not specify who the guardian angel was, and how his presence becomes beneficial to him. Thus the reliability of the narrator is shaky.

“The Portrait of A Lady,” an autobiographical account, focuses on the narrator’s relationship with his grandma. Grandmother’s piety is discussed authentically. In spite of the authenticity of the narration, the reader smells a tinge of exaggeration here and there. For example, when the narrator goes abroad for higher studies he says, “she was not sentimental. She came to leave me at the railway station but did not talk or show any emotion” (31). Likewise the narrator reports that she did not speak a single word: “she still had no time for words . . .” (31). By the end of the story, the reader detects another instance of exaggeration. That is, after the grandmother’s death when the narrator’s mother throws bread crumbs as the grandmother had done in

the past, the narrator notes, “the sparrows took no notice of the bread” (32). Thus the reader finds a few loopholes in the narration even when we consider the narrator is highly reliable.

The narrator in the story, “The Bottom-Pincher,” is an observer in the beginning but by the end of the story he becomes a participant also. When the narrator is an observer, the trend of the narration is a corrective measure, but when he is involved in the story it adds to its humour. After describing Pesi Lalkaka’s daughter, the narrator gives a reliable comment: “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). The narrator talks of partially reliable situations too. For example the narrator says, “the next morning at eleven when the chances of any members of the family being at home would be minimal I dialed the number” (122). At the same time the reader notices instances for sheer unreliability. After the first phone call, when Pesi Lalkaka stopped coming to the fire temple, the narrator reports his condition which appears unreliable: “I felt sorry for the good man whose indulgence in a harmless part-time has been put an end to” (122). Later the narrator talks of Mr Pesi Lalkaka’s reaction as he watches three women whose bottoms presented a tempting variety of sizes and coverings; “his hand came out of the pocket and caressed the three in quick succession”

(123). This seems unbelievable. Likewise, when he reappeared after many days, the narrator passes a judgement seeing his left arm in a sling. "I was sure he had cut himself deliberately" (123). This adds to the unreliability of the narrator. About the author behind the narrator Namita Gokhale observes in "A Remarkable Writer": "A man who dares to articulate his vitality and his deep and abiding interest in life is a rarity in our society" (Prasad 183).

The narrator in "The Man With a Clear Conscience" is reliable as the story begins. But as it proceeds, there is an element of exaggeration, when he says about himself: "I am a man with a clear conscience because I am a good man. . . . I am not intolerant. . . . I do not judge" (104). But when he is unable to tackle the thief-problem satisfactorily, he says with an air of self-complacency: "I had done my duty. My conscience was clear. I was going to sleep the sleep of the just" (109). These portions diminish the effect of the narrator's reliability.

The humorous story, "Posthumous," provides matter for meditation. The homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic narrator in the story begins the narration in a trustworthy manner. But he makes unreliable narrations like: "So I decide to die . . . In the evening, giving enough time for the press to hear of my death, I give up the ghost. Having emerged from my corpse, I come down and sit on the cool marble steps

at the entrance to wallow in posthumous glory” (1). This is contradictory to normal human life and belief. The story as such is an imaginary account and so reliability is not a matter for consideration. Notwithstanding the story grips the attention of the reader.

The reliable narrator in “The Butterfly” vividly describes Charles and the changes that occurred to him, the adventures he met with, his transformation to Sriyut Romesh Chandra and then to Comrade Romesh Chandra. He also narrates how Charles was beneficial to the narrator’s gang, how the narrator and party played a trick upon Charles and how Charles was let down by two girls. These reliable accounts are in contrast to the hyperbolic description of Charles’s cousin: “From the tiny red spot on her forehead down to the tips of her pink toes it was the Hindu goddess come to life – stepping out of the Vedas, descending from the heights of snow-bound Kailash, floating down the Ganges on a gorgeous lotus, and somehow face to face with Charles” (19). The reader senses, a little exaggeration in the description and the comparison but it is accepted as the evidence of a person overwhelmed by beauty.

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in “The Memsahib of Mandla” seeing a phantom figure reports: “Out of the misty haze emerged a figure of a woman in a long white dressing gown. Her hair was tied in two plaits, which fell on her shoulders. Her features were not discernible but her eyes had an inhuman brightness” (62-63).

“Maiden Voyage of the *Jal Hindia*” amuses and convinces the reader largely. But at a certain point the reliability of the narrator is suspected. He describes a scene as the professor watches, “an exquisitely beautiful nude lying with her face towards the wall . . . The nude turned on her side and lay now on her back.” It is unimaginable for the ordinary reader to think of a lady sleeping in a ship cabin without anything on. And the narrator adds: “Once again his feet come to a halt in front of the Tyson’s porthole, for inside . . . lay in recumbent pose ‘Venus de Milo’ – this time on her belly” (152).

In the humorous story, “The Morning After the Night Before,” when the reliable narrator was looking for a dancing partner, his eyes rested on the most unsuitable one and he describes her clothes: “The size of her clothes remained what it had been when she was in college. She had tried to squeeze all her protrusions in tight-fitting clothes . . .” (181).

The narrator in “The Insurance Agent” gives the impression that he is just joking: “A friend who had spotted me came up before we could greet each other, the stranger had opened his arms wide again with a triumphant ‘ah’ . . . and clasped my friend to his bosom. He slapped my friend on the back and asked about the health of his wife and children . . .” (83). The various comments passed by malicious people are reported by the narrator. Though there is also a tinge of

unreliability, the reader may read those comments as the opinion of the narrator himself.

*Train to Pakistan*

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in *Train to Pakistan* begins the narration with the summer of 1946 and 1947. The narrator gives a reliable account of a village, Mano Majra, the nearest river, Sutlej, the railway station and the people. The routine of the people is more or less regulated by the coming and going of trains. The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator is trustworthy when he reports the dacoity in the village in which Lala Ram Lal's house was robbed and he was killed. He portrays the love scene of Juggut Singh and Nooran which took place simultaneously with the dacoity. By narrating these two simultaneous actions, the narrator reveals an important truth to the reader that, Juggut Singh was not involved in the dacoity at all. Thus the narrator gains the reader's confidence. At the same time, the characters involved in the story are denied of this truth. As the reader is provided with the truth, he agrees with the narrator's renderings. As the narration proceeds, the reader feels that the narrator takes him aside and whisper some facts and truths confidentially. In "A Nice Man to Know" Bindeshwar Pathak notes that Khushwant Singh's fictional tour de force, *Train to Pakistan* is an 'absorbing account of human struggle': "The sweep of human miseries, depth of despair and strength

of humanism which survives amidst the devastating and brutal atmosphere, characterising this intensely moving piece of fiction, is borne out of the direct and deadly experiences of a sensitive teenager” (Prasad 24). †

The narrator emphasizes the specialty of the name ‘Iqbal’: “He could be a Muslim, Iqbal Mohammed. He could be a Hindu, Iqbal Chand, or a Sikh, Iqbal Singh. It was one of the few names common to the three communities”(33). By giving such details the narrator warns the reader about the complexities which may arise from that name. Through the flashback technique he reliably delineates Iqbal’s journey as well. And he continuously follows Iqbal as he takes a walk around Mano Majra and depicts the scenes reliably. The narrator is also trustworthy when he narrates the villagers’ visit and the lambardar’s offering of milk to Iqbal. His portrayal of Iqbal’s arrest is reliable too. Thus the narrator becomes dependable.

At a certain point, the narrator reveals his prior knowledge of Iqbal. He says Iqbal had a semiotic consciousness of his hooked nose and any reference to his physical appearance always put him off. Thus the narrator becomes a confidant of the reader. But the reader senses a tinge of unreliability as the narrator reports on Jugga’s temper. Jugga, he says, recovered his temper as quickly as he had lost it. He forgot the

incident of the bangles and the beating as soon as he reached the threshold.

Once again the narrator makes matters clear for the reader as he reports that Jugga had no malice or ill will towards the policemen. The policemen knew that they had made a mistake. They also knew that arresting the social worker was a blunder and a likely source of trouble. On the other hand, Juggut Singh was too obvious a victim to be the correct one. Moreover it was clear that these two had met for the first time. The narrator gives a reliable portrayal of the police station and also states the difference in the attitude of the police toward Jugga and Iqbal. As the subinspector changes his tone, the narrator comments, "That was diplomacy"(165). And he sums up the effect of the subinspector's visit to the prisoners: "His visits had been a failure. He would have to change his tactics. It was frustrating to deal with two people so utterly different" (67).

In the section, "Mano Majra," the narrator depicts the scene of the release of Malli and gang. The narrator tries to make his report as accurate as possible: "Perhaps they were not all involved, some of the five might have been arrested mistakenly. It was scarcely possible that none of them had anything to do with it" (104). And the narrator stresses the point that the police let them loose, not in their village, but in Mano Majra where they had committed the murder.

He introduces three important people, namely Banta Singh, the lambardar, Imam Baksh, the Mullah of the Mosque and Bhai Meet Singh of the gurudwara for a smooth narration. The meeting at gurudwara, their discussions and the villagers bringing bundles of wood and bottles of oil at the suggestion of the policeman are all narrated in a trustworthy manner. The narrator reports, "In their excitement they had forgotten to prepare the midday meal . . . The men did not give fodder to their cattle nor remember to milk them as evening drew near" (73). This last part alone seems unreliable.

As the narrator depicts the wavering nature of the populace, he is dependable. According to the narrator, they are not sure of anything, and they are conditioned so by the senseless authorities. The narrator through an apt comment reveals the condition of Mano Majra: "The head constable's visit had divided Mano Majra into two halves as neatly as a knife cuts through a pat of butter" (106). The narrator depicts the changes that occurred in the attitude of Mano Majra Muslims and Sikhs, and shows the bewilderment on the part of Mano Majrans as they faced the difficult task of deciding to leave or not. The narrator feels sorry for them: "Sikh and Muslim villagers fell into each others' arms and wept like children" (112). (In "*Train to Pakistan: A Thematic Analysis*" S. P. Swain is of the view that Khushwant Singh is able to build up a novel portraying the hard and bitter facts of life

against the harrowing tale of India's partition (Dhawan 117). When the narrator focuses on Mano Majra as a whole and reports how they spent that night and how the Muslims were transported the next day morning with so much wailing and weeping on both sides, it is a trustworthy account. The narrator, through his timely comment, and intrusion fills the gaps and unveils the uncertainties and gains the reader's confidence.

In the chapter "Karma" when the narrator elaborates on the problem of flood and how the Mano Majrans were affected by it, the reader does not doubt its authenticity. The narrator also reports reliably on another train from Pakistan to Mano Majra which contained corpses and how it was treated differently from the previous time. S. P. Swain comments' in "*Train to Pakistan: A Thematic Analysis*": "The harrowing and spine-chilling events of 1947 had shaken the faith of the people in the innate nobility of human beings. . . . To Khushwant Singh, this was a period of great disillusionment and crisis of values, a distressing and disintegrating period of his life" (Dhawan 114). The narrator talks of the entire village which turned up for the evening prayer at the gurudwara and their nervousness even when they slept. The narrator proceeds to give a reliable portrayal of the strangers who trespass the gurudwara and play smart and speak arrogantly and sarcastically. The boy ultimately challenges the Mano Majra Sikhs to

rise against the Muslims. The narrator truthfully reports Mano Majrans' unwillingness in the beginning and later their positive response to the strange Sikh boy. The narrator keenly reports, "some villagers who had only recently wept at the departure of their Muslim friends also stood up to volunteer" (132). And about the conspirators' plan to derail the train, the narrator comments, "It seemed a perfect plan, without the slightest danger of retaliation" (134). Shikoh Mohsin Mirza's comment in "Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*" is admirable: "*Train to Pakistan* however remains, like all Partition literature, more a warning for the future than a reminder of the past" (Prasad 181). On the whole the novel is a reliable account and is sure to stand the test of time.

### *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* gives a reliable narration of people and events. The narrator's portrayal of Sher Singh's training to become a terrorist is convincingly depicted. Though Sher had assumed the leadership of the rebel group, Madan was its backbone. The narrator says: "He was both Sher Singh's chief supporter and rival: one whose presence was an encouragement and a challenge at the same time" (166).

Sher Singh's meeting with John Taylor exposes Sher's angry mood: "He was angry, humiliated, and frightened. He wanted to cry

but no tears would come into his eyes” (243). But the narrator does not forget to show the appeasement of his anger: “For the first time in many years, Sher Singh went to the big temple in the city to pray” (243). After moving to the Punjab, the narrator broods over Sher’s mind for quite a long time and renders it reliably. He also explains Sher’s difficulty concerning the removal of arms. The narrator is trustworthy when he reports that Sher Singh’s illusions of Taylor, not knowing about his activities were shattered. Sher Singh, pondering on the national restlessness and his own inactivity, “spent that day and night in these thoughts and decided that the hour of trial had come” (286).

The narrator gives a reliable account of Sher Singh’s attitude towards the headmān who thrust the empty rifle bullets in his hand. Sher wanted to fling them in the peasant’s face, call him a dirty pig, spit at him, and kick him out of the house. The omniscient narrator faithfully reports: “This was the last time he was going to see this fellow, why not let the meeting end peacefully?”(296). The narrator reliably portrays how Sher and the gang trap the headman and murder him. It seems painful when the narrator coolly reports; “They dumped it (the dead man) into a ditch and covered it with earth and stones. They dug up and relevelled the path where he had fallen and bled” (299).

The omniscient narrator gives a reliable portrayal of Buta Singh. Loyal to British Raj, Buta Singh had begun to think in terms of bargaining with the British, only in recent years. Loyalty to the Raj had been a matter of faith for him as it had been for his father and grandfather who had served in the British army. The narrator shows clearly the change in the political scenario and the twisted attitude of the Indians to the British. But the predicament of Buta Singh was different. He favoured both the English and the Indians, certainly without each other knowing about it. His policy was 'keep in with both sides.' The narrator intrudes wherever it is necessary to lay down a comment, so that the reader may have clarity of thought. He also confides in the reader and discloses the secret that, "Buta Singh's accent and vocabulary changed when he spoke to Englishmen" (186).

When the narrator talks about the change that took place in the attitude of Buta Singh and his family towards the Wazir Chands it seems unreliable because of the hastiness of such a change. The Buta Singhs were not fully happy with the Chands. Mr Buta Singh disliked Wazir Chand. Sabhrai had her own suspicion about Madan. Sher was not cent percent on good terms with Madan. Beena and Champak had already known about Madan's promiscuous behaviour. Even when all these disparities existed, the narrator takes a short cut to declare that everything was okay with the two families.

The narrator offers a reliable account of Sabhrai's illness, her death and her cremation, and the mourning over her death. The narration on Buta Singh's plan to erect a memorial for Sabhrai and the discussion on such matters with the Taylors, are also trustworthy. In "*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale: A Re-evaluation*" Subhash Chandra observes that there is a lingering sadness enveloping the end of the novel. The sadness is not merely the result of the death of a good woman, Sabhrai, but much more: "It is the novelist's strident awareness of a world passing, a set of values getting eroded and a "brave new world" emerging in which people like Sabhrai and all that they uphold in the midst of trying and unnerving situations will become either strangers, out of place or extinct" (Dhawan 167).

While the narrator depicts Shunno, the maidservant, at the Buta Singhs, he does it in a reliable manner. His focus is on her new ailment, and her consequent absence in the gurudwara on the first of Jeth. Here the narrator provides an important revelation about the cause of Shunno's mysterious illness too. Then he narrates Shunno's meeting with Peer Sahib. And the omniscient narrator reports truthfully the thought of Shunno: "It gave her a peculiar pleasure to have a man, young enough to be her son, call her daughter" (274). As Shunno shamelessly allows herself to be checked by Peer Sahib, she becomes a curious person, and the reader giggles at Peer Sahib's preparations:

“The Peer Sahib bolted the door of the courtyard. He washed himself once more and faced west towards Mecca. . . With his large calloused, peasant’s hands he stroked the soft flesh of the woman’s under belly and the sides of her thighs” (275-76). The narrator’s portrayal of Shunno and the Peer Sahib, involved in sexual pleasures, invites a wide reading public to the novels of Khushwant Singh. As Sandhya Mulchandani observes in “A Conservative Iconoclast”: “Mixing the serious with the sexy, Khushwant has become the raconteur of our times, commenting on life in the process achieving widespread appeal and readership” (Prasad 187).

Only a reliably discerning narrator can make statements like: “A national crisis has overtaken them and completely swamped their personal problems” (280). He shows how political agitations affect the life of the characters as well. The momentous events that took place in the country were in conflict with their own secret desires.

The reliability of the narrator is part and parcel of the time sequence as well. The time span of the novel is from April 1942 to April 1943. There are references to the incidents at the beginning of 1942 and 1943 and also to points of time almost every month. To give an example, the novel begins on the last day of the previous year. And other events refer to dates like: New Year Day, Baisakhi Day, the first of Jeth (in early May), the month of Asadh, first of the month Sawan,

again the first of the next month, and yet again the first of the following month, then Christmas morning, New Year's Eve, and last, the first of Phaggan. These dates add to the credibility of the narrator, and prove that he is the son of the time and space, and the spirit of the time and space.

### *Delhi*

The novel, *Delhi*, begins with the truthful narration of Mr Singh, the narrator, who portrays his experiences from the time he deplanes at Palam airport. In the chapter "Lady J. H. T." the narrator accompanies Lady J. H. T. as a tourist guide. Without exaggerating, he depicts the sights they watch, the people they meet and their personal experiences in Delhi. A. Rajendra Prasad notes: "While narrating the saga of Delhi, and its people and rulers, Khushwant Singh in his typical realistic style unveils all the gory incidents that have made up the story of Delhi" (Dhawan 170).

In "Musaddi Lal," the narrator, Musaddi Lal, weaves his personal history with the history of the nation. Depicting himself as a *hijda* he delineates his plight in the society. The narrator traces the period from the reign of Sultan Ghiasuddin Balban to the time of Ghiasuddin Tughlak and gives information regarding seven Sultans and how each of them came to the throne and how they were dethroned or murdered. And the narration till the death of the dervish is a more

truthful utterance. There are also reliable references to the historical years from AD 1191 to AD 1324 in the episode.

“The Timurid,” a short account by the narrator, Taimur, begins with his dream and its interpretation. The narration is followed by the details as to how the narrator fulfilled the dream. Being a Turk and Muslim, the narrator’s point of view is obvious. The monarch conquers many lands of India, enslaves many people and kills many others. The narrator tries his best to make his narration trustworthy. But the reader senses a tinge of exaggeration here and there. For example, about his birth, the narrator reports, “when we were born in the spring of the year of the mouse, sparks had flown out of our royal mother’s womb and our hands were found to be full of blood” (456). When the narrator gets ready for the expedition he says, “The men who flocked to our standard were numerous as drops of rain . . .” (458). And about their speed the narrator notes, “By rapid marches we overtook birds in flight and reached the river Indus” (458). In all these cases the sense of exaggeration is conspicuous.

In “The Untouchables,” the narrator, Jaita Rangreta who is an untouchable, narrates his plight during the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. The narrator’s account is reliable when he depicts the immediate aftermath of Badshah Jahangir’s death; the reign of Shah Jahan; and his son Aurangzeb’s usurping the kingdom by foul means.

And the comments that the narrator adds as the narration progresses seem to be very apt and timely. For example, as Shah Jahan was suffering from constipation, the narrator comments: “But big people’s illness are always made to sound big. The simple shutting and opening of the royal arse-hole was made to sound as if the world was coming to an end”(486).

In the chapter “Aurangzeb Alamgir, Emperor of Hindustan” the narrator calls himself Abdul Muzaffar Mohiuddin Mohammed and narrates his own story. He describes his birth, parentage, boyhood, studies, marriage, offspring and father-son relationship reliably. The narrator Aurangzeb mostly broods over his kingdom and his father’s dislike towards him. There is a slight unreliability as he narrates, “though we were in the prime of youth, and youth has its compulsions, we wasted little time on the nuptial couch” (504). And also when he describes Hira Bai’s death he notes, “We buried her in Aurangabad beside a tank full of our tears” (505). The narrator was careful about the chronology of years throughout the novel. But by the end of the narration there is a discrepancy. After mentioning spring of the year of AD 1706 in page 516, the narrator notes in page 517 “came the summer of 1705.”

In the chapter entitled “Nadir Shah,” the narrator, gives a reliable rendering of his expedition to India. Nadir Shah, the emperor

of Iran begins the narration with his two dreams and their interpretation. As Nasiruddin Mohammed Shah was reigning the Hindustan, the narrator got news about the emperor's profligacy and the narrator wants to act the role of a saviour for the people, especially Muslims in India. He portrays reliably what he sees and does in Hindustan along with his troupe. Though trustworthy in his understanding of the people of Hindustan, there is an element of exaggeration: "Men were drawn to our ever victorious standard as moths are drawn to a lamp and they were as willing to sacrifice their lives for us as winged insects are for the love of the flame" (527). The narrator's personal dislike of Hindustan and its people are clear from his narration.

In the chapter "Meer Taqi Meer" the narrator, Meer Taqi Meer, starts the narration depicting the beginning of his career as a poet and lover. Along with his personal history, the history of Delhi is unfolded nearly from 1737 to 1783 approximately. The narrator portrays his relationship with Begum Sahiba, wife of Nawab Rais Mian, and truthfully elaborates how this woman made him and destroyed him. In love with the city of Delhi and its people, the narrator reports the political disturbance and the personal disturbance that affected the people. The narrator adds: "The accursed Nadir Shah had left behind him in Delhi thousands of widows to beat their breasts over their dead husbands and forced

thousands of orphans to go begging in the streets” (577). The reign of three emperors, Ahmed Shah, Alamgir and Shah Alam II is also portrayed. The pathetic sights seen make the narrator’s language so poetic that it pierces the heart of the reader: “Tears flow like rivers from my weeping eyes” (583).

The chapter “1857” is narrated reliably by three personages: Alice Aldwell, Bahadur Shah Zafar and Nihal Singh. The chapter is subdivided into ten, of which two sections are narrated by a European lady, Alice Aldwell. In the second section, narrated by her she is renamed, Ayesha Bano Begum. As a wife, a mother, a Christian, a Muslim and as a subject she undergoes a lot of trials and tribulations. At last when she narrates the humiliations she underwent, the reader trust the narration. She also gives a true account of Delhiwallahs.’

In this episode five sections are narrated by the last Emperor of Hindustan, Bahadur Shah Zafar. He appears reliable in the description of his life and routine with Zeenat Mahal, his queen. Trustworthy in the portrayal of the disturbances caused by the English soldiers, he is full of sympathy for the European prisoners brought to him by the mob. But their death later by Mirza Mughal is against his wish. The narrator takes care to give a true account of the destruction that occurred in the city of Delhi by the firangi and company, and the consequent devastation of the city. He exhibits a pathetic rendering of his own

condition too. The imprisonment he had to undergo by the firangi along with his queen and son, and the treatment they received in the dungeon, and the sentence for exile are all narrated faithfully.

There are three sections narrated by Nihal Singh. Having been selected to the army in Jan Company, the narrator gives a reliable rendering of what he witnesses and what he does. Surprised at the courageous figure of Hodson Sahib, the strong leader of the army by whom the English made victory, one after the other, the narrator explains how Delhi became the property of Jan Company. The narrator reliably portrays how the last Emperor of Hindustan was surrendered to the English. There is no doubt that both Nihal Singh and Bahadur focus on the condition of Delhi, and the destructions caused to it by the invaders.

“The Builders” is reliably narrated by a Sikh builder whose name is not revealed. Son of Sujan Singh, an efficient builder of roads, the narrator gives a truthful account of how his family was devoted to the English rules, a devotion which remained steady till the end of the narration. The background information given by the narrator about the partition of Bengal and the shifting of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi is a reliable account. The narrator clearly remembers the past and delineates how he and his father got into the building of New Delhi with the advice of Hailey. His account of the replanting of the

milestone from kingsway to Malcha, and how the viceregal Darbar was disturbed by the bomb blast is also reliable. The narrator depicts his own progress as well as that of Delhi from 1955. Gandhi's appearance on the scene and the consequent changes in the political scenario is narrated admirably well. By the end of the narration the narrator makes a concrete study of the differences between the English and the Indians and the narrator's preference for the British is also manifest in the narration.

The narrator, Ram Rakha, gives a reliable rendering in "The Dispossessed." He narrates his life at Hadali, the circumstances which led him and his family to leave Hadali, how they reached Delhi and how they found their residence in Delhi. He gives a truthful account of the change in his parents' attitude towards him and how he was involved in the RSS. The narrator exposes the teachings and practices at the headquarters of the RSS and how anger and enmity towards the Muslims were instilled in him. He faithfully portrays how a well-known Muslim storeowner and four of his attendants were dramatically killed by the narrator and other boys. The narrator shares his happiness and bewilderment after the adventure he has undertaken. When the narrator is assigned the important duty of a watchman and reporter of the happenings at Birla house, where Gandhi was staying and giving darshan to people, the narrator proves his reliability in that case too.

Gandhi's promise to fast to death, the crowd coming to see Gandhi, people's various reactions to Gandhi's fast and the change in the attitude of Hindus to Muslims are all narrated truthfully. For the narrator, Ram Rakha, what is going on at the Birla house is 'a put-up show, a tamasha' (714). According to him, the old man stopped his fast as he heard that the RSS had joined the Peace Committee. The narrator watches the scene of the happenings at Birla house and thus he is able to portray the murder of the old man, and subsequently report his own feelings towards that incident.

There are ten "Bhagmati" episodes and the narrator is the same in all the episodes. The first "Bhagmati" episode is reliable as the narrator explicates his relationship with two persons – Bhagmati, a hijda and Fraulein Irma Weskermann, a lady stenographer working in the West German Embassy. Shamelessly the narrator exposes his sexual relationship with these two women. As the narrator reports, "And the memory of that one night she (Bhagmati) had spent with me came back to me with pain" the reader comprehends the attachment (406).

In most of the narratives, the narrator is seen with Bhagmati, the hijda. After introducing Bhagmati in the first narrative, the narrator is seen travelling with her, or in conversation with her in the remaining episodes. He regrets the scenes of Delhi's ruins. His love for Delhi is

so ardent that he equates it with his love for Bhagmati. In an article “Why I am an Indian,” Khushwant Singh notes: “This is where I belong and this is where I intend to live and die. Of course I like going abroad. . . . However, I soon get tired of all those things and want to get back to my dung-heap and be among my loud-mouthed, sweaty, smelly countrymen” (Mehta 6). Apart from Bhagmati and some of the narrator’s friends, the two important figures appear in these episodes are Georgine and Kamala. On several occasions the narrator is seen travelling with these important figures and showing them around Delhi. He reveals the sexual pleasures he had with the three women. Each “Bhagmati” episode prepares for the forthcoming serious narrative and faint hints are given. The narrator is reliable as he talks of his ghostphobia, his trials to overcome it and his failure in it. Giving a typical example, the narrator enumerates his difficulty. There is an exaggeration in this section, where the narrator compares the dome of Bara Gumbad mosque to Kamala’s bosom: “Beautiful dome! Exactly like the bosom of Kamala, the woman from the south, the land of coconuts: firmly rounded with its taut nipple poking the sky” (522).

The narrator is reliable as he depicts the tragic scene at the Golden Temple where a thousand including women and infants-in-arms were killed, along with Bhindranwale. The narrator passes reliable critical comments after Indira Gandhi’s death. He neither

supports Indira Gandhi over her decision which caused thousands of deaths in the Golden Temple nor the people who celebrate the death of Indira Gandhi. Neither is to be applauded. The narrator is reliable when he reports that it was Bhagmati who came to save the narrator's life when she saw all Sikhs around were murdered. On the whole the narrator tries his best to be reliable. Khushwant Singh told a journalist soon after the publication of the novel:

Gone is the culture of Delhi . . . it breaks my heart. I no longer want to see Hauz Khaz or go to Suraj Kund which was a good four mile walk or visit Tughlakabad that was almost another city. Today they are in the middle of slums with construction all around. I came here when there was no New Delhi. . . . Delhi has not produced anything that will last. (Dhawan 181)

### *The Company of Women*

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in *The Company of Women* reports Mohan Kumar's marriage and honeymoon, his strained relationship with his wife, his divorce from his wife and children and so on. Finally when they were separated, the narrator says: "For Mohan Kumar, it should have been a day of rejoicing. It was not" (3). As the narrator unveils Mohan Kumar's past he also understands his emptiness. The novel appears to be written from the point of view of

Mohan Kumar and the narrator seems to support Mohan in his decisions, divorce and his relationship with other women for a short span of time. It is the narrator's problematic value-scheme that mars his reliability in several parts of the novel.

The narrator is reliable when he assesses Mohan's further step to lead a normal life after the divorce. The reasons for ruling out the three major newspapers are also reliably narrated. He portrays Mohan Kumar's longing for his children and every other move in a trustworthy manner: "His siesta was disturbed by the thought of his children. Somehow the decision he had made and acted upon that morning seemed to have put a greater distance between his children and him" (13).

The relationship of Mohan Kumar with Dhanno, the sweepress, may sound unbelievable because it is the union of an educated gentleman with an untouchable married woman. But the narrator here depicts the sprouting of the relationship with such care and accuracy that it becomes reliable. When the narrator says that till Mohan Kumar's divorce, he had neither bothered to look at the sweepress nor cared to know her name, it is a trustworthy account. She was for him, just the jamadarni, the sweeper's wife. Only after he missed his wife, Mohan Kumar began to notice her and her movements. He spends day after day, weighing the pros and cons of taking on a cleaning woman as

a mistress. He lets the woman know what he has in mind. And both wait for the fullness of time. The narrator makes this section reliable through his alert and painstaking narration, which would have been otherwise unbelievable to the reader. As Dhawan comments in “Khushwant Singh: The Man and the Writer,” the novel belongs to “the tradition of critique-of-society novels,” the narrator’s rendering of the events is helpful to understand the society around (16).

The chapter, “Letter from Rewari,” is a reliable narration on the whole. Mohan Kumar seeing his ad at the end of the endless columns of both newspapers, entitled ‘miscellaneous,’ and Sonu’s reaction about it are well portrayed. The lady professor’s letter to Mohan Kumar and their meeting and subsequent relationship through letters are portrayed convincingly. The narrator notes her audacity too: “Mohan was taken aback by her bluntness. Less than half an hour ago, when she came in, this woman had touched his feet” (35). As the reader suspects how Mohan Kumar could keep this relationship a secret, the narrator ascertains: “Since he himself locked the front and rear entrances to the house before retiring to bed, neither Dhanno nor the other servants would know what went on indoors at night” (36). The information given by the narrator immediately after is unreliable: “In the course of the next week he received more letters from women showing interest in his offer. They were from distant cities . . .” (38).

With more definite proof, the narrator boasts of eight takers from different parts of the country belonging to different communities. This is too much of a lie for the reader to accept. If it is a truth, the reader may not wish to take it in. Sheila Reddy in her review of the novel regrets: “The truth about a Dirty Old Society” (Dhawan 222).

In the chapter “Sarojini” the narrator reliably depicts Sarojini’s arrival, her affairs till Mohan Kumar arrives and the consequent mental anxieties. When the narrator gives an account of their life together at the Mohans, he appears reliable. He hints at their private moments, how Sarojini spent time in the absence of Mohan Kumar, the servants’ attitude to the lady professor and so on. As time passed he notes, “Mohan’s ardour for the lady professor lessened” (57). He does a credible job with the leave-taking session too. By the end of their ‘shared’ life, the narrator notes “It was the first time in their month-long relationship that they had used the word love with each other” (70). Thus he depicts truthfully their life which was very superficial and hollow.

In the second section there is a change of role. The protagonist in the first section becomes the narrator and the section becomes homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic. The narrator unfolds from memory his birth, parentage, the death of his mother soon after his birth, the young

maidservant who looked after him, his performance at school and college. All these are portrayed reliably in “I, Mohan Kumar.”

The chapter “Jessica Browne” shows a reliable narrator, Mohan Kumar, who remembers the day he reached Princeton, got acquainted with the Americans, started new friendships, and began his relationship with Jessica Browne, a sophomore and the best woman tennis player in the university. As Mohan Kumar narrates how he lost his virginity there is a slight discrepancy. To quote, “Want to see what I’m really like?” she asked. And without waiting for an answer she slipped off her blouse and skirt”(92). This seems hasty and unreliable to an extent. The narrator continues to narrate the blissful days which lasted for only a short time and soured soon. After drifting apart from Jessica Browne he took up with many girls: “I lost count of the girls I bedded the following spring and summer” (95). The narrator justifies the same, saying that American society is a permissive one. In “Lust for Life or Zest for Life?: A Study of *The Company of Women*” D. K. Pabby is of the view that Khushwant Singh is indirectly raising some significant sociological questions that are relevant in the evolving of a progressive-minded and permissive society. The evolving of such a society, shorn of sham-morality, double-dealing, deception and confidentialities, and above all, the general hypocrisy may actually

usher the society into a newly-defined era of healthy relationships without any hang-ups and guilt-complexes (Dhawan 266).

As the narrator narrates “Yasmeen” he is reliable as he was before. It is one of the memorable experiences he had in Princeton and he remembers how he came to know this Pakistani Muslim woman, how they became friends despite their heated arguments on religion, how he came closer to her during her last week in Princeton, and of course, the last-day climax. The narrator makes clear his stand when she bluntly asks him to make love to her: “To say that I was shocked would be an understatement. This was the last thing I had expected of the evening. Besides, Yasmeen had never appeared sexually desirable to me” (108). But “she was like a political boss in full command of the situation. . . . it had somehow drained out whatever anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan prejudices I had imbibed during my school and college years in India. . . . It was not love but lust that proved to be great healer” (109-113). The reader cannot fully agree with the narrator’s conclusion, which arises from his questionable value-scheme.

In the chapter “Getting Married” the narrator portrays the traditional customs before his marriage, beginning with his father giving ads in the matrimonial columns of the news paper, his father interviewing people for his son, their visit to Lala Achint Ram and Haridwar, their giving consent to the marriage, their search for a new

house, Achint Ram donating it, their settling in the new house, and finally the marriage. In his elaborate narration the narrator being very careful gives a faithful and factual account of all these matters. At a certain point the reader senses a tinge of unreliability on the part of the narrator as he comments: "For too long have we been fooled into believing that the basis of a happy man-woman relationship is love. 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 . . ." (137). But the narrator reports that none of the liaisons, which were purely based on lust, lasted long. So there is an incongruity and the reliability of the narrator is diminished. Likewise, when the narrator reports Rai Bahadur's display of wealth on the wedding day, the reader senses some sort of an exaggeration.

In the chapter "Honeymoon in the Shivaliks," the narrator is reliable when he speaks about the couple's journey to Shivalik Hills, the reception at the Gargs, their dinner and Sonu's initiation into sex, the subsequent sore throat and fever, their coming back home, the attitude of the narrator's in-laws and the narrator's everyday visit to Sonu, and bringing her home and finally the birth of the child.

In the chapter "Mary Joseph" the narrator focuses on one of the baby nurses and the narrator's perverted attitude to her at home and later in the hotel. The narrator also truthfully depicts Sonu's reaction

when Mohan had changed the residence and appointed a servant without consulting Sonu. It is difficult to accept Mohan Kumar's uncouth behaviour, but measuring him from his past experience, the reader is not surprised. In "The Fantasy-Erotica Paradox in *The Company of Women*" Kapadia rightly observes the service rendered by Khushwant Singh:

By writing a novel of sexploits and the voyeuristic view of male and female anatomy and titillating accounts of the innumerable sexual encounters, Khushwant Singh is parodying all the religious and moral taboos and codes of social respectability imposed on individuals in contemporary Indian society. (Dhawan 222)

In the chapter, "How the Marriage Died" the narrator gives a detailed and reliable account of the instances which ultimately led to the divorce. The narrator portrays his father, his relationship to his son Ranjit, the reasons which made him leave home and his death in the ashram. It is a curious fact that even when the couple strongly desired for divorce, they were prompted to give birth to their second child. Sonu's continuous nagging, the narrator's indifference to her, their ritual performance of sex with Sonu, are all narrated reliably. His sorrow after his father's death, the religious and social rituals related to the deceased father, Achint Ram's visit to condole the narrator, Sonu's

daring to have an end to their married life, and at last, the divorce are also narrated reliably. Kapadia reminds, "However it must be admitted that Khushwant Singh's work like that of De (Shobha De) reveals pictures of a society in transition" (Dhawan 248).

Another proof for the reliability of the narrator is that whenever matters are repeated, there are no contradictions or variations from what is already narrated by the omniscient heterodiegetic narrator or by the protagonist, Mohan Kumar. The repetition may be considered the assertions or elaborations of what has already been narrated.

The chapter, "Molly Gomes," narrated reliably by Mohan Kumar, explains how he got rid of Dhanno. Then he switches on to Molly Gomes, a trained nurse specialised in physiotherapy. The narrator reliably portrays the pleasure he derived from her: ". . . our only bonding was based on lust, and lust loses its frenetic pace as soon as the partners slip wedding rings on each other's fingers" (227). As Molly stayed with him for more than three months, both of them had a good time with each other but, "It was becoming a little awkward for both of us" (248). The author depicts what is happening around us: People are earning quick money and indulging in ostentatious living and a lot of pretence about moral standards that no longer exist.

The chapter, "Susanthika," a reliable narration, shows the narrator's plight after his separation from his lady companions. His

musings over the past is a truthful account: “It was the loss of normal human dignity that bothered me. There was nothing dirty in what I did, but their looks and remarks made me out to be a filthy sex maniac” (252). The reader is thrown into a dubious disposition as the narrator justifies his stand: “But what was the alternative to the clandestine affairs I had been having? . . . I could not think of a way out of the impasse because I needed sex on a regular basis, with a change of partners every few months” (252). The narrator also admits that river Ganga had in some mysterious way become his spiritual sustenance. As Susanthika departs, the narrator is more or less exhausted. He truthfully admits, “The idea of inviting another woman to be my mistress no longer appeared to me” (276).

The third section of the novel is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator who reliably portrays Mohan Kumar’s condition, his loss of sex drive before he reached fifty, and his further initiations to sex with the help of ‘the woman with no name’ in Bombay. The narrator depicts the events reliably. In the chapter “A Fatal Illness” the narrator talks of Mohan Kumar’s illness and the consequent treatment by Dr Malhotra. His thoughts are turned to death, a horribly painful death. And the last chapter, “The Death of Mohan Kumar” depicts Mohan’s death which is a reliable portrayal of events. The end of it seems to raise doubts: “thirty Gayatri mantras with thirty pills” (295-96). The

reader wonders whether he said the mantras as he took the pills. If he really recited mantras there should have been no provocation to take the pills. Pills and mantras are poles apart, the reader knows. Ranganath Nandyal observes in “In Defence of Khushwant Singh”:

Khushwant Singh’s provocative novel *The Company of Women* and the adverse criticism on it remind us of the age old conflict between the flesh and the spirit and importune us to ask ourselves whether it is really any deplorable inconsistency for a human being to be both angel and animal with equal devotion. (Dhawan 277)

D. K. Pabby suggests in “Lust for Life or Zest for life?: a Study of *The Company of Women*” that the concluding part of the novel does seem to make a definitive statement in favour of the need for balance and moderation rather than excesses and obsessions in all walks of life and more particularly with reference to physical indulgence and reckless gratification of sensual desires (Dhawan 270).



*A man’s learning, the wisdom he has garnered from books die with him, but what he puts on paper lives on after he has gone. There is also his reputation, good or bad, that survives his death.*

*Khushwant Singh*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **THE NARRATOR AS OBSERVER AND SERVER**

The title of the dissertation “The Observer as Server: A Study of the Short Stories and Novels of Khushwant Singh” is viewed from the narrator’s angle. Khushwant Singh, the narrator, the observer and the server exhibits a unique skill in penetrating deep into every area of human living, and into the core of the human heart, mind and soul. A sensitive, and accomplished craftsman, Singh serves humanity through his simple, unfiltered prose which provides aesthetic joy, emotional appeal, intellectual awareness and enlightening truth. By his observations on people and places, the reader gets an insight into the mind of the narrator as well as the writer himself. At ninety-one, Khushwant Singh’s vision may be failing him but not his eye for detail, nor his penchant for pricking people’s vanity.

For a while, he worked as a Professor of Hindu Law at the Lahore Law College. It is believed that he felt a sudden urge to throw away his law books and he boldly did so to his advantage, of course. Fortunately enough, the partition of India helped him to move on to a new path, his cherished path of writing. Both traditions influenced him – the Indian and the Western. Though firmly rooted in the soil and in his own culture, he

was also moulded by the western education he received in England. Naturally his writings contain a smattering knowledge of the English traditions.

The present study of the narrator's role is divided into three parts: (1) "The Extent of the Narrator's Participation" (Chapter Two), (2) "The Degree of the Narrator's Perceptibility" (Chapter Three), and (3) "The Reliability of the Narrator's Rendering" (Chapter Four).

The second chapter "The Extent of the Narrator's Participation" finds out whether the narrator participates in each story fully, partially or not at all. He may be fully personified and portrayed on a realistic level, or he may recount a story without personal involvement. That is, the narrator may be either absent from or present in the story he narrates.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Literary Critics and Criticism*, there are three types of narrators: Autodiegetic, Homodiegetic and Heterodiegetic. An autodiegetic narrator tells his own story. The homodiegetic narrator is a sort of onlooker who is present in person, but he does not talk about himself. Being a witness to the events in the story, he poses to have a kind of control over the narrative. The heterodiegetic narrator is not a character in the narrative, and he does not participate in the action, but he can move on as he likes, and be present in some places and absent in others. He can also fly to varying

periods of time and go beyond the events narrated. He is in a way omniscient, and hence has an authoritative voice for he knows the 'what' and 'how' of the characters and 'how' and 'when' the narrative will begin and come to an end.

The heterodiegetic narrator may be omniscient or partially omniscient. If he is omniscient he can comment on whatever he likes, analyze the character's motives, or describe situations which none has watched. He has familiarity with the character's innermost thoughts and feelings, knowledge of his past, present and future, is present with the character in secret places, and is aware of what happens side by side at several places. On the other hand, the partially omniscient-heterodiegetic narrator is not omniscient in principle. But yet while narrating the story he knows everything about a character's problem and also the solution to his problems. But curiously enough, he is able to step into the shoes of a character at times and participate in the story as well.

The short stories of Khushwant Singh have all types of narrators mentioned above. Four stories out of thirty-two belong to the autodiegetic type: "Posthumous," "The Man With a Clear Conscience," "The Morning After the Night Before," and "My Own My Native Land." Fifteen belong to the homodiegetic narration type. They are "The Mark of Vishnu," "The Butterfly," "The Interview," "The Portrait

of A Lady,” “A Punjab Pastorale,” “The Great Difference,” “When Sikh Meets Sikh,” “The Insurance Agent,” “The Fawn,” “The Bottom-Pincher,” “Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia,” “India is a Strange Country,” “Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle,” “Mr Singh and the Colour Bar” and “The Red Tie.” The stories which are narrated by the heterodiegetic narrators are “Karma,” “The Voice of God,” “Kusum,” “The Riot,” “The Rape,” “The Memsahib of Mandla,” “Death Comes to Daulat Ram,” “Man, How the Government of India Run!,” “Black Jasmine,” “A Bride for the Sahib,” “A Love Affair in London,” “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” and “The Convert.”

There are two stories in this section in which the narrator is identified clearly as Khushwant Singh himself: “Posthumous” and “The Great difference.” In other stories he drops hints about the narrator being different personalities. For example, he is ‘a Sikh’ in “The Man With a Clear Conscience,” ‘a bachelor’ in “The Insurance Agent,” ‘a Public Relations Officer’ in “The Interview,” ‘a respectable member of the community’ in “The Bottom-Pincher,” ‘a bearded and turbaned Indian’ in “When Sikh Meets Sikh” and ‘an anglicized Indian’ in “The Red Tie.” It is not possible to determine that all these qualifications refer to the writer Khushwant Singh exactly. As Pradeep Trikha notes in “Khushwant Singh’s Short Stories: Our Exciting

Literary Property”: “The distinction between the author and ‘the narrator I’ becomes hairline thin” in the stories (Dhawan 319).

The narrators in the short stories have one major point in common. While the heterodiegetic narrator yearns to cross the border to peep at the homodiegetic, the homodiegetic shows an inclination towards the omniscience of the heterodiegetic. In the same way, the autodiegetic often leaps over its fence to enter the area of the homodiegetic and vice versa.

The narrator’s varied roles are even more significant in the novels. The novel *Train to Pakistan* belongs to the heterodiegetic type of narration. The omniscient narrator of the novel, who is not a character in the story, takes an authoritative stand and dares to depict the mental state of the ‘people. Written in the background of the partition of India, the novel clearly portrays some of the painful aftermaths of the same. Along with the partition of the land, values of greater concern were also shattered. Peace, love, unity, cooperation and nonviolence were wiped off and animosity, inhumanity, hatred, horror, violence and revenge, were planted. In other words, the evacuation of people led to evaporation of values. If the novel is divided into two, the first two paragraphs form the first part of the novel, and the remaining whole, the second. In fact, the second part of the novel displays what the narrator condenses in the first two paragraphs.

The heterodiegetic narrator uses the technique of juxtaposition to make the narrative more effective. The educated and well-mannered Iqbal is juxtaposed with the uneducated and ill-mannered, Mano Majrans. He uses the same technique when he delineates other characters like Iqbal, Juggut Singh and the police. Emphasizing the importance of the train in the life of the Mano Majrans, he shows the correlation between the punctuality of the train and the order and the peace of the time. The trains are punctual when there is peace and they become irregular when there is disorder and disturbance in their life. He mingles the comic and the serious as seen in the conversation between Iqbal and Meet Singh. In between the serious narration of events, he does not forget to provide some lighter moments for the reader. For example, he explicates the Indian attitude towards the subject of sex which is also a significant point for him. At the end the heterodiegetic narrator very seriously sums up the self-effacing act of Juggut Singh thus, "The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan" (157).

The omniscient narrator changes over to the partially omniscient while he introduces certain characters. For example, from the beginning of the novel he is careful not to reveal the identity of Iqbal. The disclosure happens only at the end of the novel. This leap from the

partially omniscient narrator's role to the omniscient narrator's is quite unexpected, but thrilling.

The novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* belongs to the heterodiegetic type of narration. Being omniscient, the narrator knows the ins and outs of the characters, their past and present, their future hopes and dreams, their families and relationships. So the narrator is able to impart his knowledge of the characters, more than they know or more than they wish to reveal themselves. The novel portrays the paradoxical picture of the colonial encounter between the Indians and the British, its positive and negative aspects and the simultaneous rebellion and the submission, involved in it.

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator emphasizes the change that has come over Sher Singh after assuming the leadership of the rebel group. His knowledge of Sher Singh is comprehensive as he exposes his thoughts and actions, his beliefs and grievances, his past and his state of mind on different occasions. The minds of all the characters lie bare before the omniscient narrator's eye and so he lets out secrets wherever it is suitable. The heterodiegetic narrator is able to be present at two different places and report the happenings simultaneously. He depicts even what the characters have neglected or ignored. The political situation is made known to the reader through his presence. He leaves certain parts for the imagination and the enjoyment

of the reader. Not static by nature, he is not seen with any particular person or group or family or place. Instead, he is on the move, narrating the events, and reporting matters as he moves along. The narrator in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is by and large, Khushwant Singh himself. The narrator plays hide and seek in the novel, only to come out in the end to be declared the winner.

In Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*, the history of a six-hundred year period, that is from the Muslim invasion in 1265 up to the assassination of Indira Gandhi is wonderfully portrayed. The assassination followed by the massacre of the Sikhs remains a painful memory for Indians, in general, and Sikhs, in particular. The indelible mark imprinted on the mind of the author and of the narrator has given flesh and blood to the novel. He explores the beauty of his beloved city in flamboyant colours. The time is shortened, tampered with, broken and finally disjointed, but with balance and proportion.

The novel is divided into twenty-one episodes under the titles: "Delhi," "Lady J. H. T.," "Bhagmati," "Musaddi Lal," "The Timurid," "The Untouchables," "Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan," "Nadir Shah," "Meer Taqi Meer," "1857," "The Builders" and "The Dispossessed." The episode "Bhagmati" alone is repeated ten times, thus making the total number of episodes, twenty-one. The chapters titled "Delhi," "Lady J. H. T." (Lady Jane Hoity-Toity) and "Bhagmati" have

the same homodiegetic narrator whose identity is not revealed except for the fact that he is a Sikh.

However the novelist has skipped over important events and personages of the past and contemporary India. Nevertheless he has chosen the events and personages in such a way as to give a proper message for the future generation, a lesson to be learnt from the past.

*The Company of Women* has two types of narrators: the heterodiegetic and the homodiegetic. The novel is divided into three parts of which, the first and the last are narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator, and the second, by a homodiegetic one, Mohan Kumar. In the first part, "The Secret Life of Mohan Kumar," the heterodiegetic narrator's omniscience enters Mohan Kumar's psyche and thoughts. He has a sharp eye for detail. His omniscience also encircles characters like Dhanno, Sarojini and other minor characters. The narrator is present during the private moments of Mohan Kumar and Dhanno. Section three, also narrated by the heterodiegetic narrator, describes Mohan Kumar's last days. The narrator's prior knowledge of Mohan Kumar is obvious in the narration. In this section too, he depicts a lady without a name and Mohan Kumar's clandestine moments with her. At last, being an HIV positive, he ends his life taking thirty sleeping pills along with thirty Gayatri mantras. Though the narrator is omniscient in the first and third sections, his omniscience becomes partial later. He

draws the reader's careful attention to the ill-formed conscience of Mohan Kumar.

Part II of the novel, is narrated by Mohan Kumar who is both a homodiegetic and an autodiegetic narrator as well. He is also the protagonist in the first and third parts. Mohan Kumar narrates his own life, his first sexual encounter with Jessica Browne, an athlete, his relationship with one of the home nurses, Mary Joseph, the failure of his marriage, his relationship with the physiotherapist Molly Gomes, and Susanthika, the second Secretary to the High Commission of Sri Lanka. This section is divided into ten chapters. Very frank about himself, and his emotions and feelings, the autodiegetic narrator has clearly put them into words. He considers love and lust the be-all and end-all of life. He believes that sex can drain out whatever anti-Muslim or anti-Pakistan prejudices one had imbibed in the early years of life. As he rated sex higher than love and companionship, his bonding with ladies was based on sheer lust (252). He surmises that a man or a woman can have either sex or human dignity. He believes that they cannot have both. But by the end of the second part, he is disgusted with his past. Satiated with sex, he experiences restlessness and emptiness and considers himself "a rudderless boat adrift in an endless ocean" (216).

Chapter Three of the dissertation focuses on the Degree of the Narrator's Perceptibility. This 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 narrator can speak directly to the addressee, and liberally comment on the action, characters and storytelling. A few signs of overtness can be detected even in a text whose narrator is almost covert. Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* gives a list of six factors to detect overtness. In the mounting order of perceptibility they 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 of Chatman are slightly adapted to five factors for the present study. They are: (1) Specific Setting (2) Character Confines (3) Schematic Compression (4) Unsaid Statements and (5) Discrete Discernment.

"Specific Setting" is the term used to denote the description of the setting in the short stories and novels. In most of the stories the narrators specify the setting. They give either a short, or an elaborate

description for a better understanding of the story. In a play or a film what is shown directly on the stage, is expressed in language in the case of a narrative fiction. This language is the language of the narrator. Of course the description of the setting discloses the presence of a vigilant narrator.

The overt narrator in the novel *Train to Pakistan* specifies the setting of the village, Mano Majra, a tiny place, which 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. In *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, he describes a tree which was affected by their target practice. Later the narrator describes, the black sky studded with stars and the beauty of the morning, the Mashobra bazaar and its surroundings, the monsoon in the Himalayas, and the rooms of Sher Singh, Sabhrai and Peer Sahib.

In *Delhi*, the capital is described as a gangrenous accretion of noisy bazaars and mean-looking hovels growing round a few tumble-down forts and mosques. These are spread out along a dead river, with

its narrow, winding lanes, and the stench of raw sewage. The people of Delhi spit phlegm and bloody betel-juice everywhere; they urinate and defecate whenever and wherever the urge overtakes them; they are loud-mouthed; they express familiarity with incestuous abuse and scratch their privates while they talk. The narrator, in one of the Bhagmati episodes, describes the Delhi railway station, as a place which has not changed much after a gap of 50 years. The same narrator describes the picturesque Ridge Road, on either side of which there were bushes of sesbania, vasicka and camel thorn and huge boulders of red sandstone strewn about everywhere. Another narrator, Musaddi Lal, gives a detailed description of Qutub Minar. Nadir Shah, one of the narrators gives a description of a suburb called Shalimar, and its greenery of massive banyan trees whose branches hung down to the earth. He says that there were orchards of a fruit called the mango, which was much relished by the natives.

The overt narrator in *The Company of Women* describes the scene at the India Gate. He gives a beautiful picture of Shivalik Hills and its sight from the hills. Again, standing on the bridge, he describes the Ganga. 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” 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 assist 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. |

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.

The novels of Khushwant Singh have a great scope for characterization. In *Train to Pakistan*, the narrator’s prior knowledge of certain characters like Juggut Singh, Hukum Chand, and Meet Singh

is more comprehensive than what is revealed by the characters themselves or by the other characters around them. The narrator knows that Juggut Singh had been arrested before and he has spent as much time in jail as at home. He also knows that Juggut Singh's association with the police was an inheritance and being Register number ten at the police station, he had carried his father Alam Singh's name while he lived. Alam Singh had been convicted of dacoity with murder, and hanged, notes the narrator. The narrator defines Hukum Chand's character clearly saying that he was not in the habit of losing his temper or of being rude. Hukum Chand believes that an individual's conscious thought should be to save life when it is in danger, to preserve social structure and to honour conventions. The narrator knows that death had always been an obsession with Hukum Chand. Meet Singh, on the other hand, is 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 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.

The narrator describes Imam Baksh as a weaver. Though weavers were considered cuckolds, effeminate and cowardly, and also

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.

The narrator's portrayal of the headman, Banta Singh, a lambardar, who was only a collector of revenues is also 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 name. ¶

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 for him. 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 convinces the reader that for Buta Singh, creating an impression of loyalty was more

important than loyalty itself. But Buta Singh's son, Sher Singh, 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. 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, says the narrator. 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 Madan and Beena simultaneously. Madan was bold and easy with strangers, while Beena 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 whereas, Beena 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 portrays 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. She had never been known to be ill. She never had a cold or a headache. Her eyes were clear. She had an even row of teeth not one of which had ever given her trouble. She could crack almonds and walnuts as if her mouth had been fitted with a nutcracker. 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 notes that the Taylors did not belong to the class which had produced the builders of the empire. John Taylor 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. Instead 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 when they tried to be over-familiar. At times he was just abrupt, sometimes even rude in giving a reply. The narrator's characterization includes people like Wazir Chand, Jhimma Singh and Peer Sahib too.

In the novel *Delhi*, the narrator in the Bhagmati episodes identifies the character Bhagmati as “the worst dressed whore in Delhi,” “the plainest looking whore in Delhi” and “the coarsest whore in Delhi” (392). The narrator adds that Bhagmati is not a woman like other women. She believes in the wisdom of clichés. But when she is in the nagging mood, it is best to say nothing. The narrator knows that sometimes even his silence provokes her to go on and on. The narrator identifies Budh Singh, the night watchman, as a crazy fellow who never created trouble. 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.

Likewise, the narrator Musaddi Lal gives a pictorial account of Siddi Maula, who looks like a rascal, with a glossy black beard and moustaches that curled up like scorpion tails. The narrator says that being a proud man he had the airs of an aristocrat and was forever sniffing at a perfumed swab of cotton. Although he was a young man, he had developed a paunch. Even a blind man could see that Siddi did not believe in fasting or overcoming his *nafs* (desires). He was so busy giving counsel to the rich that he had little time left for the poor.

The narrator in the episode “The Builders” identifies Lord Reading, the Viceroy who had no money being the son of a fruit-seller and a deck-hand on a ship. The narrator knows that being a Jew, he had brains and he wanted to prove he was more British than the English.

The narrator in *The Company of Women* gives scintillating accounts of the lady professor, Jessica Browne, Susanthika, Sonu and other ladies who come into Mohan Kumar’s life. He identifies the lady professor as a petite and reasonably attractive woman with a skin, the colour of old ivory. She had dark brown hair, broad forehead with a bindi, diamonds in her ear lobes, a diamond nose pin, and soft, sensuous lips with a dab of fresh lipstick. Her pearl necklace went well with her white sari. The narrator identifies Jessica Browne as a tall, slender and chocolate-brown woman with a big bosom, narrow hips, protruding buttocks and long athletic legs. He also notes that she sprinted about the court like a panther. The narrator identifies Yasmeen as a fair-skinned Kashmiri woman with nut-brown hair, large gazelle eyes, fighting a losing battle with fat. She had double chin, sagging flesh on her arms and tyres about her waist. The narrator identifies Susanthika as a highly intelligent and animated woman with high cheekbones, dark thin lips, small breasts and a smaller behind. He defines Sonu as a quick-tempered, possessive woman who craved for

attention all the time. Though she had no love for him she was jealous of him.

“Schematic Compression” is used as a narrative technique to indicate the passage of time. As a reader travels through a narrative, many questions trigger up in his mind about what happens between one action and another. Obviously, it is not possible to account for a large number of years. Naturally there is need for a narrator 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. All narrators condense matters. In Khushwant Singh’s short stories also the narrator’s presence is an unquestionable fact.

Schematic compression is sparingly used by the narrator in the novel *Train to Pakistan*. The heterodiegetic narrator who is also an observer uses the technique of summary at the beginning of the section “Karma” in the novel. This technique helps him to condense many events in one paragraph. The narrator sums up Iqbal’s one-week imprisonment in his cell. Later he uses the same technique when the Muslims get ready to go. He sums up saying that the whole village was awake, some were packing and others were helping them to pack. Most just talked with their friends and the women sat on the floors hugging each other and crying. The narrator compresses Mano Majrans’ leave-

taking session too. He notes that people went from house to house – talking, crying, swearing love and friendship, assuring each other that this would soon be over. After Malli had agreed to take care of the Muslim property, the narrator sums up events saying that Malli's gang and the refugees then unyoked the bullocks, looted the carts, and drove the cows and buffaloes away. Again he compresses events saying that, by evening, Mano Majra had forgotten about its Muslims and Malli's misdeeds, and the river had become their main topic of conversation. Once more the women stood on the rooftops looking to the west. Men started going in turns to the embankment to report on the situation.

In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, the overt narrator condenses the passage of time very often. He gives a gist of the conversation between Madan and Champak saying that they sat and talked about many things: Sher Singh's election, the growing friendship between the families, the hot weather, films and film stars. As he discusses what goes on between Peer Sahib and Shunno, he compresses the dealings of Peer Sahib with other women. After giving a detailed picture of her first visit, the narrator sums up that Shunno repeated the visit several times with several shining silver rupees. He understands that later her temper improved and she stopped nagging or beating Mundoo. Instead she brought him sweets from the bazaar. The narrator summarizes the conversation of the characters during that whole afternoon and evening

and the next day. Till it was time to take the taxi, they talked about nothing but politics. The narrator once again condenses the passage of time reporting that, 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. The narrator adds that from then on there was little communication between the two families.

In *Delhi* the narrator, Musaddi Lal, condenses his past years saying that the thousands of sexual contacts he had with Ram Dulari bore no fruit in her womb. 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. The narrator, Ram Rakha, in the episode "The Dispossessed" summarizes the train journey of the family noting that in the train his father talked about the days when he and his friend, Sikh, had played together on the sand dunes around Hadali. The narrator observes that the closer they got to Delhi, the more his father's childhood memories came back to him.

In the novel, *The Company of Women*, the narrator compresses the days Mohan spent with Sarojini. Later the narrator rounds 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). He also condenses his life at Princeton and other places. Without elaborating, he says he had bedded scores of women of different races and ages and enjoyed every one of them. About his life there, he narrates briefly that he had earned and saved up a lot of money coaching students, and from lectures he was invited to deliver in colleges all over the country.

The Phrase “Unsaid Statements” refers to what Chatman calls “Reports of what Characters did not think or say.” There are several thoughts or statements which are 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 an overt narrator can provide this information. 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 in the novels are stated picturesquely by the narrator. In *Train to Pakistan* the narrator talks about the summer before 1947. Making the reader conscious that both Muslims and Hindus blamed each other, the narrator reports that both sides killed; both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed; both tortured and both

raped. He also reports that the police knew they had made a mistake, or rather, two mistakes. Arresting the social worker, Iqbal, was a blunder and a likely source of trouble, the police knew. The narrator also informs the reader that Juggut Singh 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. So he was too obvious a victim. This fact is exposed to the reader through the narrator's unsaid statements. Hukum Chand's hidden thoughts are also revealed. The narrator rightly points out his dilemma, whenever he was left alone in the bungalow, with its empty rooms peopled by phantoms of his own creation. He thinks of getting the orderlies to sleep somewhere nearby, on the verandah perhaps. The narrator also understands Hukum Chand's extreme care to avoid the slightest suspicion about his apprehensions. The narrator figures out his musing and reports it to the reader: "He would tell them that he might be wanted during the night and must have them at hand; that would pass unnoticed"(77). (

The narrator in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* comments on Sher Singh as he aims at a bird saying that missing a bird of that size would be bad for his reputation. After Sher Singh shot the bird, the narrator reports that he was a jumble of conflicting emotions of guilt and pride. And again he says that in his excitement he forgot to pick up the empty cases. About his fears the narrator notes: "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 tried to seek solace from Madan’s assurance that what all the headman could tell was that Sher Singh had used his father’s jeep and shot-gun – nothing more.

The narrator exposes Buta Singh and his attitude to the Hindus who approached him for getting a permission. The narrator reports that he had reasoned for himself that if he failed, it would not do him much damage and if he succeeded, his prestige among the Hindus of the city would increase greatly and that of Wazir Chand would suffer.

The narrator reports that Beena was ill at ease about the consequences of the escapade. She tried to drive away unpleasant thoughts by concentrating on the film and enjoying the feeling of being with Sita and her brother. The narrator also reveals that Beena did not dare to sulk or even hint that Champak and Madan travelling together might cause people to talk. For Beena, it seemed treasonable to mention such trifles, notes the narrator. About Sher and Champak the narrator says they were too full of themselves to listen to each other’s tales. He states Mundoo’s playful act which was done very secretly as he took all the gum and red ink from Beena’s table and emptied it into Shunno’s jug of water. Likewise, the narrator reports what Shunno and Peer Sahib are unconscious of: “Not a word of affection or explanation

passed between them” (277). Again the narrator comments that neither Sabhrai’s intuition nor her shrewd insight into human character, gave her a clue as to what had passed between Beena and Madan – or between Madan and Champak as they were away from her.

In *Delhi*, the narrator in the episode “Lady J. H. T.” reports that he would punish the lady till she says sorry. The narrator in “Bhagmati” describes the hijda as a horrible bitch who would give him no peace of mind till he pacifies the fire he has lit in her body. She has to cool off and he has to re-warm himself. The narrator adds that a change has happened in Bhagmati for she is becoming jealous and possessive. Later he reports that she had not yet forgiven him for using Kamala, the Brigadier’s wife.

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 reports that Mohan thought this would establish his credentials as one who belonged to the elite of Delhi society. Thus several unsaid statements of the characters have been stated admirably by the narrator for the narratee.

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 homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators in the short stories diagnose the characters and discern their judgement upon them to the better understanding of the reader. The narrators reach up to the fullness of overttness through the usage of commentary, according to Chatman's list of the signs of overttness. 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 overttness as prescribed by Chatman.

In the novel *Train to Pakistan*, the narrator notices Iqbal's manner of walking and comments that he just walked on like a soldier. The narrator compares Iqbal's mind when he was in the prison with the delicate spring of a watch, which quivers for several hours after it has been touched. As he put his plates, knife, fork and tins back into the haversack, the narrator discerns his condition of feverishness; the sort of feverishness one feels when one is about to make a declaration of love. 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 that one little man cannot do anything great in this enormous impersonal land of four hundred million. In the presence of police: "Iqbal was in complete possession of the situation," comments the narrator (49). He also discerns that reference to his physical appearance always put him off.

The narrator's judgement of Hukum Chand varies from time to time. The narrator notes that he was a magistrate, not a missionary. When taking another whisky he felt uneasy and dismissed his conscience saying that life was too short for people to have consciences and again the narrator notes that one took life as it came, shorn of silly conventions and values which deserved only lip worship.

The narrator generalizes on the police saying that they were not human like other human beings. They had no affections, no loyalties or

enmities. They were just men in uniform one tried to avoid. 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 comments on educated people, saying that they cannot be trusted as they are all suspiciously cunning. About the Sikhs in general, the narrator discerns that logic was never a strong point with them. When they were roused, logic did not matter at all.

In the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* the narrator's discernment of people and places are noteworthy. He is surprised at the Muslims who pretended to be against the idea of Pakistan when they were with non-Muslims but gave it their support in every way they could. The narrator discerns that anyone who has had to live the hard way, literally fighting for survival at every step, may not treasure values like truth, honesty, loyalty, or patriotism. The narrator also notes how applause can intoxicate like wine. According to him, it temporarily subdues anxiety and restores confidence. About Sabhrai's posthumous presence the narrator discerns that she seemed to pervade the Gurudwara like the incense which rose spirally from the stick and then scattered lazily all over the room.

In one of the Bhagmati episodes in *Delhi*, the narrator understands that it does not take long for the men of Hindustan to

switch their minds from fawning flattery to deadly hate. In another Bhagmati episode, the narrator comments that the white people are not used to flattery and so succumb very easily. About girls, he says that they are easier 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. The same narrator later adds that 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.

The narrator in another Bhagmati episode comments on people's memory that it is curious how the first encounter remains so indelibly printed on the mind while the affair that follows is soon blurred. 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. The narrator judges women who write letters to men as serious-minded bores. The same narrator judges the lady, Kamala on the basis of her use of language: "The 'itself' is her first Indianism" (495).

The narrator, Musaddi Lal, discerns that as soon as someone achieves success, people vie with each other to discover new facets of his genius. He also comments that when a man's instincts are evil, repentance has a short lease and brief is his gratitude towards those who have done him good. The narrator in "The Builders" judges the power of the Indians by saying that 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. He observes that the Sahibs were slow to anger but once their temper was roused their wrath could be terrible. The narrator in the episode, "The Untouchables," comments that big people's illnesses are always made to sound big.

Discrete discernment is evident in *The Company of Women* too. The narrator makes a general statement regarding a child's growing up in a peaceful atmosphere. A person had only one life to live. As a result he should not 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. His assessment of married people also is revealing. He discerns that

married women could sense their husband's extra marital affairs without having any tell-tale evidence to substantiate their suspicions. About married men the narrator notes they were so absorbed in themselves that their wives could cuckold them for years without being suspected of infidelity. About women the narrator adds that women were much the same in their essentials but enchantingly different in detail.

In the episode "Susanthika" the narrator, Mohan Kumar, comments that nobody bothers about marriages which hold; everyone is deeply interested if things go wrong. Thoroughly stupefied by the audacity of Dhanno, the sweeperess, the narrator comments that working class people did not believe in dropping hints or being tactful: they were direct and blunt. After the divorce, Mohan Kumar comments on his condition of being absolutely alone. The narrator's observation on nationalities is a bit too harsh. About Americans he says that they were money-oriented and money was what mattered to young millionaires regardless of how it was made. Again he notes that jealousy is something Americans disdain as a medieval emotion. There are comments on Indians too. The narrator observes that Indians regarded marriage as a sacrosanct bonding for life. Later he comments that Indians do not believe in privacy; they are a nosey people and the one thing they will not do is mind their own business. Once again he

comments on the protagonist Mohan Kumar, his lady companions, like Dhanno, Sarojini, Susanthika, Jessica Browne and many others. The narrator comments on his attitude on life, love and lust too.

Chapter Four deals with the narrator's reliability. Reliability, a crucial factor in the understanding of a work, is a vital characteristic of the narrator. Narrators may be grouped according to their reliability. "A reliable narrator is one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it the reader is supposed to take as an authoritative account of the fictional truth," says Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (95). On the other hand, an unreliable narrator, is one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it "the reader has reasons to suspect." Reliability varies in degree and kind. Therefore it is easier to define unreliability. Says Rimmon-Kenan: "Signs of unreliability are perhaps easier to specify, and reliability can then be negatively defined by their absence." The main sources of unreliability, according to Rimmon-Kenan, are: (1) the narrator's limited knowledge, (2) his personal involvement and (3) his problematic value-scheme. It is not possible to find out whether the narrator is reliable or not. It is also not possible to know, to what extent he is reliable or unreliable. Moreover a narrator can be reliable in one part of the text but unreliable in another.

The present study on Khushwant Singh's short stories and novels reveal that the narrators vary from story to story and novel to

novel and, accordingly reliability too. But most of the narrators are highly reliable. The rendering of the story and the commentary are reliable in most of the cases. There are no double-edged images or contradictions in the narrator's language usually. But there are parts of certain stories and novels which seem to be unreliable to the ordinary reader. There is no story which is totally unreliable, except "Posthumous." Even there the reader finds reliable situations. Unreliability in the stories and novels is often the author's conscious doing for the sake of readability and enjoyment. This chapter is concerned with the reliable narrator and the consequent reliable narration and also the partly reliable and the partly unreliable narrators and narrations as well.

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in *Train to Pakistan* begins the narration with the summer of 1946 and 1947. The narrator gives a reliable account of a village, Mano Majra, the nearest river, Sutlej, the railway station and the people. The routine of the people is more or less regulated by the coming and going of trains. The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator is trustworthy when he reports the dacoity in the village in which Lala Ram Lal's house was robbed and he was killed. He portrays the love-scene of Juggut Singh and Nooran which took place simultaneously with the dacoity. By narrating these two simultaneous actions, the narrator reveals an important truth to the

reader that, Juggut Singh was not involved in the dacoity at all. Thus the narrator gains the reader's confidence. At the same time, the characters involved in the story are denied of this truth. As the reader is provided with the truth, he agrees with the narrator's renderings. As the narration proceeds, the reader feels that the narrator takes him aside to whisper some facts and truths confidentially.

Through the flashback technique the omniscient heterodiegetic narrator reliably delineates Iqbal's journey as well. And he continuously follows Iqbal as he takes a walk around Mano Majra and depicts the scenes reliably. The narrator is also trustworthy when he narrates the villagers' visit and the lambardar's offering of milk to Iqbal. His portrayal of Iqbal's arrest is reliable too. Thus the narrator becomes dependable. At a certain point the narrator reveals his prior knowledge of Iqbal. He says Iqbal had a semiotic consciousness of his hooked nose and any reference to his physical appearance always put him off. Thus the narrator becomes a confidant of the reader. But the reader senses a tinge of unreliability as the narrator reports on Jugga's temper. Jugga, he says, recovered his temper as quickly as he had lost it. He forgot the incident of the bangles and the beating as soon as he reached the threshold. The narrator gives a reliable portrayal of the police station and states the difference in the attitude of the police toward Jugga and Iqbal.

The meeting at gurudwara, their discussions and the villagers bringing bundles of wood and bottles of oil at the suggestion of the policeman are all narrated in a trustworthy manner. As the narrator depicts the wavering nature of the populace, he is dependable. According to the narrator, they are not sure of anything, and they are conditioned so by the senseless authorities. When the narrator focuses on Mano Majra as a whole and reports how they spent that night and how the Muslims were transported the next day morning with so much wailing and weeping on both sides, it is a trustworthy account. The narrator through his timely comment and intrusion fills the gaps and unveils the uncertainties and gains the reader's confidence. ¶

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* gives a reliable narration of people and events. The narrator's portrayal of Sher Singh's training to become a terrorist is convincingly depicted. After moving to the Punjab, the narrator broods over Sher's mind for quite a long time and renders it reliably. He also explains Sher's difficulty concerning the removal of arms. The narrator is trustworthy when he reports that Sher Singh's illusions of Taylor, not knowing about his activities were shattered. He gives a reliable account of Sher Singh's attitude towards the headman who thrust the empty rifle bullets in his hand.

The omniscient narrator gives a reliable portrayal of Buta Singh. Loyal to British Raj, Buta Singh had begun to think in terms of bargaining with the British, only in recent years. The narrator shows clearly the change in the political scenario and the twisted attitude of the Indians to the British. But the predicament of Buta Singh was different. He favoured both the English and the Indians, certainly without each other knowing about it. His policy was 'keep in with both sides.' The narrator intrudes wherever it is necessary to lay down a comment so that the reader may have clarity of thought. He also confides in the reader and discloses the secret that, "Buta Singh's accent and vocabulary changed when he spoke to Englishmen" (186).

When the narrator talks about the change that took place in the attitude of Buta Singh and his family towards the Wazir Chands it seems unreliable because of the hastiness of such a change. The Buta Singhs were not fully happy with the Chands. Mr Buta Singh disliked Wazir Chand. Sabhrai had her own suspicion about Madan. She was not cent percent on good terms with Madan. Beena and Champak had already known about Madan's promiscuous behaviour. Even when all these disparities existed, the narrator takes a short cut to declare that everything was okay with the two families. Later, the narrator offers a reliable account of Sabhrai's illness, her death and her cremation, and the mourning over her death. The narration on Buta Singh's plan to

erect a memorial for Sabhrai and the discussion on such matters with the Taylors, are also trustworthy. The reliability of the narrator is part and parcel of the time sequence as well. The time span of the novel is from April 1942 to April 1943. There are references to the incidents at the beginning of 1942 and 1943 and also to points of time almost every month.

The novel, *Delhi*, begins with the truthful narration of Mr Singh, the narrator, who portrays his experiences from the time he deplanes at Palam airport. In the chapter "Lady J. H. T." the narrator accompanies Lady J. H. T. as a tourist guide. Without exaggerating, he depicts the sights they watch, the people they meet and their personal experiences in Delhi. In "Musaddi Lal," the narrator, Musaddi Lal, weaves his personal history with the history of the nation. Depicting himself as a *hijda* he delineates his plight in the society.

A short account, "The Timurid," by the narrator, Taimur, begins with his dream and its interpretation. The narration is followed by the details as to how the narrator fulfilled the dream. The narrator tries his best to make his narration trustworthy. But the reader senses a tinge of exaggeration here and there. For example, about his birth, the narrator reports that when he was born in the spring of the year of the mouse, sparks had flown out of his royal mother's womb and his hands were found to be full of blood.

In “The Untouchables,” the narrator, Jaita Rangreta who is an untouchable, narrates his plight during the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. The narrator’s account is reliable when he depicts the immediate aftermath of Badshah Jahangir’s death; the reign of Shah Jahan; and his son Aurangzeb’s usurping the kingdom by foul means. In the chapter “Aurangzeb Alamgir, Emperor of Hindustan” the narrator calls himself Abdul Muzaffar Mohiuddin Mohammed and narrates his own story. He describes his birth, parentage, boyhood, studies, marriage, offspring and father-son relationship reliably.

In the chapter entitled “Nadir Shah,” the narrator, gives a reliable rendering of his expedition to India. Nadir Shah, the emperor of Iran begins the narration with his two dreams and their interpretation. Though trustworthy in his understanding of the people of Hindustan, there is an element of exaggeration as he says men were drawn to his ever-victorious standard as moths were drawn to a lamp and they were as willing to sacrifice their lives for him as winged insects are for the love of the flame.

In the chapter “Meer Taqi Meer” the narrator, Meer Taqi Meer, starts the narration depicting the beginning of his career as a poet and lover. Along with his personal history, the history of Delhi is unfolded from 1737 to 1783 approximately. The narrator portrays his relationship with Begum Sahiba, wife of Nawab Rais Mian, and truthfully elaborates

how this woman made him and destroyed him. In love with the city of Delhi and its people, the narrator reports the political disturbance and the personal disturbance that affected the people.

The chapter "1857" is narrated reliably by three personages: Alice Aldwell, Bahadur Sheh Zafar and Nihal Singh. The chapter is subdivided into ten, of which two sections are narrated by a European lady Alice Aldwell. In the second section, narrated by her she is renamed, Ayesha Bano Begum. As a wife, a mother, a Christian, a Muslim and as a subject she undergoes a lot of trials and tribulations. At last when she narrates the humiliations she underwent, the reader trusts the narration. She gives a true account of Delhiwallahs too.

In this episode five sections are narrated by the last Emperor of Hindustan, Bahadur' Shah Zafar. He appears reliable in the description of his life and routine with Zeenat Mahal, his queen. The imprisonment he had to undergo by the firangi along with his queen and son, and the treatment they received in the dungeon, and the sentence for exile are all narrated faithfully.

There are three sections narrated by Nihal Singh. Having been selected to the army in Jan Company, the narrator gives a reliable rendering of what he witnesses and what he does. There is no doubt that both Nihal Singh and Bahadur focus on the condition of Delhi, and the destructions caused to it by the invaders.

“The Builders” is reliably narrated by a Sikh builder whose name is not revealed. The background information given by the narrator about the partition of Bengal and the shifting of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi is a reliable account. The narrator clearly remembers the past and delineates how the narrator and his father got into the building of New Delhi with the advice of Hailey. By the end of the narration, the narrator makes a concrete study of the differences between the English and the Indians and the narrator’s preference for the British is also manifest in the narration.

The narrator, Ram Rakha, gives a reliable rendering in “The Dispossessed.” He narrates his life at Hadali, the circumstances which led him and his family to leave Hadali, how they reached Delhi and how they found their residence in Delhi. He gives a truthful account of the change in his parents’ attitude towards him and how he was involved in the RSS. The narrator exposes the teachings and practices at the headquarters of the RSS and how anger and enmity towards the Muslims were instilled in him. The narrator watches the scene of the happenings at Birla house and thus he is able to portray the murder of Gandhi, and subsequently report his own feelings towards that incident.

There are ten “Bhagmati” episodes and the narrator is the same in all the episodes. The first “Bhagmati” episode is reliable as the

narrator explicates his relationship with two persons – Bhagmati, a *hijda* and Fraulein Irma Weskermann, a lady-stenographer working in the West German Embassy. Shamelessly the narrator exposes his sexual relationship with these two women. In most of the narratives, the narrator is seen with Bhagmati, the *hijda*. After introducing Bhagmati in the first narrative, the narrator is seen travelling with her, or in conversation with her in the remaining episodes. He regrets the scenes of Delhi's ruins. His love for Delhi is so ardent that he equates it with his love for Bhagmati. The narrator is reliable as he depicts the tragic scene at the Golden Temple where a thousand including women and infants-in-arms were killed, along with Bhindranwale. He neither supports Indira Gandhi over her decision which caused thousands of deaths in the Golden Temple nor the people who celebrate the death of Indira Gandhi. Neither is to be applauded. The narrator is reliable when he reports that it was Bhagmati who came to save the narrator's life when she saw all Sikhs around were murdered.

The omniscient heterodiegetic narrator in *The Company of Women* reports Mohan Kumar's marriage and honeymoon, his strained relationship with his wife, his divorce from his wife and children in a reliable manner. As the narrator unveils Mohan Kumar's past he also understands his emptiness. The novel appears to be written from the point of view of Mohan Kumar and the narrator supports Mohan in his

decisions, divorce and his relationship with other women. The narrator's problematic value-scheme mars his reliability in several parts of the novel. He is reliable when he assesses Mohan's further step to lead a normal life after the divorce. The reasons for ruling out the three major newspapers are also reliably narrated. He portrays Mohan Kumar's longing for his children and every other move in a trustworthy manner.

In the second section of the novel there is a change of role. The protagonist in the first section becomes the narrator and the section becomes homodiegetic-cum-autodiegetic. The narrator unfolds from memory his birth, parentage, the death of his mother soon after his birth, the young maidservant who looked after him, his performance at school and college. All these are portrayed reliably in "I, Mohan Kumar."

The third section of the novel is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator who reliably portrays Mohan Kumar's condition, his loss of sex drive before he reached fifty, and his further initiations to sex with the help of 'the woman with no name' in Bombay. In the chapter "A Fatal Illness" the narrator talks of Mohan Kumar's illness and the consequent treatment by Dr Malhotra. His thoughts are turned to death, a horribly painful death. And the last chapter, "The Death of Mohan Kumar" depicts Mohan's death which is a reliable portrayal of events. The end of it seems

to raise doubts: “thirty Gayatri mantras with thirty pills.” The reader wonders whether he said the mantras as he took the pills. If he really recited mantras there should have been no provocation to take the pills. Pills and mantras are poles apart, the reader knows.

Chapter Five concludes the previous chapters. Singh's positive vision of life is expressed through his love of human beings. With his intuitive understanding he depicts things as they are and not as they ought to be. He writes from the heart more than from the head and so he is appealing to the readers. Another quality of his writing is that he writes for the reader and not for himself. Jug Suraiya, a journalist and columnist comments in “The Khushwant I’ve Never Known” that he has the knack of seeming to speak directly to the reader, shrugging himself out of the confines of the printed page, putting his arm across your shoulders (Prasad 165). At the same time Mushirul Hasan, a historian and celebrated author, says in “Nobody’s Yes Man”: “He is somebody who questions conventional wisdom, flouts established norms and disregards time-honoured conventions. . . . He is tolerant, broadminded, secular, and strongly wedded to multiculturalism” (Prasad 147). Dedicated to the core, Singh views the society from the inside and not merely from the outside. So his approach is definitely concrete. M J Akbar, another celebrated author observes in “The Man and His Legacy” correctly: “He travels less now, but his eyes dart with the same precocity that lit the way

for generations of readers; his indefatigable mind still explores greedily ideas and opinions from every nook of life” (Prasad 110).

The significant aspects of Khushwant Singh's power of observation are as follows: He thinks ahead of people; he guesses what people are leading up to from their matter and manner of speech; he assesses verbal evidence as it has been presented and determines whether the verbal evidence supports the speaker's mind. At convenient intervals he mentally sums up what people have said. While he observes he sees beyond the apparent and he searches for additional information and meaning which people may have inadvertently missed. Thus while providing aesthetic joy, emotional appeal, intellectual awareness and enlightening truth he serves humanity effectively. The most important thing about him is that he can never succumb to hypocrisy, hatred or pettiness on any score. Sandhya Mulchandani comments in “A Conservative Iconoclast”: “Standing up to his beliefs without fear or hypocrisy is Singh’s trademark, a trait that he acknowledges has often been detrimental to his career” (Prasad 187).

His observations of human beings, written in black and white, serve as corrective measures. The sugar in his sugar-coated pills melt before they are swallowed, so much so, though they taste bitter in the mouth, the cure is affected in time. His “moral courage to speak out the

truth through his brilliant and eminently readable writings” gained him the Sulabh Honest Man of the Year Award in 1998, says the jury (Prasad 23). Kaamna Prasad, the editor of *Khushwant Singh: An Icon of Our Age* rightly sums up what the writer is: “A keen observer of things, an incurable romantic, an incorrigible believer in human goodness, stickler for detail and, brutally honest” (From the Editor).

Singh has an unquenchable thirst to expose truth. So he is least concerned about how it shocks or hurts the reader. "Singh spares no one, neither his friends nor himself nor the many icons he came across in the course of his long career in law, diplomacy in UNESCO as a journalist and a writer, his five-year stint in parliament and after” (“Excerpts” 40).

In a column written for *The Hindustan Times*, Khushwant Singh published his English rendering of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn and invited suggestions from readers on how to improve it. The hymn was originally written in Gujarati by Saint Narsinh Mehta. The original and the English translation is as follows:

**The Original Hymn**

Vaishnav Jan to taynay  
 kahyeeye,  
 Jav neerh naraavee  
 ray  
 Par dukkhey upkar karey,  
 Toyey man abhiman na  
 annev ray  
 Sakal lokma sahuneey vandeey,  
 Ninda na karey kaineey  
 Vaach kaach, man nischal  
 raakhey,  
 Dhan-dhan jananee taineey  
 ray.  
 Samdrishti nay trishna  
 tyagee,  
 Par-stree jaynay mat ray  
 Jivaah thaki Asatya na bolay,  
 Par-dhan nav jhaley haath  
 ray.  
 Moh maya vyaapey nahin  
 jeyney,  
 Drud vairagya jeyna manma  
 ray  
 Ram-naam-shoon taalee  
 laagee,  
 Sakal teerth teyna tanma ray.  
 Vanalobhee ney kapatrahith  
 chey,  
 Kaam, krodh nivarya ray  
 Bhane Narsaiyon tainoo  
 darshan kartan,  
 Kul ekotair taryaa ray

**Mr. Singh's Translation**

A godlike man is one,  
 Who feels another's pain  
 Who shares another's sorrow,  
 And pride does disdain  
 Who regards himself as the  
 lowliest of the low,  
 speaks not a word of evil against  
 any one.  
 One who keeps himself steadfast  
 in words, body and mind,  
 Blessed is the mother who gives  
 birth to such a son  
 Who looks upon everyone as his  
 equal and has renounced lust,  
 And who honours women like he  
 honours his mother.  
 Whose tongue knows not the taste  
 of falsehood till his last breath,  
 Nor covets another's worldly  
 goods.  
 He does not desire worldly things,  
 For he treads the path of  
 renunciation  
 Ever on his lips is Rama's holy  
 name.  
 All places of pilgrimage are within  
 him.  
 One who is not greedy and  
 deceitful,  
 And has conquered lust and anger  
 Through such a man Saint  
 Narsaiyon has a godly vision,  
 Generations to come, of such a  
 man, will attain salvation.

In all his works Khushwant Singh, the man, observes, men and matters around him and presents the observations through the channel of a narrator. Thus he serves the society at large. There is not a scintilla of truth in the comment that every narrator is Khushwant Singh himself. The narrators are so diverse in their intellectual, emotional aesthetic and spiritual concepts that all of them cannot be one and the same. What can be said of this comment is that the reader of Khushwant Singh's short stories and novels can soar up only to the height of his own perception. The perspective of the writer is so far above the ordinary level that he defies a proper definition. Moreover from the great height he has risen to, Khushwant Singh can swoop down so low that the readers can read and enjoy his works. But only the intellectually elite among them can perceive what Khushwant Singh has perceived. So it may be concluded that Khushwant Singh, the narrator contains all the narrators. He is the observer of mankind, the server of mankind, serving man through his narrators.



*The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man  
who writes about all people and about all time.*

*G. B. Shaw*

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