

**DYNAMICS OF POWER AND SEXUALITY IN SELECTED
TEXTS OF KHUSHWANT SINGH: A STUDY**

BY

PRASENJIT DATTA ROY

MZU REGD. NO. 1506530 OF 16th NOV, 2015.

MZU/Ph.D./852 OF 19.04.2016.



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES**

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MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Dynamics of Power and Sexuality in Selected Texts of Khushwant Singh: A Study**" is the bonafide research work conducted by PRASENJIT DATTA ROY under my supervision. PRASENJIT DATTA ROY worked methodically for his thesis being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Dept. of English, Mizoram University

This is to further certify that he has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. Neither the thesis as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University or Institute.


(PROF. SARANGADHAR BARAL)

Supervisor

Prof. Sarangadhar Baral
Dept. of English
Mizoram University

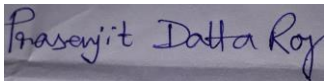
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MARCH,2021

DECLARATION

I, PRASENJIT DATTA ROY, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.



PRASENJIT DATTA ROY

Candidate

(Prof.SARANGADHAR BARAL)

Supervisor

Dept.of English

(Prof. K.C.LALTHLAMUANI)

Head

Dept.of English

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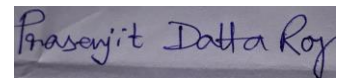
First and foremost I thank the Almighty God for His benevolence and guidance who has made all things possible.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to my Supervisor Prof. Sarangadhar Baral, who has patiently supervised me, and encouraged me. His tireless patience, enthusiasm to check my drafts and his valuable response with amazing regularity proved tremendously beneficial.

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Candidate

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Prasenjit Datta Roy".

PRASENJIT DATTA ROY

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Chapter –I

Introduction

Khushwant Singh continues to enjoy the reputation of being a resolute personality in the field of Indian-English writing. Singh's literary works cover a wide gamut of genres including novels, short stories, biographies, history and poetry. He was born on 2nd February, 1915 in Hadali in Punjab. He got his early education at Modern School, New Delhi, and graduated later from Government College, Lahore. Singh's career was also interrupted by journalistic occupation. He edited the reputed "Illustrated Weekly of India", Bombay, from 1969 to 1978 and the "National Herald" from 1980 to 1983. He also served as the editor of several literary and news magazines as well as two newspapers, between the 1970s and 1980s. He officiated the post of Member of Parliament in the Upper House between 1980-86. He was awarded with the Padma Bhushan in 1974 which he returned in 1984 in his protest against the Operation Blue Star by Indian Army in Amritsar. Again he had been awarded with the Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian award of the nation in 2007. Khushwant Singh breathed his last on 20th March 2014 in Delhi. He earned reputation for his wit and satire. According to Birendra Sinha and Dinesh Mishra, Singh is popularly known for his "trenchant secularism, his humour and an abiding love of poetry" (209).

Khushwant Singh has portrayed the contemporary modern Indian society which is debased in many respects. Further, the problems of sexuality in the Indian context are abundantly reflected in his works, which have invited brusque comments usually. His works show how the sexual aesthetics in contemporary India are violated variously; and this would be a prominent dimension to probe critically in Singh. Therefore, the present research is an attempt to critically understand and examine these significant and other related aspects in his fictions.

The present study undertakes to examine whether his novels and other stories produce anything more than what critics usually find as the obvious themes. The criticism about Singh ranges from appreciation to downright condemnation. For example, S.K. Dubey in the book *Khushwant Singh: A Critical study of His Novels* appreciates Singh as a great story teller with humour. Dubey observes:

Khushwant Singh is a great story-teller. His novels combine the narrative techniques of the West and the Punjabi fiction. He is full of anecdotes and they add a special flavour to his novels. His sense of humour is rich and typically Punjabi. He cuts jokes even at his own cost and that of his community as well. He is good at manipulating his point of view and use of satire. (vi)

Chitvan Singh Dhillon comments that it is his style of writing, armed with “impeccable repartee, candour and malicious” gossip was combined with a “liberal vision and breadth of scholarship”. Singh never apologised for “what he wrote,” yet he never “shied away” from confessing his own “fears and frailties” (5).

Surjit Singh Dulai notes that in comparison with “many of his contemporaries”, Khushwant Singh has written a “rather small amount” of fiction. Yet “he figures prominently” among the “major writers of India” today. The secret of his appeal seems to lie in the “concern and faithfulness” with which “his milieu” is mirrored through his writing (1).

Rajvinder Singh situates Khushwant Singh beside his contemporaries and observes that he is being noticeable among members of a “group of five masters and vanguards” of the Indo-English literature, which included Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Bhabhani Bhattacharya. Khushwant Singh appeared to be “the most modern and up-to-date” of the group. Apart from his long writing career, his writings smack of performances “like those of painters, actors or musicians”. His wonderful words ran freely and tenderly. His compositions had attained a diction which is absolutely “un-identical” to anyone else of his contemporaries or his predecessors (148).

Manoj Kumar Mishra complains that Khushwant Singh is a misinterpreted writer. The celebrated critic like M.K.Naik too does not give him the importance he deserves rather blames him of vulgarity. Even the journalists writing in daily newspapers form and bear wrong impressions of him as they use epithets like “India’s most prized dirty old man” for him, and publicise that he loves “salacious gossip”. Some journalists also suggest that his literary trademark is that of “scotch and sex” which he is always eager to “serve up”. They also assert that his works are

“greeted by an army of lustful readers” and blame him of writing the kind of stuff that makes for rapid sales at the railway book stalls (Mishra VII).

Singh’s portrayal of the scenes involving sex and violence in his works has made him misunderstood by many readers. But a detailed study on his works proves that portraying sex and violence are not his mere purpose, rather always he tries to present a true picture of the society. According to Raji Narasimhan the term “exuberant seems an apt epithet” to the prose-style and fiction of Khushwant Singh. He maintains a straight narrative approach to present his accounts of Sikh life in the “Punjab villages and cities” which are true to life and photographic (82). H. Moore Williams comments that as a novelist Singh is “exclusively concerned” with the Sikhs of North India whose sorrows at the time of the partition were painful (13).

Thus it is necessary to review and reassess Singh’s writings, on the one hand, and also attempt to explore what significant meanings or fresh insights into understanding life his works would facilitate, on the other. The present thesis is titled “Dynamics of Power and Sexuality in Selected Texts of Khushwant Singh: A Study”. Studies and critical awareness of Singh’s critics are an immense help towards deciding this research topic. Thus, most critical writings as evident from the statements cited above do not reflect certain interesting, yet unconscious, dimensions in Singh’s works. For example, Singh’s concern is for a morally stable and secular society, the very nature of which is defeated and devastated in his times, since power structures play deleterious impacts upon the society’s wholesome existence.

The objectives behind this research are to study the dynamics of power and sexuality in the selected texts of Khushwant Singh. As it appears that most of the critics have treated social and political dimensions in Singh’s works, without complicating the issues for their critical analysis. Thus, the aspects of power and sexuality which form relevant and critical premises are found not presented satisfactorily, nor intensively in the available critical works so far. So this thesis makes an attempt to study on the power relations between society and individuals as well as explore the complications of sexuality in Indian society as the author has tried to figure out in his texts. The present study would like to assess the impact of power machinery in shaping the life of an individual as well as a newly emerging

nation. The study is an effort to re-examine the socio-political relation of power as these emerge in Singh's works. The thesis also intends to highlight how Singh and his contemporaries viewed sexuality. The thesis likes to highlight the different aspects of sexuality like lesbianism, repressed sexuality, state of sex-mania, clandestine love affair, hyper sexuality, lascivious gestures, castration complex and also pleasure principle.

Khushwant Singh occupies a significant place among the Indian-English writers. His achievements are far ranging and they bear ample evidence to his versatility. His works are permeated by a genuine native consciousness and it starts at the grassroots of the Punjabi social milieu and gradually extends itself to cover other aspects of life. His works include abundant comments and criticisms on the contemporary life. But in doing so, he exceeds the temporality of his times and reaches out to a time beyond the narrowly chauvinistic and informal realities. They aim at a humanistic ideal that is knitted in fraternity and unity. As a creative writer, Singh is an example of the synthesis of realist and humanist. He has also written a number of short stories and each of them relates to his contemporary life. His short stories are a blend of quick wit and piercing irony. Another fundamental quality of his art is his comic spirit which animates his fictional world. For him, comedy acts as a social corrective and it has a psychological curative effect. In Singh's fiction, the comic is linked with social and moral criticism. He has five novels to his credit besides being a short story writer, a columnist, a journalist, while having a large number of works on varied subjects. He competently portrays the true picture of society, besides the social, political and religious ideas of the people. Through his works he expresses his positive outlook and his trust in the values of love and humanity.

'Dynamic' in the title "Dynamics of Power and Sexuality" may be understood according to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, which is the way in which people or things behave and react to each other in a particular situation. Dynamics of 'power' and 'sexuality' in this sense refer to the complex and subtle ways in which 'power' and 'sexuality' operate to shape popular and serious discourses. The books that have been chosen for study are: *Train to Pakistan*, 1956 (abbreviated *Train*), *I*

Shall Not Hear the Nightingale, 1959 (abbreviated *Nightingale*), *Malicious Gossip*, 1989 (abbreviated *Malicious*), *Delhi: A Novel*, 1990 (abbreviated *Delhi*), *The Company of Women*, 1999 (abbreviated *Company*), *Burial at Sea*, 2004 (abbreviated *Burial*), *Paradise and other Stories*, 2004 (abbreviated *Paradise*) and *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!*, 2012 (abbreviated *Agnostic*). The abbreviated titles will be replicated forward mostly in this study.

Premises of power and sexuality are abundantly available in Khushwant Singh's novels. *Train to Pakistan* deals with the reversal of human values in the aftermath of partition violence and the indelible scars the same has left on the psyche of the survivors of both the countries, i.e., India and Pakistan. It is a picturisation of the ordeal of partition of a nation. The text foregrounds the politics of 'power' manifested in the dubious conspiracy on the part of colonial British Government to divide India. Set in the fictitious village of Mano Majra on the frontier of two countries, namely, India and Pakistan, the text looks at the political consequences of partition, most noticeably discerned in the growing discomfort and suspect between the Sikhs and Muslims. While commenting on *Train to Pakistan* S. K. Dubey remarks that no Indian English writer has ever taken up the "traumatic issue of India's partition" and dealt with it so "vividly and lucidly" as Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* (21).

The text investigates the role of power mechanisms like religion and government administrative structure in perpetuating an atmosphere of violence. Foucault says that power travels in all directions to and from. If power operates to hegemonies tyrannise and oppress in the text, counter power in the form of love attempts to negate the atmosphere of suspicion, hostility, and violence. The love affair between Juggut (also known as Jugga) and Nooran while serving to function as sub-plot of the novel works to show decent against the acts of brutality. It is this power of love that wins over the evil power of hatred in the long run and saves the train to Pakistan from a mass genocide.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* encompasses the aspects of power and sexuality. Politics dominate the society. The Foucauldian concept of the state authority and the Althusserian concepts of "State Apparatus" are found playing pivotal role in

impacting the life of the people in the fictional village of Mano Majra as portrayed by Singh. The novel shows the politics and power game of the British Empire in India to divide the nation. Magistrate Hukum Chand and the police force represent the state power in the form of Government agencies, while Jugga's mother cannot accept Nooran, a Muslim girl immediately as her daughter-in-law, since her conservative society is restrictive of trans-religious marriage. Besides, there is the blemish of social defamation of accepting such a girl as daughter-in-law who is already pregnant before getting married. The state apparatus encompasses, in 'Marxist theory', the government, administration, army, police, courts and prisons, which together organise the "Repressive State Apparatus". The term "repressive" is understood at the limit (for there exist many and very subtly occulted forms of non-physical repression), in the strong, precise sense of "using physical violence" direct or indirect, legal or illegal (Althusser 75). Besides, it is the religious identity that brings disaster in the life of the Muslim people of Mano Majra as the nation has been divided on the basis of religion. In fact, Mano Majra is a replica of the whole nation. The novelist has portrayed *Train to Pakistan* as a microcosm of the macrocosm in reference to the rest of India. Thus, major dimensions of the novel are found to be politics, religion, and sexual relationship.

The novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* narrates the days in Amritsar during the peak hour of India's freedom movement. Basavaraj Naikar in his article "The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*" writes that Khushwant Singh has tried to give a very "microscopic picture" of Punjabi life in the novel though he concentrates on the "political theme" (147). The text is built on a series of conflicts, such as submission versus liberation, old versus young, British colonisers versus Indians. The text develops on the ideological conflict between these factors mentioned above. It is an important text in relations between the government and the governed. It tries to focus on the dynamics of power politics in exploring their relationship within the sphere of pre-independence social, cultural, religious and economic life.

Delhi: A Novel (1990) brings together history, romance and sex. Starting from the days of Zahiruddin Babar, the novel ends with the assassination of former

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Pramod Kumar Singh in his book *Major Indo-English Novelists and Novels* observes that “the narrator’s, being the novelist” himself, “sexual encounter with Bhagmati”, a hijra; engender an uncanny feeling among the readers (166).

In *Delhi: A Novel* both the aspects of sexuality and power are found present. Though temporarily it may seem that the narrator rescues the eunuch on the road on humanitarian ground, he brings the hijda at his house, instead of shifting the ailing one to any hospital. The Freudian concept of the elements of repressed sexuality to explore the unique physical feature of a eunuch might have played a role behind such behaviour. On one occasion while narrating the presence of Bhagmati at the narrator’s apartment, the narrator has also admitted that he failed to refrain himself from thinking and exploring the physical feature of a eunuch ultimately:

My curiosity was roused. I’d never known a *hijda* only seen them go about in groups of fours and fives, sing in their unmelodious male voices, make ungainly movements they called dancing and clap their hands with the fingers stretched backwards. I had heard strange stories of their sex-life and the shapes of their genitals. (*Delhi*35)

The Company of Women presents the story of man-woman relationship: the mingling of love, sex, and passion. However, the text includes an enchanting and engrossing appeal for the readers. Besides, the novel serves as a morality tale with the scene of committing suicide by Mohan Kumar as he comes to know that he has developed AIDS, thus, paying for his sexual immorality practised throughout his whole life. In the novel *The Company of Women* after going through the aspect of “pleasure principle”¹ and thus enjoying a lavish life of sexual abundance, Mohan Kumar, the protagonist finally faces the state of an AIDS patient, in fact, paying for his promiscuity for the whole life. The state of AIDS victim generates the feeling of inferiority in his mind as he thinks that he is no longer fit to go through sexual relation with any woman. It is this feeling of inferiority that plays the role behind his committing suicide by consuming Calmpose:

Then he resolutely composed himself and took the first Calmpose; as he gulped it down with a sip of water, he recited the Gayatri Mantra. He did the

same with the second, and the third, till the last: thirty Gayatri Mantras with thirty pills. Then he put his head on the pillow and closed his eyes. (*Company* 232)

Pramod Kumar Singh again comments in *Major Indo-English Novelists and Novels* that *The Company of Women* can be regarded as “the millennium’s last Great Indian ‘Lascivious Novel’ that gives the “voyeuristic view of male and female anatomy and titillating accounts of the innumerable sexual encounters of his protagonist.” Besides, the author has narrated the sexual incidents so skilfully that a reader may feel like watching a blue film instead of reading a fictional novel. *The Company of Women* delves into the private life of Mohan Kumar as he beds one woman after another in a series of sexual exploits. Through his writing, the novelist seems to preach the slogan that love and sex do not know any caste, class and community bar (174-75).

In the novel *Burial at Sea* the novelist focuses on different issues like twentieth-century Indian history, fake religious personalities, and sexuality. Victor Jai Bhagwan is a brilliant young man with the spirit of leadership and dedicated to his nation. Though Victor has love and respect for Mahatma Gandhi, he differs from Gandhiji’s vision for the future of the nation. Victor returns from England with the determination to bring the benefits of modern industry to India, and within a few years of India’s independence he becomes country’s biggest industrialist. But this is not the only ideal of Gandhiji that he defies: facing a midlife crisis, he falls passionately in love with a tantric god-woman who introduces him to the pleasures of unrestrained sexuality. The text narrates the story of an illegal sexual relationship between the protagonist Victor Jai Bhagwan and Ma Durgeshwari, a tantric woman. The result of the two years long hidden relationship is Durgeshwari’s illegitimate maternity. Here we find the manifestation of practical sense in the characters of both Durgeshwari and Victor Jai Bhagwan. They want to act as per social reality. Victor neither feels any interest in that baby nor dares Durgeshwari to give birth the child in public. Hence, Durgeshwari chooses a secret place to give birth the child, lest to lose her social dignity. But the sense of morality motivates her to disclose the issue to Bhararti and thus to lighten the burden of sin of her illegitimate maternity:

‘I have something to tell you, Bharati,’ Durgeshwari Began, ‘I’m pregnant. It’s your father’s child.’ (*Burial* 141)

It is in this text too that “pleasure principle” plays a role in the two prime characters of Victor Jai Bhagwan and Ma Durgeshwari, the tantric god-woman. The two are so much possessed by the charm of enjoining each other’s company that Durgeshwari becomes pregnant with the illegitimate child of Victor.

The book *Paradise and other Stories* is a collection of short stories based in India. The story “Paradise” narrates a lesbian sexual incident and how the ashram, being one of the agencies of the state apparatus punishes both the offenders, namely, Margaret Bloom and Putli. “Zora Singh”, another story, narrates a peripheral sexuality between the protagonist Zora Singh and the house maid Deepo. Such a relationship stands outside the agreed morality. Zora Singh, on the one hand is sympathetic to the helpless family of Deepo with her two children, but on the other he is interested in enjoying extramarital affair too in the form of secret sexual pleasure with the widow. The influence of “castration complex”² is found present in the character of Deepo, a widow. The aspect of “castration complex” developed by Sigmund Freud (6th May 1856 – 23rd September 1939) and Jacque Lacan (13th April 1901 – 9th September 1981) is found relevant in this story. Deepo who is the wife of Zora’s office peon Tota Singh, feels herself helpless and aspires for protection from another male figure. The story “Wanted: a Son” narrates the life of a childless couple, both are police cops by profession. The story describes the manifestation of the role of adjustability. The aspiration to get a child pushes Baljit to a dargah. There she gets involved in sexual relationship with the care taker of the dargah out of her urge for sex as her husband has already denied the incompetency in his semen and thus tries to protect his male ego. Baljit acts appropriately according to the situation and becomes pregnant. The story ends with the celebration with the new born baby by the whole family members especially Raj Kumar, Baljit’s husband as well as the official father of the new born. The text hinges on questions of repressed sexuality, pleasure principle and the role of social apparatus.

The nonfictional text *Malicious Gossip* spans Singh’s long, chequered career, in which he recollects the people he came across, befriended or fell out with. Written

in his characteristically impudent manner, each sketch exposes keen observation about the characters and also throws light on the unknown aspects of their personalities. Almost every profile offers captivating perceptions into the multifaceted human psyche.

In the book Singh has portrayed the life sketch of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1928-79), his ascending to the throne of President of Pakistan. The story ends with Mr. Bhutto's last journey to the gallows. In the part of the book 'To Pakistan with Love', it is found how power dynamically produces a socio-political condition in man's life. The title of the book looks significant and it evidences the writer's inimitable style of irony to talk of love. His ear to catch gossip is matched by his observant eye for reality.

In the biography of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto named "From the Death Sentence to the Gallows"; the crucial role of the politics affecting rise and fall in a man's life is found. The story narrates the death of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1928-79). Bhutto was a barrister and also a politician who served as the 9th Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1973 to 1977, and prior to that as the fourth President of Pakistan from 1971 to 1973. He was also the founder of the 'Pakistan Peoples Party' and served as its chairman until his execution in 1979. The story shows how the political situation can impact the life of a man. It is found that there is a curious paradox in the Pakistani political scene, which would be discussed at a later stage.

Besides, in this book Singh has portrayed the biographies of Rajiv Gandhi (1944 -91), Sanjay Gandhi (1946 -80), and V.P. Singh (1931 -2009). While portraying these characters Singh has shown how a character may be influenced by different aspects of power in life from time to time. In the non-fictional piece "Why Isn't Aditi Married", Singh might be suggestive of the time's tendency towards over insistence on sexual relations which he ironically devalues in support of Aditi who presents individual choice and freedom by not succumbing to the social bondage of marriage and stereotypical life of a woman.

The part entitled 'Around the World' is a series of stories. The pieces chosen for the study are "Indonesian Fortnight", "Polonaise", and "In Gaddafi Land". In all the stories the writer has brought different aspects of power and sexuality. Singh in

his work has shown how the different aspects of power including “state authority” and various aspects of “ideological state apparatus” can influence the life of a man as well as a nation. Besides, the author has shown the role of sexuality in man’s life. But in the travelogues of “Indonesian Fortnight”, “Polonaise”, and “In Gaddafi Land” Singh has used his usual sarcastic tone to criticise the life of the nations. In the travelogue “In Gaddafi Land” Singh continues to examine the impact of the state-power in moulding the socio-political life of a nation. A Muslim ruler’s dabbling in religion and politics together comes to the foreground, as the writer relates:

He outbid Israel and brought over Idi Amin for the Muslim world and gave large sums of money to Black dictators in the hope of converting them to Islam. He sent arms and money to Pakistan for use against India in the Bangladesh War of Independence and is known to be the chief financier of Islamic bomb. All these exercises cost Libya a lot of money and earned him many enemies. (*Malicious* 235-36)

Another non-fictional text *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!* (2012) expresses Singh’s opinion about the concept of God and on different rituals. In this book it seems that finally he comes to the conclusion that there is no God. According to him, instead of entering into a useless debate on “whether or not God exists” (*Agnostic* 23), it is more significant to accept in mind that trust in the “existence of God” (*Agnostic* 23) has little bearing on building a person a good or a bad. One can become a holy person without believing in God and also a crook believing in Him. Singh, over the decades, has built up his name for coming up with something new and controversial in each book, and he does not dissatisfy his readers this time too. The book begins with a chapter on the “The Need for a New Religion – Without a God”, in which he questions the relevance of God. He then moves on to describe how religion has proved to be more harmful than beneficial and, in the process, debunks astrologers and the breed of so-called “godmen” (*Agnostic* 214). However, Singh is not indifferent totally to religion. Through his writing, he brings out the beauty and significance of the holy books such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Quran* and the *Granth Sahib*. The author next tries to dispel the prejudices held by many non-

Muslims against their Muslim nationals by giving down-to-earth examples. He also emphasises the importance of the Ramzaan fast. Singh's description of the life and times of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and his in-depth analysis of the *Granth Sahib* throw new light on a particularly troubled period in India's history. The chapter is dedicated to the interaction of the author, a self-proclaimed "agnostic", as Singh himself claims "I am an agnostic. I don't believe in God" (*Agnostic* 238) in an interview with the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader.

In the chapter "Religion versus Morality", Khushwant Singh talks about the power of religion. According to him, religion extends its sphere of activity including making laws for the society. The divine fear works as an effective means of preventing men from hurting each other, from stealing each other's properties. Secondly, religion can also extend its jurisdiction by making laws of social intercourse. This shows how Khushwant Singh considers secular and social matters more relevant and urgent for human life.

Susan Curtis in her article "The Sovereignty of the Secular and the Power of Religion" says that the relationship between "sacred and secular", however, is not "unidirectional". That is, it is not just a question of the shaping power of culture and society on religion. Rather, one must also recognise the power of "religious ideas, images, symbols, and moral systems" to add depth and meaning to other aspects of cultural life (337).

The above discussion clearly underlines some basic preoccupations of Khushwant Singh, which the present study aims to critically explore and reassess. Further, It is important to situate him among other Indian- English writers including his older contemporary Mulk Raj Anand (2nd December 1905 –28th September 2004), and two young contemporaries, namely, Amitav Ghosh(11th July 1956--) and Arundhati Roy (24th November 1961 till date). These writers have too focused on the social power structures and exploitive mechanisms in the society. Here, this is to briefly stress and compare Singh's social perceptions and observations with that of his contemporaries, on order that his creative as well as critical artistry gets better placed. Mulk Raj Anand's first novel, *Untouchable* was published in the year of 1935. It is a story based on the life of the most downtrodden, hated and oppressed

section of Indian society, the outcastes – those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. This story is based on a single day in the life of Bakha, a latrine cleaner as well as sweeper boy. Anand had always been sickened with and opposed to religious sectarianism, communalism and caste-bar in society. The *Untouchable* has consciously drawn on the relationships between the underdog of the society and its established power structure. With the publication of *Untouchable*, Anand had firmly associated himself with that brand of writers who saw “political, social and human causes as genuine impulses for the novel and poetry” (Cawasjee1). He left behind an inheritance of tolerance, social justice, and the celebration of human life itself.

Anand has been observed by Pramod Kumar Singh, as a humanist. In his book *Five Contemporary Indian Novelists* he observes that Anand’s main protagonist represents “any suffering class” of the society. “As he is a humanist, his novels bring out human predicaments in a very vivid and lively manner” (13). Anand has something significant to reflect about the social gaze and sex, though on a lower key.

Anand’s second novel *Coolie* is a popular novel depicting the tragic plight of the millions of coolies who are landless and run away from famine and hunger of villages. Driven by poverty they become coolies only to be victimised by the social machineries of exploitation, capitalism and industrialism and finally die somewhere in a corner of the society, unknown and unwept. The novel provides insights into the exploitive dynamics of colonial capitalist structures and political power. T. N. Dhar in his observation about the novel says that “Coolie also provides a brief glimpse of the corrupt and unscrupulous Britishers who exploit the poor textile workers in their factories in Bombay” (98). M. Subba Rao in his observation about Anand has termed him as a humanist. He comments that the “man of labour” has won a permanent place in Anand’s creative works. His first protagonists are “sweepers, coolies and plantation workers”. These characters are a “new phenomenon” in Indian literature (143). However, Khushwant Singh’s creative canvas captures the rhythms of Indian life on a larger panoramic view. Of course, his large landscape is teemed with the characters in post-independent India.

The ugly face of power can be seen in the aspects of migration and tragedy because of foreign invasion which are depicted in two works of Amitav Ghosh, namely, *The Glass Palace* (2000) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004). *The Glass Palace* narrates the forced migration of the native people to some unknown land. Amitav Ghosh has nicely portrayed the historical context responsible for the movement of people from their native place to an unknown land by choosing migration as the subject of the novel. In his observation, Y. Venkateswarlu says that *The Glass Palace* is an embodiment of Ghosh's "diasporic imagination" which struggles with an understanding of "biculturalism" as it "yokes by violence together". Separate and distant identities essential to our understanding for our history has been created by the novelist (134). In *The Glass Palace* the migration is limited not only up to the Burmese royal family and its associates, but also refers to the people from colonised India who are also transported to Burma to work in oil camps and other menial jobs. On the way to the exiled place, the King finds several Indian faces along the waterfront. He wonders:

What vast, what an comprehensible power, to move people in such large numbers from one place to another - emperors, kings, farmers, dockworkers, soldiers, coolies, policemen. Why? Why this furious movement - people taken from one place to another, to pull rickshaws, to sit blind in exile? (50)

The price of defeat for him is too high. Even the native subjects under victorious foreign rulers are left to the mercy of the rulers' whims or political designs. In another novel *The Hungry Tide* too Ghosh has depicted the issues of migration, resettlement and the tussle between the helpless migrants and the state power. The tide of political occurrence during the Indo-Pak war in 1971 and the resulting refugee influx at the Sundarbans of West Bengal, India from Khulna District of erstwhile East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh. Rehabilitating them is often done in an illogical way. The existence of refugees is an indicator of the presence of political conflict. In the novel, Amitav Ghosh examined the hunger for power which leads to the tragedy of Morichjhapi where the Government agencies had massacred thousands of refugees in an attempt to evacuate the place to build reserve forest for the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Both Khushwant Singh and Amitav Ghosh have narrated the picture of migration and the resultant suffering of the innocent people. The state power decides the fate of the innocent people of a nation. Singh describes the miserable plight of the Muslim refugees on their way to Pakistan by train in the *Train to Pakistan*.

Arundhati Roy is another writer who has consistently explored and critiqued power structures in her texts. Her *The God of Small Things* has enjoyed great readership. The text examines and cross-examines different aspects of life like gender, caste and political formulations. Roy writes about the social issues that plague Indian society. She portrays how the caste system, though being outlawed, still continues to coil its net over the social life of India. She portrays gender inequality through her female characters. *The God of Small Things* throws challenge to the patriarchy advocating the changes in conventional notions of gender and sexuality in a male-controlled society.

Elizabeth Outka in her observation about the novel says that sexism is another “systemic trauma” that Roy explores; both through the limited options open to the novel’s women and the treatment they receive from many of the male characters (39).

Gender is a forced role for the characters in *The God of Small Things*, and it exists simply as a defining social construct. The women of the novel are forced to stay true to femininity in Indian society, or else the consequences are unacceptably harsh. Besides, in the novel Roy introduces the power structure in society and shows how the more powerful victimise the less powerful as there is gender oppression, oppression of lower caste, subjugation of children, police atrocity and hypocrites. Roy’s realistic sketch of her characters, be it Mammachi, Pappachi, Chacko or Baby Kochamma needs to be praised, for she scores well on this front. Multiple power structures remind us of our own society where such Chacko and Mammach reside who exercise their power on the weak and less powerful.

In his comments John Lutz says that in *The God of Small Things* democracy is depicted as a “superficial ideology” that reinforces the domination of the market values. This depiction underwrites those instances in the novel when “consciousness of the brutal reality of capitalism” must be repressed in order to prevent any

questioning of the “boundaries of class, caste, race, and gender” that reproduced the system. Each of the representations of the “authority and power” in the narrative displays an “obsessive concern” with classification that extends from the organisation of objects to the sorting and ranking of human beings (63).

Explorations into how power operates in different dimensions including sexuality in the texts of Khushwant Singh offers ample scope for research. While Khushwant Singh has been probed into from other paradigms, a look into how his texts hold numerous subtexts within it in the domains of power and sexuality is an area that needs further research. While authors like Arundhati Roy has extensively been researched on gender and sexual parity and imbalance as well as how institutions operate to contain bodies and individuals, a similar research on Khushwant Singh awaits a detailed study and which this research work seeks to do. The present research work would therefore explore the unexplored facts related to power and sexuality in the selected texts as presented by Khushwant Singh.

As observed earlier, Singh’s novels are studied in the light of socio-political interests that the India of the 50s and 60s mostly aroused. His knack for satire has undoubtedly made socio-political topics more fascinating and critically viable. However, more interesting premises of power in social and political life and that of sexuality have not been studied with equitable critical awareness. In the present study Foucault’s critical notions of power and sexuality as part of methodology will be relevant to use. These concepts are utilised and applied in a greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

As the present thesis intends to examine critically the dimensions of power and sexuality in the selected texts of Khushwant Singh, so Michel Foucault appears as a relevant source of critical premises that relate to his theory of repressive sexuality. According to this hypothesis, power has been exercised to repress discussion of sex. More important than sex though is the discourse on sexuality. The institution of marriage has claimed the discourse on sexuality as its exclusive property having its absolute authority to speak about sexuality. Effectively, most cultures ban any conversation on sexuality that occurs outside the boundaries of marriage. In this study of the selected texts this very Foucauldian concept of

repressive sexuality that he has spoken about in his book *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Vol-I* may be brought under discussion. He says:

If sex is repressed, that is condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. (6)

As this thesis proposes to study these selected texts and explore the dynamics of power and sexuality, so the research work attempts to examine relevance and different aspects of power and sexuality applicable to the selected texts in the light of literary theories on power and sexuality developed by Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Thus the study would use an interdisciplinary approach by applying the relevant dimensions found in above thinkers. Paul-Michel Foucault (15th October 1926 – 25th June 1984), generally known as Michel Foucault, was a French philosopher, historian of ideas, social theorist and literary critic. His ideas have been very influential in different fields of study especially in literature. His books like *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things*, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Vol-I*, *Discipline and Punish* and others have influenced many writers and thinkers to make a critical study on 'power' and 'sexuality'. His book *History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Vol-I* in particular has garnered wide interest among the readers. The book forwards his idea of 'repressed sexuality' which the author sees as a modern phenomenon. It looks into numerous institutions like psychiatry, pedagogy and family as carriers of prejudiced views about same-sex relationships and how they operate power to produce new discursivities. Freud's idea of sexuality is no less interesting. While Foucault concerned himself with external forces and the coming together of power and knowledge, Freud's ideas are internally ordained. Freud's psychoanalysis of sexuality has its own importance in literary studies. Freud developed the theory of 'Oedipus Complex' and 'Castration Anxiety'. In 'Oedipus Complex', Freud traces the psychosexual development in children in which they develop feelings of desire for his or her opposite-sex parent and jealousy and anger

toward his or her same-sex parent. Castration anxiety is the conscious or unconscious fear of losing all or part of the sex organs, or the function of such. However, in Freud's Castration Anxiety, the anxiety develops in a child from fear of father castrating him. The theory is that a child fears damage being done to his genitalia by father as punishment for sexual feelings towards the mother.

Apart from Freud, Jacques Lacan, another French psychoanalyst developed his own theories known as Lacanianism. Starting as an observation on the works of Sigmund Freud, Lacanianism developed into a new psychoanalytic theory and reproduced a worldwide movement of its own. It has been contended that Lacan's concepts must be read as presupposing the entire content of classical Freudianism, or else it would just be another philosophy or intellectual system. Lacanianism began as a philosophical reinterpretation of Freudian ideas. Later it became an autonomous body of thought and now exists as a matter of debate. Lacan considered the human psyche to be framed within the three orders of The Imaginary, The Symbolic and The Real. However, Lacan himself famously informed his followers: "It is up to you to be Lacanians if you wish. I am a Freudian"³.

This *Introductory Chapter* intends to provide an overview of the works by Khushwant Singh. It also tries to give a brief overview of 'power' and 'sexuality', keeping Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan in consideration. Besides, the chapter further attempts to study how power and sexuality interact and relate to the Indian English fiction in general and to the works of Singh in particular. The *Second Chapter* titled 'Exploring the Power Relations in the Selected Texts' intends to highlight the role of power in the life of characters and their surroundings in the selected fictional texts. The role of sexuality will be discussed in the *Third Chapter* of the thesis titled 'Aspects of Sexuality in the Selected Texts'. The *Fourth Chapter* titled 'Power and Sexuality in selected Short Stories and Non-fictions' attempts to explore the dynamics of power and sexuality in the short stories and non-fictional texts selected for the study. The *Fifth Chapter* 'Moral Issues in Selected Works of Khushwant Singh' tries to explore the moral issues related with power and sexuality. The *Sixth Chapter* is the 'Conclusion' which

attempts to summarise the relevant points discussed in the previous chapters and bring out the final outcome of the research.

Notes

1. The “pleasure principle” is a term originally developed by Sigmund Freud to characterise the tendency of people to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Freud argued that people will sometimes go to great lengths to avoid even momentary pain, particularly at times of psychological weakness or vulnerability. Paul Allen Miller observes that Freud, in fact, defines the “pleasure principle” as one of the “self-preservative or ego instincts.” The reality principle is its reflex and represents, not the Real, but our “socially constructed picture of the world” that sets parameters on our “pursuit of pleasure” so as to avoid unpleasure.

Source: Miller, Paul Allen. “Enjoyment Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Antigone, Julian of Norwich, and the Use of Pleasures.” *The Comparatist*. Vol. 39 (October 2015), pp. 47-63. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26254718.

2. The ending of the Freudian concept “Oedipus Complex” is brought about by somewhat literal threat of castration, is formulated in Lacan’s works in terms of the “subjects recognition of the lack in himself and in the Other.” The entry into the symbolic order ultimately means feeling symbolic castration, and life in the “symbolic order” means the acknowledgment that “we are subjects of lack.” Fetishism (the phallus itself is a fetish) is a defence mechanism against castration or lack. In other words, the phallus signifies lack - the lack of the subject and in the Other. In Lacanian theory this holds for both genders. Both men and women may desire to have, or to be, the phallus in the play of deception. Lacan links the phallus with the notion of desire (the desire of the Other - the imaginary lost object) and with language.

It is the language that creates desire, by turning the need into a demand from the Other.

Source: Meiri, Sandra. Masquerade and Bad Faith in “Peeping Toms” *Shofar*. Vol. 24, No. 1, Special Issue: *Israeli Cinema* (Fall 2005), pp. 107-124. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42944124.

3. Full text of “The International Journal of Indian Psychology, Volume 3, Issue 4, No.65.” *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. Volume 3. Issue 4.b No.65. [URL:https://archive.org/stream](https://archive.org/stream). Accessed: 7 April,2020.

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Chapter – II

Exploring the Power Relations in the Selected Texts

There are several concepts of power. Steven Lukes in his book *Power: a Radical View* refers to John Locke, an English philosopher and physician, widely regarded as one of the most influential of enlightenment thinkers and commonly known as the “Father of Liberalism”. Locke sought to capture the “generic sense of power” when he defined having it as being “able to make, or able to receive, any change”. Even that is not however general enough, for it excludes the power to resist change in the face of a changing environment. Luke in his book further observes that when the “generic sense of power” is used in relation to social life, it refers to the capabilities of the “social agents”. The agents may be individual or collective. The latter can be of many kinds: states, institutions, associations, alliances, social movements, groups, clubs and so on (69-72).

This chapter titled ‘Exploring the Power Relations in the Selected Texts’ is an attempt to understand the use and perspectives of power in the texts chosen for the study. For this Michel Foucault’s radical idea of power and Louis Althusser’s concept of “Ideological State Apparatus”¹ would be the mainstays among other relevant ideas. For this chapter, the chosen texts are *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), *Delhi: A Novel* (1990), *The Company of Women* (1999) and *Burial at Sea* (2004).

In all probability, there seems no evidence of direct contact between Michel Foucault and Khushwant Singh or Foucault’s inspiration for the latter. Nevertheless, in most of Singh’s writings, the use as well as abuse of power is found. Singh is not theoretically inclined, his creative texts rather evidently explore the dynamics of power relations at all levels of social behaviour and relationship. On the surface of it all, the political sense of power is more apparent and affective, but in Singh, the moral, religious and the social relations too are not untouched by most effects of power. It may be pertinent to hold that Singh’s world is, as it is definitely in Foucault, a network of power as understood with reference to the radical thinker. Thus Foucault’s concept of power is of utmost importance to clarify certain aspects of Singh’s world in which power relations work significantly. Singh has not named

these relational dynamics as ‘power relations,’ but his novels emerge from the socio-political environments of the contemporary time or the past which continues in its present powerful effects. According to Foucault, in modern liberal government, “individual conduct and comportment” have become directly involved in the operations of power. Government focuses on the “conduct of conduct,” and the state has been de-centred. The totality of dominated voices exists as the population of the governed. Rule in modern societies, according to Foucault, is to be understood as “triangulated around practices of sovereignty-discipline-government” and to have as its essential object the population (Curtis 506).

Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Vol-I* says, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (93). According to Michel Foucault, power suggests that power is omnipresent, i.e., power can be found in all “social interactions”. By saying that power is omnipresent, i.e., power is co-extensive in the field of social relations, Foucault expresses his view that power is interwoven with and revealed in other kinds of social relations.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* shows the politics and power game of the British Empire in India to divide the country, where all leaders are involved, while *Delhi: A Novel* testifies to the power of destructive human psyche moulded by the socio-political context as the novel depicts the sectarian riots in Delhi. The novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* presents the impact of colonialism on the native Indians, through the character of Buta Singh, a high official, toeing even the stated rules or rule books. The novel illustrates how state power and politics of power management affect and subjugate the subjects under colonial rulers. In one occasion in the novel it is found that there has been a ban by John Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner, on all meetings and processions under which a religious procession of the Hindus too comes (*Nightingale* 67).

Julie Bywater and Rhiannon Jones have discussed Michel Foucault’s idea of power and stated that ‘power’ is active in “all levels of social interaction”, in “all social institutions” and “by all people.” The “crucial aspect of power” is felt through discourse which plays the most significant role. For Foucault, power and knowledge

are closely connected and support each other. Besides, these concepts construct what is acceptable and what is not in relation to sexuality (5-6).

Matti Peltonen remarks that Michel Foucault has the great eminence of analysing the nature of discourse which acts as a strategy of power. Foucault was interested in a much wider phenomenon than discourse. He also studied the practices and an abstraction that he called “dispositifs”, by which he meant “historically specific totalities of discourses and practices”. Foucault claims that the world “consists of nothing but discourses”. He thinks that this view of the world frees the cultural theorist from the reductionist thinking that rendered both social history and Marxist uninteresting. “The state, the body, society, sex, the soul, the economy are not stable objects, they are discourses” (206 -7).

This discourse as a tool of knowledge enforces that power is in fact not the theoretical concern of Khushwant Singh in his novels. However, Singh is acutely aware of the nexus between politics, laws, religion, ethics and power which definitely impacts the life of society at large. One significant dimension of Singh’s discourse is irony which is used extensively in exposing the dishonesty, corruption and moral hypocrisy of leaders in politics and other fields of life.

The novelist seems to expose the relationships and acts of injustice, power game and politics while satirising many social modes in the fifties and sixties in India. In the novel *Train to Pakistan* the role of the police cops and the way people believe them are emphasised by irony and innuendo. For example, Iqbal is taken into custody on the false accusation of the murder of Ram Lal. When the policemen take him, his outbursts express cynicism and scepticism about the Indian police reared under the colonial system. He says bluntly to Meet Singh, “I would rather trust you than the police in this free country of ours” (*Train* 57). The policemen who arrest Iqbal can read his innocent anger and apprehend that ‘arresting the social worker was a blunder and a likely source of trouble’ (*Train* 62). Here, Khushwant Singh seems to point ironically to the usual sordid police practice how to file fake cases. In self-defence and self-confession, the practice gets exposed: “some sort of case would have to be made up against him. That was always a tricky thing to do to educated people” (*Train* 62-63). The law in force

follows its underhand deals by discriminating between the educated and uneducated victims by throwing the principle of equality and neutrality into the wind. It is to disclose how Punjabi policemen were so adamant and hypocritical of their class that they would never admit making mistakes. This discourse exposes misuse of the institutional position and power to fabricate charges against innocent victims. In an independent country like India, it becomes clear that the modes and manners of corruption have continued relentlessly since the colonial times, as the old institutions are not overhauled. Corridors of power sound of the same old shuffles, but new power brokers have walked in. It is found in the novel that Hukum Chand, the Magistrate, plays foul game in making up the identity of Iqbal Singh who is arrested with Juggut (also known as Jugga) and is held by the police on the charges of involvement in Lala Ram Lal's (the moneylender of Mano Majra) murder in order to exercise his official power:

He looked thoroughly into the empty tumbler and added: 'Fill in the warrant of arrest correctly. Name: Mohammed Iqbal, son of Mohammed something-or-other or just father unknown. Caste: Mussulman. Occupation: Muslim league worker.' The sub inspector saluted dramatically. (*Train* 69)

Richard A. Lynch comments that according to Foucault, power is not a thing but a relation. Power is not something that is exclusively localised in government and the State. Power is exercised throughout the social body. Power is omnipresent, i.e., power is "co-extensive with the field of social relations; that power is interwoven with and revealed in other kinds of social relations, it does not mean that power functions as a trap or cage, only that it is present in all of our social relations, even our most intimate and egalitarian" (28).

Louis Althusser's concept of "ideological state apparatus"¹ is found relevant here. Althusser discusses how, a state institution, especially, police on the street calls an individual to answer, and how the subject is fixed, identified or ideologically constructed. This is in other words, the gaze of the authority of power to fix the individual as the other. In the *Train to Pakistan* similarly individuals are fixed, and the state power's surveillance produces identities even if falsely. In the early post-

British period, the system of administration and criminal law remained unchanged in India.

The State is a codification of relations of power at all levels across the social body. It is a concept that provides arrangement of intelligibility for a whole group of already established institutions and realities. Foucault cautions that power is neither a theoretical “principle in itself” nor a concept with “explanatory value.” Rather, he continues, power designates “a domain of relations which are entirely still to be analysed”. In our terms, Foucault’s commitment is not to a single concept of power but rather to an analytic that deploys power as a category so as to reveal multiple concepts of power at work in different contexts (Koopman 832).

The horrible look of authoritative power is found in the aspects of migration and tragedy because of foreign invasion which are depicted in two works, namely, *The Glass Palace* (2000) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004) by Amitav Ghosh, one of the young contemporaries of Khushwant Singh. Ghosh has depicted migration, misery and tragedy of people as disastrous common outcomes because of tragic migration and foreign invasion. Similarly, in the novel *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh has depicted the issues of migration, resettlement and the tussle between the helpless migrants and the state power. The tide of political events during the Indo-Pak war in 1971 and the resulting refugee influx at the Sundarbans of West Bengal, India from Khulna District of erstwhile East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh. *The Hungry Tide* reveals that during the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 there has been an influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh into India. Rehabilitating them is often done in an illogical way and exigent manner. The existence of refugees is an indicator of the presence of political conflict:

Once we lived in Bangladesh, in Khulna jila: we’re tide country people, from the Sundarban’s edge. When the war broke out, our village was burned to ash; we crossed the border, there was nowhere else to go. We were met by the police and taken away; in bushes they drove us, to a settlement camp. (164-65)

The Glass Palace (2000) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004) written by Ghosh have drawn attention to the anticolonial / on the pro-colonial administration and its

manipulation of power relations in enforcing migration. The resultant effect is new low-status for the migrated in the foreign land in general. *The Glass Palace* narrates the forced migration of the native people to some unknown land. New identities are fixed for the displaced subjects. Amitav Ghosh has nicely portrayed the historical crisis responsible for the movement of people from their native place to an unknown land by choosing migration of people as newly the subjected identities of the novel.

Both Khushwant Singh and Amitav Ghosh have narrated the pictures of forced migration and the resultant suffering of innocent people. The state power decides the fate of the innocent inhabitants of a land. Singh describes the miserable plight of the innocent Muslims on their way to Pakistan by train in *Train to Pakistan*. It is the prevailing scenario, how the micro level of relations gets affected because of the macro state activity, may be observed in Singh's novel. The talk of the country's imminent division brings awareness to Iman Baksh, the father of Nooran, to leave for Pakistan, before the situation becomes too worse. He asks his daughter Nooran to pack everything up as soon as possible and also goes to the houses of the other Muslims to inform them about the situation. When Nooran objects to leave India, Imam Baksh tries to convince her by saying that she should not to behave like a silly girl. "Hundreds of thousands of people are going to Pakistan and as many coming out. Those who stay behind are killed" (*Train* 136).

As the tragedy of migration is depicted by Singh in the north-western part of India during Independence, similar miserable plights of the Burmese royal family members and the refugees in Morichjhapi of West Bengal of India have been depicted by Amitav Ghosh in his two works. While *Train to Pakistan* talks about the time of decolonisation of the British Government in India with an ironical award of partition of the nation and the resultant socio-political crisis, *The Glass Palace* is based on the British colonial aggression of Burma and the displace of the royal family from their glass palace and also subsequent series of miserable incidents. In *The Hungry Tide* Ghosh describes the sufferings of the migrants to Morichjhapi of Sundarban. How state power can make the fate of a nation and how the life of innocent people is monitored by both state authority and also different state apparatuses are found in the novels.

Further, in the novel *Train to Pakistan*, Singh examines a small part of discourse involving the character of Jugga's mother in her talk with Nooran. This discourse is not merely a personal talk between two persons; it may be termed as a socio-political effect at the personal level. However, Jugga's mother handles the sensitive situation wittily. She craftily suggests that in the troubling times of partition, Nooran should first go to Pakistan with her father, but assures her by saying that her son Jugga would bring her back when situation will become normal. In support of her pretentious view she refers to the continuous financial crisis of the family. She shrewdly argues that if Jugga has to get a wife, then he would have no other option except Nooran as his wife. Here in the discourse, the power of ready-wit is found handy in the character of Jugga's mother (*Train*139). Nevertheless, in the context of the entire novel, in this personal dialogue, many social dimensions are implicit like complicit colonial interest, religious difference, partition of a country, unequal marriage between two different faiths, and social acceptability of illegitimate child by the larger community. And the entire novel may turn out to be an extended discourse on what remains unsaid or unexposed and not highlighted.

The novelist has used the power of discourse to convince the unwilling person to yield. He has drawn attention to the constructedness of truth in the couch of language. It may be said that Nooran is told a lie to believe it as a truth. Besides, Singh has tried to draw attention also to the love and its power of human bond between two distinct religious communities, which, however unfortunately, are subjected to ruin under changing political upheavals and breaking of a country into two nations.

Paul A. Bove may be of use here to recall how power relations associate with "governmentality," which, in other words, extends as a concept from the action of the "police" in the comprehensive sense. Bove says that Foucault recovers and employs it to the relations among family members to the individual's struggle for self-mastery in the aesthetic style (86).

This point of constructedness of truth acting as a powerful force in relations is found in Foucault's theory. Foucault's ideas on discourse revolve around the relationship between truth and power. According to Foucault, the traditional

philosophical dictum, “you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free,” is hopelessly naive. So too is the “critique of ideology” which, following this statement, juxtaposes liberating truths to powerful illusions. Foucault argues that “truth is neither outside of power nor lacking in power and hence cannot be juxtaposed to it”. The production of truth is systematically saturated with power. Foucault characterises their interaction: “‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it.” Foucault explores these power relations which create truth and the power effects truth creates (Love 279). Similarly in *Delhi: A Novel* the episode relating the education of a Hindu boy among his Muslim mates in school points to how institutional power manipulates individual infirmity or susceptibility.

While commenting on the role of power relations in *Train to Pakistan*, Peter Morey, a critic, says that among all the communal madness, Jugga becomes “an agent of that connection across the difference” promoted by the novel in using his body as both bridge and sacrifice, ensuring the Muslims’ survival by “hanging on to and severing the rope” designed to sweep as many as possible from the roof of the train. Indeed, it is a text that “builds and valorises” the bridges of various kinds, most clearly in the “intercommunal relationships” of Jugga-Nooran and Hukum Chand-Haseena. In addition, the novel raises the issue of those “transgressive spaces and identities” which defy the reductive classification of bigotry. Morey also says that it is in the character of Iqbal that the issue of “unattributable cultural identity” is most memorably manifested. Unable to separate from the name Iqbal the ethnic allegiance of the young activist who has recently appeared in the village Mano Majra – he could be Iqbal Mohammed (Muslim), Iqbal Singh (Sikh) or Iqbal Chand (Hindu). But, it is ultimately found that he is a Sikh, though Iqbal is already circumcised by an operation and has fashionable modern short hair. The cross-communal quality of the identity which is fluid is now fixed by offices or establishments. The authorities read Iqbal as a Muslim when attempting to implicate him in Ram Lal’s murder, in order to encourage a “Muslim exodus” before the real storm of communal violence breaks out. Later, when manipulating his release in an attempt to prevent the planned “rail sabotage”, Hukum Chand, the Magistrate, “conveniently reinterprets” Iqbal as a

Sikh. Morey says further that Iqbal is therefore, a “transgressive signifier.” To transgress – literally to go beyond set boundaries- is what Jugga and Nooran, Hukum Chand and Haseena, the sweepers, and the *hijras* do. It is also of course, why borders exist in order to prevent transgressors. Communal identity is a fact in India to prevail, since many language and religious groups jostle with each other to stabilise their identities. It seems that it is the power of transgression that Khushwant Singh appears to valorise, and that against the “rampant communal nationalism” (173-74).

Communal nationalism is a divisive power which may divide a multicultural nation into separate group identities and set each against the other in the interest of powerful masters. The political scenario of India heading towards a breakup into two independent nations is captured at the micro level of individual characters in *Train to Pakistan*. But the individuals are not free from the larger macro-scenario of national politics. Khushwant Singh does not focus purely on the macro level planning of the partition; the novelist has artistically treated the macro-micro intersection of state and people in the conduct of power relations. The *Train to Pakistan* does not project India as a properly disciplined society, but held to discipline by coordinated institutions like prisons, hospitals, asylums, schools and army barracks. To use Foucault’s idea, such discipline is a mechanism of power which regulates the behaviour of individuals in the social body; in other words, the society’s behaviour is regulated by a complex system of surveillance. Foucault in his book *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* observes that the “exercise of discipline” assumes a “mechanism that coerces” by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see persuade “effects of power”, and in which, equally, “the means of coercion” make those on whom they are applied clearly visible (170-71). A society facing a huge political crisis of the country cannot be expected to observe a disciplined living what law conveniently expects. Therefore, prisons, hospitals, asylums, and army barracks are kept ready and active to enforce law and order. It is true what Foucault emphasises that power is not discipline; rather discipline is simply one way in which power can be exercised.

The political turmoil of an unfolding history and practical exigencies in the novel prompt Imam Baksh, father of Nooran, to migrate to Pakistan, before the situation turns worse. The novelist is sensitive to the human needs and problems that generally affect the life. Baksh asks his daughter Nooran to pack before the communal violence turns worse. He asks his daughter not to become silly, dragging her feet but to do as he says. In the prevailing situation, in the *Train to Pakistan*, it is easy to believe a rumour and understand a caution that those who will stay behind will be killed (*Train*136). In this case, we find the impact of political situation as un-ignorable on the life of the general people of the country. From the story of the novel, this can be understood how the political upheaval may throw a man brutally out of his native land overnight and drive him helplessly to save his life, property and dignity. The novel implicitly throws light on the big political power brokers who make fortunes out of muddy waters.

While commenting on the *Train to Pakistan*, S. K. Dubey says that through the “sacrifice of Juggut Singh” the novelist tries to tell the readers that the “overpowering urge for violence” in men can be fought with the “force of love”. In fact, it is the power of love which drives the protagonist of the novel Jugga to “prevent the mass killing” by “laying down his own life”. It is in love that Jugga finds his actual identity as a human being and cultivates his inner strength of morality to take risk of his life for his love, Nooran. Jugga’s love for Nooran exceeds “from personal to universal” as in this process he prevents a massive genocide. Thus, the novelist attempts to convey the message that “love in men is as deeply rooted as the urge for violence”. But it is the love which produces strength and courage to face violence with fortitude (34-35).

Singh exhibits that political crisis engenders many ugly tendencies, however, he also stresses that the channel of power may produce limited creative energies to counter some negative forces, because a system of surveillance through barracks, prisons, hospitals and courts would not allow such an imaginative space to proliferate. Singh also expresses his protest against the communal hatred through the character of Jugga who would consider the colonial agents (including Indians)

basically as profiteers and opposed to his country. The novelist nevertheless projects Jugga's mother as an embodiment of compassionate values.

Khushwant Singh treats the aspects of love and sex as of immense value. Love and its complication hold a genuine interest for the writer. He has always something of sexuality to investigate in his works. This is not merely individually relevant; it is also meaningful in the larger sociocultural context. It can be observed that the power of genuine love far exceeds the power of the state and society. In the wider Indian reality sexually deviant persons are not socially nor historically deserted as ill and malignant. It is seen that love and sexuality is hotly played in the middle of a political crisis in the *Train to Pakistan*. The power of sexuality is shown as not bounded to consideration of religious difference or social segregation or other limiting boundaries. The work *Delhi: A Novel* relates the instinctual power of sexuality secretly lurking towards its opposite gender in the characters of both the anonymous narrator and Bhagmati, a eunuch. The nameless narrator who is represented by the use of the first-person narrator 'I' in the novel finds Bhagmati on the road at a moment of her sudden epileptic state. He rescues her and brings her to his home. Initially, it is his sympathy for Bhagmati which motivates him to help her, but gradually it is found that the narrator's kind-heartedness for the helpless one turns into his sensual inquisitiveness which brings in his mind the thought to explore the unique physical feature of the eunuch Bhagmati. In this context, it is to be noted that the human-psyche may shift from one state to the other very fast, and it may impact on human behaviour. It may be likely that the nameless narrator is inclined to associate with sensually deviant persons:

I had heard strange stories of their sex-life and the shapes of their genitals. Despite my curiosity to find out more about her, I asked her if she would like to be dropped home. (*Delhi* 35)

The aspect of repressed sexuality may also be considered as a reason behind the narrator's sexual appeal for Bhagmati. According to Sigmund Freud sexual repression is a psychological problem of mankind. He concluded that repression and constriction of sexual behaviour in youth would become manifest in adulthood. Nothing inspires murderous havoc in human beings more reliably than sexual

repression. Denied food, water, or freedom of movement, people will get desperate and some may lash out at what they perceive as the source of their problems, although in a weakened state. But if expression of sexuality is thwarted, the human psyche tends to grow twisted into grotesque, enraged perversions of desire. Unfortunately, the distorted rage resulting from sexual repression rarely takes the form of rebellion against the people and institutions behind the repression. Instead, the rage is generally directed at helpless victims who are sacrificed to the sick gods of guilt, shame, and ignorant pride. Ethel Spector Person observes that Freud's own "vision of sexuality" was not ultimately hopeful, and he did not reach the same conclusions as his pragmatic followers. While Freud supports "sexual reform", he was convinced of the inevitability as well as the "necessity of sexual repression" if man was to live as a social being. For Freud, there was an "inevitable conflict" between "instinctual life", by which he meant sexual life, and civilisation (24).

Among all the power-driven machineries, the society plays a very important role in dominating the personal relations. Renowned critic Frank Tannenbaum remarks that the society is not totally "malleable to the hand" of man. The society is controlled by a series of "irreducible institutions" from time to time; those both describe man and define the basic role he plays. Since his "most primitive state" man is found in a community. But he is not just a member of a community. The contrast between man and society is, like so many other intellectual edifices, a deceptive and, in fact, a mischievous simplification; for every society is always possessed of a number of institutions, organic to the society itself. "The family, the church and the state, to mention only the most obvious, are inherent in the pattern, inclusive in their claim upon the individual". Man is therefore not only a product of the society, rather, he is the very child of a "complex institutional system" that conditions his survival and "sets the stage for the drama of life" itself. These institutions, prevailing from the ages, marked themselves in almost "infinitely variable forms", but always fulfill the same role-the structuring of "incommensurable human experiences and needs", and thus give them a "visible role" in the culture (482).

Foucault's systemic surveillance and Louis Althusser's ideological state apparatus sound relevant in basic thought here. According to Althusser, man's

identity is constructed and his socio-political position is fixed by the ideological state apparatuses which include churches, different public and private 'schools', the family, the political system, including the different parties, the trade-union, the communications, namely, press, radio and television, and the cultural apparatuses including literature, arts, sports, etc. The state apparatus comprises two types of apparatuses:

i) The Repressive State Apparatus (the government, administration, army, police, and specialised repressive corps: gendarmerie, courts, judiciary, prisons, and so on). This apparatus is a single, centralised corps.

ii) The Ideological State Apparatuses (social formations, scholastic, religious, familial, political, associative, cultural, the news and information apparatus, and so on). These apparatuses are multiple, relatively independent, and unified as a distinct system by all or part of the State Ideology (140).

In *Delhi: A Novel* the anonymous Sikh narrator is obsessed with history, sex and tales. The first-person narrator is conscious about the social and moral restrictions. He admits through the narration that he is accustomed to bring unknown ladies to his apartment. But to keep himself undisclosed from the public gaze and thus to retain a façade of his social dignity intact he regularly pays monthly tips to the watchman Budh Singh (*Delhi* 39). Singh does not feel tired of unravelling dark passages of sexuality, nor feel ashamed of satirising the nexus between sexuality and human weakness. The *Delhi: A Novel* can also be regarded as a political narrative, which vividly describes the unfortunate and immediate repercussions following Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. Any society, a network of relations, exercises its power to position the people who again attempt to bend the dynamics of this network to private aggrandisements. The Delhi anti-Sikh riot exposes the utter terror of mindless destruction of life with communal hatred, breakdown of state law, socio-political divide:

The mob is composed of about fifty young boys armed with iron rods. Some have canisters of petrol in their hands. They surround the gurdwara and storm in. They drag out the Bhai and beat him up with their fists and rods. (*Delhi* 388)

In an atmosphere of utter chaos and lawlessness, late Indira Gandhi's political supporters were out to take revenge of the murder of their leader. But her assassin was one Sikh only. However, the vengeful enthusiasts undertook killing the innocent Sikhs at random and ransacked their properties. The author has demonstrated his voice of protest and disgust over the scene of horror and mindless genocide that followed in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's death:

They are killing every Sikh they see on the road, burning their taxis, trucks, scooters. Connaught Place is on fire. They are looting every Sikh shop, office, hotel. (*Delhi 387*)

Communal politics, bigotry, sly conversion tactics are not unfamiliar issues in India. It is unfortunate that the political system has not been able to dispense with immediate justice to the suffering families and victims. It is a fact that the penetrators of violence are political leaders who get shelter and remain at large unjustly free. This would also disclose how the ecosystem of politics, power and justice prospers in an unhealthy nexus.

Khushwant Singh makes a biting attack on the educational institutions managed by the Maulvis and their communal agenda during the Muslim period. At one Madrasa, the Maulvi Sahib gives a Hindu boy Musaddi Lal a Muslim name, Abdul, in order to protect him from being bullied by other Turkish as well as Hindu converts. They call him Abdullah though he is not declared a convert. Many of the Muslim boys try to persuade and convert him into the Muslim faith for his brighter prospects. Therefore, conversion by lure, profits and complicit institutional silence are not unknown in India:

My Muslim friends suggested that if I accepted conversion to Islam my prospects would be brighter; I could even aspire to become Kotwal of Mehrauli. And I would have no trouble in finding a wife from amongst the new converts. If I was lucky I might even get a widow or a divorcee of pure Turkish, Persian or Afgan stock. 'If you are Muslim,' said one fellow who was full of witticisms, 'you can have any woman you like. If you are up to it, you can have four at a time.' (*Delhi 51*)

This passage may give insight into the hidden agenda of lure and conversion. Singh could notice how institutions are clandestinely engaged in undemocratic and illegal practices. It is widely believed that a successful conversion or many such successes are divinely rewarded, and would likely ensure a quicker arrival of the converting agent in the heaven. The overstated and repeated secular ideals in a multi-religious country of India are not practically followed on the ground. The connection of religion, politics and poverty has been exploited by powerful agents of profits all the time. This is an effect of power relation what Foucault has been stating. This also exposes medieval mentality and orthodoxy of the Islamites.

Singh has his observant eyes revealing the rifts and shortcomings that afflict all social groups in India whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. Singh in this narrative highlights the social evil practice of early marriage during those bygone days: “We were married when I was nine and my wife, Ram Dulari, only seven” (*Delhi* 51). Singh’s protesting critique here discloses the abuse of power and passion associated with the means of money, religion and women. The Muslim bait for conversion and the implicit polygamous patterns of the Islamic society are satirically presented in the novel. One may imagine in another sense, how the Islamic society treats women abjectly as property. In spite of all temptations, a young Hindu Musaddi doesn’t get converted. He wants to bring back his wife Ram Dulari, but Ram Dulari’s parents refuse to send their daughter back, because there has been a rumour that their son-in-law’s parents had adopted the ways of the Muslim ‘maleecha’ (impurity) (*Delhi* 52). In the novel, Singh has exposed various irrational ways how particular sects have traditionally maintained their so-called purity or segregations from other groups or faiths, when the people have been subjected to misery and suffering. Whether it is segregation or any religious restriction, the matter basically empowers a certain class or sect of believers. Religion is a hugely influential factor to decide the social behaviour in India; and an individual is not truly independent to decide for himself his own way to reach the highest divine. The matter of divinity is not left to the individual’s care and free choice, but has been hotly debated and decided by every religious congregation, by every power block. Power exists and works in every place, as Foucault observes rightly. Power and

politics combine to energise the ulemas and other religious institutions who would otherwise publicly deny association with politics or political leaders. The materialists and communists would quickly add that religion works like opium for the people. But religion and faith has not departed from the earth yet; and this would prove that materialism has not answered every deep or imaginative urge of man.

Besides, the novelist has also satirised practices and beliefs based on racial discrimination:

It took me several weeks to realize that my wife did not intend to cohabit with me. She cooked her food on a separate hearth and ate out of utensils she had brought with her. For her I was an unclean, Muslim *maleecha*. (*Delhi* 53)

Besides, in this narrative Singh has brought both the powerful aspects of human kindness and destructive hatred showing the contradictory pulls of the human mind. In *Delhi: A Novel*, another motif of the novelist is to satirise and bring out facts, which are historically true about the Muslim rulers who helped to demolish the Hindu and Jain temples in the city out of their fanaticism: “The *ulema* exhort Your Majesty in the name of the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) to destroy temples and slay infidels to gain merit in the eyes of Allah” (*Delhi*56). This Sikh writer’s statement touching on matters of religious and political issues projects him to be non-partisan and neutral.

By portraying the characters of the ulemas, Singh seems to bring out the fact sarcastically that there are people who like the ulema leaders, depend on and blindly follow the religious texts without understanding the meaning or truth, and fight in the name of religion. It is through this mockery that the novelist conveys his disapproval of the blind religious faith and practices:

He unwrapped a copy of the *Quran*, touched it to his forehead and read out a passage. The crowd broke into a chorus of applause *Wah!Wah! Subhan Allah!*Few of them understood Arabic. Even fewer understood what the word meant when translated into Turki.(*Delhi* 56 - 57)

Khushwant Singh is outspoken about the unreasonably biased attitude of the religious preachers and leaders in Pakistan who ignore the people’s language and

teach religion by imported foreign language like Arabic or Turki. In this novel *Delhi: A Novel*, the entire social space that the novelist explores reveals not only a complex Indian situation, but also exposes the hidden politics and power groups that effect life at every level. The writer has duly satirised the difference between ignorant applause and genuine appreciation for Allah. One wonders if the Arabic is adopted by ulemas to keep the common man as ever-ignorant to further their own political power. The only reason for adopting Arabic is that the original *Quran* was written in that language. This least understood language incapacitates its follower who would require mediation of the mullah and ulema. And this is also a process by which the power relations are reactivated to continue in religious matters. As discourse mediates and produces knowledge and power, the text *Delhi: A Novel* by its focus on the ulema-Arabic nexus exposes that truth to a certain degree. The Arabic discourse more hides and mystifies than disseminates the truth for the common people.

The critic Sudhendu Shekhar remarks that for Khushwant Singh, man is rooted in his instinct of power, which is realised through passion and ends with pain. "Power and passion are the co-ordinates of history that characterise human evolution across the centuries in Singh's novels. Simultaneously they also betoken how history is amenable to the fallibility of man through his impulsive self" (119). The critic also remarks that the novelist has depicted Delhi's rulers having urges for greed, desire, and lust which testify an intricate dynamics of dishonesty, disloyalty, infidelity, ferocity, animosity and corruption. "The values of tolerance, co-existence, faith, non-violence, sacrifice, co-operation and fellow-feeling which have a convincing sway over the people at large, even if occasionally, are relegated to the background" (136).

It appears that Khushwant Singh the novelist has a weird insight into the role of power in shaping social relations and human dealings. The mode and function of power are not necessarily ennobling or positively empowering. Rather, the political, social and religious structures in India get exposed in their unholy nexus with each other. In the novel *Train to Pakistan* the two prime characters of Jugga and Nooran are found interested in their secret relationship centred on sexuality. They push their relationship to such an extent that, though undesired, Nooran becomes pregnant. The novel refers to the troublesome affair between Jugga, a Sikh young man and Nooran,

a Muslim girl. Each forgets the constraints of religion and wider social conventions of the time, and both continue their affair secretly to their life's contentment. They are equally unaware of the political turns in the country. So, the larger social context of diverse religious complications is ignored by both. The novel brings out the sad turn of events in the wake of India-Pakistan division, so much so that the lovers are separated, and their love's paradise is shattered. Even the novel cryptically reveals how religion comes as a stumbling block on their way. The writer does not hesitate to describe the young lovers' passion by physical imagery and corporeal movements:

Juggut Singh's caresses became lustful. His hand strayed from the girl's face to her breasts and her waist. She caught it and put it back on her face. His breathing became slow and sensuous. His hand wandered again and brushed against her breasts as if by mistake. (*Train14*)

The lovers' act of love, as described in the pages of the novel, will testify to the fact that Khushwant Singh celebrates the joy of life in every occasion. He appears to privilege natural, genuine human relationships over conventional religious beliefs. In other words, love is more meaningful than a limiting faith. However, his novel explores that practically such a relationship is a danger to the existing differential system of every religion, which protects its distinct borders by disempowering its followers. Thus religious institute plays its part in power relations.

In most of Khushwant Singh's books, sexuality and power corridors are having shady links. In a conservative socio-religious set-up, the natural love between the Sikh Jugga and the Muslim girl Nooran is not permitted to bloom in the novel *Train to Pakistan*. In other words, as Foucault holds, sexuality is controlled by the institutions of power. It is to be enjoyed by those in authorities and in control of social relations. This is because sexuality is perceived as a threat to the institutional power which is self-protective. What is to be appreciated in Singh's novels is his inescapable knack for fun and humour. His characteristic turns to humour relieve the dark and cynical environment of sordid and immoral relations. He humorously raises his accusing fingers at the spurious religious tricks, power politics, deception and the societal constraints predominant in the Indian society which is multi-religious and

multi-cultural. While narrating an incident between the Magistrate Hukum Chand and Haseena, the Muslim prostitute girl, Khushwant Singh has shown how sexual thirst can make a man emotional and immoral:

The thought that she was perhaps younger than his own daughter flashed across his mind. He drowned it quickly with another whisky. Life was like that. You took it as it came, shorn of silly conventions and values which deserved only lip worship. She wanted his money, and he ... well. (*Train* 30)

The passage has enough indication that random or promiscuous sexuality is not the only goal in everybody's life. Some have other, more powerful object, i.e., money and recognition to obtain. Here, in his writing Singh emphasises that life itself is more valuable than money, sex and faith. In the relationship between Jugga and Nooran, the novelist celebrates life and its instinct, and intends to project life as the primary fact to be held as the highest value un-interfered by society or politics; but no society ensures this all the time.

It is justifiable to say that in power relations, Khushwant Singh has employed satire as a tool of exposure and a weapon of moral authority. To him, exercise of power is interventionist and disciplinary. It is only love between two loving persons which does not succumb to power relations. The case of youngsters' love in the village Mano Majra cannot be said to be empowered by all agencies and institutions, but love also proves that power does not issue from a specific origin or agency.

In the novel *Train to Pakistan* it is found that the police in India are habitual in making trouble rather than solving problems all the time. In the name of help to the common people, sometimes they appear as a nightmare. Police is unjust in the case of Jugga. Without any proper evidence they put him behind the bar. Absence of social justice thrusts people into the world of crime. Iqbal also becomes a victim of police. He is made naked to check whether he is a Muslim, and arrested for no offence. In fact, he did not have to say what Iqbal he was. "He could be a Muslim, Iqbal Mohammad. He could be a Hindu, Iqbal Chand or a Sikh, Iqbal Singh. It was one of the few names common to the three communities" (*Train* 38).

In this description Singh's commendation for the common basis of men's life is apparent. To him religious identification or communal tag is divisive, stereotypical and unjust. But in the socio-political conduct of power relations, the human life gets tagged and has to bear with naming tags.

Khushwant Singh tirelessly exposes the socio-political and religious-social connection of power relations and tries to destabilise sexual-religious knots in the society. Hukum Chand comes to know that Haseena would also be in the same train that would carry the Muslim refugees from Chundunnugger camp to Pakistan. It is in this critical moment that Jugga and Iqbal are discharged from police custody. But after reaching the village Jugga finds that Nooran has already been taken to the refugee camp and that she would also be travelling in the same train to Pakistan. He also comes to know about the conspiracy of the Hindu nationalists to take revenge on the Muslims on their way to Pakistan in the form of a massive genocide. To prevent the killing, Jugga climbs the steel spans of the bridge and starts slashing the rope with "a small kirpan". Though he is fired by the Hindu leader, he sticks it to the rope with his hands and cuts it into pieces. The engine of the incoming train "was almost on him". Thus, "the train went over him and went on to Pakistan" (*Train*190). This sacrifice of Jugga proves that love can reach the level higher than the conspiracies or politics of power. He rises up to the position of a sacrificial hero.

The novel *Train to Pakistan* certainly dramatises the tragedy of life, especially the broken relationship of Jugga and Nooran. What more to acknowledge is the socio-political situation which remains as the powerful mechanism to drive and force individuals to face their unexpected destinies. It is the Indian society which is politically broken into two separate identities, and hence, such a society cannot nurture wholesome psyches, unified personalities, or sane individualities. A divided India, therefore, has its corresponding impact on its citizens. From this perspective, Foucault's concept of power relations within a complicated conduit seems relevant to reading Khushwant Singh's novel which captures every activity as a product out of a larger structure or system.

Bruce Curtis remarks that in the art of government, then, governing ceased to be "seen as existing on the external boundaries" of the state; it was inside the state,

inside society. And Foucault emphasises that these arts presented “governing as practices” in continuity from the individual’s “government of itself”, through the father’s government of the household, to the prince’s government of the state. The “art of government” sought to introduce economy, conceived as right management, initially a concept that applied to household government, into political practice (522).

In the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Buta Singh thanks the British Government for his position as being a Magistrate, his loyalty to his job ultimately turns into flattery. He sends his wife Sabhrai to meet his son in the jail. The purpose of meeting Sher is to convince him to disclose the names of his fellow activists, so that the act of disclosure would set him free from the imprisonment. Sabhrai asks her husband to tell her what she is “to say to Sher Singh about the confession” (*Nightingale* 223). This incident shows the dark dealings on the power corridors. It is the institutional power which has punished Sher. It is the same power which is capable to award him a free life under certain conditions. Thus, power relations are exhibited by the novelist as always dynamic and beyond easy blame or praise that conventions attempt or abuse.

In *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Khushwant Singh describes the role of different types of power, in the form of patriotism on the one hand and the colonial rule on the other. Here, the writer satirises the selfishness and the lust for power and position as found in the character of Buta Singh. Buta Singh, a magistrate by profession, represents those Indians who exhibit extreme flattery. When his son Sher is arrested in an allegation of having acquaintance with the anti-British extremists, Buta boasts and tries to convince Mr John Taylor, Deputy Commissioner of the District by saying that his son “may hobnob with the Nationalists but he will have to be loyal to the British as long as Buta Singh lives.” Besides, Buta also expresses a grim warning that he will “disown him” otherwise. His son can do “what he likes” only after Buta Singh is dead (*Nightingale* 201).

But, his son, Sher is the leader of a gang of well-armed but aimless nationalists who wield their weapons, by futile demonstrations. They shoot rare birds without reason. In one occasion in the novel, it is found that Sher comes back home

and hands the shotgun to the servant boy Mundoo and goes indoors and sits down to dinner with his wife, sister and mother. When Champak, his wife asks him whether he has got anything today, he replies “no”. Though he and his friends thought to get a pigeon or two, but they “did not come across any”. Hearing this, his mother Sabhrai says that she is glad to know this because she does not like “this business of killing poor, harmless birds” (*Nightingale* 15). Finally, to exhibit their strength, they murder the village headman, who has been blackmailing Sher:

Sher Singh stepped back and fired. The headman bent over with a loud ‘Hai.’ His hand moved to his gun. The boys behind him saw and gave warning. Madan fired a second shot. The headman let out another loud ‘Hai,’ sagged down on his knees and slowly stretched himself on the path. (*Nightingale* 189-90).

This discourse full of codes and secret keys does indicate that the discourse empowers its speakers and disempowers those who do not belong to the particular power or pressure group. In spite of knowing the truth, Mr. John Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner of the district fails to prove Sher’s guilt and sets him free ultimately.

Sabhrai being mother considers her son as the costliest thing in this world. She finds no other way except approaching her religious Guru for mercy to direct the proper way which she can show to her son. It is found that Sabhrai is by nature one enjoying power of truth and spirituality. Her overnight prayer at the gurudwara enables her to reach a sound decision. The next morning, she tells her son that during her meditation her Guru has said that her son has already done wrong. But if he discloses the names of his fellow activists, he would be doing greater wrong. He is no longer to be regarded as a Sikh. She also says that eventually she is not ready “to see his face again” for turning out as a false Sikh (*Nightingale* 234). Khushwant Singh himself a Sikh may have portrayed Sabhrai’s character ideally. But more important to note here is how the power of faith has moved her to stand up as a morally brave Sikh mother.

Michel Foucault’s concept of spirituality is context-free and can be used to explain Singh’s idea here. In various interviews and essays, Foucault denotes increasingly to the “care of the self as a spiritual undertaking and a key to spiritual

life.” And this makes the sense that “ethics can be considered as one part of human life” involving our “duties and responsibilities to self and others.” But spirituality confirms the “wholeness of each human existence”—not just our ethical behaviour, but the “commitment of our whole being to a higher reality or truth” and this is what efforts Foucault’s explanation of the care of the self. Foucault tends to combine the “ethical” and the “spiritual,” and the “care of the self”, becomes the point at which both of these merges (White 500-1). Singh’s spirituality may be close to Sabhrai’s practice.

As these three characters are analysed, the presence of different types of power relations is found. While Buta Singh feels controlled by fear of authority with a desire for self-fulfilment and ambition to rise higher in position; Sher, his son is motivated by the passion of patriotism having a dream to have a free nation; Sabhrai plays the role of an ideal mother by showing her son the way of truthfulness and true friendship in the name of God.

Singh mostly shows his ideological reservation on alleged disbelief in orthodox conventionality. But the character of Sabhrai is a portrait apart. Further, one can observe how within the same social setup of Punjabi life, Haseena in *Train to Pakistan* earns money in the form of a prostitute at the cost of her self-dignity, whereas, Sabhrai in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is ready to sacrifice her son for the greater national cause. Jugga’s mother is of course, a possessive character and readily protects her son by making pretexts. However, the society which these two women, namely, Haseena and Sabhrai belong to is the same in sociological terms. Their diverse tendencies and individual psyches would exemplify the fact that they derive the power of negotiation, the power of selfless sacrifice from a socio-political structure that is more complex than what appears on the surface, because many forces play or interact within it.

Ivan Strenski observes that for the study of religion, Foucault’s “Clausewitzianism” has definite consequences. Religion becomes “the most finely tuned examples of power structures,” “patterns of force” which control human lives and command how they are to be conducted. Religion, in other words, is always a “political manifestation.” Besides, religious studies deploy the “hegemonic power of

language and conceptualization” over others by claiming what they do is “religion”. Further, those institutions identified as “religious,” must also be seen as parts of “strategies of power and domination” (346-47). But Sabhrai’s simple faith and prayer in practice reveals how organised religion can be politically powerful to regulate human life as well as society.

The power of faith in a Sikh mother points also to this interactive process. The usual ironic tone of the writer is subdued with respect to Sabhrai; rather her earnest passion in traditional faith might have surprised the writer who is known for his bitter criticism of many such conventions. Therefore, individualities are not superfluous products, but they may be powerful and meaningful entities to shine only in social interaction. Therefore, the production of ideology, just as the product of power relations has the similar appeal to Michel Foucault as to Khushwant Singh equally. In other words, there can exist no independent source of power, just as no independent individual can exist outside a network of social relations.

The power relations are in intricate interactions; one set of relations is circuitously dealing with the other set of relations. The political power in the hands of colonial rulers, the power of office or authority and the power of personal relations motivated by intimate emotions are present in every socio-political situation. This is also to recognise that simultaneously another set of forces opposed to exploitive modes also arises. In a social space of conflicting interests and constraints that India of the time presents, the novelist uses his sardonic tools.

Khushwant Singh is found in a sarcastic mode while portraying the character like Buta Singh who performs a dual role according to his need and future safety. He would like to call Buta Singh a “double-faced” man. His loyalty towards the British Raj and his own people changes frequently. When he is with English men, he shows his loyalty to the British Government. Buta also tries to protect his loyalty to the colonial government as he says, “At my age, I cannot change”. But, amidst the countrymen, Buta is seen a little critical of the colonialism. Buta let his son to mingle with the nationalists and does not object to his political activities. He explains to Taylor his son as ‘of your way of thinking’. By many people, Buta is described as

“double-faced” (*Nightingale* 26). On the other hand, his wife Sabhrai, the mother figure in this novel bears no double standards.

While commenting on the novel and especially on the characters of Buta and his son Sher, Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi says that in the novel John Taylor regards both father and son as muddle headed. Their minds are in a confused state. When the English are around Buta Singh, he says that English are his “mai-bap” or “father mother”. But when he is with the Indians, he is somewhat critical of the English ways. He does not approve of his son’s attitude towards the British but at the same time he does not mind his son meeting the nationalist groups because he sees in his son a “future political figure”. Devi also says that “Sher Singh is as much of a muddle as his father”. He is a member of a secret organisation who promises to attack and kill the British armies. But he is not “as courageous and bold in action as he is in words”. He fails to choose between the two options of secured life ensured by his father in one hand and the field of revolution which is full of risk and trouble on the other. He is so scared that he cannot kill even a small bird. But, one of the most amusing things about Sher’s confusion is his naming of his dog. He has named his dog Dyer. He does so because it is the most hated name. In the days of India’s freedom movement, General Dyer fired on an unarmed crowd of Indians at Jalianwalabag and killed several hundred of men and women. In giving the dog that name he seems to express his hatred for the British General. But apparently “he seems to love the dog” more than anything else (97-99).

It is little difficult to fully agree with Devi’s observation. Buta Singh’s role can be interpreted as one usually generated in postcolonial situation. His complicity in his son’s anti-British activity may be a conscious or repressed willingness, though not professionally promoting or exhibitionist.

In the novel, though India is all set politically to be free for official purposes, it is hard to say that the colonised mind has suddenly redeemed itself of all appropriated values which are self-demeaning complexes nourished under the colonial regime. Buta Singh is a replica of that hybridised culture. To survive in a hostile environment, it may be a strategy for the average intelligent person to mimic the master. Never the less, here, hybridity which generates servility reflects to some

degree why he speaks ill of his British authorities at their absence. Rather than being a simple muddle headed, this may be illustrative of the character's unconscious which reveals his resentful and long suppressed self beneath the powerful master. Under the prevailing conditions, it may be imagined that part of his repressed self finds relief in his indirect support to his son's vengeful activities organised against the alien rulers. Further, his son belongs to a different era which is suffused with war cries for freedom and national pride. Secondly, his naming of the dog as Dyer may be read as a deprived self's symbolic mastery over the thankless master of authority and power. On the whole, this complicated network of colonial master, Buta and his son Sher's interactions reveals dynamic power relations. It may be an illustration of the discourse, how this language reveals both hatred and love at once. Ideologically the young Sikh here is opposed to foreign rulers; his radical nationalism is at times subjected to ironic criticism by the novelist.

In the novel *The Company of Women* greed plays a powerful role in the characters of Mohan Kumar and his father. They built up marital relation with a superior family richer than theirs in their dream to become rich by receiving dowry from the bride's house. This greedy dream misleads them:

Enquiries from parents of unmarried girls followed. He and his father were invited to tea, introduced to nubile girls, tempted with large dowries and offers of partnerships in business. Even after all these years Mohan was amazed at how easily he had allowed himself to be offered for sale, finally agreeing to marry. (*Company* 4)

Here the novelist has critically exposed this marriage which is a marriage of convenience and which shows moral emptiness and lust for wealth. The dream to become rich overnight and thus to enjoy a luxurious life by receiving dowry from the bride's house comes into reality and material fulfilment for a certain period of time. But the dream vanishes within a very short period and ends in the separation of the couple. In other crucial aspect of this immoral and ill-gotten wealth is to disclose the social malign at large. Under colonial exploitations, the impoverished subject dreams of better times to realise by easy gain of money. But it is indefensibly ironic that one has to steal from one's own people.

In the novel *Burial at Sea* the power of sexuality and social principle of morality are traceable in their interaction. But the ultimate role is played by the forces of social restriction which brings separation between Victor Jai Bhagwan, the protagonist and the tantric woman Ma Durgeshwari. In the story Victor Jai Bhagwan falls in love of a tantric woman and the relationship becomes so close that Durgeshwari becomes pregnant. But they want to remain socially respectable by maintaining some secrecy and disguise. Victor neither feels any interest in that baby nor does Durgeshwari dare to give birth to the child in open society. Hence, she chooses a secret place to give birth to the child, lest she would lose her social dignity. But Durgeshwari's moral sense moves her to disclose the issue confidentially to Bhararti, daughter of Victor, a twenty-one year old girl and thus to lighten her mental burden of the sin of illegitimate maternity. Victor, however, does not like to leave Durgeshwari. The absence of wife in life as she died earlier brings the yearning for another woman in his mind; he falls in love with Durgeshwari. On the other hand Durgeshwari, being a young woman cherishes for the company of the opposite gender as she had been banished by her husband. When both the minds meet, the result is the development of two year old relationship and an illegitimate pregnancy:

She took her time telling him the complete truth. She was silent for several minutes, then said, 'I am pregnant. It is your child.' Because she did not look up, she did not see the shock and confusion on Victor's face. (*Burial*140)

Another example of sexuality can be found in the past life of Victor Jai Bahgwan. He lost his purity at the age of fourteen years to a girl called Jenny in London. Here is the description:

Victor got into his pajamas. He had no covering, so he decided to keep the gas fire going. Jenny stripped herself naked, tossed her clothes on top of the bed and said, 'If you feel cold, join me in the bed. (*Burial*40)

At the end of the novel there is a collision in between the sexuality and the social principle which results in the end of the relationship of Victor and Durgeshwari and also brings the catastrophic end of the protagonist Victor. The illegal relationship between Victor and Durgeshwari is not accepted by the society

and there is a lot of rumour. During the labour troubles at the mill in Bombay, the damning reference to the relation between Victor and Durgeshwari is made public by the Union leader through his speech. As a result, there is a tussle between Victor and the Union leader. The incident gives birth to the embarrassment among the mill workers. Someone from the crowd shouts that Durgeshwari is an evil influence, she will destroy Victor. "She is evil; she will destroy you" (*Burial* 133 - 34). The Foucauldian notion of power relations is found through the circuit of all industrial, religious and political forces that make the social life complex and the meaning of survival more material and amoral.

Singh's novel has similar awareness of the combination of factors and forces that ultimately affect life's ordinary activities. In a society which customarily approves or legitimates the manner of expending money and that of enjoying sex, Victor Jai Bhagwan and Ma Durgeshwari are found to be unwholesome influences as power, i.e., centre of business and tantra associated respectively with wealth and knowledge of the body mystique.

After having suffered a big humiliation by the Mill workers for having relation with Durgeshwari, Victor Jai Bhagwan dies a tragic death finally. Victor is "a few yards from the Gate way" when a series of bullets shot at the same time. People start running in all directions, falling on each other. In the meantime, the car that brought the shooters to the crime scene flies away without giving chance to anybody "to stop it or taking down" its number. By the time the chauffer is able to get to his master, Victor is "drenched in his own blood" and fallen dead (*Burial* 146).

Through the fiction *Burial at Sea* Singh tries to blow out at the fake religious practises, political hypocrisy and also the social prohibition severely present in the minds of innocent people. The novel starts with a brilliant young Business man Victor Jai Bhagwan who after his returning from England expresses his determination to bring the benefits of modern industry to India. Within a few years of Independence, he becomes India's famous industrialist. His determination to become a successful businessman plays the prime role for his success: "Victor and his vision of progress were taking India by storm. In barely five years he had set up mills in a fourth of the country" (*Burial* 61). In this novel Singh has shown how the

aura of faith and the lure of money in unison establish power relations and lead to unexpected ending.

When people grow financially and socially strong, they bring many changes in their attitude forgetting their past life. Singh, in this regard ridicules the character of Nair. His attitude towards Victor changes completely. Moreover, even his principles undergo tremendous change. In the initial stage Nair is found as a character that gives much importance to India and its people and opposes the British. He even seems to be a person not much interested in self-development. But after having been elected to Parliament as a Congress candidate, he becomes financially strong and tries to dominate Victor and Bharati, Victor's daughter. He becomes jealous, wants to become number one in the companies of Victor and switches over to a western style of life. Nair becomes annoyed seeing Victor busy with his new friends and rebukes him for being so, for which Victor replies: "The kind of education we had can be very limiting. You shouldn't have a closed mind. You've become a black Englishman" (*Burial* 114). Not only that, when Bharati scolds Nair she says, "Watch your mouth, Nair," she snapped. Swamiji's a wonderful yoga teacher and the most wonderful man I have met. You won't understand him because he speaks only Hindi, India's national language, I might remind you. You can't say a single sentence in Hindi. But for the blind support our mill workers gave you, you would not have got into the lavatory of the Parliament House Annexe" (*Burial* 115). Nair exhibits power politics and the prosperous politician's dislike for the Indians. In Singh's narrative one often comes to find a sense of conflict between nationalism and political debouchment from the nationality.

The novelist has his scathing comments made on the manners of men including the law makers who belittle their people and enjoy the power of politics. Even their ignorance of the language of the land is ridiculed severely. At the same time the novel has made an ironic dig at the Indian workers and voters for their blind support to undeserving persons as politicians on the basis of caste, faith, linguistic and regional affiliations.

In the novel *Burial at Sea* the novelist portrays Nair as a power-crazy person. As a politician Nair has mastered the coloniser's policy of divide and rule. Hence, he

wilfully instigates the trade union workers to rise against Victor, the mill owner. He succeeds largely and Victor's dream of developing the economy of the society is fallen apart. The irony of the situation is that the workers turn jobless, but persons like Nair do not lose anything, since, in politics, the opportunity to power is never closed. In India and worldwide, union strikes in industrial establishments are common phenomena, which reflect the ceaseless conflict between opposed ideologies, both capitalism and communism and the like. In this context, Victor's workers are found to be manipulated by politician Nair. Therefore, in such a social space of vested interests and contestations, it is hard to pin point the exact source of power, which vindicates Foucault's power relations. The point is not power is characteristically negative or positive for all times. As Foucault holds, power circulates and functions in all situations, relations and complex nexus, it does not reside in a single arm of authority. Singh's novels show that society is a complex network of interactions and interrelationships, and life's movement is always possible in this complicated social space. When the matter comes glaringly to an immoral end, Singh does not spare a moment criticising and castigating the involved persons as unhealthy forces and influences in the society.

While narrating the power of trade unionism in the industrial sector, Khushwant Singh satirises the trade unions for the political hobnobbing and misconduct. It is an undeniable fact that trade unions play a pivotal role for the welfare of the workers. So the union should fight for a genuine cause. If a capitalistic organisation does not meet the demands of the workers, there is need for the intervention of the trade union. But if the same trade union goes on strike on irrelevant issues, its reputation is doubted, for it is usually manipulated by the powerful persons in politics. In the text *Burial at Sea* it is clear that the trade union leader is a man supported by Nair. It is due to Nair's sly persistence that the union leader provokes the workers to a strike.

Mohan Kumar in *The Company of Women* and Durgeshwari in *Burial at Sea* may be understood as denizens signifying the presence of all-powerful social control or gaze. Michel Foucault's concept of "panopticon"² could be relevant to understand the aforementioned characters in the selected texts. In Foucault's judgment the

panopticon is a “magnificent machine” not only for “subjection” but also for “self-subjection”. By persuading in inmates an awareness of their “own constant visibility”, the panopticon compelled them to structure their own behaviour consistent with the power mechanism. In *The Company of Women*, Mohan Kumar, in his life time goes on many illegal sensual affairs, but secretly to hide his illegal sexual relations from the society and thus to retain his social dignity. He commits suicide in the long run by consuming thirty sleeping pills in a day after coming to know that he has developed AIDS, an incurable disease. He has very much thought for his social dignity and does not like to be labelled as an AIDS victim in the society. In *Burial at Sea* too, Durgeshwari decides to give birth to her child in a hidden place at South to save her dignity from getting ruined with the blame of illegitimate maternity. Here the power of social machinery is found in dynamic role in monitoring the activities of all the characters in both the novels.

The play of visibility enabled by spatial arrangements and lighting served to make inmates the very “conduits of the power mechanism” embodied in the Panopticon. As Foucault clarified that whenever one is dealing with a “multiplicity of individuals” on which a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic scheme may be used. Foucault detailed all of the panoptic features of the architecture of the asylum in the early nineteenth century. This cross-institutional takeover of panoptic architectural dispositions intensified the spread of disciplinary power (Hoffman 32-33).

In conclusion, this can be said that through his writing Khushwant Singh has displayed his sufficient awareness of social milieu and different forms of power active always in complicated nexus that dynamically affect the human life.

Notes

1. European Marxists like Althusser, Gramsci and Poulantaz while referring to ‘structural’ aspects of late capitalism have drawn attention to the role of the state apparatus with special reference to the role of state bureaucracies. Poulantaz claims that ‘the political, economic and ideological structures have

a relative autonomy' of social classes and there is a struggle and conflict among the fractions of the classes, 'within the power bloc' and the state in such a situation plays a 'cohesive role'. Clashes are between competitive versus monopoly fractions, finance versus industrial divisions and international versus local bourgeoisie and state has to play a consistent and assimilating role in such a situation.

Source: Bhambhri. C. P. "New Economic Policy: Indian State and Bureaucracy." *Social Scientist*, Vol. 24, No. 1/3 (Jan. - Mar., 1996), p.50. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3520118.

2. For 220 years the Panopticon has stood as the concrete symbol of total surveillance, discipline, and control. Always it has been the "utopian dream" as well as a hellish nightmare. Its initial, architectural manifestation was promoted heavily in the late 1700s. Its pure form disappeared after a few decades but left an "indelible mark on social practice and discourse". Since the mid-1970s, scholars of surveillance studies have insisted that the Panopticon should be taken not literally but as a "metaphor for surveillance" of all types, with emphasis on power relationships.

Source: Dobson, Jerome E. and Peter F. "The Panopticon's Changing Geography." *Fisher. Geographical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3, Geosurveillance (Jul., 2007), p. 307. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30034174.

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Chapter – III

Aspects of Sexuality in the Selected Texts

Over a career of long six decades, Khushwant Singh with his honest and bold exploration of human sexuality has tried to explore the different problems of sexual relations, such as, repression, infidelity and ethics in marriage in addition to social impingements. This chapter intends to focus on the different aspects of sexuality portrayed by Khushwant Singh in the selected texts for the study. The issues of society involving sexuality like premarital pregnancy, repression of desire, religious restriction, social conditioning and policing, acceptance of the body in sex, sexual perversion, sexual disease, drugs and uninhibited sexual aggrandisements are being creatively reflected in Singh's works. However, sexuality as socially admirable practice or aesthetically ennobling enhancement has not been realised in Khushwant Singh. Singh has been preoccupied with examining playfulness and clandestine practices in the sex life. But the socially and morally healthy dimensions in sexuality are not being equally explored. It seems that Singh has focussed on sexuality from a materialistic and practical viewpoint of life. Deliberation of sexual desire and simultaneously its criticism are generally crucial aspects of his novels.

John Casperson perceives the importance of sexuality and its social gaze for power management of people. In his book *What If God Has a Vagina? Why eve took the Rap* shows sexuality as a power relation is his main objective. He states:

Nothing inspires murderous mayhem in human beings more reliably than sexual repression. Denied food, water, or freedom of movement, people may get desperate and some may go for what they perceive as the source of their problems. But if expression of sexuality is hampered, the human psyche inclines to grow perverted into grotesque, enraged perversions of desire.(74)

Repression and perversion as odd forms of sexuality under the social gaze of power are Foucault's contentions. Singh as a socially aware critic seems to creatively expose human weaknesses and hidden sexual indulgences, when no other writers of his time were inclined specially to do this. Different critics have expressed their different views on Khushwant Singh's handling of sexuality in his writings. Pramod

Kumar Singh in his book *Indian Fiction in English* comments that Khushwant Singh is deeply aware of various social evils, oddities and eccentricities of society. He ironically highlights how minor girls are sexually exploited by relatives against sound social norms. Moly Gomes in *The Company of Women* recalls how she had been sexually abused by her uncle, who was nearly twenty years older than her (7). S. K. Dubey comments that Khushwant Singh “brings in sex as a professional writer” to draw the attention of his readers. Though, he is not elaborative on his characters in the texts, but his sex scenes are fully elaborative (87). Dubey also observes that in *Delhi: A Novel* Singh openly deals with all kinds of obstinacies in all its “horrificing nakedness” and “filthy epithets” which make the “conscience of the readers itch” (100). In “Khushwant Singh: A Critical Study of his Works”, critics Birendra Sinha and Dinesh Mishra write that “Khushwant Singh is not a bore” and people of all ages “feel at home with him”. To Singh, a frank discussion about sex is not offensive. Rather, discussions about sex are integral parts of his plot. This is his creative frankness, which unethically sticks a label of “dirty old man” to him (215). According to R.K Dhawan, to Khushwant Singh “a favourite subject” in his writing is “love and sex”, which “dealt at length” with the “emotions of love and passion” (15).

Human sexuality refers to the capacity of a man or a woman to have sensual practices as well as responses. A person’s sexual expedition can be affected by his sexual interest and attraction for another person belonging to the opposite gender in the normal cases. In an answer to the question “what is sexuality?” Joseph Bristow in his book *Sexuality* says that the term ‘sex’ is also ambiguous in meaning. Sex refers not only to “sexual activity”, but also marks the “distinction between male and female anatomy”. Bristow further suggests that it would be wise to think twice about the ways in which sexuality might be implicated in these distinct frameworks of understanding. Is sexuality supposed to be termed as “sexual desire”? Or does it refer instead to “one’s sexed being”? If we find ourselves with the affirmative answer to both the enquiries then sexuality would appear to hold ideas about “pleasure and physiology, fantasy and anatomy”. In this way, sexuality appears as a

term that defines both internal and external phenomenon including both the realm of the mind and the material world (1).

Rishi Vatsayana's *Kamasutra* is the earliest book on sex and erotic love that has come to us in India from the third century AD. The book teaches about sexual satisfaction with moderation of the process to enjoy life. But one has not to forget the three principles of life, which are spelled out as Dharma, Artha, and Kama (17). "Now when a courtesan finds that her lover's disposition towards her is changing, she should get possession of all his best things before he becomes aware of her intentions, and allow a supposed creditor to take them away forcibly from her in satisfaction of some pretended debt. After this, if the lover is rich, and has always behaved well towards her, she should ever treat him with respect; but if he is poor and destitute, she should get rid of him as if she had never been acquainted with him in any way before" (150).

H.C. Ganguli observes that the concern how sexuality can be an important aspect in the contemporary society, there are many debatable but unsolved issues. One important issue is the relation between religion and contraception. Religion should have its say in the "sex life of people", as it has done in the past. On the other hand, the family planning movement in India affects sexual attitudes and practices of people in an intense though not yet well-understood manner. An examination of the "two major influences of religion and the family planning movement" in their mutual cooperation is thus appropriate here and desirable. Side by side, "sexual norms and mores" are changing all over the world and these are gradually affecting the Indian life, particularly in the urban centres and for the young people. The changing "sexual norms and perception of sex roles" also overlay the current "Indian feminist movement" concerned with the role and position of women in India (VI).

In this chapter Singh's major works are taken for investigation into perspectives of sexuality. Singh's first work of fiction the *Train to Pakistan* concentrates on two major themes: it deals with the village Mano Majra and the events which describe the partition of India into two nations, and its effects on the village Mano Majra situated in Punjab. The plot of the novel begins and ends with Mano Majra, which is at the centre of the novel at the same time. Singh also portrays

a love story in the novel. There is love affair between Jugga a Sikh boy and Nooran a Muslim girl of the village. The two themes of love and partition run simultaneously and overlap the narrative. In the climax of the novel the triumph of love is manifested as Jugga sacrifices his own life to save his beloved Nooran who is also one of the Muslims evacuated from their native land, on their way to an imagined and unfamiliar landscape of Pakistan by a train going from India.

In *Train to Pakistan*, sexuality plays a big role. In a conservative socio-religious set-up, the natural love between the Sikh boy Jugga and the Muslim girl Nooran is not permitted to bloom. To recall, as Foucault holds, sexuality is controlled by institutions for power to be enjoyed by those in authorities and in control of social relations as found in the book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*:

It is not that the- beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies. (217)

This is because sexuality is perceived as a threat to the institutional power which is self-protective. What is to be appreciated in Khushwant Singh's novels is his inescapable knack for fun and humour. His characteristic turns to humour relieve the dark and cynical environment of sordid and immoral relations. He humorously raises his accusing fingers at the spurious religious tricks, power politics, deception and the societal constraints predominant in the Indian society which is multi-religious and multi-cultural. While narrating an incident between the Magistrate Hukum Chand and the Haseena, the Muslim prostitute girl, Khushwant Singh has shown how sexual thirst can make a man emotionally immoral:

The thought that she was perhaps younger than his own daughter flashed across his mind. He drowned it quickly with another whisky. Life was like that. You took it as it came, shorn of silly conventions and values which deserved only lip worship. She wanted his money, and he ... well. (*Train* 30)

The narrative hints at the question of repressed sexuality¹. Hukum Chand's sexuality lay dormant and the body of Haseena functions as an instrument for the

satisfaction of repressed sexuality. Hukum Chand's repressed sexuality thus finds its fulfilment in the person of Haseena. On the other hand, the passage has enough indication that sexuality is not the only goal in everybody's life. Some have other, more powerful object, i.e., money to obtain for living life. Here, in this discourse, Singh indicated that life itself is more valuable than silly conventions, more important than money, sex and faith. Khushwant Singh has portrayed man's multidimensional mind. This juxtaposition is further discerned in other ways. While the text looks at how the division of the country led to blood sheds on both sides, then there are instances where characters seek to prevent further fragmentation of the poisonous discourse. The novelist informs the readers through Iqbal that "Criminals are not born. They are made by hunger, want and injustice" (*Train* 45). It is in this that characters like Sikh priest Meet Singh and the reformist Iqbal Singh seek to urgently stop communitarian violence on both sides of the divided nation. Jugga is the manifestation of that understanding or tolerant world view that Meet Singh and Iqbal Singh propose. The text not only looks at the untold stories of sexual neglect, injustice and political mismanagement in India in the wake of partition, but also simultaneously how people stand to fight against all disorders. How sexual relations are being powerfully controlled by a society with its politics, custom, religion, and group identity may be realised in Singh here. Singh seems to suggest that love is to flourish at all costs across divisions of caste, religion, and other constraints.

In *Delhi: A Novel* the role of sexuality is characterised by both the characters of the first person narrator without name and Bhagmati. The narrator finds Bhagmati, a hijda on the road in her epileptic state. The narrator rescues Bhagmati and brings her to his home primarily on the humanitarian ground, but he is pricked with a sensual inclination to explore the physical feature of a third gender person. In the text, Singh has worked out a love twist. In the novel the history of Delhi is narrated by an old Sikh, named Mr. Singh who finds Bhagmati and Delhi typically same. The narration shares the old Sikh's passionate craving for the duo: "As I have said before I have two passions in my life; my city Delhi and Bhagmati. They have two things in common: they are lots of fun. And they are sterile." (*Delhi* 30).

Besides, the novelist highlights the sexual abuse of the 'hijdas' by different people; some interested persons enjoy them like a female and some others like a male:

When men came to expend their lust on 'hijdas'—it is surprising how many prefer them to women—Bhagmati got more patrons than anyone else in her troupe. She could give herself as a woman; she could give herself as a boy. She also discovered that some men preferred to be treated as women. (*Delhi* 30)

Singh has reflected something miserable about the hijda's situation. A hijda is considered as a sexual object who is exploited by the old and young, the potent and impotent, homosexuals, sadists and masochists, but the hijda is always an object of discrimination, and remains without social recognition or specific identity. However, with a twist in narration, the novelist compares Bhagmati to the city of Delhi. Bhagmati, the eunuch is a metaphor for the city of Delhi and its history simultaneously. Her character symbolises compromise between the adversative elements, settlement with one's psychological and social or financial condition. The narrator's romance with Bhagmati is a representation of the city of Delhi which charmingly matches. Budh Singh, the watchman of the apartment where the narrator lives, has strong objection about his relation with Bhagmati and so he discloses, "everyone is talking about it. They say, take woman, take boy-okay! But a hijda! That's not nice" (*Delhi* 6). Sexual urge plays a big role in the character of the first person narrator which drives him to become inquisitive about the sexual features of a eunuch. But, anyhow, he refrains from his curiosity and asks Bhagmati to be dropped at her home. He reveals his own mind as he thinks silently:

I had heard strange stories of their sex-life and the shapes of their genitals. Despite my curiosity to find out more about her, I asked her if she would like to be dropped home. (*Delhi* 35)

Conventionally it is accepted that "there are two types of people: male and female" based on the shape of genitalia. But in fact, various cultures "have long recognised" members who buck the biological binary. The ancient texts wrote of those people who were neither men nor women; individuals have been "swapping genders for centuries"; and intellectuals have severely debated the connection

between the body and the self. Today, there are many populations with alternative identities, such as hijdas in South Asia, kathoeyes in Thailand, and muxes in Mexico. Yet these groups haven't life going easy, often facing discrimination and violence. Only recently has the fight for legal recognition-and respect-of "third gender" begun to bear fruit, thanks to pioneering activists and policymakers. The world, it seems, is slowly embracing an adage once restricted to liberal value that gender is a construct, and people should be able to define it for themselves (Thah 16).

But, Bhagmati seeks shelter for that night. As the narrator is careful of his social reputation so he suggests that they should leave the house before his servant comes back. He also suggests that as Bhagmati needs to get shelter for that night, she can come to the house and stay there for the night only after the servant has left for the night. But she will have to leave the house early in the morning so that no one can see her (*Delhi* 36).

In the orthodox Indian society, there can be no open discussion on sexuality. Moreover, sexuality without physicality is no experience for the involved individuals. Singh does not prefer hiding sexually real acts by only using symbolic expressions or in the name of public morality. What is more revealing is a certain reality about the hijda is enacted more than the hijda being kept conventionally a curiosity in public knowledge. Singh's liberal description of sexual activities may have to draw opposite reactions. However, Singh encourages openness about a crucial aspect of the individual that is sex, not merely a salacious pornography to read. He gives expression to such encounter in one passage thus:

I felt a desire for sex. I tried to put it out of my mind. A sick, scruffy hijda—how could...I was aroused. I pulled her beside me, fished out a contraceptive from under my pillow and mounted her. She directed me inside her. It was no different from a woman's. She smelt of sweat, I avoided her mouth. She pretended to breathe heavily as she were getting worked up. Then sensing my coming to climax she crossed her legs behind my back and began to moan.... She began to play with my nipples—first with her fingers, then with her tongue. She placed her head on my chest and began to stroke my paunch—first with her fingers, then with her tongue. She went on till my reluctance was

overcome... With a series of violent heaves she sucked my seed into her in a frenzy of abandon. I lay on top of her—exhausted. (*Delhi* 39-41)

This passage reveals that the hijda's passion is also human, not an alien fallen from another imagined world. And the issue of public morality here seems to be a social cudgel, and not a physically necessary approval. The narrator is conscious about social restrictions. From his conversation with Bhagmati, the impression for his sense of self dignity is revealed. Bhagmati requests the narrator to take her to any good hotel and provide her with some food. The narrator in reply says that if anyone sees him with her, then his reputation will be ruined: "And be seen with you in public? You want me to cut off my own nose?" (*Delhi* 37). The narrator of the novel has a habit of bringing women from outside to his apartment as he one day has brought Bhagmati. To keep himself undisturbed from any kind of social defamation, he pays regular tips to the night watchman, Budh Singh (*Delhi* 39).

The novel describes that there has been sexual enjoyment between the narrator and Bhagmati at night during her staying at the narrator's house. The narrator feels thirst for sex. But he tries to repress his sensual feelings by reading a journal. But his efforts of not getting involved into any sexual event are ruined as Bhagmati enters his room being completely naked. Khushwant Singh relates the ways the duo explore each other's private parts. Singh gives here the lurid description of physical enjoyment between the narrator and Bhagmati, the hijda (*Delhi*40). Singh's sexual description may have been caused by his intention to demythicise and normalise sex, and more by countering sexual superstitions prevalent in the society.

Khushwant Singh touches almost all the aspects of society like he depicted the exploitation of Indians by the British rulers. What is uncommonly significant is that "Delhi" is personified as a eunuch in the manner of the eunuch Bhagmati, who is seduced by different people for physical pleasure. Indian History reveals that Delhi has too been ravished by different Mughal rulers from time to time and also the British rulers. According to Sudhendu Sekhar, the consort of the protagonist, Bhagmati, is the "spirit of Delhi" as well as the "symbol of sterility". Bhagmati's "bi-sexuality is a conceptional disability" and therefore, the "proper figurative" for

Delhi. In all happenstances, Bhagmati remains a “lively extrovert” but displays a “battered spirit”. However, it is her “existential reality” that the novelist “falls back upon” for authenticating the reality of Delhi. After each historical narrative, it is her “enigmatic presence” that keeps the author true to the drive of probing the “spiritual dimension” of Delhi’s continuing nemesis. It is his transitional motif as well as incitement (125-26).

Singh portrays the character of Bhagmati to highlight the practice of going to prostitution to enjoy the pleasures of life. He seems approving the idea about the need of sex in one’s life when he shows Meer Taqi Meer dissatisfied with his wife as she is unable to satisfy him sexually, but can be satisfied either in the company of his beloved or whores or in Singh’s novels in the company of a eunuch as well.

I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale is based on a Sikh family during the days of India’s independence movement. The story is set at the background of 1942 Quit India Movement. Though the novel narrates political situation of the then India, it can hardly be considered a political narrative as it makes no direct reference to the historic Quit India Movement. Besides, no character in the novel is involved in the political activity completely. But the novel provides a panorama of the life and atmosphere during that historical period. The novel gives some details about the countrymen’s craving for Independence. Besides, the text also refers to the efforts by some enthusiastic youths working their way through ‘terror’ means to free India from British colonisation.

Due to Sher’s over ambitions to get established in the field of politics, he ignores the sexual urge of his wife, Champak, but on the other hand, Madan Lal behaves like a sex-fanatic who indulges himself with many women. Champak has also been portrayed by the novelist with some uncommon sexual traits. The following lines justify the point. “She lay like a nude model posing for an artist: One hand between her thighs covering her nakedness and the other stretched away to expose her bust” (*Nightingale* 18).

The image of a traditional Indian housewife has been challenged by Champak as she always indulges herself in sensual thoughts. She likes to exhibit her beauty openly. She comes out as a figure whose sexuality has been repressed. As her

husband Sher has no time for her so it is in Madan that she finds an outlet for her sexual urges. On the Baishakhi Day, the New Year Day for the Sikh community, while Sabhrai is engaged in religious works, Champak is busy in her sensory accomplishments. She does not conform to the ancient-age woman's duty towards her husband, as the *Kamasutra* of Vatsayana would persuade, while the husband too does not pay attention to her sexual demands. Sexuality is a relation for both the partners with equal participation and persuasion. Her role may be understood from a materialistic, realistic and practical point of view, as Vatsayana emphasises the Dharma, Arth, and Kama in the sex life (17). The following paragraph vividly paints Champak as she is:

She loosened her hair and turned round to see how she looked from behind. Her hair fell to the point at which her buttocks rose like softly rounded water melons. There are dimples on either side of rear waist...She clasped her arms above her head and wriggled her hips in the manner of hula-hula dancers...She studied her face and figure in all the postures she had seen in photograph of nude models. She found the reflection in the mirror to her satisfaction. (*Nightingale* 50)

The above paragraph reminds us of Lawrence's penchant for description of women's body and the sensitive body-consciousness that usually dominates his works and more particularly in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. This is not to suggest that Singh rises to the level of the self-conscious, audacious and Lawrence category artistically but to propose that Singh understands sex better than any of his contemporaries.

Sher loves his wife but cannot match the sexual sensitivity that his wife is occupied with. In fact the narrative makes it clear that he does not care for her private approaches, hobbies and likings. Since his interest lays in politics, there is a mismatch between the husband and wife. It seems that Sher has been named ironically by Khushwant Singh, as he performs quite opposite to the implication of his name. He thinks to kill as many English men as possible, but his mind is misbalanced at the shooting of a Sarus, a bird. There is always a mismatch between what he thinks and what he would like to do or not. Sher is in a dilemma to choose

between an agreeable life that his father provides under colonial rule and his personal desire to make the nation an independent country. Such a dilemma again takes place in his marital life. His inadequacy in satisfying his wife Champak sexually is expressed through the following lines:

Champak had taken off her Kimono and lay stark naked on her belly. She had the pillow between her arms, her legs were stretched apart. Sher Singh knew what this meant. 'My God I feel flagged out', he said wearily and switched off the light. (*Nightingale* 53-54)

Champak's display of her beauty is not inspired by her husband. This is a fact that she prepares herself to exhibit her beauty to the outside world. She realises her physique as a matter of appreciation. But she cannot deny the social conditions. Obviously, she remains as a powerless woman within the limit of social restrictions. Ashcroft Bill discusses that surveillance has been accepted as one of the most powerful approaches of supremacy because it places a viewer with "an elevated vantage point" from which the dominant gaze can exercise power over what is seen. This leads to the objectification of the subject "within the identifying system of power relations and confirms its subalternity and powerlessness" (207).

In spite of living together, the couple do not get attached psychologically. Champak does not get satisfaction in the conjugal life with her husband. Though she tries to draw Sher's attention to enjoy conjugality, Sher continues talking about his political meetings or war. There are numerous instances which justify that Sher tries to avoid Champak. This negligence leads her to infidelity. Champak pretends to be very loyal to her husband, but in his absence, her hidden relationship with Madan goes on, "She flung her arms about his neck and bit him fiercely on the nose. Madan kissed her on her nose, chin and neck; then buried his face between her breasts" (*Nightingale* 127). Sher has no time to satisfy his wife's sexual demands and hence Champak strives for sensual satisfaction by getting involved with Madan in a secret love affair in Shimla involving him through her devious skills. The scene between Madan and Champak justifies the above point:

He undid the top button of her shirt and let his hand slip on to her warm, rounded breast. She turned her face up to him; their mouths met with hungry

passion. Madan gently pushed her against the wall on the side and kissed her on her eyes and glued his lips on hers. The breath in his nostrils became heavy. (*Nightingale* 126-27)

In Singh, sexuality is enhanced with physical action and responses, which are never side-lined for moral or aesthetic ideas. Khushwant Singh portrays another character called Beena, the daughter of Buta Singh. In Beena's relationship with Madan we get inkling into Singh's penchant for naked and stark sexual passion. Beena is an adolescent studying in a college. The narrator describes a particular scene of interest in the following words:

Beena had no doubt about Madan's intentions as his fingers closed round her elbow.....Madan began to caress her arm. Beena did not move. Then his hand brushed against her breast. She shrank away into the farther corner of her chair. (*Nightingale* 41)

The episode speaks itself for the sex that has been built into the narrative. It appears as if sex is at the top of the character's thoughts. Madan is married and yet he does not shy away from touching Beena's private parts. What Khushwant Singh intends is to preach a message to the youths of the society to keep themselves away from unselective sexual relationship. When Beena is accompanied by Champak to go to Shimla, Madan and his sister Seeta also happen to turn up. They decide to rekindle their desire despite the fact that it is socially unacceptable. Before Beena decides to go to Madan's room one night, she comes across a letter sent by her mother Sabhrai. The novelist's purpose is served with the following passage, a part of Sabhrai's letter:

O, Black Buck, why lovest thou
The pasture of fenced-in fields?
Forbidden fruit is sweet but for a few days,
It entices and ensnares
Then leaves one sorrowing ... (*Nightingale* 129)

This principle spirit of her poetry can be discerned throughout the novel, which apparently Khushwant Singh approves. Sex is a basic necessity, a natural expression and there is nothing sinful about it. But the complications arise when we

are not able to differentiate between love and lust. This is the idea that is replete in the narrative. There is a social significance to it. The idea of infidelity is also attached to it. The issue which comes out of this illicit affair is the infidelity of the married persons to their better-half. To this category belongs Champak, who does not receive proper sexual entertainment from her husband Sher, while Madan inspite of having wife behaves like a sex-maniac. Both get involved in extramarital affair.

Other characters involved in extramarital relationships in this novel are Shunno and Peer Sahib. Singh throws light on how religious places where saints should teach the devotees against material attachments, may also turn up to be a place where illegal physical relationship also can occur. Peer Sahib and Shunno are the examples of the physical urge for sex. The narrative uncovers the passion of sex in their mind. Sex here appears as a boundless entity that denies the social, moral, ethical and religious limitations. Even the fear of God, that otherwise holds back people from 'immoral' acts, cannot restrain both the Hindu widow and the Muslim Peer from getting involved into unlawful physical relationship.

Singh has been accused of writing more elaborately about sex than his characters. But he does so purposefully. In his works if there is portrayal of a stark naked scene, in terms of description of sex or if that one is suggestive, then that scene serves as an integral part of the plot of his story. The sex scenes are elaborative and serve certain purposes. The novelist sketches the character of Champak:

Champak went into the bathroom and took a shower. She came back wearing her transparent kimono. She went to the window and let down the shutter. A gust of wind blew the kimono on either side, baring her from her feet to her waist. Her hair flew wildly like the snakes on Medusa's head. (*Nightingale* 168-69)

Such a narration indicates that Champak is confident of her seductive power. She has a feminist sense of appreciating her body, and wants her lover to accept her with all her bodily flaws. Medusa's reference shows Western influence on Singh. Medusa's mythical image functions like a mirror to reflect and focus Western thought as it relates to women, including how women think about themselves. By way of reference to Medusa's snakes, Singh seems to suggest Champak's ghastly

and terrible aspect including her sex-centric personality. Susan R. Bowers comments that Medusa was a powerful goddess at a time when “female authority was dominant” and the power to be dreaded was feminine. As the “serpent-goddess of the Libyan Amazons”, Medusa represented women’s wisdom. A female face “surrounded by serpent-hair was an ancient, widely-recognized symbol of divine, female wisdom” (220).

This descriptive way of detailing sex is the characteristic feature of Singh’s art. While such a pictorial detail arouses the sensual side of the readers, they are at the same time aroused to the emotional appeal in which the act is performed, together with its social and moral implications. Clandestine affairs may even flourish at the holy abode of God between a Hindu widow and a Muslim Peer, besides; another illegal affair takes place between a married man and a married woman at Shimla breaking all ethics.

In doing so, the novelist foregrounds on the sexual urge and hints that the obsession of Shunno for Peer Sahib and the same of Champak for Madan is generated of physical demands that can supersede the barriers of religion, caste or any other ethical logic. The furtive affair between Shunno and the Peer has been described through these lines. “Here was a man twenty years younger, strong and virile with an untamed lust savagely tearing off the padding of respectability with which she had covered herself”(Nightingale159).

If Peer Sahib is overwhelmed with Shunno, then so Shunno is also with him. The author makes it quite clear that how Shunno had been kept away from sex and how the desire can never wholly be capped:

She “had almost forgotten.... Her instincts had been buried under a thick pad of conventional morality prescribed for a Hindu widow-religion, charity, gossip about sex, but no sex”. (Nightingale159)

If Shunno was held back, so too was Peer Sahib:

With the vows of celibacy to which he was committed, sex got little chance of natural expression. He had to be satisfied with his own devices or

occasionally take liberties with little boys sent by their mothers to learn the Scripture. (*Nightingale*158)

In choosing to bed Shunno with Peer Sahiib, the novel exposes conventional morality of the society that ignores a widow's physical urges. It could well be said that Singh emerges as a social critic and also as an artist who pleads for physical contentedness, the need for sexual gratification for the overall happiness. It would not be wrong to say that the narration seeks to liberate sexual urge from social and moral restrictions that often maligns and gives it evil names. Khushwant Singh creates a world in his works, where characters come out of their restraints and appear courageous in their sexual adventures. It is a world that knows no bounds, besides, breaks all boundaries.

Champak's craving for sex and her daring nature is disclosed before the readers to assess her character through her behaviour with Mundo. The class-consciousness is active here in Champak's character, to impose herself before Mundo, a teen aged servant boy, always inferior, and also silenced by his class conditioning. Champak is not ashamed of having been seen in her bare state by this teen-aged male servant. In fact, she also seems to have no sense what impact might be there in the mind of a teen aged boy by seeing her in bare state. Charles Platt in his article 'Class Consciousness' remarks that "class consciousness blinds"; it is an "egoistic crust" which separates us from our co-workers, and prevents understanding. Understanding needs "open-mindedness and an outward gaze", not introspection and a centring on self. But understanding, too, lies at the root of all successful endeavour, and especially, since society is essentially co-operative in character, it lies at the root of all social attempts. In proportion as class consciousness grows, our understanding contracts; with "class consciousness perfect our understanding is at zero." For Platt the home is the "last stronghold of complacent class tyranny". The relation between employer and employee is a relation that is suggestive of the "dark ages of industry" (558-67).

The contextual irony that is seen in this novel is that there are two contradictory ways of living practiced by the same set of people in the same house. The presence of Sabhrai makes the house a holy place to live in. In that same house

Champak too lives who enjoys sensual pleasure by examining herself before a full length dressing table mirror after shaving her private parts.

Commenting on the novel Rosanne Archer says, “It is sometimes interesting in spite of one dimensional characters, heavy-handed plotting, a flattered climax, and dollops of sex piled on irreverently”. Archer also remarks that a good number of pages of the book are clumsily “devoted to the rambles” and “pasteboard people through bed and bower”. The book is saved somewhat, however, “by an easy style” and by the “charm and interest of its picture of the Punjab land and Sikh people” (21).

In sexual sessions Madan Lal is a perfect match for Champak. What the novelist tries to hint is that Champak searches for opportunity to enjoy sexual pleasure with Madan Lal. It is the result of Sher’s negligence towards her. The fact that Sher Singh and Madan Lal share a cordial relation of friendship that makes it easier for the latter to be easily accessible to the former’s wife Champak. Besides, Champak is also attracted to Madan for his virile qualities, sweet voice and good-looking personality that make the things easier. Depictions of sensual scenes are central to this novel.

Another text *The Company of Women* is based on the story of relationship of one man with a large number of women. The novel introduces multiple sexual partners across limiting boundaries of religion and class. The book begins with Mohan Kumar, a successful businessman of Delhi, breaking off with his wife. The novel tells of his incessant business success and access to money, which inspires him more flexible engagements for fulfilment of his physical inclination. The novel also deals with the concept of arranged marriages in Indian society, which is often similar to business bargains. The text presents the women including his wife serially with whom Mohan goes through corporeal relationship. Here Khushwant Singh seems to support the idea that love and sex do not admit of any caste, class and community bar. In *The Company of Women* the protagonist Mohan Kumar is in search of enjoying boundless sex. He gives an advertisement to the newspapers to get “a live-in companion” within a short span of less than a month after his wife has left him (*Company* 9).

Mohan gets involved in sex with his wife Sonu immediately after marriage and makes her pregnant. But this early pregnancy is not accepted by the members of his wife's family. The reactions of Sonu's parents to Mohan seem odd and different. They saw him "as if he had committed a crime" (*Company* 127). From this incident, it is clear that the society does not even excuse the husband and wife from intervention to go through their private life smoothly as per their own wish. Any greed will certainly have its own effects. Mohan Kumar marries Sonu only because of the insistence of his father to receive a huge quantity of dowry. After marriage Mohan and Sonu go to the Shivaliks for their honeymoon and spend nearly five days. Due to the latter's ill-health they return before the schedule. Mohan is blamed by his mother-in-law. "You could have been more patient: she is only a child of twenty-one. There was plenty of time to start a family" (*Company* 130).

The pre-marital life of Mohan Kumar reveals that he has gone through sexual relationships with other women during his staying abroad with Jessica Browne and Yasmeen. Besides, in his married life too, he gets involved in physical relationship with Dhanno, the sweeper woman in absence of his wife. Seeing the newspaper advertisement which Mohan gives to the newspaper to get "live-in companion for a mutually agreed time duration" (*Company* 9), many live-in companions come forward. To hide truth from the servants of the house and thus to save his social dignity Mohan has to introduce them with different designations and also he has to refer to various purposes of their visits. For example, Mohan introduces Sarojini Bharadwaj as his cousin, a lady professor by profession. But he can feel that from the staying of that lady who does not go to any college, house servants might have suspected her as a prostitute:

The first days went by pleasantly. However, Mohan sensed growing resentment among the servants. How was it that if the lady professor had been transferred to Delhi she did not go to teach in any college nor go round looking for a place of her own? (*Company* 44-45)

Mohan does not feel hesitant to build up sexual relationship with Mary Joseph, a Syrian Christian nurse appointed to look after his baby Ranjit Kumar. This illegitimate affair is anyhow suspected by Sonu, Mohan's wife and she decides to get

rid of the nurse. During Sarojini's stay at the house, Dhanno, the sweeper, with whom Mohan had already built up sexual relations, was feeling sentimental on that issue.

During the funeral of Lala Achint Ram, the father-in-law of Mohan Kumar, he has to face the bitter circumstances caused by his brother-in-law at the cremation ground. The brother-in-law continues that Mohan should not have come there to join with them. He also asks Mohan about his new woman companion whom Mohan has introduced as his cousin. After Sarojini, it is Molly Gomes, whom Mohan has introduced as a lady doctor. There is a rumour among Mohan's friends that he is going to marry the lady doctor soon. Molly Gomes stays with him for three months. Through the episode of Molly Gomes too, the novelist derides the attitude of women. Molly Gomes' debut into an illicit life began as she narrates, "It was my own uncle, my mother's younger brother, a good twenty years older than me" (*Company* 180). Here, Singh accuses the old for being the cause to lead the young and immature minds to the world of illegitimate sexuality.

After Molly Gomes it is Susanthika. The relation between Mohan Kumar and Susanthika continues for two years. But this time there is no gossip around Mohan Kumar and that lady. They set up a regular schedule of meeting and their code word was 'Operation Colombo'. To keep the relation with Susanthika a secret affair, Mohan Kumar remains conscious from the very beginning. He invites the lady to his home but tells all the servants of the house that he would have a lunch with a lady from the Sri Lankan High Commission. He also sends his servants the afternoon off. Susanthika comes to Mohan's house punctually. But she does not come in her embassy car but in a taxi (*Company* 212).

H.C. Ganguli in his book *Human Sexuality: An Introduction for Sex Education*, has expressed his view on sexuality by citing different perspectives of sexuality. In his writing he has stressed on the role of sexuality in the formation of human psychology. According to Ganguli, human sexuality has many facets, namely, biological, psychological, social and ethical. The biological point of view is related primarily with the "anatomy and physiology of reproduction" and seeks to understand "human sexuality" along lines equivalent to the sex life of lower forms of

life. Psychological theory of human sexuality is indebted much to the “psychoanalytic theory of psychosexual development”. Ganguli further says that, “cultural anthropology” has studied sexual behaviour in “different human tribes and cultures” and has drawn responsiveness to the “immense variability in sexual practices” and also revealed the sexual roots of many ancient “social customs, rituals, modes of worships” etc. (3).

If the handling of the three women Sarojini Bharadwaj, Molly Gomes and Susanthika is discussed, it becomes clear that all of them have been handled by Mohan Kumar skilfully to keep the society unaware of the happenings. It is true that the society allows development of sexual relationship between two married persons of opposite gender. Judy Long in the article, “Sex Roles and Sexuality: Non-traditional Roles of Men and Women Strengthen the Family and Provide Healthier Sexual Relationships,” has spoken on this issue. According to Long, the sexual relationship is a “major part of marriage for contemporary young adults” and enters into wooing as well. The critic also says that sexuality is also a part of “individual development”. Besides, the quality of the sexual relationship” is frequently observed as an indicator of the quality of the relationship. It is also expected that people who love each other will “automatically have a good sexual relationship” (34).

The chapter ‘Letter from Rewari’ in *The Company of Women* is the continuation of the first chapter where Mohan Kumar gives advertisement to have short-term sex mate. Khushwant Singh, in this context, parodies on the illicit extra-marital affairs in a country like India where marriage is regarded as a “sacrosanct bonding for life” (*Company* 20). The chapter entitled ‘Sarojini’ is a realistic representation of life. Though the chapter seems to be an episode on the sexual life between Mohan and Sarojini, a hint of love-life is presented in a very convincing manner. Both Mohan Kumar and Sarojini are seen as characters searching for sexual aggrandisement.

Sex is one of the factors that lead to love. Though the novelist seems to satirise people like Mohan and Sarojini who pursue illegitimate relationship, it is a fact that the sexual urge binds Mohan and Sarojini together. Sex may lead to develop

love in true sense in the long run. Besides, Singh also hints at the significant issue that “the word love had made lust profane” (*Company* 55).

Khushwant Singh also shows that it is not only Sarojini, but also many other women who belong to the same category. In spite of having a decent profession with sound income, they are ready for illegitimate physical relationship because of their unquenched thirst for sexual gratification. Singh here mocks at the people like Mohan for whom sexual enjoyment is the primary important object in life. The chapter ends with an anxious Mohan expecting the arrival of Sarojini:

He checked all the items in his guest room: The bathroom had fresh towels, new cakes of soap, tooth brush and paste, comb and brush and a bottle of cologne; everything that a five-star hotel would provide...He put twenty five-hundred-rupees notes in a buff envelope with a slip of paper reading...The cook has been told to serve you lunch...Just let me know all is okay. (*Company* 31)

The fear of losing social dignity by getting involved in any kind of sexual scandal always plays a role in the mind of Mohan Kumar. He is infected by AIDS, an incurable disease. He is very much conscience about his dignity (*Company* 232). He commits suicide by consuming Calmpose. It is found in the novel that during his last moments of life Mohan Kumar develops a sense of guilt for his illicit sexual life. That is why during his final journey to get salvation from all his sins he continues chanting the Gayatri Mantra:

Then he resolutely composed himself and took the first Calmpose; as he gulped it down with a sip of water, he recited the Gayatri Mantra. He did the same with the second, and the third, till the last: thirty Gayatri mantras with thirty pills. Then he put his head on the pillow and closed his eyes. (*Company* 232)

According to Ian Prattis, the Gayatri mantra is the main component of the “Sandhya-Upasana ceremony”, a ritual constituent for “Brahmanic definitions” within Hinduism. The Gayatri mantra is considered by Indian sages, saints and practitioners to be the most powerful mantra of “purification and transformation”

known to the yogic traditions. The Gayatri mantra is designed to expand consciousness in multiple directions. It facilitates “healing and releases karma”, as it is believed that the process of chanting it “shakes loose the fetters of suffering”. The successive sounds of the Sanskrit syllables and words are designed to move the individual into “different states of spiritual consciousness”, first of all by calming the mind and body, then through activating the energy centres of the body, which brings about a deeper connection with internal essence. The repetition of the Gayatri mantra generates a “unique series of vibrations” that integrates a person’s psychological consciousness with deeper levels of the “unified energy system” that is believed to be at the “core of being”. Gradually, the said mantra can take the individual into an experience of stages of development of consciousness, boosting the devotee into different intellectual states (79 – 85).

In fact, Mohan’s death by AIDS can be considered as a true justice to the random life he has lived. His disease and guilt drives him to drug and death. No spiritual awakening on his part is visible. The Gayatri mantra is uttered only in a superficial mode without in-depth understanding. Khushwant Singh has captured through him a picture of an educated, urbanised and lost-self in the Indian society.

Krishna Kant Singh in *Studies in Modern Indian English Novels* says that Mohan Kumar is a “typical representative of the cosmopolitan culture” which is going to influence our “rural background as well as traditional outlook” (13). Mohan Kumar’s series of extramarital relationships with different women testifies this. All the nine different women that have been cast in the novel belong to nine different social categories, but they all serve the same motive. His relationships with Jessica Browne, Yasmin, his wife Sonu, Mary Joseph, Molly Gomes, Dhanno, Sarojini Bharadwaj, Susanthika and also with a prostitute in a hotel in Bombay speaks for the “dormant nature of sex” in a human being. It also speaks on the necessity of the carnal side of human existence. The reader might agree with Mohan when he says, “Love cannot last very long without lust. Lust has no time limit and is the true foundation of love and affection” (*Company* 108). It is lust that keeps the characters going in the text. It is the extramarital relationships that keep marriages intact. Lust gives a window to the pent up frustrations. But such a carnal desire comes with its

own limitation. Krishna Kant Singh also says that Mohan Kumar's death by AIDS is not a "kind of punishment"; rather it provides "an authentic poetic justice" to the protagonist and also enables him to know "the futility of the human relationship" dependent upon sex and passion (13).

Mohan Kumar's relationships are primarily fulfilling in the sexual scheme of things, but these lead to no satisfaction in the long run. It is interesting to note that critics have pointed out how Mohan used women. But it can also be said that it is Mohan who has been used by different women in course of the text with their different motives.

In *The Company of Women* the main theme is sex, and how it leads to catastrophic end of the protagonist Mohan Kumar. The moral lesson preached by the novelist is found at the end of the story when Mohan Kumar commits suicide as he comes to know that he has developed AIDS, thus, paying for his life-long promiscuity. Singh's narrative hinges on realistic details to give a factual account of each encounter. Mohan's ultimate tragedy lies in his incapacity to bond with any particular woman.

In his book *Sexuality Today*, Felix M. Podimattam has said that sexuality appears as a demand for enjoyment and relief on the biological level; but this involvement is just the base of the individual sensual yearning. What a person wants in sexual gratification is to be close to somebody, to share the warm kind of disclosure of one's self, to give one's self in impulsive trust to another. Besides, one wants a deep personal closeness and security:

True sexuality offers occasion for enormous pleasure. But what is desired is the sharing of the pleasure that ensues from the sharing of self and the overcoming of aloneness through communion. It is the deepest pleasure of intimacy of person with person, of giving of one's self and receiving of another's self, and of communion springing from personal exposure that sexuality urges one to seek and find. It is in play and pleasure that communion is deepest as should be evident from married life. Indeed, the pleasure of sexuality is the greatest earthly pleasure precisely because it

stems from the most radical and complete realisation of two human beings in communion. (53 - 54)

Khushwant Singh in his works has brought premarital affair under discussion. In the novel *Train to Pakistan* and *The Company of Women* it is found that the young unmarried couple are involved in enjoying sensual pleasure. In the novel *Train to Pakistan* it is very difficult to accept Nooran with her pre-marital pregnancy for Jugga's mother. In this novel Nooran suffers because of her inter-religious love affair and pre-marital sexuality and the resultant illegitimate pregnancy.

The same picture of premarital sexuality has been drawn by the famous novelist Chetan Bhagat, one of the young contemporaries of Singh. In his two works namely, *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* and *Half Girlfriend*, Bhagat has portrayed the aspects of premarital sexuality. In *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* the romantic love can be seen between Krish and Ananya. They represent the romantic love of young lovers with full natural fondness. Bhagat states that the first kiss has a beautiful memory and can be felt with the bonding of two souls. There are several descriptions of the sexual moments between Ananya and Krish, "We kissed for three seconds" (*2States* 25).

The novel *Half Girlfriend* begins with Madhav Jha, a rural boy from Dumraon, a village in Buxar, Bihar. Being a good basketball player, Madhav gets admission through his sports quota. The rich and beautiful Riya Somani, a girl from Delhi is also selected through the sports quota. Madhav and Riya become close friends due to their association with basketball. Madhav wants to make Riya his girlfriend, but she refuses. He demands that they should get physical relationship. Offended by his vulgar remark "Deti hai to de, varna kat le" (*Half Girlfriend* 75), Riya leaves him and forbids him to talk to her in future.

The novels by Chetan Bhagat discussed about the man-woman relationship reflect different shades of sexuality. The passion of love has a universal appeal. These love affairs represent various forms and passions. Nevertheless, one common quality in all the love affairs is that they are all romantic love affairs in nature. Bhagat narrates the pre-marital sexual affair very often in his works. As Jitendra

Kumar Mishra observes in this line, “Bhagat introduces premarital sex as a natural need in the youth” (22).

There is a notion in many Indians, especially the men, to have an extraordinary fascination for the foreign ladies. The foreign women are given more importance than the Indian women. Here it seems that Khushwant Singh has used the elements of satire in the novel *Burial at Sea*. Victor Jai Bhagwan, the protagonist comes into contact with Indians of his own age at Oxford and tries to make friendship with them but fails.

There were “three sons of Indian princes” who lived “in style with cooks and servants” they had brought with them. They used to take “more interest in sports and dating English girls” than in study. Besides, there were others “from well-to-do middle-class families - sons of senior civil servants”. Their one desire was to “get into the Indian Civil Service” or, failing that, they preferred, to get a lucrative job in “British-owned companies in India” with handsome salaries. “They too seemed to have screwing English girls on top of their agendas; *Mem ki phuddi* was the one thing they wanted most from England, everything else was of little importance” (*Burial* 50).

Besides, in the meeting of Indian Majlis too when Victor propounded his views of developing Indians, “they listened to him in bored silence” (*Burial* 51). In *Burial at Sea* Victor Jai Bhagwan falls in love with Durgeshwari, a tantric woman and the relationship becomes so close that Durgeshwari becomes pregnant. Victor Jai Bhagwan had lost his wife at a very early age and therefore his sexuality was also not exercised. When he meets Ma Durgeshwari then his repressed sexuality finds its outlet in her person. But they are also constricted by rigid social norms. Victor neither feels any interest in that baby nor dares Durgeshwari to give birth the child in public. Hence, she chooses a secret place to give birth to the child, lest to lose her social dignity. But Durgeshwari discloses the issue to Bhararti, daughter of Victor by his legal marriage and thus tries to lighten the burden of her guilt of illegitimate maternity. Victor, however, clings to Durgeshwari as his sensual partner. The lack of wife in life as she had died earlier brings the desire for sexual enjoyment in the mind

of Victor. On the other hand Durgeshwari, being a young woman cherishes for the company of the opposite sex, a natural human instinct.

In this context, Felix. M. Podimattam is found appropriate. According to him, sexuality urges us both “physically and psychologically” to get accomplishment in “someone complementary to our self”. A human being feels attracted to the opposite sex; “men to women and women to men”. This appeal is actually a call from within oneself, from the sexual nature to relate to the other, not only physically or genitally but also in a very much personal way (55).

Victor Jai Bhagwan dies a tragic death, besides having suffered a big humiliation by the mill workers for his relation with Durgeshwari. Durgeshwari out of fear of getting punished by the society does not dare to give birth to her child in public, and chooses a secret place. One thing is clear from the story, i.e., there is an interrelation of different instincts, namely, sexuality, madness, discipline and the punishment in the moulding of a human character.

Durgeshwari suffers from an unwanted pregnancy and decides to leave for a distant place and give birth to the child secretly and thus to save herself from getting punished by the discipline bound society in the form of losing her dignity:

No one should know. I can't afford that and nor can you. I have a place down South where I can go and spend some months in private. I can also leave the baby there. It will be safe and well looked after. Perhaps you can adopt it later. (*Burial* 140-41)

The relationship between Victor and Durgeshwari also faces a confrontation with the social discipline for which both of them have to pay a price in the form of their big humiliation. During the workers' trouble at the mill, Victor goes to the spot with Durgeshwari. That brings more irritation among the mill workers. There is a tussle between Victor and the union leader regarding the mention of Durgeshwari in his speech. Victor slaps the leader and the leader throws abusive and threat in return (*Burial* 133-34).

In the book *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*, Joane Nagel, in an article “Constructing Ethnicity and Sexuality: Building

Boundaries and Identities” has spoken about the nature of sexuality including sexual identity and its limitation. According to him, as social milieu sets the boundaries for the concept of sexuality, so with the passage of time, the nature of sexual constraint can be changed:

Like ethnic boundaries, sexual boundaries give the appearance of naturalness and timelessness. They seem inborn, unchanging and stable. As history and cross-cultural research show us, however, like ethnic boundaries, sexual boundaries are socially constructed, change over time, and individuals can cross sexual boundaries, changing sexual identities and sexualities in the process. (48)

In *The Company of Women* and *Burial at Sea* the author deals with the socio-psychological problems in the present male-dominated society. Sarojini Bhardwaj, Yasmeen Wanchoo, Mary Joseph, Molly Gomes and Susanthika are faced with socio-psychological problems too. In these women there have been the clashes between the principles imposed by patriarchal society, impact of education and also financial freedom. In *Burial at Sea* too Durgeshwari, the tantric woman is basically abandoned by her husband on the suspicion of her infidelity with three other men during her marital life of being Shanti Devi.

In the selected texts Khushwant Singh has narrated some moments of extramarital affairs too. Some characters in the texts are found involved in extramarital relationships. In *Train to Pakistan*, Hukum Chand, the Magistrate of Mano Majra is involved with Haseena, a prostitute who is perhaps younger than his own daughter. In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Madan, son of Buta Singh’s colleague Wazir Chand and Champak, wife of Buta Singh’s son Sher Singh are found involved in secret affair. Both Madan and Champak are married. Due to Sher’s over ambition to flourish in the field of politics, he ignores his wife Champak, while Madan Lal behaves like a sex-fanatic who indulges himself simultaneously with many women. A glimpse of Champak’s character is found through the following lines: “She lay like a nude model posing for an artist. One hand between her thighs covering her nakedness and the other stretched away to expose her bust” (*Nightingale* 18). In the novel Singh also writes that “unfulfilled sexual impulses”

may result in an “obsession with sex” (*Nightingale* 48). The implication of this line is that suppression of sexual feelings may have negative impact.

Unable to get sexual satisfaction from her husband, Champak tries to get sexual favour from Madan. Hence, she tries to enjoy sex with Madan in Shimla in privacy. Through his writing the novelist apparently advocates freedom of sexual relationship, not to be hindered by the gaze of society or religion. Through the portrayal of the character of Madan what Singh wants to say is that among all human impulses, love is the prettiest and most provoking element that controls our whole life. But unfortunately people like Madan forgets the true concept of love. Singh, through the character of Madan portrays the impudence of man.

In *The Company of Women* Singh seems to suggest that occasional adultery does not “destroy a marriage”; on the contrary it proves to be “a cementing factor” which saves marriages from breaking. “It was silly to condemn adultery as sinful; it often saved marriages from collapsing. It could have saved his” (*Company* 7). Mohan enjoys extra-marital sex with the sweeper woman Dhanno:

Morning sessions with Dhanno became a bi-weekly affair. She was docile, ever willing to cater to his needs. He grew familiar with every contour of her body, down to the large sunburn mark on her right thigh which he always felt with his fingers and kissed before he kissed her eyes and lips. (*Company* 19)

In Mohan Kumar’s character the influence of “hyper sexuality”² is found through his series of sexual affairs with different women. Hyper sexuality refers to compulsive sexual behaviour with excessive preoccupation or obsession with sexual fantasies. It carries a negative connotation referring to incapacity to control oneself to the point of causing distress that negatively affects the health. The portrayal of Mohan’s character has been made befitting to the term ‘Mohan’ by the novelist by dint of his skilful artistry.

Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi finds that all the female characters in *The Company of Women* are influenced with the aspect of “Pleasure Principle”(133). J. E. Barnhart in the article “Freud’s Pleasure Principle and the Death Urge” says that Sigmund Freud states that the “Pleasure Principle” dominates the process of the

mental apparatus from the start. What this statement means is that at least the “human organism is naturally predisposed to gain positive experiences of pleasure and to hold on to this pleasure.” That is only “one fork of the pleasure principle.” The other is that the human organism is predisposed also to escape or avoid “pain and displeasure”. Thinking that he is being descriptive in talking of the pleasure principle, Freud does not purport to be prescribing that men ought to be concerned with pleasure; rather he is saying that they are so concerned in a most fundamental way. Psychoanalysis is seen as an instrument for helping an individual in achieving pleasure and avoiding useless displeasure as he comes to terms with his own body, the external world, and other human beings (113).

Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi also comments that in *The Company of Women*, the writer deals with the “socio-psychological problems of women” with a deep sense of connection with the present “male-dominated” society. Sarojini Bhardwaj, Yasmeen Wanchoo, Mary Joseph, Molly Gomes and Susanthika are faced with socio-psychological problems. In these women there have been the conflicts between the values taught by patriarchal society, impact of education and economic independence. Since these women fail to get any befitting male match, they desire for the “real companion”. Being instigated with the “pleasure principle” they go on for gratifying their aspirations in the form of clandestine affairs with men they like (132-33).

While, according to Freud, the pleasure principle is one of the two principles of mental functioning, the other being the reality principle, the pleasure principle directs all mental or psychical activity towards obtaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure, for Jacques Lacan, the pleasure principle is an obstacle to jouissance³ which takes the subject to that extreme point where the erotic borders upon death and where subjectivity risks extinction.

In this issue, Sharif Mebed comments that Lacan diverged to some degree from Freud’s thinking on the pleasure principle. According to Lacan, though “we desire good things” on our conscious level, but on the unconscious level, that same ethical desire is aimed at a “radical evil”. The ultimate satisfaction of our desire brings us evil and self-destruction, not happiness (100).

In both the texts of *The Company of Women* and *Burial at Sea* the protagonists are found to have involved in illegitimate sexual affairs. If their characters are judged from the Lacanian point of view of pleasure principle, then it is found that their ultimate satisfaction of desire brings evil and destruction, not happiness to their life. But a careful reading of Singh's work shows a limited 'radical evil' sometimes serve to keep life intact. Mohan Kumar's life serves as an example to this kind of thinking.

Mohan's wife's lack of appetite for sex after the birth of their second child becomes the point of contention. Whether sex outside marriage is good or bad, given the failure inside the institution of marriage is an important thematic concern that Singh brings at the intellectual thought-table. The narration nowhere explicitly argues on its permissibility. Nevertheless, Mohan Kumar's life speaks on its importance given the context. Kumar's experiences with numerous women perhaps advocate for sexual freedom unhindered by social policing and moralistic principles.

Through his works Khushwant Singh seems to convey the message that sexuality is an essential issue in human life. Besides, the characters found involved in sexual activities in the above-mentioned texts are more or less influenced with the aspect of "hetero-sexuality"⁴. Heterosexuality refers to a romantic attraction, sexual attraction or sexual behaviour between persons of the opposite sex or gender. In *Train to Pakistan* the affair between Jugga and Nooran comes under the category of "hetero-sexuality". In spite of being followers of two different faiths of Sikhism and Islam, the two persons do not feel hesitation to build and continue physical relationship. In *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* the characters of Madan Lal, Champak, Beena, Shunno and Peer Sahib all are attracted to each other as obsessed with attraction for the opposite gender. The novel testifies that they get involved into sexual relation finally. The aspect of repressed sexuality is seen in the novel *Burial at Sea* in the prime two characters of Victor Jai Bhagwan and Ma Durgeshwari. Victor lost his wife at a very early age, i.e., immediate after birth of his daughter Bharati while Durgeshwari originally named Shanti Devi had been banished by her husband on account of infidelity. It is their repressed sexuality which forces them to come close to each other and get involved into illegitimate sexual affair. *The*

Company of Women involves the aspect of hyper sexuality in the character of Mohan Kumar the protagonist, while the text projects the female characters involved with Mohan in sexual relations influenced with pleasure principle.

This can be said about Khushwant Singh's approach to female characters that, though they look interesting but do not stand out as extraordinary in comparison with their male counterparts. They usually shine by their sexual activities. Their other interests in spirituality, intellectual life and social responsibility are ordinary or little. In fact, Khushwant Singh has explored sexuality as one of the fundamental drives behind a person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. It outlines the means of genetic reproduction, describes psychosomatic and sociological representations of self, and places a person's sensual attraction to the other. Moreover, sexuality shapes the intelligence and physique to be pleasure-seeking.

Notes

1. Our society is one “not of spectacle, but of surveillance”; under the surface of images, one devotes bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces. The circuits of communication are the supports of gathering and a centralisation of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the- beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.

Source: Foucault, Michel. “Panopticism.” *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of Prison*, Vintage Books, 1995. p.217.

2. Hyper - sexuality or Sexual addiction is defined as a dysfunctional preoccupation with sexual fantasy, often in combination with the obsessive pursuit of casual or non-intimate sex; pornography; compulsive masturbation; romantic intensity and objectified partner sex for a period of at least six months.

Source: www.psychocentral.com/lib/hypersexuality-symptoms-of-sexual-addiction. Accessed 31 March, 2020.

3. Jouissance, and the corresponding verb, “jouir”, refer to an extreme pleasure. Sometimes it is translated as 'enjoyment', but enjoyment has a reference to pleasure, and jouissance is an enjoyment that always has a deadly reference, a paradoxical pleasure, reaching an almost intolerable level of excitation.

Source: “Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis.” ["http://www.nosubject.com/Jouissance"](http://www.nosubject.com/Jouissance) Accessed 31 March, 2020.

4. Feminist analyses of gender power inequalities in the negotiation of heterosexual sexuality (hetero sex) have exposed heterosexuality as a key site for the reproduction of patriarchy. Heterosexual sexuality (hetero sex) has been increasingly highlighted as a central site for the reproduction of unequal gender power relations and male dominance.

Source: Shefer, Tamara and Don Foster. "Discourses on Women's (Hetero) Sexuality and Desire in a South African Local Context." *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 2001), p. 375. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4005200.

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Chapter – IV

Power and Sexuality in Selected Short Stories and Non-fictions

In this chapter there has been an attempt to focus on the dynamics of power and sexuality on the chosen non-fictional texts of Khushwant Singh, namely, *Malicious Gossip* (1989), *Paradise and Other Stories* (2004) and *Agnostic Khushwant: There is no God!* (2012). These texts too exhibit similar treatment of socio-political power and sexuality as Singh's fictions do. There is no concrete difference between fictional and nonfictional values of socio-political power or human sexuality in treatment. On the other hand, these ideas get more sharpened edges in nonfictions. Singh has sharpened his satiric intent and intellectual spade to dig out the contradictions and prejudices underlying all faiths.

Michel Foucault does not see power originating from any particular source or group. According to him, power is "omnipresent", that is, power can be found in all "social interactions". By saying that power is omnipresent, i.e., power is co-extensive in the field of social relations; Foucault expresses his view that power is interwoven with and revealed in other kinds of social relations. This does not mean that power functions as a "trap or cage"; rather it means that power is present in all of our social relations, even our most "intimate and egalitarian" (Lynch 28). Power as already discussed is conceived as a critical relation between all involved and idle partners in socio-political arenas.

The form of power in politics gets more heightened and dynamically more perceived. When politics is discussed, Singh's irony does not remain idle. Most of Singh's nonfictions are pointed towards politically significant figures and their behaviour. In this, his aesthetics took a rear seat or little visibility. Singh as a writer seems to have a knack for looking up for contradictions and conflicts that exist between power and morals, between words and actions. He is well aware how the political state manages power and how a society of people expects the political leadership to fulfil its genuine demands. His political tracts are saved from dry details by his use of mockery. Hence, he maintains an objective tone of realism well touched with irony. For example, in *Malicious Gossip*, he deals with a volley of characters with their individual traits and also the impact that different types of

powers have over them. How the role of power imposes socio-political condition in a man's life is evidenced in the first part of the book 'To Pakistan with Love'. The title looks significant and it evidences Singh's inimitable style of irony to talk of love. His ear to catch gossip is matched by his observant eye for reality.

Khushwant Singh remained close to politics and lawmakers in Indian Parliament where he was a Member. He has experienced the breakup of his country into two nations. His own state Punjab got divided in that political process. Thus Singh is acutely observant of the moves and wiles of power, especially the political one. Pakistan, a newly created political state, remains as an object of interest for him to know its evolution and success or failure. His vignette of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto artfully captures a man's journey through the power corridors in Pakistan. In the biography of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto named "From the Death Sentence to the Gallows"; the crucial role of the politics affecting rise and fall in a man's life is seen. The story narrates the death of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (5th January 1928–4th April 1979), the former Pakistani President. The story shows how the political decision can impact the life of an ambitious man. Khushwant Singh presents here a curious paradox in the Pakistani political scene. Most people admit that if Bhutto was let out of the jail and there were be a "free and fair election", his party would have swept the polls. But, at the same time the political analysts think that there is "little likelihood of a spontaneous rising" in favour of Mr. Bhutto. The contradiction is explained in this way: Bhutto was very popular amongst the Pakistani masses because of his populist slogans he had coined and also the promises he had made to them, such as, freedom from hunger, a change of clothes and a roof over their heads. Nevertheless, the mass knew very well that he had neither the intention nor the means to fulfil these promises. But for the hungry, hate-fed, homeless people the imagination was better than nothing (*Malicious* 47-8).

To be brief about Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he was born in the year of 1928 in Ratodero Taluka, Bombay Presidency, British India. He was educated in Bombay and also at the University of California, Berkeley B.A., in the year of 1950. Bhutto studied law at the University of Oxford and then practiced law and gave lectures in England. Upon his return to Pakistan in 1953, he started practicing law in Karachi.

There he was selected as a member of Pakistan's delegation to the United Nations in 1957. After Mohammad Ayub Khan seized the power in the year of 1958; Bhutto was appointed as the Commerce Minister and also held other cabinet posts. He had the political aspiration to lead his country. After his appointment as Foreign Minister between 1963–66, he started working for liberation from Western powers and for closer connections with China. His opposition to the peace with India after the 1965 war over Kashmir caused him to resign from the government, and in December 1967 he founded the Pakistan Peoples Party. Bhutto criticised the "Ayub Khan regime" as a dictatorship and was consequently imprisoned.

There is impact of political power to mould a nation. Pakistan turned into an Islamic country under Bhutto's regime and moved away from the idea of a secular nation, which Mr. Jinnah promised. What is significant to note is that religion and politics got ruefully combined in the life of a new sovereign country. Thus major problems like instability of the nation appeared gradually. Feeling that the public was turning against his rule by decree, Bhutto called for new elections in 1977 to obtain a popular mandate. His party won by a large majority, but the opposition charged him with electoral deception. The government was thrown out in a coup by General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, the army chief of staff on 5th July, 1977. Soon afterward Bhutto was arrested. He was sentenced to death on 18th March, 1978, on the accusation of having ordered the assassination of a political opponent in 1974. Finally, Bhutto was hanged.

Abdul Ghafoor Bhurgri in his book says that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the "falcon of Pakistan". He flew "very high in the political skies" and none else could be compared with him. No Prime Minister of Pakistan, or Head of the State with the exception of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was so popular and dynamic, as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (13). He, moreover, says that Bhutto is called a "martyr" throughout Pakistan by an overwhelming majority of "young and old, men and women, literate or illiterate" (14). The author also remarks that though Mr. Bhutto, was popularly called Quaid-e-Awam, i.e., leader of the People, was "alone" in his political life (15).

Another author, Kamaleshwar Sinha, observes that Mr. Bhutto had the experience of “two decades of Indo-Pakistani politics”. While his contribution in the happenings in Pakistan had been “intense and uninterrupted”, his worry with the “repercussions of the transformation” taking place in India under a permanency of “principled leadership” had been absorbing. He had been consistently fighting for democracy in Pakistan. His logic had been “razor-sharp”, his dislikes strongly marked, and his affections “un-diminishing”, his affectations “unconcealed”(10).

In the biography “From the Death Sentence to the Gallows” Khushwant Singh presents the Pakistani civilians sharing different views about Bhutto. While on the one hand he is loved by a section of people, on the other hand, he is hated also by a large number of citizens. The “urban elite of Pakistan” recall “his years of misrule” during which many opposition politicians had been murdered, their families, including their women folk had been insulted and thousands of innocent men and women were put into jail (*Malicious* 49). The non-fictional piece comes to an end with the death of Bhutto by hanging according to the verdict of Supreme Court of Pakistan. The influence of social body in the life of a man is testified here. Because of certain misdeeds committed by Bhutto, the majority of Pakistani civilians went against him. Finally, he had been dethroned and sent to gallows. In this narrative, Khushwant Singh has shown how politics can raise a man to the seat of power and the same politics can corrupt a man of power too. A corrupt man may bring degradation to himself and devastation to a nation.

Singh has expressed his irony while portraying the character of Bhutto. The man who did not hesitate to settle the murder of many opposition politicians and also insult their family members in various ways, appears to be helpless. He was also frightened at knowing about his own death sentence passed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Bhutto’s helplessness is evidenced through one of his comments: “Marna bahut mushkil hota hai (dying is not easy)” (*Malicious*56).

While narrating the last journey of Bhutto, the narrator sarcastically says that all his boldness had gone out of him. He lay on the mattress and went into a kind of coma. Besides, there are different descriptions of what followed. According to one, when after waking up Mr. Bhutto “saw the men with handcuffs, he panicked”. He

tried various tricks to consume time. He wanted to “take a bath”, “write his will”, “have a cup of tea” etc. But all his demands were firmly but politely denied. According to some others, he refused to be woken up. The Superintendent feared that he might have committed suicide. But the doctor felt his pulse, heard his heartbeats through his stethoscope and opened his eyelids to make sure that he was alive. In both the descriptions it is found that Bhutto was afraid to die (*Malicious* 59). Here, Khushwant Singh satirically shows how a powerful man having great potential may turn into a caricature in the long run.

Politics is a path of troubles and machinations that the story reveals. The use of political power as a tool to enjoy life without end is a dream that may end suddenly without any warning. In “From the Death Sentence to the Gallows” the court delivering verdict under an army Chief General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, is indeed an instance of maligning its own existence. Besides, the biography is a political and moral debacle for one who had used power to murder many, but had no courage to face his own death. It may be justified to say that political power circulates through various modes, and this power is not any one’s obedient servant for all times. The autocratic men, in many cases, face ironical turns and twists in their lives.

In the travelogue “Pakistan: Sweet and Sour”, the presence of the power of religion in a man’s life is felt. According to Khushwant Singh the public ban on alcohol is much more of a farce in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This discourse¹ is used in the form of a devastating irony that the author could use to travesty the Pak aristocrats, He states: “a drinking man may find liquor in the mirages of the Sahara desert. In Pakistan, liquor is banned, but it does not run like the river Ravi in spate; however it is present in tumbler full in most well-to-do Pakistani homes”. A man may have “whisky served in a metal tumblers” or in a teapot and have to sip it from a china cup. It costs more than twice as much as in India but it may go down twice as well because it tastes of sin (*Malicious* 66). The double standards of the Pakistanis get exposed here, because in Islam drinking wine is considered a sin as Pakistan is known as an Islamic country.

The role of religious belief in the life of man as well as social custom is found evidenced with this reference to wine. Besides, the travelogue also shows how faith system may play a huge role in the social life of people. At Lahore, “the morning azaans blare forth in succession” from a large number of mosques enduring for twenty-five minutes, “followed by recitations from the Quran” (*Malicious* 67).

In this regard, Khushwant Singh comes close to Foucault observing that “religion” is not a category of thought to be trusted in his most important writings. He frequently assumes its usually ordinary meanings. He neither projects a fixed metaphysical essence behind the term nor uses it with a single judgement. Religion, according to Michel Foucault, enhances the “constraints” of confinement; it “safeguards the old secrets of reason” and “constitutes the concrete form of what cannot go mad”. Religion is seen as part of a wider disciplinary apparatus, developed from monastic models of ordered existence. Silence was part of the disciplinary control found in “religious exercises” and incorporated into structures of penal practice. The church is for Foucault a part of the network of institutions (an apparatus) which seeks to control speech and silence. They form a political strategy in the creation of religious “truth”. Religious powers govern the individual self and nation-states through the operations of the said and unsaid; and it is precisely this mechanism of coercion which motivates Foucault to develop his ideas of a “political spirituality” (Carrette 31-32).

Mitchel Foucault’s concept of micro-mechanism of power may be found applicable here. In analysing “micro-mechanisms of power”, John Gledhill remarks that the mechanism of power is grounded in everyday life. He observes that Foucault has defined power in a distinctive way, by refusing to reduce it to the negative control of the will of others. He argues against treating dominant forms of social knowledge merely as ideologies legitimating oppressive relations. Foucault has contended that such forms of knowledge could only underpin “technologies of domination” over people because these could define “a field of knowledge accepted as truth.” The production of these “regimes of truth” is the dynamic aspect of power (129-30).

Religion, being a predominant factor in everyday life extends its power to define the everyday life of a country like Pakistan as Khushwant Singh observes. The impact of religious system is found again in another travelogue “Plane to Pakistan”. The power of religion on the life of a nation like Pakistan is so inauthentic and dogmatic that the Arabic news is broadcasted in Arabic usually in Pakistan Radio. According to the writer, “Someone explained to me that this was because the Quran was in Arabic,” (*Malicious*75). From the above discussion it seems that the Pakistani power regimes built up by certain discourses suppress the common man’s language which is close to Hindi. In fact, the Arabic discourse is not accessible to the general public of Pakistan. This is a technology of political domination as the language mystifies messages and ideas and people accept these as religiously true and hence unquestionable. The writer also points out that the religion of Islam is used to political ends in the regime of the then Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto:

Bhutto succumbed to mulla pressure and agreed to make Pakistan a modern Islamic State. But, writes Kureishi, “Islamisation built no hospitals, no schools, no houses; it cleaned no water and installed no electricity... Under the tyranny of the priesthood with the cooperation of the army, Pakistan would embody Islam itself.”(*Malicious* 76)

Political power instead of being power exercise in the interest of people is seen to serve a religious group of mullas and Islamic army. Bhutto’s political regime shows its deprivation of humanistic goals and objectives, for the religious discourse put in place is unquestionable.

The article “War and Cricket” reveals how politics and diplomacy both in India and Pakistan swing to cricket. The Pakistani politicians manage to keep the initiative in their hands all the time. As Rajiv Gandhi was reluctant to invite Zia to India, Zia would have “decided to invite himself” to watch a test match between the two nations of India and Pakistan in February 1987. He came with his “Begum Sahiba and daughter” in order to score diplomatically and deceptively a personal upper-hand as the head of the State of Pakistan. He then went triumphantly to Jaipur to watch cricket. (*Malicious* 79)

The above incident is an example of execution of the diplomatic skill by the representative of state machinery to keep healthy bilateral relation with another nation. This cricket diplomacy as it is called is a case of silencing the opposition of home crowds, diverting their attention from real troubles in the country by this smokescreen of growing friendship with neighbouring countries. Pakistan has been adept in such mannerisms which have never improved bilateral relations between the two nations of India and Pakistan. Nevertheless, the point of political power as regulated by the army chief of a nation is put across by Khushwant Singh.

‘Many Faces’, another part of the book may be seen as revealing many faces of power politics. Khushwant Singh himself was familiar with politicians and power-politics, since he was an M.P. in the parliament for six years from 1980-1986. This part of the book includes the short biographies of the eminent personalities of India. Among those the selected ones for this chapter are: Rajiv Gandhi (1944 –1991), Sanjay Gandhi (1946 –1980), and V.P.Singh (1931 –2009). Khushwant Singh has portrayed all these characters in their social contexts as well as individual characteristics that become influential factors in their lives.

While portraying the character of Rajiv Gandhi (1944 –1991), Singh brings out the impact of the circumstantial pressure from the Congress Party workers to make him join politics immediately after his mother’s unfortunate assassination. In the next few days, Rajiv Gadhi was expected to announce his decision to “quit flying” and “enter politics”. He had no interest in politics and had a very poor opinion of the politicians. He was unwilling to change his career. Besides, his wife “Sonia was totally against his going into the hurly burly of political life”. However, he at last decided to join the party under pressure from the Congress Party members (*Malicious* 83).

It is in reference to Rajiv Gandhi that the comments made by J.Murickan.S.J, a critic on power relations are found valuable. According to Murickan, power resides not only in the “formal organisations”, but it also lies in “communities, families and friendship groups”. A person at his personal level may acquire “leadership of his friendship group” not by any election or appointment but by his sheer ability to influence his peers. Opinion leadership is another informal position of power.

Leadership of the expert, of the moneyed, and of the celebrity refers to the informal power. It is not completely absent in formal organisations. Frequently organisational activity is controlled by the persons who do not occupy “formal positions of authority”. The phrase ‘king maker’ is an expression of the presence of such an informal power (6).

Besides, while assessing Rajiv Gandhi’s character Khushwant Singh examines the impact of “illusion of invulnerability” in the form of negative power as a result of sympathy-propelled massive success in election of his party in all over the country under his leadership. This led him to feel himself invulnerable and the resultant decaying of his image within two years of his second term as the Prime Minister:

He succumbed to the temptation of riding roughshod over dissenters, ignored institutions and traditions of governance, appointed friends unknown to the public to important public positions and unceremoniously fired those whose vibes did not please him. (*Malicious* 85)

While passing her comments on Gandhi, Neena Gopal, a journalist says that even after losing power in Centre, Gandhi saw the “mass hysteria” wherever he went as a sign of his immense popularity, as a “vindication that the people still loved him” and that he remained his “party’s main vote-catcher”(10).

Rajiv Gandhi, not a grass root politician, had no political vision or acumen of his grandfather Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, nor did he possess charisma of his mother Indira Gandhi. He had to survive in his troubling field of power politics by any means. So, his approach was to promote his friends and sycophants by suppressing others’ sane dissent within the party. Political power is such a vicious circuit. This is Khushwant Singh’s critical examination of Rajiv Gandhi’s character and political manipulation of power he enjoyed. Singh as an author exposes Rajiv Gandhi and does not fear to expose Gandhi’s mishandling of power.

The Congress Party is practically family-centric, centred on the Nehru-Gandhi family. So, Sanjay Gandhi of this family raised politically powerful and exercised authority equal to the Prime Minister’s without institutional

responsibilities. While narrating the last journey of Sanjay Gandhi in the year of 1980, Singh observes the impact of personality cult that led Gandhi to promote the “Sanjay Cult” (*Malicious* 88). Singh finds that at the funeral of Sanjay Gandhi the crowd was larger than that one had been witnessed at the funeral of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister in the 50’s and 60’s. In this piece, Singh has compared the image of Sanjay Gandhi with that of great revolutionary Che Guevara, the Argentine Marxist revolutionary. It is in this context to note Khushwant Singh’s satirical intent that like Guevara, Sanjay too was more feared than loved. Singh recalls Sanjay’s impertinence “that a leader who is feared is more respected than a leader who is loved” (*Malicious* 88). Sanjay Gandhi’s rise to political power proves that conspiracy and death walk along the power corridors. His death by plane crash remains controversial.

Singh narrates the character of V. P. Singh (1931 –2009), as a powerful orator. Viswanath Pratap Singh has been narrated as one of the most competent ministers in the ministry of Rajiv Gandhi but “by no means the most outstanding in the Treasury Benches” (*Malicious* 95). Besides, the writer also mentions about V P Singh’s depth of knowledge, a powerful weapon to present the budget in the Parliament. Rajiv Gandhi chose V.P. Singh as the Finance Minister in place of Pranab Mukherjee. It was to his credit that the first budget he presented, though totally “at variance with Pranab’s way of thinking”, was warmly supported and accepted by the industrialists. Nani Palkhivala, an eminent lawyer and also a Director of Tatas and the country’s “best-known expert of budgetary finance”, who generally always used to find loopholes in almost all the budgets, remained full of praise for V.P Singh’s first budget (*Malicious*106).

V.P. Singh was born in the Rathore Royal Family of Manda to Raja Bhagwati Prasad Singh of Daiya and was later adopted by Raja Bahadur Ram Gopal Singh of Manda in 1936, whom he succeeded in 1941. He soon made a name for himself in the state Congress Party for his unfailing rectitude, a reputation that he would carry with him throughout his career.

Khushwant Singh through the biography of V.P. Singh has tried to convey the message how the business, industry and the political institutes are manipulated

by important players like powerful orators, lawyers, economists to promote self-aggrandisement. Singh sets his observant eyes on the power game of politics. He does not tire at exposing the lies and shady deals of politics and the leaders' power hunger. V.P. Singh's political career catches a few nuanced dimension of political power. The Bofors deal remained a big scandal involving huge financial kickbacks allegedly benefitting the Congress Party and the Nehru-Gandhi family. Khushwant Singh's description captures impermanent and opportunistic ties among political leaders. Even power could lead to ultimate destruction of a democratic framework, which was seen during the imposition of national emergency (1975) by Indira Gandhi.

The political portraiture capturing varied shades of life and development even of a nation could be seen capturing exercises of power as Foucault has theorised. One of the most important features of Foucault's views is that mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge which collate information on people's activities and existence. The knowledge gathered in this way further reinforces dynamics of power. Foucault contradicts the well-known idea which says 'knowledge is power'; rather it is the discourse which produces power, and knowledge is co-existent with it. Foucault is interested in studying the complex relations between power and knowledge without emphasising that they are the same things. Without being same goal-oriented, power and knowledge involve one another. For Foucault, power and knowledge are not seen as independent entities but are inextricably related, so that, knowledge is always an exercise of power and power is always a function of knowledge.

Michel Foucault in his book *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* says that knowledge and power are "integrated with one another", and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power; this is just a way of "reviving humanism in a utopian guise". It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power (52).

The part titled 'Discovering India' of the book *Malicious Gossip* comprises short stories. Among the short stories the chosen one for study is "Why Isn't Aditi

Married". It is in this story that we find the presence of strong admiration to do something remarkable in life that keeps a girl Aditi unmarried. Aditi works in the National Institute of Oceanography. She has been there for eleven years. The narrator tries to find out the reason behind Aditi's spinsterhood. In reply to one of his questions Aditi replies intelligently and perhaps more honestly. She says, "I am not important. My work is" (*Malicious* 136). Finally, the narrator comes to know that Aditi might have found something more interesting in her work than running after a man and bearing his children. How the characteristic determination to do something, and also to know more about something, to do something extra-ordinary in life can mould a person's life is described here. Besides, the short story brings in its arena the clash between the instincts of sexuality and demanding knowledge. The story shows that Aditi combats sexuality by dint of passion for work and remains unmarried. Aditi's characteristic power of self-control triumphs over the natural human instinct of sexuality. Khushwant Singh might be suggestive of his age and time when a tendency is marked towards over-insistence on sexual relations which he ironically devalues in support of Aditi who presents individual choice and freedom by not succumbing to the social bondage of marriage and stereotypical life of a woman. This focus of Singh on the sexual life of his character may give a hint at his incontinent interests in exposing sexual hypocrisies in society. It is interesting to see that in his fictions Khushwant Singh has indulged in sexual encounters elaborately. However, both in fictions and non-fictions he intends to expose hypocrisies in the name of love and marriage.

The part of the book *Malicious Gossip* titled 'Around the World' is a collection of travelogues. The writer has brought different aspects of power generated from various aspects of our surrounding. As against repression of sex, which Freudians read to be unhealthy in living, Singh in his travel story "Indonesian Fortnight" has presented the socio-sexual scenario of Indonesia. He has also presented the aspect of sexuality as he found during his visit to this foreign land. Singh has compared the fertility of the soil with that of the women who can produce many children:

Unfortunately, its women are equally fertile and produce more mouths than the earth can feed. There is something about the rice-n-fish diet which makes men more randy and women more fecund. (*Malicious* 159)

In this above extract the tone is moulded by irony and realism. The narrator's realism and insight disclose that in Indonesia which is an Islamic country there is free mixing between males and females. Hence, molestation of women or "eve teasing" hardly exists there. That is why he observantly remarks that fascination with sex has healthier outlets in Indonesia than that in India. His Indonesian travel also throws light how "men and women mix as freely as they do in Western countries" (*Malicious* 160).

The author's satirical tone is not missed here. Indonesia, being a Muslim dominated country, is surprisingly liberal in the matter of sexual free mixing which is against the Islamic conservatism. In Indonesia, there is a famous festival called Pon. It is a surprising sexual triumphant ritual taking place on the island of Java. The event takes place seven times a year. And during the celebrations, revellers will climb up Gunung Kemukus, a hilltop Islamic shrine, found on the island of Java to join the holy ceremony to ensure good luck and fortune by having sex. Participants in the festival of Pon have to spend the night at the top of the mountain and have sex with strangers if they want good luck and fortune to befall them in future. Besides, this tradition holds the belief that this will only work if they have sex with the exact same person all seven times throughout the year during Pon. The ceremony includes offering prayers and flowers at the grave site of Pangeran Samodro, one of the sons of a Javanese king. Participants have to wash themselves in a sacred spring and then find a stranger to perform the sexual intercourse.²

The sex-ritual here is more of pagan tribal orientations than Islamic, which is surprising in Indonesia. If power is sex or sex is power, Indonesian individuals enjoy it without damage done to any. Khushwant Singh's explorations of socio-sexual orientations in individuals and societies and politicians reveal a broad panorama of his views on sex. At times his ideas may be explained by Michel Foucault's theory.

Foucault sees sex as inextricably tied to the question of power and knowledge. For Foucault power is not something that limits discourses. It is not

repressive. On the other hand power offers opportunities for different discourse to emerge. It is in this that knowledge about sex helps to create discourse about sex. This is strengthened through institutional mechanisms. Thus, power relation is inescapably tied with sexuality.³

While on the one hand Singh has expressed his satirical view as mentioned above, in the subsequent pages of the story, he has presented the impact of religion in the formation of social custom and life of the nation. The author says that in every sunset, the Indonesian TV relays the call to prayer with words of the azaan in Arabic, and the Bahasa translation is also there with a succession of Indonesian scenes at twilight time. There is silver-domed mosques and minarets at every little village and town. Besides, it is rare that a person is not stopped on the way by groups of boys collecting donations to build new mosques. While on the one hand, Singh provides the picture of such a religion-dominated society, on the other hand he utilises the satirical intent and tone by referring to the existence of the “beer bar” at every street corner of the country which Islam by principle forbids (*Malicious* 162). This would reflect that human life is not fully contained within the dogmatic limits of any faith.

Perhaps his most famous example of practice of power and knowledge is that of the confession, as outlined in *The History of Sexuality*. Once solely a practice of the Christian Church, Foucault argues, it had become soft-eyed into secular culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through the confession, people were incited to “tell the truth” about their sexual desires, emotions, and dispositions. The event organised as a public participation or consent is only an outcome of organised power system. Through these confessions, the idea of a sexual identity at the core of self-identity-came into existence (a form of knowledge), and public exhibition, an identity that was intended to be monitored, cultivated, and often controlled. It is important to note that Foucault had understood the relationship between power and knowledge as prolific as well as compelling. He also says that power and knowledge not only brings limitation what we can do, but also opens up new ways of acting and thinking about ourselves.⁴

The same impact of religion is also seen in another travelogue “Polonaise”. Though there has been authoritative rule under Comrade Gomulka and his

commissars with iron hands, communism could generate very little enthusiasm among the common people. Besides, in spite of Marxist indoctrination that “religion was an opiate” (*Malicious* 169) the public seemed to have generated a longing for communitarianism under church. Furthermore, from the grand reception of the Pope what has been clear is that the impact of religion on the people outweighs that of communism. The tussle between the state-power and the religious authority is witnessed here with the writer’s satiric tone and comment that religion is more deep-rooted in the life of a nation than any other political ideology:

The Poles remained free of taint of either ideology; the tumultuous welcome they gave to the Pope last year left no doubt in anyone’s mind that the Catholic Church in Poland is stronger than Communism. (*Malicious* 169)

This would reveal how power relations shift in matters involving politics and faith. The same people of a political state would perhaps love to be religious even while they prefer one political party to others. In this respect, Louis Althusser’s “Ideological State Apparatus” is found relevant. While commenting on the role of state apparatuses Althusser begins with a “standard Leninist account” of the state playing a central role in securing the economic, social and political conditions necessary for the functioning and continual reproduction of capitalism, such as, the capitalist mode of production acquires a viable measure of historical stability. At its disposal the state has two “distinct but related” kinds of “coercive instrument” to secure this: the repressive state apparatuses (RSAs) and the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). The former comprise the public face of state power (law courts, police, army, state functionaries) and are grounded in a more or less explicit code of constraints and obligations. They rely on violence in that failure to comply usually elicits some form of statutory state sanction (fines, incarceration and so on). The ISAs, in contrast, function not by force but by ideology. They constitute those sites within which subjects acquire and exercise their individual rights and freedom. Among the ISAs, Althusser includes such institutions as the family, trade-unions, the media, the church and cultural ventures, but it is the education system that, in the modern era, assumes the role of the dominant ISA. In a notably polemical passage, the educational ISA is characterised as little more than a ruthless machine churning

out workers with the appropriate skills, attitudes and values to take up their appointed place within economic production (Smith 59 – 63).

How life of man in society as well as in a nation is influenced to a large extent by the religion is reflected in the travelogues “Indonesian Fortnight” and “Polonaise”. While talking about power relations in society, Mulk Raj Anand, one of the contemporary writers of Khushwant Singh appears contextual here. Anand, in his first novel *Untouchable* talks about the impact of social power structure in the life of man. In this novel, Anand shows that the marginality of women is the handiwork of the indigenous power structure that thrives on patriarchy, caste-system and class-based privileges. The *Untouchable* underscores the nonconformity of women as they are made to suffer under the predominant class structure, booming on rich-poor division. Besides, in Indian society, caste is a major factor of a person’s place in the power structure. Along with these markers of power, gendering and sexualisation of the body also play important role in keeping the women down at the bottom of the social pyramid. Khushwant Singh, though being a contemporary of Mulk Raj Anand, but, unlike him does not focus on pariah women’s social degradation. But his writings relate certain aspects of degradation in the character of high profile woman like Ma Durgeshwari, a tantric woman in the novel *Burial at Sea*.

Mrs. Pradnya V. Ghorpade observes that social disparity is a crucial factor in the caste system in India. The dominance of one caste over the other does not mean supremacy of one caste over the other. It is more precise to think of the caste system as creating a “multiplicity of hierarchies” determined by tradition within various geographical areas of organisation. The “relationship of one caste to another” is not similar to the relationship that exists between the master and the slave. The “inferior-superior relationship” of a caste can be stated in terms of its purity (35).

In another travelogue “In Gaddafi Land” Khushwant Singh continues to examine the impact of the state-power in moulding the socio-political life of the country. While talking about Gaddafi of Lybia in the African subcontinent, Khushwant Singh says that:

He outbid Israel and brought over Idi Amin for the Muslim world and gave large sums of money to Black dictators in the hope of converting them to

Islam. He sent arms and money to Pakistan for use against India in the Bangladesh War of Independence and is known to be the chief financier of Islamic bomb. All these exercises cost Libya a lot of money and earned him many enemies. (*Malicious* 235-36)

This establishes that nation-states are dictated by power-relations. Political leaders gather national and international influence by clandestine deals. This political move keeps men divided and lets them forget larger issues of brotherhood and friendship.

Khushwant Singh's artistry does not spare politicians and especially those in political establishments to pretend as religious saviours and vice-versa. Singh, in this story also says that though for short span of time, Gaddafi's effort in the propagation of Islam was appreciated by the Muslims, but soon the Saudis, Egyptians and Syrians came to regard him "as a man dangerously disturbed". The author uses his sense of humour in the form of ironic undertone and finds that while most of the outsiders regarded Gaddafi as a Muslim fanatic, the chief opposition within his country came from the mullahs who used to believe that Gaddafi was too modern (*Malicious* 236).

Singh also refers to the conspiracies that though there have been around sixteen deadly attacks on Gaddafi, he is not frightened. "Once, two bullets missed his heart by a few inches" (*Malicious* 238). But the dictator continues to appear in public all the time. Every month he manages to travel most parts of his vast country to see how things are going. Here, Khushwant Singh stresses the power of characteristic stamina as well as bravery which enables Gaddafi to carry on his dictatorial ruling overcoming various difficulties. One can mark as well how faith emboldens and empowers political leadership to cling to power.

Ivan Strenski observes that for the study of religion, Michel Foucault's "Clausewitzianism" has definite consequences. Religion becomes "the most finely tuned examples of power structures," "patterns of force" which control human lives and command how they are to be conducted. Religion, in other words, is always a "political manifestation." Besides, Religious Studies deploy the "hegemonic power of language and conceptualization" over others by claiming what they do is

“religion”. Further, those institutions identified as “religious”, must also be seen as parts of “strategies of power and domination” (346-47).

In the book *Paradise and other Stories* Singh has narrated the role of sexuality in the society. In the first story “Paradise” Margaret, a foreign visitor is found guilty of getting involved in “lesbian affair”⁵. Putli does not like to enjoy sex with her husband, leaves him, comes back to her father’s house, but ultimately manifests her sexual urge in the form of lesbianism when she meets Margaret in the Ashram. Lesbianism is considered a sin in the Indian society. Margaret is compelled to leave the Ashram. In this story, while the wish to enjoy lesbianism manifests the urge of sexuality in Putli, Margaret’s banishment from the ashram by Swamiji is the display of the civilised norm monitored by the principal of civilised society: “There was a long silence before I asked, ‘You want me to leave the ashram?’ ‘I think it would be the best for you’ ”(*Paradise* 31).

Rosalee Telela observes that many people have difficulty in integrating their “sexuality with their religious beliefs” and this difficulty is intensified if they are “lesbian or homosexual.” Most people were raised with religious beliefs which had little space for the truth, especially if they are lesbian or homosexual. While the word “love” can be used normally in a religious setting, it is generally used so conditionally that it seldom captures the “spiritual essence of love” yet too often religious institutes teach about political and social order and control (35).

Lesbianism, though not accepted in Indian Society generally, but of course, it is one of the different categorises of sexual identity as a whole. According to Joane Nagel, different sexual identities can be considered significant as per changing situations from time to time:

Sexual identities (gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, butch, femme, promiscuous, celibate, monogamous etc.), like ethnic identities, are negotiated between individuals and audiences, and these can recede or advance in social significance in different situations and throughout the life course. Individuals have portfolios of sexual identities some of which are more or less salient in various situations and vis-à-vis various audiences. As

settings and spectators change, the socially defined array of sexual options opens to us changes. (48)

The story “Zora Singh” narrates the physical relation between the protagonist Zora Singh and the house maid Deepo. Zora Singh, on the one hand, is sympathetic to the helpless family of Deepo with her two children, but on the other, he is interested in enjoying extramarital affair in the form of secret sensual pleasure with the widow. Through this story, Khushwant Singh tries to expose the bitter truth that there is nothing free to get on this earth. If there is charity to any needy person, that is also exchanged in terms of some kind of return or the other. The writer here satirises the human nature embodied with several limitations and self-interestedness. “This became a weekly routine. Deepo awaited the Sahib’s two words: ‘Aj sham, this evening.’”(Paradise 83). On Zora’s part it is one kind of compassion for a helpless widow, who might otherwise have become easy target to other men’s lust, but For Deepo, it is returning thanks to a man who provides shelter for her and her children.

The story presents the stark reality of life weighting down a woman in poverty and privation and also relieving a man of instinctual and sexual drives. Khushwant Singh has rightly pointed to the social attitude of Zora’s ‘kindness’ and as well Deepo’s ‘gratitude’ as all fake and essentially a frailty. The castration complex in the character of Deepo plays a big role in building and continuation of this illegal relationship. Deepo, in absence of her husband feels helpless and aspires for protection from another male figure.

Bill Hardwig comments that in Freud’s conception of a girl’s “normal” development through “the Oedipal complex”, she sees that she has already been “castrated” and blames her mother for this “lack,” because she too is castrated. The girl then turns her attention away from her mother as primal love-object to her father, adopting the “normal” female passivity. Lacan attempts to rescue Freud’s ideas by placing this process in the realm of language. Lacan agrees that the Oedipal complex is triggered by the child’s fear of castration, experienced as a “lack” or insufficiency, which shatters the apparent autonomy and “totality of her imago”. According to Lacan, in order to resolve this complex, the child “must abandon her attachment” to

her mother, identify with her father, and adopt her proper place in the society. But Lacan also argues that the child's fear of castration is caused not by her recognition that she does not have a physical penis, but also by her recognition that she does not have the "Phallus," the symbolic power that accumulates to the father by virtue of his place in the social and linguistic order. Lacan observes that to resolve this complex, the child must identify not with her biological father but with the "Name of the Father," the "symbolic representation of the (male-determined) organisation of power", which is personified in her father (577 -78).

The story "Wanted: a Son" deals with the story of a childless couple, both are police cops by profession. In this story Khushwant Singh furnishes the manifestation of sexual pleasure and a woman's natural desire to become a mother. When it becomes clear to Baljit that her husband Rajkumar is incapable to cope with her to have a child, she develops the desperate aspiration to get a child anyhow. It is this dominating factor in the character of Baljit that brings her frequently to the dargah to have sex with the caretaker and thus to get pregnant finally. Though Baljit is very much conscious about the fear to be caught by anyone, but she fails refrain herself from her desire of sexuality. She knows that she is taking a terrible risk. There is the CRPF group centre in the valley right across the dargah where junior policemen do their training. All of them recognise her. But she acts "like a tigress" that has "tasted human blood and thirsted for more" (*Paradise* 135).

Sexuality cannot be enjoyed alone. In human life sexuality is ironically rational; it resists loneliness. Sexuality is the force within a person urging him to break out of the physical and mental solitude. But, society is a big challenge for open sexuality. Baljit is also aware of that. In spite of all societal fear she pays frequent visits to the dargah to have sex with the caretaker to fulfil her desire for obtaining motherhood. Singh writes:

Baljit paid three more visits to the mazaar. She knew that if she did not stop soon, it was only a matter of time before someone noticed and guessed the reason. That would be the end of her marriage and possibly her career as well. (*Paradise* 137)

However, the story comes to a happy ending with the birth of a new male baby.

In the book *Paradise and Other Stories* the author has narrated the lives of different women in three different stories, namely, “Paradise”, “Zora Singh” and “Wanted a Son”. In “Paradise”, Putli, one of the inhabitants of the ashram gets involved in lesbian relationship with Margaret, a foreign visitor to the ashram from New York. As the story moves on it is disclosed that Putli, a Gujarati girl had been married to the son of a rich Gujarati merchant against her will when she was in her first year of college. (*Paradise* 19). But the groom wanted only to enjoy sex forcefully. So she had to return to her parents ultimately and her marital life came to an end in this way. After consulting doctors, psychiatrists, and sadhus for her recovery from that mental trauma; when all efforts went in vain she came to the ashram and continued her staying there finally. In the story “Zora Singh”, the female character Deepo is a widow. For her, in one hand, it is a way of giving thanks to the man by entertaining him sexually who provides shelter for her and her two sons. But on the other hand, being a widow, as she is unfortunate to enjoy marital sensual pleasure, so in Zora Singh she finds a way out to satisfy her physical urge by getting involved in clandestine affair. The same clandestine affair is found in the story “Wanted a Son”. Here, Baljit, wife of Rajkumar gets involved into sexual relationship with the caretaker of the dargah. It is through this clandestine affair with the caretaker that she gets pregnant which her husband Rajkumar failed to make her. Here, it seems that the women discussed above do not get any suitable match, they want for a true companion for their lives. They, steered by “Pleasure Principle”⁶ go on for satisfying their desires in the form of secret affairs with men they choose for a purpose.

In Singh’s works men and women are explored with sexuality for a purpose of playfulness. Thus, sex as a dark, fertile energy and creative endeavour has not been examined. Nevertheless, Singh has indicated that end by negative methodology of his character’s belittling of sexual energy only in physical aggrandisements. On the other hand, the deliberate fabrication of ‘women’ by the governing class in India belonging to male gender is given careful attention in Mulk Raj Anand’s novel.

Sohini, in Anand's *Untouchable*, plays the role of an untouchable girl who tolerantly waits for a caste Hindu to draw water for her from a well as she herself is not allowable to 'pollute' the well. Pundit Kali Nath, the priest in the nearby temple, decides to draw water for Sohini as "reward of Sohini's patience." A woman, hence, needs to maintain the restriction decided by men of higher caste and should impress them by the feminine virtues like tolerance, obedience and patient servitude in order to justify the role of an ideal woman.

In terms of Foucault's sexual theory, it may be said that socio-sexual discourse appropriated as knowledge mostly empower those in power, law and institutions of faith. Bakha, in the *Untouchable*, finds his sister Sohini as beautiful and finds her beauty as a reason behind her downfall as Sohini's youth makes her a temptress. Men are freed of any blame in the sexual abuse of women that they commit in the prevailing society. Pundit Kali Nath sexually abuses Sohini, but Bakha puts the denunciation somewhat on Sohini's sensuous attraction. Sohini's body is a threat to Bakha's family 'honour', and the responsibility is on her to keep the body away from the threatening male attention. Anand has a crucial point to make artistically, that is, the beautiful body that of a low caste woman is a threat to social honour, whereas this body is lusted for private satisfaction. Khushwant Singh recognises this fact and in many stories lays bare the body's relevance for sex, which offends the moral brigades of the society.

Pundit Kali Nath escapes his responsibility in the sexual abuse of Sohini, as Bakha holds his sister responsible for the whole mess. Female sexuality, hence, needs cautious management in a society where men are not supposed to have any self-control in matters of sexual desire. In this context Foucault's idea of an 'inspecting gaze' as found in the book *Power / Knowledge* seems useful to decoding hidden social norms of female exploitation. There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. There is needed just a look. Through this inspecting scrutiny, each individual under its weight will end by "interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself." This is a superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost (167).

Ashcroft Bill discusses that surveillance has been accepted as one of the most powerful approaches of supremacy because it places a viewer with “an elevated vantage point” from which the dominant gaze can exercise power over what is seen. This leads to the objectification of the subject “within the identifying system of power relations and confirms its subalternity and powerlessness” (207).

In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the “gaze” is the nervous state of mind that comes with the self-awareness that one can be seen and looked at. Lacan generalised that the gaze and the effects of the gaze might be produced by a lifeless object, and thus a person’s awareness of any object can persuade the self-awareness being an object in the material world of reality. Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber says that in explaining how the gaze operates, Lacan states, “I see only from one point, but in my existence, I am looked at from all sides”. These multiple views of people define them according to their multiple constituencies. Lacan further proposes that identity comes from the other: “the subject, in initio, begins in the locus of the Other, in so far as it is there that the first signifier emerges”. If one is defined by what others see, then one’s identity shifts with one’s audience. This mechanism, whereby “identity derives from the Other,” allows one to occupy different subject and object positions simultaneously. For example, a wealthy black woman’s identity shifts with the “gaze of the Other,” depending on whether that gaze focuses “on class, race, or gender.” Likewise, a white Jewish labourer maintains multiple identities. (448).

Untouchable accounts for another incident where Pundit Kali Nath makes sexually explicit suggestions to an untouchable girl and then blames her of polluting the temple premises. The concept of pollution is critical to the ideology of the caste system because it is obligatory to keep the low-caste in a state of eternal demotion.

Khushwant Singh’s another non-fictional work *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!* (2012) deals with his views about God and different rituals in His name. How religious theory structures the life of man is found in this book. Ashok Chopra, the publisher of this book, who arranges together the pieces of Khushwant Singh’s writings appropriately gives the title *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!* According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, the term, “agnosticism”, derived from Greek “agnostos”, “unknowable” is a doctrine that humans cannot know of the existence of

anything beyond the phenomena of their experience. The term has come to be equated in popular parlance with scepticism about religious questions in general and in particular with the rejection of traditional Christian beliefs under the impact of modern scientific thought.⁷

In *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!* Singh says that human society is fragmented into two prime religious families: the “Hindic” and the “Judaic”. The Hindic family includes the Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism, while the Judaic family includes the Judaism, Christianity and the Islam. The powerful role of religion in the life of a man is to decide the holistic vision of bounden to fall in God. While the Judaic family believes in one birth theory, the “Hindic” view of life is cyclical and thus births are renewed until the final release, i.e., moksha from this cycle.

The Judaic group maintains the view that God had created this world, pushed out Adam and Eve to propagate the human race and created all other forms of life. According to this view, one day, all life on earth would come to an end and also there would be the Day of Judgement when people would have to rise from their graves to be judged for their good or evil deeds, done during their lifetime, and accordingly would be sent to heaven or hell. The Judeo-Christian-Muslim view of life is in similar lines: “it has a beginning, a middle and an end”. The Hindic view of life is cyclical: “There is no beginning and no end but a continuing, unending cycle of births, deaths and rebirths” (*Agnostic* 20) until the final release which is the self-realisation of truth beyond heaven-hell paradoxes.

In the chapter titled “The need for a new religion – without a God” Singh tries to satirise the image of God as well as the power of religion believed to form man’s existence or being. Singh holds the view that the formation of man’s idea about his own identity happens through his own acts and opinions. So, instead of entering into pointless debates on whether or not God exists, one is to believe in one’s action. Singh enforces that the belief in the existence of God has little bearing on making a person good or bad as citizen. He observes by his usual ironic mode, “One can be a saintly person without believing in God and a detestable villain

believing in Him” (*Agnostic* 23). Singh’s observation appears closer to the Dharmic view of life than the Abrahamic view.

Singh’s dispassionate observation of human frailties and superstitions has convinced him that life is better with reason than with mere superficial belief in God. Singh holds to the philosophy and practice of honest agnosticism. His political criticism sounds just when he refers to the conflicts between politics and religion that are irrational and continuously harped on as sanctioned by Holy Scriptures. In this chapter, Singh has on the one hand shown the constructive power of religion through the implementation of certain rules and rituals, as followed by the two prime religious families of “Hindic” and “Judaic”:

All scriptures are held in “awe either as words of God or divinely inspired” utterances....Those which enshrine “codes of conduct and ethics” undoubtedly serve a useful purpose in providing stability to society.... However, there are religions like Islam, which enjoin “congregational namaaz” in a public mosque as a religious obligation. Christians also exhort attendance in churches on Sundays and at masses. In Hindu and Sikh temples, keertans and kathaas (sermons) are conducted regularly; without congregations to listen to them, they would lose much of their impact. (*Agnostic* 24 – 27)

Besides, Singh satirises the alleged power of religion by citing its negative aspects. In support of his sarcastic view he cites example and mentions that some years back the most sacred site in Islam, the Kaaba, at Mecca in Saudi Arabia was the scene of a “pitched battle”. In India too, there have been prolonged litigations over the control of mosques and temples and also Waqf funds and trusts. In the early 1980s, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs, was under the control of young “gun-toting” men spouting hate rather than spreading the message of love that their Gurus preached (*Agonistic* 27).

Singh remains controversial in this regard as he returned his national award of Padma Bhushan in 1984. This was in protest against the Operation Blue Star in which the Indian Army raided Amritsar and rampaged the holy shrine of the Golden Temple during the Indira Gandhi regime. Singh also has mentioned the “demolition

of the Babri Masjid” at Ayodha in Uttar Pradesh on 6th December 1992 by the “Hindu fanatics” which led to massive riots across the country (*Agonistic* 27). Of course, he is no more alive to see the Supreme Court verdict on 9th December 2019 which declared the construction of the Rama Temple in Ayodha in the same site. From here it is clear that personal assumptions of the intelligent persons do not stand scrutiny of historical facts as to be arbitrated by the legal systems. The honourable Supreme Court of India in its historic verdict assured that the “evidence on record” clearly establishes that the mosque had been built by destroying the Hindu temple and that the place was originally the birth place of Lord Ram. It is thus concluded that “prior to construction of Mosque” there was 22 “Janmaasthan of Lord Ram” and that it has documentary and archaeological evidences to prove that. (116)⁸

In his effort to deconstruct the religious system of burning the corpses of the Hindus and the Sikhs, Khushwant Singh suggests that instead of burning a corpse which consumes roughly two quintals of wood, and thus a shocking total of millions of quintals of wood every year, Hindus and Sikhs may bury their corpses without erecting tombstones so that after every five years the land is returned to agricultural purpose. In fact, the soil is always “in need of rejuvenation” (*Agnostic* 39). These statements would obviously set Khushwant Singh as pragmatic and agnostic. Even the Hindus have started using electric funerals. But surprisingly Singh has no suggestions for the Muslims and the Christians who occupy land areas expansively to bury dead bodies, and the land area increases without good use for the future.

In one part of the chapter, Singh sets on his emphatic conviction that all religious systems have failed us, failed all humanity. These have produced more “misunderstanding and hatred than love and friendship” (*Agnostic* 41). However, since some people need some sort of system to believe in, there is need to develop a new religion that corrects or eliminates the drawbacks of “outworn creeds”, of which we have had enough as frustrating experience (*Agnostic* 41).

In the chapter titled “Religion, Tolerance, Revenge and Miracles” Singh has satirised religion for its destructive influence in the form of intolerance preached towards the belief of other faith. Though all religious systems claim to propound love and peace, the fact remains that most of canards of violence are inspired by

religious bigotry. According to him, there is no religious system which has escaped the “cancer of intolerance” (*Agnostic* 53).

Singh has moved his satiric intent and intellectual spade to dig out the contradictions and prejudices underlying all faiths. For example, he says that Hinduism, which makes lofty claims of being the most lenient of religions, was incapable of containing itself either against Jainism or Buddhism, which broke away from it. When Hinduism came back into its own, it caused “terrible vengeance” against Jains and Buddhists and practically wiped them out as separate communities. Judaism was unable to accept the “emergence of Jesus Christ” and denounced him as a “heretic”. Christians never forgave the Jews for what they did to their Messiah and continue to persecute them to this day who struggled for generations to have a home of their own. “Then Christianity splintered into many churches: Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Protestant and dozens of others”, writes Khushwant Singh inimitably with ironic nuances. Catholics and Protestants have waged “wars against each other” and engineered massacres of each other’s populations. “When Islam rose out of paganism, Judaism and Christianity, Muslims suffered the same fate”. But, they returned rebuttals to the Jews and the Christians in the same way. Minor religious groups like the Sikhs did not escape “malaise” either. While they were able to make adjustments with the numerically more powerful Hindus and Muslims, they could not endure sub communities that broke away from the Sikh mainstream. Two groups, namely, “the Namdharis” and “the Nirankaris”, which recognised gurus of their own, were ostracised. Neither of them is allowed inside the gurudwaras and no “amritdhari (a Sikh who has been baptised as a Khalsa by taking amrit or nectar)” may have matrimonial relationship with them (*Agnostic* 53-54). Singh’s clinical exposure of the internal discord and disharmony within the same faith and among others recreates his own image as an agnostic.

Susan Curtis in her article “The Sovereignty of the Secular and the Power of Religion” says that the relationship between “sacred and secular”, however, is not “unidirectional”. That is, it is not just a question of the shaping power of culture and society on religion. Rather, one must also recognise the power of “religious ideas,

images, symbols, and moral systems” to add depth and meaning to other aspects of cultural life (337).

Khushwant Singh has also raised question about the authenticity of the miracles associated with the religion. In the book there is a story of the Jewish woodcutter and his wife who made good business by selling small phials with water from the pond which had been considered as blessed by the “Holy Virgin” (*Agnostic* 63). Through this example Singh tries to point out how it is easy to deceive innocent people in the name of religion. How a silly incident can be given the shape of a religious miracle which can be utilised as a powerful deceiving tool has satirically been narrated in this story. The silence of the woodcutter and his wife against the rumour about the “Holy Virgin’s” visit to the pond and thus earning money by selling water from that pond testifies to their deceiving character. In this chapter too, Khushwant Singh has tried to bring the negative aspects of religion to propagate that his agnostic view is the best vision to practice.

In the chapter “Anti-Muslim Prejudices” Singh discusses certain questions related to the prejudices against the Muslim community. All those prejudices are related to the Islam religion. The first prejudice is about the many wives kept by the Muslim males and thus producing a large number of children. In reply to that prolonged blame against Muslims, Singh says that it is rare nowadays that a Muslim man has more than one wife unless the first wife is “barren or physically or mentally impaired”. Besides, Singh also satirically exposes many Hindus saying that Muslims have no larger families than Hindus. In support of his comment he cites the examples of the large families of V. V. Giri, former President of India and Laloo Prasad Yadav, former Chief Minister of Bihar (*Agnostic*104).

The second prejudice is that Muslims are fanatics who try to impose their religion on others. Singh says that no community can impose its religion on others; whatever conversion takes place now a days is “those of deprived people promised a better deal” (*Agnostic*105). The writer expresses his preformed ideas about the conversion hypocrisies in India. He describes conversion to Islam or Christianity among the Scheduled Castes and Tribals. Here, too, Singh satirises the unconcern and carelessness of the Hindus indirectly responsible for the fate of Scheduled Castes

and Tribes. Singh does not explore how Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are seduced and misled by their so-called benefactors who vest interest mostly in expanding their religious network to gain their own mileage.

The third prejudice is that Muslims do not respect the other religious places of worship. In this context, it is to be mentioned that Khushwant Singh cannot deny the fact that there are historical disputes regarding demolition of Hindu temples by the Muslim conquerors, for example, Kashi Viswanath Temple at Varanasi and Mathura Sri Krishna Temple. But according to Singh, when the Hindus and the Sikhs had their upper hand, they did not “lag behind in desecrating” mosques. This contest of desecration has almost come to end with the Independence of India (*Agnostic* 105). Singh does not forget to mention the demolition of Babri Masjid by the Hindu faithfuls in the year of 1992 and thus conveys his satirical view on the anti-Muslim prejudices cultivated by the non-Muslims of the country. However, Singh has not provided any satisfactory reason for the Hindu side clinging to their belief in Lord Rama. History evidently records that Babar was an invader, whereas the Hindus are the indigenous inhabitants of this country. A mosque (Babri Masjid) built in an invader’s name is bound to be questionable as well as controversial. But, Singh has not analysed the historical root of this conflict, however, prefers to pass one sided comments on the Hindus and clings to his lopsided agnosticism.

The fourth prejudice is that Muslims are not loyal to the nation. Khushwant Singh, in this context, says that “there is no evidence of whatever of Muslim’s disloyalty to India” in times of wars between India and Pakistan. Rather, according to him, many Muslims have “laid down their lives” fighting for India against Pakistan (*Agnostic* 108). So; in this chapter it is found that Khushwant Singh has opposed all the anti-Muslim prejudices. He satirises and holds that hurtful statements are one kind of power and influential to mislead the common people, i.e., the non-Muslims against the Muslims resulting in communal disturbance. The problem with Singh’s idea is that he takes a religious group for an individual and everyone is equally rational as he himself is. The fact, however, in India is that individual freedom is a principle looking wonderful in theory, but in practice, especially in faith and religion, most persons are inspired by their respective religious ideals.

In the chapter “Religion versus Morality”, the writer talks about the power of religion. According to him, religion extends its sphere of activity including “making laws for the society”. The fear of the unknown God is found as “an effective means” of stopping men from hurting each other, from thieving each other’s properties. Secondly, religion also extends its jurisdiction by making rules of “social intercourse”. For example, who can marry and who cannot; the number of wives one can have and also prescribing rules of diet and hygiene as if they are divinely designed. Besides, religion also works as introspective machinery, i.e., “looking within oneself” to judge one’s behaviour with the other. This usually takes the form of meditation, prayer, saying the beads of the rosary and other similar practices designed to make one better as well as restore the peace of mind (*Agnostic* 210-11). The above discourse no doubt resembles Sikh morality and religion at practice.

The book comes to an end with Khushwant Singh’s mockery on the prophecies made by Swami Vivekananda. In the last chapter of the book, titled “Five Star Religion: Swami Vivekananda”, Singh has satirised the prophesy that “Europe, the centre of the manifestation of the material energy, will crumble into dust within 50 years, if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life.” Vivekananda also prophesied, what would save Europe is the “religion of Upanishads”. Singh observes that Europe has not crumbled, though fifty years since the date of prophesy is gone, but his irony aptly clings when he remarks that there has been decay in the “land of Upanishads”. Thus, the writer has condemned the belief in the miraculous power of prophecies made by any spiritual leader (*Agnostic* 244-45). In this context it may be observed that Khushwant Singh has mistakenly taken India for a state ruled by the Upanishadic principles alone. The present India is a multi-religious country where Dhramic and Judiac interests meet in conflict on fundamental principles. These contesting ideologies in India unlike other countries embracing one dominant religion are cause of decay that Singh observes.

To conclude, Khushwant Singh himself has not done prophesy, and remained committed to live a life by reason and logic. His education in European literature and rationality must have influenced his way towards pragmatism and moral uprightness.

As a Sikh too, he has appropriated the Guru's teachings of nonviolence and service. Even in non-fictional works, he has examined human frailties as well as socio-political systems that fail humanity at large. While being critical of state-power relations, sexual and religious cults as exploitive; Singh appears as a friendly spirit close to Michel Foucault in many respects if not in most others. However, it would be incorrect to see Khushwant Singh as a theorist of any kind or a philosopher of original vision. He appears as an agnostic, moralist and pragmatic free from dogmatic beliefs.

Notes

1. James Paul Gee and Michael Handford in the “Introduction” of their book says that discourse analysis is the “study of language in use”. It is the study of the meanings given to the language and the actions carried out when the language is used in specific contexts. Discourse analysis is also sometimes defined as the study of language above the level of a sentence, of the ways “sentences combine to create meaning, coherence, and accomplish purposes”. However, even a single sentence or utterance can be analysed as a “communication” or as an “action,” and not just as a sentence structure whose “literal meaning” flows from the nature of grammar.

Source: Paul Gee, James and Michael Handford. *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Routledge, 2012. p.1.

2. www.askmen.com/top_10/dating/crazy-nsfw-sex-cultures, Accessed 1 May, 2020.
3. This commentary is a part of The Atlas Society's 1999 online “Cyber Seminar” entitled “The Continental Origins of Postmodernism.”
Source: [www. HYPERLINK "https://atlassociety.org/objectivism/atlas-university/deeper-dive-blog" HYPERLINK "https://atlassociety.org/objectivism/atlas-university/deeper-dive-blog" HYPERLINK "https://atlassociety.org/objectivism/atlas-university/deeper-dive-blog"atlassociety.org/objectivism/atlas-university/deeper-dive-blog](http://www.HYPERLINK \). Accessed 1May, 2020.
4. www.routledgesoc.com/category/profile-tags/powerknowledge, Accessed 1May, 2020.
5. Lesbianism, also called “sapphism” refers to the female homosexuality. It is the quality or state of intense emotional and usually erotic attraction of a human female to another female. Just as heterosexual orientation produces a great variety of behaviours, so, too, lesbianism presents no unified face. Some lesbians hide or deny their orientation, marrying in order to be accepted by their families and communities. Others—often in the relative

anonymity of an urban setting—prefer to live openly as lesbians, sometimes bearing and rearing children.

Source: www.britannica.com/topic/lesbianism, Accessed 1May,2020.

6. The “pleasure principle” is a term originally developed by Sigmund Freud to characterise the tendency of people to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Freud argued that people will sometimes go to great lengths to avoid even momentary pain, particularly at times of psychological weakness or vulnerability. Paul Allen Miller observes that Freud, in fact, defines the “pleasure principle” as one of the “self-preservative or ego instincts.” The reality principle is its reflex and represents, not the Real, but our “socially constructed picture of the world” that sets parameters on our “pursuit of pleasure” so as to avoid unpleasure.

Source: Miller, Paul Allen. “Enjoyment Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Antigone, Julian of Norwich, and the Use of Pleasures.” *The Comparatist*, Vol. 39 (October 2015), pp. 47-63, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307.

7. www.britannica.com/topic/agnosticism. Accessed 1May, 2020.
8. “In the Supreme Court of India, Civil Appellate Jurisdiction, Civil Appeal Nos 10866 - 67 of 2010”.www.sci.gov.in/pdf/JUD_2.pdf , Accessed 1May, 2020.

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Chapter – V

Moral Issues in Selected Works of Khushwant Singh

Ideas of power relations and sexuality affect the moral principle in Khushwant Singh's works. In other words, the moral principle which Singh advocates and projects through his fictional characters is strongly moulded by power structures and sexual relations present in the society and culture. This chapter intends to explore the dynamics of these relationships being complicated, but vigorous in shaping the socio-political and cultural life of people.

The overtly sexual content in the selected texts for this study may work as a factor to produce a certain misgiving about the writer's intention. The manifestation of sexuality in the selected texts may lead the readers to denounce the writing as pornographic. However, Singh's deployment of sarcasm would actually steer his artistic goal to achieve a moral vision.

In the previous chapters, concepts of power relations and sexuality have been explored. Their relevance for Singh's creative fictions and texts has been examined in the light of theoretical premises propounded by Michel Foucault and Sigmund Freud mostly. Both these thinkers are known for their critique of Western and conventional Christian notions of morality. These notions of morality naturally refer to and operate in the Greco-Roman culture that generates such forms and operations. It is of course, not to deny the fact that some moral perspectives enunciated in the West and the East are common, hence appreciated as universal and not culture specific.

The socio-political context and sexual milieu with multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic background as discerned in Singh's writings mostly point to the Indian society. Thus, the moral dimensions in such a complex socio-political culture as these emerge in the fictions is reflective of the broadly Indian panorama deserve to be looked into in specific ways.

Walter Kaufmann in his book *The Faith of a Heretic* says that discussions on morality rest on the assumption that "moral," "morally good," "evil," and "wicked"

have some single central meaning. Philosophers go on to argue whether “moral” means “approved by God” or “conducive to the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number”; “approved by me” or “approved by a certain group of people”; “what I prefer and would like everybody to prefer” or “what all of us should do if we had perfect wisdom and if we were not impeded by some weakness of the will.” This account is sufficient to show that different people, and even the same person in different contexts mean different things when using the same word. What is common to the different meanings is that whatever is called “moral” should be “approved by somebody and related to conduct”; but the reference should be “primarily to character and only derivatively to conduct”, and the consent need not be unqualified (301).

The word morality refers to a structure of performance regarding the standard of right or wrong behaviour. The word carries the concepts of moral standards, with regard to behaviour, moral responsibility, referring to our conscience; and also moral identity of a person who is capable of right or wrong actions¹. Common synonyms of morality include ethics, principles, virtue, and goodness.

There are different dimensions of morality. Iredell Jenkins in *The Dimensions of Morality* writes that there are three corresponding moral levels, namely, preference, commitment, and devotion. ‘Preference’ is a force that expresses the “needs and desires” of an individual. It is “self-centred” and “self-directed”. But this does not mean that it is “self-enclosed” too. It is prompted by things outside itself, and it knows that it must figure with the world. Jenkins holds that ‘Commitment’ is a force that states the individual’s recognition of the value of other things as coordinate with his personal values. The world becomes more than merely something to be figured with: it is transformed into an object of respect. Man here recognises that the realisation of his morals and drives is not solely dependent upon the world, but is intricately bound up with the comprehension of morals and drives those are other than his own. Jenkins also says that “religious confirmation, national allegiance, marriage, social or fraternal initiation, group participation, friendship, the reading of a book, the buying of a puppy” are all similar cases of commitments; they vary in their ritual, content, intensity; but all initiate the self to something that is

isolated in “space, time, and consequences”. Such commitment is not entered upon in isolation from preference; nor does it abridge the force of this latter. People commit themselves in the direction of what they prefer, and they withdraw from commitments that demand too much of them without providing a satisfactory reward. As a moral force, commitment stands above preference, but it does not replace it. As a stage of “moral emergence”, commitment signifies a “development beyond preference”, but it does not impede a relapse into this.

According to Jenkins, human beings in committing themselves become “real moral agents” because they pledge themselves to the purposes those are objectively grounded, and human beings surrender the right, though never the power, to withdraw in the face of the personal consequences of their commitment. It is in the behaviour executed on this level that the “bivalence of the moral life” stands out most sharply: the agent recognises objective values those are potential within the situations he encounters, he acknowledges his responsibility to actualise these values, and he dedicates his resources to that work. Jenkins finds that ‘Devotion’ is another force that expresses the individual’s union of himself with the object of his interest. In devotion human being surpasses his individuality by dipping himself in the concerns of something else. When a man is devoted, he constrains himself through fondness and he prefers the “content of our commitment”.

Jenkins also says that it is the essence of devotion through which the privacy of the ego is disproved. A man can accept the values of others as his own, and he makes himself participants in others’ enterprises. In devotion man reaches the highest level of moral understanding. But this does not mean that it is either possible or desirable for devotion to wholly “replace preference and commitment” as moral powers, and for man to restrain his moral life to the “plane of devotion”. It is not possible for devotion to rule life completely, because “preference” and “commitment” are the real forces those express real factors in man’s nature (181-96).

Singh, through his writings seems to know about the Indian tradition which proposes ‘Karma- Yoga’, the technique of intelligent action discussed in the *Bhagawad Gita* as a model for moral development. The Karma-Yoga is theorised as made up of three dimensions viz. duty-orientation, indifference to rewards, and

equanimity. The dimensions of Karma-Yoga are related to moral sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral character (Mulla 349). As Sikhism upholds “the virtue of the Guru is supreme” and the teacher saves “the soul which worships sincerely and humbly” (Griffin 294), it is close to the Bhakti-Yoga in Hinduism.

Morality has become a topic mired in debates and controversies. What constitutes morality and who decides what is moral or immoral is a subject of fierce discussion amongst the critics. The question of morality, just like identity, is seen today as a construct shaped by the collective discursivities of the society. Foucault phrases this as a conflict between the ‘universal’ code of conduct and the ‘subjectivation’ of the self. In this regard Graham Longford has examined Foucault’s concept of morality in his article “Sensitive Killers, Cruel Aesthetes, and Pitiless Poets: Foucault, Rorty, and the Ethics of Self-Fashioning”. He observes that by the early 1980s, Foucault turned to the questions of personal ethics of existence in response to the waning of “the idea of a morality as obedience to a code of rules”. The Greco-Roman ethics of the care of the self-entailed a relation to the self as an object of one’s own ethical self-fashioning, and a set of “quasi-spiritual exercises” through which one worked on oneself in order to “fashion or transform oneself” into an ethical subject, a work of art or object of beauty, to be admired by others, oneself, or posterity. According to Foucault, it is this ethic of the care of the self which Christianity eventually displaces with the concept of “moral behaviour” as faithfulness to a universal code of conduct. Prior to the universalisation of the “Christian code of morality”, Foucault argues that ethical behaviour comprised of a series of “deliberate, carefully modulated” practices in which the individual engaged in order to work on, adjust, moderate, or exhibit certain aspects of the self. The Christian code of morality, as Foucault points out, is always accompanied by “certain practices of the self”, even if they took the abstinent forms of “self-disclosure, renunciation, and effacement”. Greco-Roman practices of the self, meanwhile, always take place within the context of “an elementary set of ethical resolutions.” In the contemporary age in which many aspects of the Christian code has lost their authority, Foucault tends more to dwell on the forms of “subjectivation and the care of self”. Foucault’s writings also reflect an “understanding of the

interdependence between practices of the self and the moral coding of conduct”. Every morality, in the broad sense, he argues, comprises both “codes of behaviour and forms of subjectivation,” but certain of them such as Christianity, emphasise the code aspects of morality whereas others, such as in the ethics of late-antiquity, can be found “in which the strong and dynamic element is to be sought in forms of subjectivation and the practices of the self” (569-89).

This chapter is an attempt to understand the perspectives of morality in selected texts of Khushwant Singh. The texts chosen for this chapter are *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, *Delhi: A Novel*, *The Company of Women* and *Burial at Sea*.

Ravindra Kumar, a critic on the issue of morality finds in his observation on morality that our personal as well as public life is based on certain foundations of moral issues. Those issues include truth, justice, love, ethical and unethical and so on. We have to maintain our life by distinguishing between right and wrong, good and bad, necessary and unnecessary, essential and unessential, eternal and non-eternal (13). The *Train to Pakistan* brings up these moral issues to the fore in the days of partition. The text deals with the nature of man and how these are tested in times of crisis. The partition of the country becomes the contextual framework in which the moral psyche of the people is tested. Mano Majra is the microcosm of the large macrocosm. The violence in the wake of partition of India and its enactment in *Train to Pakistan* stand contradictory to the idea of morality which placed equanimity above bigotry. Singh is deeply concerned with moral issues. Being himself a witness to the destruction during the partition of the nation, he brings the moral issues in this background. India’s partition brought world’s largest mass emigration of people. It seems that the novel was written to vent his anger as well as to give free expression to the traumatic experiences during partition.

Train to Pakistan fictionalises the fear, suspicion and guilt in the communities as well as the individuals in the wake of the partition. “Muslims said that Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides get killed” (*Train* 1). Through these

lines, at the very beginning of the novel, the novelist exposes the true picture of the post-partition devastation.

The text suggests that the narration is concerned more with important moral issues than in narrating violent incidents. It is in the factual and detailed descriptions of hostility and atrocity that the text prepares the ground for intervention in moral and ethical lessons. It may well be said that the thematic interest of the text revolves around the consideration of the nature of man and enigma of human fate through a juxtaposition of violence with the concept of morality. The narration seeks to re-evaluate the position of man vis-a-vis other human beings and to establish the victory of humanity and moral cause.

While commenting on the trauma of partition of India, Radhika Chopra says that the partition of the Indian sub-continent is the most shocking experience in the recent history of the country. According to her, the violence “wrecked on each other worsened our social sense, distorted our political judgement and deranged our understanding of moral righteousness” (174). In *Train to Pakistan*, the hostility is a divergent affair that involved three communities, i.e., Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. If the Hindus and Muslims fought against each other, then the Muslims and the Sikhs were not far behind. A Sikh character in the text remarks “Never trust a Mussulman” (*Train* 128). The violence and harms suffered by women in the context of post-partition conflicts and political repressions are many and are linked frequently. The links make destructive interactions of loss and suffering. Violence imposed on women harms women; some harms expose women to further violence and additional harms; and severe too. Moreover, deadly injuries result from different forms of violence and repression in which though, women are not the primary targets of conflict but are affected in the long run.

Margaret Urban Walker in her article “Gender and Violence in Focus: A Background for Gender Justice in Reparations” observes that there are different forms of hierarchies that dispense power, authority, and opportunities in “distinct and unequal ways”, in human societies as is male domination. Gender norms constitute forms of “domination, coercion, violence, and silencing” of women by men at a given level as socially legitimate: tolerated, permissible, or required. It is

both normal and in accordance with established social “rules” that women are both unequal to men and dominated by men socially, economically, and civilly, at least within social levels (24 – 25).

Through the description mentioned above in *Train to Pakistan* a reader may comprehend how deeply Khushwant Singh is affected by the post-partition devastation. According to Shashi Tharoor, the formation and endurance of “Hindu–Muslim antagonism” was the most “significant accomplishment” of the British imperial policy: the project of “divide et impera” would reach its conclusion in the horrors of partition that eventually supplemented the collapse of British Empire in 1947 (93). The point is that the moral fabric of the peaceful multi-cultural society got suddenly shaken, and each community suspected of the other of wrong doing. So suspicion has overtaken the mutual faith and peaceful existence, which turns out to be a newly emergent moral for the people.

Ayesha Jalal observes that the partition of India did more than “rip apart the territorial unity of the subcontinent”. Ransacking of properties and the haphazard murder of innocent men, women, and children only because of their religious identity, destroyed the “psychic equilibrium” of people, now divided into two “separate and mutually hostile” nations. The overflow of refugees bringing tales of fear and grief “vitiating the atmosphere”, testing the administrative capacities of the two nations’ administrative authorities “to the hilt, and casting a grim shadow” on the independence celebrations. The human cost of partition was massive and unbalanced to its rewards, especially for the two main Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal, which were divided along evidently religious lines (145).

The text *Train to Pakistan* holds forth an optimistic outlook amidst all hostility and violence. Jugga’s sacrifice of his life to save the Muslim passengers on the train to Pakistan from an impending massive genocide constitutes one of the finest specimens in moral spectacle.

Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi finds that *Train to Pakistan* represents a “realistic picture of the distress of the people” as a result of the violence by an emission of unexpected sectarian abhorrence. The “adventurist politicians misguided people to homicide”. Amidst the intense violence the novelist expresses his positive

message by portraying the love between Jugga and Nooran. While the “government machineries fail to save the train” to Pakistan from being attacked in retaliation by the Hindus, it is the love of Jugga for his beloved Nooran which makes the work possible (163).

In his observation of morality, Ravindra Kumar further says about the relation between human psychology and the morality. According to him human psychology is concerned with the study of the external behaviour of an individual from which his inner mind can be read. Everywhere it is found that the individual’s mind is the original action whether it is “individual, social or public life” (16). In *Train to Pakistan* Khushwant Singh presents the chronological development of events relating to partition and its consequences. The action of the novel is confined to a few summer weeks in 1947 in the village of Mano Majra. With a very little depiction of the history of partition the novelist focuses on the migration of people in large numbers and the immense violence including killing, social disorder and moral lawlessness relating to that. The description follows:

Mullahs roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. Hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier abandoned their homes and fled towards the protection of the predominantly Sikh and Hindu communities in the east. (*Train* 1-2)

Khushwant Singh’s historical introduction to the story is limited merely to the two opening paragraphs of the novel where bitter accounts of those days set the true picture. Barney White-Spunner remarks that in West Pakistan the Sikhs had melted away and protested violently at “house searches” in their villages, which they said violated the “privacy of their women”. The fate of the abducted Muslim women was, on the other hand, frightening. Most were murdered when the Sikhs had no “further use for them”. Clifford Williams, an officer in Bristow’s brigade, was driving along the Grand Trunk Road when he came across the “naked, mutilated bodies” of forty women of whom only one was still alive. Their breasts had been “sliced off” and the stomachs of the pregnant women “slit open with their unborn

babies” beside them. In the West Punjab Muslim gangs carried out acts of equal horror on fleeing Hindus and Sikhs (168).

Apart from this introduction, there is a reference to the situation in which Hukum Chand, the Magistrate in Mano Majra, recollects three terrible encounters. These encounters shame the name of man with moral façade. Firstly, there was Prem Singh, Hukum Chand’s colleague, who had gone to Lahore “to fetch his wife’s jewellery” and was murdered outside a hotel. Secondly, when Sundari, the daughter of Hukum Chand’s orderly was returning with her husband Mansa Ram to their home following their wedding; a mob stopped their bus, stripped and castrated her husband before her eyes, and then raped her. Thirdly, Sunder Singh and his family who were deserted without food and drink in an unbearably hot, crowded train, when there was not even urine left to drink; he shot his children and wife and was about to put a bullet through his own hand when the train began at last to move on. Sunder Singh “heaved out the corpses of his wife and children” and came to India (*Train* 185-88). In this context the morality is questioned and questions may arise about the role of moral sense and its ineffectual nature during the crisis. How religious bigotry can make man inhuman, and how a man can be much cruel are found in the three examples mentioned above. Michel Foucault’s idea of moral care of self in the case of Sunder Singh is relevant here. Never the less, Jugga’s sacrifice reflects self-effacement as within moral behaviour also.

The moral and humane significance of Jugga’s heroic self-sacrifice, in which he dies cutting the rope across the bridge, thus preventing hundreds of Muslims plummeting from the carriage tops onto the knives and guns of the ambush party symbolises the morality of the human soul. In Mano Majra the Sikh and Muslim communities had been living together in harmony for centuries until the train loads of corpses arrived at the station of Mano Majra. Here Singh has sarcastically said that the villagers are not even aware that the country has been divided and British have left India. Rumour works as a weapon in producing hatred among the public:

Rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims in Patiala, Ambala and Kapurthala, which they had heard and dismissed, came back to their minds.... Sikh refugees had told of women jumping into wells and burning

themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Those who did not commit suicide were paraded naked in the streets, raped public, and then murdered. (*Train* 127 -28)

The partition destroys the moral fabric of India's multicultural identity. Here, the author makes one impression clear that no side is less guilty than the other in enforcing prospects of massacre. This balanced view is also evident in other parts of the novel. Thus, while the two communities of the Sikhs and Muslims in Mano Majra suffer from their disbelief against each other, the Sikh boy Jugga and the Muslim girl Nooran continue pursuing their love. While on the one hand, the miscreants kill innocent people, do massacre and plunder for pleasure, there is Jugga on the other, who dedicates his life to save the lives of the passengers in the train to Pakistan. This is justifiable that without the portrayal of the character of Jugga, the novelist's moral vision might have remained incomplete.

Insecurity of life and property during the post-partition violence appears as an upsetting factor of moral integrity. Firstly, there are threatening intimations outside the village circle. Hukum Chand, the Magistrate and the sub-inspector talk about violence in other places from an anti-Muslim point of view, and comment on the necessity of maintaining law and order in the district. Bhola, the tonga driver tells Iqbal of a suspected killing in which Sikhs are supposed to have opened fire on Muslim refugees. Then there are worrying signs about the train schedules, by which the villagers normally keep track of the time: "Instead, ghost trains went past at odd hours between midnight and dawn, disturbing the dreams of Mano Majra" (*Train* 81). The arrival of a train causes uproar in the village; there is gossip about ominous activities at the station, and at a meeting of the elders uneasiness results from the mention of a rumour of train incidents.

Here, the village Mano Majra symbolises a place of haunted dreams and rumours of death and carnage. Besides, there is also a scenario of pathos and pity, a strain of irony where the human outcry fails the name of God. Protection of the collective psyche and group identity becomes urgent when the individual feels unsafe and his personal morality is threatened. On the other hand, the moral horror is self-ruinous.

Hukum Chand predicts correctly that Jugga would accomplish his wish of saving the Muslim migrants loaded in the train to Pakistan. In an early conversation between Hukum Chand and the sub-inspector the novelist indicates that the magistrate is provided with limited moral commitments. In one place of the book the Magistrate admits “God alone knows what I would have done to these Pakistanis if I were not a government servant” (*Train* 23). But, he also has anxiety for the train to Pakistan as he has been psychologically attached to Haseena, a Muslim dancing girl who too will be in the same train. The committed love here victories over unstable human mind in producing the moral thought of mass rescue.

Train to Pakistan is also full of discussion about morality and immorality. Though Magistrate Hukum Chand is assigned to protect the moral and human values; he indulges in variously crooked and wicked activities. He hires Haseena, a sixteen year old girl, a prostitute who is younger than his own daughter to meet his sensual pleasures. Hukum Chand loves both wine and women. He gets excited to see a young woman singer in his house. The novel plays a sarcastic taunt at the magistrate’s role as he is lost in wine and thus careless for his duties (*Train* 30). It also suggests that lust can ruin the moral vigour of a person.

In Singh’s writing, passages like - “Morality, Meet Singhji, is a matter of money. Poor people cannot afford to have morals. So they have religion,” so speaks Iqbal (*Train* 39) capture the attention of the readers. Meet Singh, the Gurudwara priest, remarks after the murder of a villager – “Robbing, a fellow villager is like stealing from one’s mother.... this is Kalyug-the dark age...Now all morality has left the world” (*Train* 43). By portraying the character of Jugga, the novelist tries to convey the message that morality is an outlook towards mankind. In *Train to Pakistan* Iqbal who sounds critical and talks of instrumental morality, fails to evacuate the Muslims of the village Mano Majra safely, but men like Hukum Chand and Jugga who are found engaged in different immoral activities, appear as moral agents by saving the lives of the Muslims on their way to Pakistan by a train. The novel *Train to Pakistan* has characters to represent distinct shades of morality which their individual personality embodies.

Brij V Lal, comments that morality is permanent and cannot be changed. He states, the duration of the material universe is manifested in cycles of kalpas. A kalpa is a day of Brahmā, and one day of Brahma consists of a thousand cycles of four yugas: Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali. These four yugas, “rotating a thousand times, comprise one day (12 hours)” of Brahmā. Tulsidas, the saintly poet as well as the composer of *The Ramayana* tells in his *Ramcharitamanas* that one can deceive anyone, even one’s own guru, to satisfy material benefits in this Kaliyug. This is the dharma of this Kaliyug or Dark Age (251).

Train to Pakistan undergoes an association of the moral aspects relating to the Sikhism emphasising on human values by presenting the scene of shelter given to the refugees, “The Sikh peasants cannot refuse shelter to refugees; hospitality was not a pastime but a sacred duty when those who sought it were homeless”(Train 132).

At the end of the novel *Train to Pakistan* when Jugga dies in his effort to save the trainload of Muslim refugees going to Pakistan; his sacrifice denotes how love can change a man’s heart. Thus the novel attempts to reconcile the aspects of horror and cruelty with a singular example of courage, dignity and sacrifice in one person. Singh acknowledges the principle that man is capable to replace all monstrosities and establish the supremacy of the moral law. During the moment of crisis, it is the moral sense in man which can conquer over the beastly element in him. This is indeed the moral triumph of man so forcefully demonstrated in *Train to Pakistan*. Jugga jumps into action:

The rope had been cut in shreds. Only a thin tough strand remained. He went at it with the knife, and then with his teeth. The engine was almost on him. There was a volley of shots. The man shivered and collapsed. The rope snapped in the centre as he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan. (Train 190)

According to S K Dubey, in a fair analysis, it is found that the novelist brings out that “love in men is as deeply rooted as the urge for violence”. Love provides “strength and courage” to fight against “violence with fortitude”. The novelist has tried to show that love can transform a “criminal into a humanist”, into a “crusader

against violence and communalism” who seeks his fulfilment of life in saving the life of his lady-love. As explained earlier that Khushwant Singh is a novelist with moral vision, and he has a message for the people to avoid violence and “stand up against the evils” gripping the society and the nation (35).

In another novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Sabhrai appears as a moral character; as she is ready to protect the higher cause even by sacrificing her son if needed. She has been depicted as an orthodox, Sikh mother who is dignified, gentle and also spiritually devoted to God. The nightingale is a symbol of beauty, immortality, and freedom from the world’s troubles². But by saying that she will not hear the nightingale, Sabhrai tries to say that she would not be able to see the free India. When Sabhrai asks her son Sher what India will gain with independence, Sher replies her optimistically that spring would come to their barren land...“Once more the nightingales will sing” (*Nightingale* 89). Then, before Sabhrai dies she says, “I shall not hear the nightingales, my son” (*Nightingale* 261), a remark which symbolises the impending death of Sabhrai before the Independence of the country. It is found that the serene thought which Sabhrai, mother of Sher Singh could have cultivated is the outcome of her visionary mind boosted up by her moral spirit. Ravindra Kumar’s comments on the issue of morality may be relevant to cite:

Behind every rational and thinking mind there is a source from which thinking, feeling and willing take place. This source is known as “Psyche” or the soul. Thus the eternal truth is that we are part and parcel of the Universal Consciousness, Universal Existence, Universal Bliss, (*Sat, Chit, Ananda*), as the Eternal soul manifesting in and through the different physical forms. Thus we have to realise God or Truth in all living beings in this manner, especially in human beings as their soul and inner controller of all voluntary actions. Because of this essential identity in difference and existence of Moral Order along with Uniformity of Nature, we are capable of willing the right action and we are also free to choose between the right and the wrong action. This alone can bring universal welfare or the greatest happiness for the greatest number. (16 - 17)

However, before Sher is released from Police custody Sabhrai falls fatally ill. After praying for the whole night at the shrine, before joining the morning prayer to rescue her son she takes bath in the “bitter cold” water. As she has “brought no towel” with her, so she dries “herself in the breeze” (*Nightingale* 229). In this way she develops pneumonia and fever subsequently. Her death is symbolic of the spiritual self-sacrifice. Sudhendu Shekhar in his observation finds that in the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, the “novelist is pre-occupied” with the “theme of the anti-thesis” between violence and moral demeanour (123).

One important feature of Singh’s fiction is his aim to see the life from a moral perspective. His works bear the noble aspect of Sikh martyrdom. Guru Gobind Singh prepared the Sikh race as a self-sacrificing community. Jugga in *Train to Pakistan* cannot be valued properly unless we understand that Khushwant Singh personifies Jugga in the tradition of Sikh Guru Martyr like Guru Teg Bahadur (1621–75). Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru accepted the supreme sacrifice for the fundamental right of a person to practice freely his or her own religion without any interference. To sacrifice one’s life for a cause is an extraordinary task. It is found in the history that many people have given their lives for their personal reasons; however, what is amazing in the case of Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru is the fact that the Guru stood up not for the rights of the Sikhs, his “own people” to practise their religion, but he defended the rights also of the non-Sikhs, the Hindus in Kashmir also.

These persecuted people from Kashmir were Hindu pundits who were being threatened with conversion to Islam, under the threat of death by the Muslim emperor Aurangzeb (1618–1707). The Kashmiri Pundits (also known as Kashmiri Brahmins) are the Kashmiri Hindus and a part of the larger Saraswat Brahmin community. In 1669, the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb shunned the policy of religious tolerance once maintained by his forerunners and implemented a policy of religious oppression against the non-Muslims of the country. This caused large-scale discouragement and misery among the people of the country. No need to recall that even in Independent India these minority Kashmiri Pundits faced genocide in 1990. Rahul Pandita writes in his book:

Ours was a family of Kashmiri Pandits, and we had fled from Srinagar, in the Kashmir Valley, earlier that year. We had been forced to leave the land where our ancestors had lived for thousands of years. Most of us now sought refuge in the plains of Jammu, because of its proximity to home. (6)

According to Nirbhai Singh, a critic on Sikh morality, the Sikh Gurus crystallised the concept of the sacrifice into the doctrine of martyrdom. The concept is assimilated in *The Guru Granth*. The Sikh way of life advocates heroic action in the world and creates no false hope for the “utopian other world”. Etymologically the term ‘martyrdom’ means much more than sheer suffering physical death for faith. The event of martyrdom of Guru Arjundev is considered a supreme sacrifice for the sake of truth and moral values. He was martyred tortuously. It is also recorded in some Sikh chronicles that he was “wrapped and sewn” in the raw calf hide to “humiliate and pinch” his conscience because the cow is considered sacred in the “Hindu dharma”. In the eyes of the then Mughal Emperor Jahangir, Guru Arjundev was a Hindu religious leader. The distinct Sikh identity was not yet formed. Guru Arjundev is revered in the Sikh tradition as the “king of the martyrs”, because he sacrificed his life for the sake of humanity and truth. He represented “the dharma” as a “collective moral responsibility” and commitment to the deliverance of humanity. The martyrdom of Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur is also another historical fact. The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was annoyed with Guru Tegh Bahadur as he was carrying a banner of revolt against the Emperor. The conflict between Aurangzeb and Guru Tegh Bahadur was a clash “between bigotry and intolerance” versus “freedom of conscience”. The martyrdom of the Sikh Gurus refers to the significance of the “dharma – yudha” (holy war) which holds that the final victory shall be of “truth and good” (187 - 228).

Just as Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru is a symbol of harmony between the Hindus and Sikh communities, so also Jugga’s love for Nooran, and his rescue of the Muslims in *Train to Pakistan* justifies the morale of synchronisation which is needed between the Sikh and Muslim communities to live together. Jugga, a local bully of the village Mano Majra, who is also jailed on the charge of committing

the murder of Lala Ram Lal, the money lender is changed into a martyr for sake of humanity.

J.S.Grewal in his observation comments that according to the Sikh concept of morality, to appropriate salvation offered to man by the Guru in the world, the individual has to attempt to “cleanse himself of all evil”. Inward devotion is to be found not in external practices, but in the innermost disciplines of “love, faith, mercy and humility”, expressed in righteous and compassionate deeds and in upholding all that is true (134).

In the *Train to Pakistan* it is the moral sense of humanity that instigates Jugga to lay his life down and save the train to Pakistan from a massive genocide. In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Sabhrai executes the moral role. It is Sabhrai who becomes the moral backbone to Sher Singh during his stay in the jail. She inspired Sher with the following words: “There was a man. He had lost all his four sons and refused to give into injustice. She was to lose only one.” (*Nightingale* 229). Instead of projecting a hero, Khushwant Singh projects a heroine in the form of Sabhrai who clearly possesses the characteristic morality. Like a true devotee to her Guru she utters the message to her son Sher:

He said that my son had done wrong. But if he named the people who were with him he would be doing a greater wrong. He was no longer to be regarded as a Sikh and I was not to see his face again. (*Nightingale* 234)

Singh writes the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* on the context of Quite India Movement in the year of 1942. The novel can be considered as a moralistic novel as the full strength of the text stands on Sabhrai empowered with moral and spiritual integrity. The noble verses and spiritual ideals of the *Adi Granth* present throughout the narrative are intended to provide not merely insights into the Sikh way of life but also a perspective in the light of which the characters can be morally judged.

The novel *Delhi: A Novel* reveals history sarcastically. The narrator Musaddi Lal recalls the past with remembrance to his ancestors:

When Mohammed Ghori defeated and slew Raja Prithvi Raj and became ruler of Delhi my ancestors acquired knowledge of Turki, Arabic and Persian and continued in the service of the new ruler. My great-grandfather served under Sultan Qutubuddin Aibak and with his eyes saw the destruction of Hindu and Jain temples, the building of the Jamia Masjid later called Quwwat-ul-Islam on their ruins and the beginnings of the tower of victory, the Qutub Minar. (*Delhi* 50)

The novelist presents the history by rendering all the terrifying acts of horror that have been committed in past. The conquerors of Delhi were bloodthirsty. Singh also criticises the immorality in the form of human frailties and weaknesses and ridicules many other aspects of human foibles. The novel *Delhi: A Novel* seems to be a product intermingled with Indian history and the author's personal life. It exposes in ironical mode the shortcomings of the human society. Irony is also a favourite mode through which Khushwant Singh comes to our view as a writer. In 'A Note from the Author' to this novel, he writes that in this novel he has tried to "tell the story of Delhi from its earliest beginnings to the present times." He also says that he constructed it from "records chronicled by eye-witnesses." It is from the very beginning to the end of the novel that the reader can find a series of parodies present throughout the narrative. The novel begins in this way:

I return to Delhi as I return to my mistress Bhagmati when I have had my fill of whoring in foreign lands. Delhi and Bhagmati have a lot in common. Having been long misused by rough people they have learnt to conceal their seductive charms under a mask of repulsive ugliness. (*Delhi* 1)

The above passage is suggestive in mixing the novelist's own person and the narrator of the text. He is not afraid of speaking what others might hesitate to express. His sense of irony is so expansive that it touches every aspect of life and activity including politics, religion and morality. For example, he talks about the Indian punctuality by referring to the Air-India flights' schedules which are often behind their scheduled time. Singh attacks the Customs Department where officials always force passengers to part with goods purchased abroad. He spares neither the pompous politician nor the common porter. The taxi driver asks for double charge,

while taking the narrator in his cab another day. When he goes to his house there is no electricity, no water and when he wants to complain to the caretaker he finds two girls conversing in the late hours. At last after several attempts he gets the telephonic access. The man at the other end tells him to dial Assistance, and there he receives again that “Number out of order please, dial Complaints” (*Delhi* 6). The narrator gives up in revulsion saying, “I will write letters to the papers about delays at the airport, the manners of customs inspectors, cheating by cab-drivers, the inefficiency of the electricity company, Delhi telephones, Delhi water supply” (*Delhi* 6-7). The scenario that is narrated here is the human negligence and the lack of sense of duty.

While commenting on the novel Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi says that Khushwant Singh in this novel makes a rational assessment of the social and political situations and the plight of people in general. She also says that in the novel there is an undercurrent of philosophy of Sufism. Sufism is an old religious sect. Khwaja Nizamuddin was a Sufi saint who led a simple ascetic life and left all worldly possessions and pleasures. For the people shunned by the others, Peer Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin took them into his fold and in his own words he became an “umbrella against the burning sun of Muslim bigotry and the downpour of Hindu contempt.” One of Khwaja Nizamuddin’s principal aims was to remove the bitterness prevailing between the Hindus and the Muslims. He preached that there was only one God and laid stress on the brotherhood of mankind...Thus, Khwaja Nizamuddin became the messenger of love, peace and unity. According to Devi, his message becomes “the message of the novelist”. The novelist stresses that the primary feature of “India’s culture is and always had been its extreme tolerance in religious affairs” (58-59).

While commenting on Sufism, Leonard Lewisohn says that in Sufism love is the subject of “innumerable tributes”. Sufism involves detachment from the world and abstraction from material things and, ultimately, dissolution of the self, its first beginnings being the removal of all obstacles to spiritual progress. The Sufi who goes through the spiritual path is characterised as a “seeker, a wanderer or voyager

or an arrive” according to whether he is respectively a “novice, initiate or gnostic master” (435- 63).

The use of sarcasm serves the writer’s moral vision. Singh not only criticises the ways of living of the Hindus but also that of the Muslims. In the novel *Delhi: A Novel* he has given a number of sarcastic references to the Indian history. After the death of Jalaluddin Firoze (1290-96), Sultan Alauddin Khilji (1296–1316) set about despoiling the Hindu kingdoms of the south, the Hindus like Mussadi are not able to live. He feels humiliated since his state is being neither a Hindu nor a Muslim in category. Hassan has made himself greater with the blessings of the Khwaja Sahib:

He was like an actor who takes off a mask which has moustaches painted insolently upwards and puts on another which has them hanging down in humility. The arrogant boaster suddenly turned into an ardent hem-kisser and tear-shedder. (*Delhi* 73)

Critic Pramod Kumar Singh expresses his view that in *Delhi: A Novel*, Khushwant Singh “ironically satirises the doctors” who are frequently negligent of their duties. When the narrator “goes for an outing with Bhagmati” at the tomb of Sultan Feroze Shah Tughlak (1309 –88), he was attacked suddenly by the bees aggressively. His flesh begins to swell, fingers become too fat to be useful and body tingles all over. He drove fast to the “Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital” for emergency treatment. There is a gathering of patients around the doctor’s table but he is found “engaged in talking on telephone” with somebody else. When the narrator of the story “speaks in English” about complaining to the Health Minister, English works like magic and the doctor starts examining him (146-47).

The use of English language symbolises the colonial domination. The novelist here mocks at the colonised set up of the human mind that though British has left India, but a large number of Indians likes to practice the foreign language with preference. As a result, many people suffer problems for their lack of English knowledge. Singh writes in the novel:

English works like magic in independent India. The bugger examines my stings, gives me a massive shot of something and tells me that I am lucky to

be alive. Then adds humbly, 'Please forgive me for the delay. I am only an intern.'(*Delhi* 94)

According to Sudhendu Sekhar, another critic on Khushwant Singh, sterility is found to be the "conspicuous theme" of *Delhi: A Novel*. It has been made out to be "culturally sterile despite its eventful liaisons" with many great names in history. If it speaks of their ignorance towards seeking a cultural identity of Delhi, it also discloses their "passionate preoccupations" with the demands of power. It emphasises the lack of a true, broader perspective of one's role as well as vision while in "power and self-aggrandisement". Without doubt, they manoeuvred their tenure in absence of cultural homogeneity. Sekhar again remarks that Delhi has been the "destination for plunder and lust" rather than good will and creativity. Even the novel's narrator in the earlier parts of the novel, shows his "obsessive mechanical ardour of a bohemian life-style, totally devoid of spiritual nourishment. His occasions of "reflection and self-introspection" with Bhagmati, the "ever-together consort", are instants of "deliverance from self-resignation, and for resurgence" (125).

In *The Company of Women* Khushwant Singh turns his weapon of mockery towards the Americans in the chapter "Jessica Browne". By depicting the relationship between Mohan Kumar and Jessica, he hints at the reformation of the moral values. As the time goes on, their intimate sexual connection begins to wear down. Mohan Kumar is introduced to life's every aspect to enjoy. He enjoys and feels very happy. Later Jessica Browne, one of his seniors at Princeton, playing Tennis meets and initiates Mohan Kumar to sex. She takes Mohan to her room where Mohan loses his purity. Next few months they get along with each other very intimately as if it were a permanent relationship to stay. But that doesn't last long. He finds Jessica getting irritated with him over small things. They begin to drift apart. Then one day he sees her going out with another boy hand-in-hand. He feels jealous. Khushwant Singh observes with irony and awareness of cultural differences thus: "jealousy is something Americans disdain as a medieval emotion. You break up with one, you take up with another" (*Company* 75).

Khushwant Singh has also expressed his view that the moral value of Americans regarding sexuality and that of the Indians are based on their respective cultures. Mohan Kumar is sexually a rebellious in a different culture which adheres to physical satisfactions more than any morally stable relationship. Besides, Singh exposes Mohan's character as going "on the rampage like a stud bull in a herd of cows on heat" (*Company* 96).

Mohan's father dies at Haridwar where his body is cremated without Mohan's knowledge (*Company* 156). He receives the message that his father is no more two days later. Then he goes to Haridwar, does all the post-funeral rituals. Here, the novelist while describing the beliefs and rituals seems to satirise the religious formalities of the Hindus. When Mohan takes the sacred ash of his father to dissolve it in the river Ganga, one of the Paandas takes him to the river and begins to "chant mantras in Sanskrit. Half-way through he stretched out his palm and demanded dakshina" (*Company*158). With his hand he emptied the contents in the urn into the river when Mohan grabs it firmly stating, " 'This I will do myself,' I said in a firm voice. 'No one else will touch my father's remains' " (*Company*158). Besides, the paandas who recite the appropriate mantras, two other trades have been established in the place. One is the sifting the gold or silver fillings of the teeth of the dead persons from their ashes. This job is performed by the "urchins who stand waist deep in the river, shining mirrors into the water to catch the glint of precious metal" (*Company* 159). Their partnership with the paandas to retrieve treasures is seen as a travesty of the belief and the moral attached traditionally to such rituals. The novelist is appropriate to satirise this superficial repetition of rituals without true meanings of the tradition.

Mohan's habit for sexual-expedition developed in America is borne into his Delhi residence. In the chapter "Molly Gomes" Mohan after a brief period of loneliness and perplexed mind decides to advertise for paid lady companions, and he says "It was an extraordinary decision. But I am glad I made it because it brought me many moments of joy" (*Company*165). In this brief period Mohan takes Dhanno as his mistress. The novelist, through the character of Dhanno, who works as a sweeper in the house of Mohan Kumar, seems to preach the lesson that it is poverty which

may drive a poor to lose his or her moral sense and loyalty. Persons like Dhanno do not stand up with their loyalty to the masters even if they are benevolent and kind. Mohan Kumar needs physical pleasure and in return he gives Dhanno a lot of money and sex to her satisfaction besides other privileges. But one day it is surprising to find Dhanno arrested by the Police for thieving and prostituting. The Sub-inspector and the Policewomen ask Mohan if he knew her and displays the items found in Dhanno's house. "French perfume and nail polish, a pair of gold earrings, two pairs of ladies' shoes, a couple of saris, two pair of silk salwar-kameez and a Cartier gold pen" (*Company*166). These belong to Mohan and Sonu. So poverty and prostitution may affect the moral upright of a person. This speaks of the fact that morality is a construct.

The Company of Women presents a number of sexual encounters in case of Mohan Kumar to show how uncontrolled lustfulness takes its toll. Mohan Kumar and Molly Gomes pass a very good time together. Mohan takes her to many places, buys a lot of things for her and tries to satisfy her in every way. Apart from enjoying physical intercourse they discuss about many things that Khushwant Singh uses as a weapon to satirise human nature. Gomes reminiscences that in her childhood she knew the difference between boys and girls. She had many male cousins and as children they used to show each other what they had between their thighs. "The boys were great show offs. They'd show us how far they could pee" (*Company* 179).Gomes also recollects that during her teen ages she had been sexually exploited by her own uncle, her mother's younger brother, who was twenty years older than her:

He kissed me, as he always did, but this time on my lips. He sat down on the sofa, pulled me onto his lap and started kissing the back of my neck and my ears. I could feel his prick getting stiff and large against my bum. (*Company* 180)

The idea which this incident suggests is that sex is such a personal and intimate thing that the East and the West are ready to violate moral principle for pleasure.

Besides, in this novel Singh expresses his sarcastic view against the treatment of woman as inferior. When Mohan Kumar and his father visit Achint Ram's house for the first time, the family members are introduced. The wives of all the three sons of Achint Ram "folded their hands, said namaste and sat down on the sofa furthest from us." They were not expected by conventional morality to open their mouths. They sat muted (*Company*105). Even Sonu the only daughter says, "I did my BA in English literature from Miranda House. Papa would not let me do an MA" (*Company*106). Khushwant Singh criticises the male domination and the social attitude detrimental to women's higher education prevalent in his contemporary society. Singh is found lively in the same satiric tone in his another book *Khushwant Singh on Women, Sex, Love and Lust*. In the essay titled "The male Venom" of the book he addresses the treatment of women as inferior to men. He points out that even literary giant such as "Leo Tolstoy and William Shakespeare had poor opinions" for women. Expounding on the many proverbs from across the world that feed into this gender disparity, Singh ends the essay with an English proverb that briefly concisely the chapter, "Men have many faults, women only have two. Everything they say and everything they do" (19).

The Company of Women casts the human being into immoral shreds, and the Delhi society is presented in its dark sensual dimensions. Khushwant Singh appears as a cynical observer, but his moral conviction has a point to defend. As far as the Delhi society is concerned Mohan is already a "sex maniac – who paid all kinds of women for their services" to him. But now the secret and clandestine relationship between Mohan and Susanthika Goonatileke is not known to anyone and he is considered to be a man of high quality. "Most in my circle of friends came to the conclusion that at long last I was going straight. It was a simple formula: if you fucked and were found out you were debauched, a goonda, unacceptable to society; if nobody got to know about it, you were a respectable citizen" (*Company* 213). Singh mocks at the shortcoming that in our society a corrupt person may live proudly unless his misdeeds are caught.

In the last part of the novel Mohan Kumar, the protagonist is found to hide his deadly disease of AIDS from the society. He makes a will of his properties and

ultimately commits suicide while chanting the Gayatri Mantra. Through this description, the novelist has apparently suggested that the Gayatri Mantra believed to be one of the most powerful Vedic Mantras will not come to help the diseased mind. This mantra cleans and purifies the mind towards realising the highest goal of existence, i.e., “moksha”³ in life. But Mohan is neither a true practitioner nor a confirmed believer of this Mantra. To him it is mostly perhaps another Hindu ritual that he performed in relation to his dead father. At the last moment of his life he might have remembered the words of his father that the Gayatri Mantra is in praise of the deities of all the elements in nature. It repels all evil in a man. “Gayatri is the most powerful mantra in the world, puttār. It wards off all evil” (*Company* 95). At the end of the story Mohan commits suicide by consuming Calmpose:

Then he resolutely composed himself and took the first Calmpose; as he gulped it down with a sip of water, he recited the Gayatri Mantra. He did the same with the second, and the third, till the last: thirty Gayatri Mantras with thirty pills. Then he put his head on the pillow and closed his eyes. (*Company* 232)

Krishna Kant Singh in his comment about the character of Mohan Kumar says that “Mohan Kumar becomes the man of religious temperament” during his last days. He realises the truth that he is himself liable for ending of his life. He starts to read the *Bhagwat Gita* and recite the Gayatri Mantra. His transformation is not a chance, but a “realisation of truth” which he must have to face in life, the life which he spent too much. This can also be said that in the portrayal of the character of Mohan Kumar, Singh is successful at the end of the text by doing poetic justice to the protagonist. Mohan’s death by AIDS lowers the burden of blemish. Mohan Kumar, who seems to be the “champion of Kamasutra” for his whole life, comes to realise the futility of human existence at the end (24-25).

The Kamasutra is an ancient Indian Sanskrit text composed by Vatsyayana, an ancient Indian philosopher in the third century AD. The text is on sexuality, eroticism and emotional fulfilment in life. The text mentions the four classes of women, the Padmini, Chitrini, Shankini and Hastini, as also the enumeration of the days and hours on which the women of the different classes become subject to love

(4). So far the character of Mohan Kumar is concerned he has gone through sexual expeditions with different types of women throughout his life. Hence, the term “champion of Kamasutra” is applicable to him. Further, *The Kamasutra* does not mention the *moksha* aspect of life, which would have emphasised the morality of the society beside the erotic satisfaction.

In the text *Burial at Sea* Khushwant Singh criticises the falsehood prevailing in the society. He focuses on the superstitious beliefs and bogus religion. This is a fact that there are many people with amoral character who cheat in the name of God and religion. The novelist sharply parodies the fake religious practises in the novel. In this context Victor is found spending the days exploring the countryside. It is then that once he comes across an ashram near the holiday home about which his daughter Bharati had mentioned in one of her letters. When he enquires, the caretaker replies that, that is the “ashram of Ma Durgeshwari”, a powerful tantric. People say that she was “born in a cave” in the high Himalayas. Besides, she owns a tiger called Sheroo (*Burial* 95). Khushwant Singh has presented a mysterious encounter that took place between Ma Durgeshwari and Victor during their first meeting:

Victor began to enjoy the charade. He went down on his knees and touched her feet. His eyes wandered to her thighs and his hands began to shake. Ma Durgeshwari held his head with both her hands and pulled it to her breast. She untied the sash covering her breast. ‘Now drink the milk from your mother’s bosom,’ she commanded. (*Burial* 99)

The passage mystifies tantric eroticism and sounds satiric of conventional faith as well. Besides, in the novel Khushwant Singh has cited many references to sexual relationships between Durgeshwari, the tantric woman and Victor, the industrialist. In one occasion after having sex between them it is found that Durgeshwari regrets for having “nail and bite marks” all over her body by Victor. She expresses her anxiousness to “face the people in the ashram”. As Victor proposes to marry her, she refuses that. She says that as she is Kshatriya and Victor a Brahmin so there can be no marriage. She also cannot give up her sadhvi life. But she assures Victor that she will go to him “whenever and wherever” he wants her

(*Burial* 105). Here, it is clear that Singh has boldly satirised the people who in the guise of religious personality live a deceitful life, cheat innocent people and mislead the society. Never the less, the writer knows that sex is an instinctual urge at the base of life to fulfill. A moral relationship is healthy with a healthy sex life, bare of hideous intentions and social masks.

Victor after going to Delhi sends a large station wagon to fetch Durgeshwari, Sheroo and Swami Dhananjay Maharaj. Khushwant Singh succeeds in making his reader laugh through his sarcastic statements:

His mother was happy to learn that he had paid homage to Ganga Mai and become a bhakta of a sadhvi and was practicing yoga. Only his sister and her husband were somewhat cynical about his new-found enthusiasm for what he called real India. (*Burail*110)

The past life of Ma Durgeshwari and Swami Dhananjay Maharaj is uncovered during the course of the story. Khushwant Singh being a journalist himself has presented the media as a powerful weapon of criticism against the prevailing immoralities in society. Here too, with reference to the tabloid (a newspaper having pages half the size of those of the average broadsheet, typically popular in style and dominated by sensational stories) *Thunder* he has shown how media can protest against the immoral incidents in the society. In one of the issues of the *Thunder*, there were pictures of Victor with Ma Durgeshwari and Bharati with Swami Dhananjay Maharaj. According to the tabloid's special correspondent and his research team, Ma Durgeshwari's "real name was Shanti Devi" who had been banished by her husband in Jhansi because of suspicion of her adultery (*Burial* 125). Here too, the novelist parodies the corrupt people who in the guise of religious personality hide all their sins committed in their earlier life, live a deceitful life, cheat innocent people and thus harm to the dignity of people's faith.

Furthermore, in the text, there is also another example of hypocrisy which has been narrated by the novelist while portraying the role of Durgeshwari during the pooja ceremony in the ashram and her self-contradictory gesture in her conversation with Victor:

The pooja lasted half an hour. Ma Durgeshwari chanted Sanskrit sholas in a deep, hypnotic voice that made the skin on Victor's and Bharati's arms come up in gooseflesh. As the chanting rose to a crescendo, the Englishwoman at the ashram went into a frenzy and fell at her tantric guru's feet and thrashed about like a fish out of water. After the aarti, Ma Durgeshwari helped the woman up gently and blessed her. (*Burial* 129)

Contradictory to this holy gesture of Durgeshwari the novelist has narrated the next incident which shows her lustful mentality:

As the family were about to get into their cars, Ma Durgeshwari sidled up to Victor, 'I want to be with you for a few days while you are in Delhi. Will you send a car to fetch me tomorrow or the day after?' (*Burial* 129)

Through his works, Singh has pointed out the various social evils including hypocrisy practised by people of different social status and thus befool the society. His writings are in this way a vigilant for the society to make people conscious of the deceitful traps in the walk of life.

At the end of this chapter it can be said that the texts chosen for this chapter include all the three corresponding moral levels of preference, commitment, and devotion. In the text, *Train to Pakistan*, Singh has presented the role of preference, commitment and devotion in different characters of the text. Hukum Chand, the Magistrate prefers to keep the peace in the village and also save the lives of the Muslims. Besides, the moral elements of commitment and devotion are found present in the character of Iqbal Singh, the social worker who too works for keeping peace in the village. In the character of Jugga the role of morality is found present. It is his true commitment to humanity and devotion to the moral cause of saving the lives of innocent Muslims travelling in the train to Pakistan that makes him prefer to martyr his life in an effort to save the train from a massive genocide.

In *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Buta Singh, the Magistrate prefers British colonisation and he presents himself as a loyal servant. If his character is judged from the Indian nationalistic point of view, it seems that Buta Singh is a traitor to his nation; but if it is judged neutrally within a power structure, then there is no doubt

that it is his morality which makes him devoted to his master, the British colonisers. However, he is never a detached and loyal person, since the novelist has exposed in various incidents how he deploys his criticism of the British in their absence. On the contrary, his wife Sabhrai, a devoted woman to God prefers to teach her son the lesson of fellow feeling and advises him not to disclose the names of his team mates to Police who investigate the murder of Jhimma Singh, the village head man. Here, the author expresses his post-colonial criticism though put intelligently, not elaborately.

In the novel *Delhi: A Novel*, the anonymous narrator prefers to rescue Bhagmati, a hijda, found in epileptic state on the road. Initially it may seem, that the anonymous narrator might have done that on the ground of moral kindness, but simultaneously, the force of repressed sexuality has prompted him to explore the physical feature of a hijda, as he instead of taking Bhagmati to any doctor, takes her to his house and provides her shelter. It is found in the course of the novel that there develops a sexual relationship between Bhagmati and the narrator. Besides, the narrator prefers to retain his self-dignity on the social plain. But as he frequently brings different women to his apartment, it is disclosed that he is a divided self. To hide his identity he has to keep the security guard Budh Singh silent and he pays him tips frequently. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator saves the life of Bhagmati from epileptic state, similarly in the end; Bhagmati tries to save the life of the narrator from the anti-Sikh riot in the city. She comes to the narrator taking her own life risk in the riot and wants to take him with her to the hijda locality. This shows her devotion to the narrator which moves her to perform the moral act of rescuing another person's life in danger.

In the novel *The Company of Women* Mohan Kumar, the protagonist is found involved in a series of illegitimate sexual affairs. Mohan for the whole of his life prefers to enjoy sensual pleasures. But he is committed to his social dignity too. That is why he always tries to keep his series of illegal affairs hidden. Even, when his deadly disease AIDS is diagnosed, he tries to keep that hidden. When he falls severely ill, he prefers to commit suicide by consuming sleeping pills. In this way he tries to hide the actual reason of his death and thus to save his social prestige. He is

found very much committed to save his dignity. But at the last scene he is found chanting the Gayatri Mantra. This is probably his effort to get rid of the sins committed by enjoying a series of illicit corporeal relations with large number of women. May be this realisation had come too late that makes him devoted to the Mantra. In this novel too, Khushwant Singh seems to have presented his aspects of irony. He has used Yasmeen, Mohan Kumar and another Jew student as a tool for his satirical purpose. Each supports their own religion and brings out the demerits of the other's with their interesting arguments. In one of the classes Dr Ashby, the Professor of Comparative Religion deals with the world's major religions. He lectures on the four Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita:

‘Hindus have no prescribed scriptures: no Zend-Avesta, no Torah, no Bible, no Koran. Read what moves you the most. Seek the Truth within yourself.’
And how spiritually elevating was the message of the Gita as the professor explained it – Nishkama karma: do your duty without expectation of reward.
(*Company* 76-77)

A dying man's realisation has more truth than all the sophisticated and learned talks. About this Mohan Kumar exclaims: “They made more sense to me than the other religious texts he had dealt with” (*Company* 76). Singh's appreciation of *The Gita* teaching is found here. Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi has commented about *The Company of Women* from the psychological point of view. According to her, in this text too Khushwant Singh has dealt with the socio-psychological problems of women with a deep sense of involvement in the present male-dominated society. Sarojini Bharadwaj, Yasmeen Wanchoo, Mary Joseph, Molly Gomes and Susanthika are faced with “socio-psychological problems”. In these women Singh brings to focus the conflicts between the values “imbibed through patriarchal society and impact of education and economic independence” (132-33).

Khushwant Singh by his inimitable style of social exposure comments that these women do not get any befitting match, they desired for the real companion. They go on to gratify their sexual aspirations by getting involved into clandestine affairs with men they like. A trace of criticism amounting to women's fallibility and weakness is seen here.

In another novel *Burial at Sea* the elements of preference, commitment and devotion are found present in the characters of Victor Jai Bhagwan, the protagonist and Ma Durgeshwari, the tantric woman. Victor becomes a successful business man in life due to his devotion to his works. But, later in his life when the tantric woman Ma Durgeshwari enters, both Victor and Durgeshwari prefer to enjoy illegal physical relation. The result is Durgeshwari's illegitimate pregnancy. Both Victor and Durgeshwari are committed to their social dignity. So Durgeshwari proposes to give birth the child at a hidden place, so that, no one can come to know about the scandal, Victor remains silent. Though there is always uproar among the labourers regarding the presence of Durgeshwari in the life of Victor, but he always remains adamant at his point not to leave her company. This is the element of preference in the character of Victor that makes him committed to his love for Durgeshwari.

On the basis of the above discussion this can be said that Khushwant Singh is very much relevant in the present era of moral recession. Singh is a materialist as well as a rationalist too. His idea of morality is constructed and based on personal benefits. Perhaps religion and ethics are given to fix morality for everybody.

Notes

1. Morality is concerned with the values of right and wrong behaviour which implies “men’s conduct or standard and practice of daily living”. Moral independence as “cognitive autonomy and sense of responsibility” is the essential characteristic of the human spirit.

Source: Singh, Laitonjam Muhindro .“Political Morality and Ethics in Indian Polity.” *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (April – June 2008), pp. 301-312. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41856418.

2. Nightingales appear very often in English and European poems for their links with sweetness and romance. The poet P. B. Shelley represents nightingales as “joyous rather than mournful”, in this respect joining Coleridge and Keats in reliability. The major role of nightingales in Shelley's poetry is “as communicants and celebrants of the Absolute Beauty”. They are exemplars of the “highest perfection and happiness”. (569- 70)

Source: Ford,Newell F. “The Symbolism of Shelley's Nightingales.” *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Oct., 1960), pp. 569-574. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3721383.

3. Moksha refers to the “liberation of the spirit” after death. It is the “freedom of consciousness” from the transitional character of prakriti. When consciousness withdraws itself from association with avidya and aviveka, with prakriti, there is kaivalya, moksha.

Source: Krishnananda, Swami. “The True Relation of Subject and Object”. *The Ascent to Moksha*. The Divine Life Society, pp.202, www.swami-krishnananda.org. Accessed: 31March, 2020.

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Chapter-VI

Conclusion

This concluding chapter summarises earlier chapters and brings out the final outcome of the research. It highlights the key points that have been discovered so far. Singh is a versatile author and his works are a reflection of his wide experiences throughout his life. Singh's works are full of comments and criticisms on contemporary life. In doing so, he exceeds the shortcomings of his time and reaches out to a life beyond the prejudiced realities. His works aim at a humanistic ideal prevailing in the society. Singh as a creative writer is an embodiment of the blending of the realist and the humanist. An essential quality of his writing is his satiric spirit which enlivens his fictional world. His selected works are charged with social and moral criticisms in real and symbolic terms. The concerns of the present study are however on the literary merit of Khushwant Singh as they appear in his select body of texts involving the domains of power, sexuality, and morality. In most of Singh's books, the aspects of power and sexuality are seen to have closer associations; in other words, power is used to maximise sexual aggrandisement, and sex is used to realise power in connection with powerful people. It is an inspirational endeavour for a researcher to undertake a critical study of these aspects in his works since Singh is one of the first to write about sexuality without inhibition that we usually see in his Indian contemporaries. It is already made clear that Khushwant Singh has not utilised consciously Foucault's theory of power, but this research is an attempt to delve into the power relation of politics, society, religion, law, and justice as worked out in Singh's novels.

The *Train to Pakistan* is based on the historical context of the partition of India. The conflict among different ethnic groups to control political power of the nation is reflected. Elements of ethnic identity accompanied by religious faith, as the novel shows, play a significant role in decision making about the economic, social, political, and even everyday life of the people of Southeast Asia. But while Singh shows religion as important to Indians, he does not say it caused the partition of British India. His novel reveals that ordinary life across religion gets devastated because of the partition, which was the political design of many power-seeking

groups including colonial agencies in India. Moreover, he shows how the law enforcing agencies and the people in institutional power bring allegations against the innocent people, such as Iqbal and Jugga who are not actually responsible for the crime. This reflects two important things: one is how the system of justice derives from the colonially established order; and secondly, how law in the hands of state bureaucracy can manipulate a person's life and legitimate its status by illegitimately punishing the right person. Finally in the novel, when the Policemen arrest the real robbers, they do not punish them; rather they set them free. The role of ideological state apparatus is seen here in the form of Government machineries.

European Marxists like Althusser, Gramsci and Poulantaz while observing 'structural' aspects of late capitalism have mentioned to the role of the state apparatus with special reference to the role of state bureaucracies. Poulantaz claims that "the political, economic and ideological structures have a relative autonomy" of social classes and there is a struggle and conflict among the fractions of the classes, "within the power bloc" and the state in such a situation plays a "cohesive role". Clashes are between competitive versus monopoly fractions, finance versus industrial divisions and international versus local bourgeoisie and state has to play a consistent and assimilating role in such a situation (Bhambhri 50).

For example, in *Train to Pakistan* when the magistrate Hukum Chand wants to know about the murderers of Ram Lal, the sub-inspector tells him the real story. The sub-inspector reveals without any conscience about the robbers:

They are men who were at one time in his own gang: Malli and four others from Kapura two miles down the river. But Jugga was not with them. ... We were wrong about both Jugga and the other fellow. ... (*Train* 104)

Singh's interest lies in throwing insights into how the ordinary, even law abiding person, gets rolled up in unjustified system of power. In this novel Singh seems to point ironically at the usual police practice of filing fake cases against innocent people. For example, Iqbal is taken into custody on the false accusation of the murder of Ram Lal (*Train* 57). Through this example Singh shows the misuse of the institutional position and power to fabricate charges against innocent people. In independent India too corruption continues relentlessly since the colonial times.

Corridors of power continue with old wine, but new power brokers have walked into the business. In the novel *Hukum Chand*, the magistrate plays foul game in maligning the identity of Iqbal Singh who is arrested with Jugga held by the police on the charges of involvement in Ram Lal's murder. The novelist exposes the acts of injustice, power game and politics while satirising many social modes in the fifties and sixties in India.

Train to Pakistan shows that communalism can divide a nation into separate ethnical identities and set man against each other. The political scenario of India proceeding towards division into two separate independent countries is brought at the micro level of characters by the novelist. But unfortunately, the individuals are not free from the larger macro-scenario of national politics. Whatever happens at the larger macro level has its repercussion in the local level. It is thus that Mano Majra is not an independent entity in itself. Whatever happens in Mano Majra is a reflection of what happens at the larger national field. The novelist has dealt with the macro-micro intersection of the nation and its citizens in reference to the power relations.

“It is like this, Uncle Imam Baksh. As long as we are here nobody will dare to touch you. We die first and then you can look after yourselves” (*Train* 133). Through these lines, Singh tries to convey that the common non-Muslims are against the attack on Muslims. By leaving and fearing implication, the peaceful common villagers convey the message that they are against any kind of violence, what Singh shows again and again in the novel. All violence is operated by the political agents in the name of religion, but their motive is to grasp the power and rule the innocent people.

An important feature that is seen in Singh's text is the role of sexuality through which he tries to convey the message that sexuality is essentially an affective part of human life. The characters involved in sexual activities in *Train to Pakistan* are more or less inclined to the “hetero-sexuality”. But, in the conservative socio-religious set-up, the natural love between the Sikh boy Jugga and the Muslim girl Nooran is not permitted to bloom. In *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, as Foucault holds that sexuality is controlled by institutions for power to be

enjoyed by those in authorities and in control of social relations (217). This is because sexuality is perceived as a threat to the institutional power which is self-protective.

Through his works Singh exposes the socio-political connection of power relations and also tries to destabilise sexual-religious ties in the society. Jugga's sacrifice shows that love aims beyond political conspiracies or politics of power. The novel also acknowledges that the socio-political situation remains as the powerful mechanism to drive and force individuals to face their unforeseen fates. Bruce Curtis, a critic, is found contextual here. In his remarks, in the art of government, then, governing ceased to be "seen as existing on the external boundaries" of the state; it was inside the state, inside society. Foucault emphasised that these arts presented "governing as practices" in continuity from the individual's "government of itself", through the father's government of the household, to the prince's government of the state. The "art of government" sought to introduce economy, conceived as right management, initially a concept that applied to household government, into political practice (522).

In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* the novelist mocks at the selfishness and the lust for power and position in the character of Buta Singh, a magistrate who seems to stand up and represent as a natural leader of his Sikh community; but simultaneously is committed to the British regime for his personal gain. The inferiority complex is there in the older generation who had lived their whole life under colonial reign, while the younger generation uproars for independence. This inter-generational clash is the central theme of the text, present in the relationship between Buta Singh and his son Sher.

It is be easy to label Buta Singh as a flatterer to the British Government. But, it is also important to understand his psychology in the context of a life-time of unspoken suppression and cultural appropriation. The instance of Sabhrai's visit to her son Sher in jail to convince him to disclose the names of his fellow activists in the murder of Jhimma Singh, so that he is set free from the imprisonment (*Nightingale* 223) demonstrates the dark dealings on the power corridors. It is the institutional power that punishes Sher. It is the same power which may have to

release him at a certain kind of intervention if made. Thus, the novelist displays the power relations as always dynamic and beyond easy blame or praise. Here lies the issue of the culmination of British colonisation in India which includes the exploitation and suppression of the natives.

As already told that in Khushwant Singh's works, power and sexuality move side by side. Champak, a house wife and Shunno, a servant, live in the same house, and also possess the same aspect of sexual aspiration. Singh sketches the character of Champak as a sex-thirsty woman who does not spare the teen-aged servant Mandoo too. But Champak is not ashamed of having been seen in her bare state by her teen-aged male servant and instead asks him to stay saying: "What shall I mix the water in? Both the bucket and the canister are full" (*Nightingale* 51). In this example, both the persons are used to having class consciousness and class difference; Champak makes most of her class power. The sexual body which is usually kept covered as private and sacred for some is exhibited as a means of power. Mandoo responds as asked and "his eyes never rose above Champak's knees, nor left them. Champak remained as she was, hiding her nakedness with her hands, watching the boy's embarrassment" (*Nightingale* 51).

Champak's sexual crave is disclosed in front of the readers. The role of class-consciousness is present here in her character. As she is one of the members of the house, so she possesses the class superiority to Mandoo, a teen aged servant boy, always considered as an inferior, and hence she feels no shame of having been seen in her bare state by the teen-aged male servant. In fact, she also seems to have no sense what impact might be there in the mind of a teen aged boy by seeing her in bare state. Charles Platt in his article "Class Consciousness" remarks that "class consciousness blinds"; it is an "egoistic crust" which separates us from our co-workers, and prevents understanding. Understanding needs "open-mindedness and an outward gaze", not introspection and a centring on self. But understanding, too, lies at the root of all successful endeavour, and especially, since society is essentially co-operative in character, it lies at the root of all social attempts. In proportion as class consciousness grows, our understanding contracts; with "class consciousness perfect our understanding is at zero". For Platt the home is the "last stronghold of

complacent class tyranny”. This class consciousness is indicative of power relation. The relation between employer and employee is a relation that is suggestive of the “dark ages of industry” (558-67).

Khushwant Singh is found to have been influenced with Western thought as in this novel he has referred to the Medusa:

Champak went into the bathroom and took a shower. She came back wearing her transparent kimono. She went to the window and let down the shutter. A gust of wind blew the kimono on either side, baring her from her feet to her waist. Her hair flew wildly like the snakes on Medusa’s head. (*Nightingale* 168-69)

Susan R. Bowers comments that Medusa was a powerful goddess at a time when “female authority was dominant” and the power to be dreaded was feminine. As the “serpent-goddess of the Libyan Amazons”, Medusa represented women’s wisdom. A female face “surrounded by serpent-hair was an ancient, widely-recognized symbol of divine, female wisdom” (220).

Singh is also influenced with Western thought in another occasion as found through his reference to the role of nightingale. The nightingale is a symbol of beauty, immortality, and freedom from the world’s troubles. Newell F. Ford comments that nightingales appear very often in English and European poems for their links with sweetness and romance. The poet P. B. Shelley represents nightingales as “joyous rather than mournful”, in this respect joining Coleridge and Keats in reliability. The major role of nightingales in Shelley’s poetry is “as communicants and celebrants of the Absolute Beauty”. They are exemplars of the “highest perfection and happiness” (569- 70).

In *Delhi: A Novel* the social set-up presented by the novelist exposes the hidden politics and power assemblages that impacts influence on the life at all levels. Singh does not feel hesitation for satirising the connection between sexuality and human weakness. In this text, Singh attacks the educational institutions managed by the Maulvis and their communal agenda during the Muslim period. Singh in this text shows how educational and religious institutions were clandestinely engaged in

undemocratic and illegal practices. This also exposes medieval mentality and orthodoxy of the Islamites. Moreover, these activities are well grounded in power relation.

With his attentive eyes Khushwant Singh reveals the shortcomings that trouble in all social groups in India whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. Singh in this narrative highlights the evil practice of early marriage in the past. The novel pejoratively notes: “We were married when I was nine and my wife, Ram Dulari, only seven” (*Delhi* 51). Singh here discloses the abuse of power and passion associated with the means of money, religion and women. The Muslim bait for conversion and the implicit polygamous patterns of the Islamic society are sarcastically presented in the novel. How the patriarchal Islamic society treats women as a property may be felt by the reader. The parents obviously cannot ignore social bindings, because the society is a powerful network of relations and also protects life and property when crisis takes place.

Richard M. Eaton remarks that the “greatest incidence of Islamisation” took place among the people who were called “mlecchas” in Sanskrit texts, similar to ‘barbarians’ for the Greeks. The growth of Islam was motivated by a “desire for liberation” from a “Brahmanically defined social order”. Such thought assumes a rigid Hindu caste system that harshly discriminated against its own lower caste people. Eaton also remarks that for centuries members of the lower castes suffered under the “crushing burden of oppressive and tyrannical high-caste Hindus”, especially Brahmins. When Islam came with its liberating “message of social equality”, these oppressed castes “seeking to escape the yoke of Brahmanic oppression” and aware of a social equality turned to Islam (380).

There is another story that Eaton does not highlight which is a fact, that is, Islam has not removed wide spread division from its own practice. Secondly, the lure of conversion in India points to the unstated politics of number game more than real liberation of the poor and converted. The hidden belief behind pursuing this conversion activities is motivated by earning the high status, hence of power, in the society. And more ironically this activity in the name of God’s glorification is

believed to take the conversion activist earlier and closer to heaven and God. Hence conversion by hook or crook is always welcome; more the better.

Besides, Khushwant Singh has also satirised practices and beliefs based on racial discrimination. Singh writes that it took Mussadi several weeks to realise that his wife did not intend to cohabit with him. She used to cook her food on a separate hearth and eat out of utensils she had brought with her. For her Musaddi was an unclean, “Muslim maleecha” (*Delhi* 53). Faith is not a small thing to wither away with knowledge or rationality; it dictates one’s action. Whether one faith is better or lower, faith remains. And Singh’s novel projects that faith is a measure of socio-political power.

Another motive of the novelist is to satirise and bring out facts about the Muslim rulers who helped to demolish the Hindu and Jain temples in the city out of their fanaticism: “The ulema exhort Your Majesty in the name of the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace to destroy temples and slay infidels to gain merit in the eyes of Allah” (*Delhi* 56).

This text as a political narrative describes the consequences following Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s assassination in 1984. A society is a network of relations that can exercise power to position the people who again attempt to bend the dynamics of this network to private aggrandisements. The Delhi anti-Sikh riot exposes the utter terror of mindless destruction of life with communal hatred, breakdown of state law, and socio-political divide. The mob surrounded the gurdwara and storm in. They dragged out the Bhai and “beat him up with their fists and rods” (*Delhi* 388).

In this text too Singh has brought the role of sexuality. The novel narrates how sexuality powerfully motivates hidden action beneath social gaze of sanity and goodness. It is right to agree with Foucault that social institutions or institutional apparatuses are designed to sanitise the sexually deviant and deny them with their rightful satisfaction in normal social dealings. Thus, operations of power are felt in releasing socially permitted practices. The first person narrator therefore has to hide his relationship with a socially unequal eunuch, while the eunuch does not lose

socially anything. So power operates in controlling human behaviour including sexuality.

While commenting on gaze critics like Kevin A. Pelphrey, Ronald J. Viola and Gregory McCarthy say that Gaze is a “potent social cue”, with mutual gaze often gesturing threat or approach and “averted gaze” carrying “submission or avoidance”. An explanation of the “neural substrate for gaze processing” is a vital step in the development of a “neuroscience” for social understanding (598).

Besides, the novel also narrates the instinctual power of sexuality secretly lurking towards its opposite gender in the characters of both the anonymous narrator and Bhagmati, a eunuch. The aspect of repressed sexuality may also be considered as a reason behind the narrator’s sexual appeal for Bhagmati. According to Sigmund Freud sexual repression is a psychological problem of mankind. Freud said that repression and constriction of sexual behaviour in youth would become manifest in adulthood.

Peter Madison observes that “Repression” was first used by Freud in the “early studies of hysteria” to refer to “unconsciously motivated forgetting”. This specific meaning of the word continued unchanged throughout all of Freud’s writings. But when Freud turned from the study of hysteria to other “neuroses”, he began differentiating “other defenses” such as “conversion, projection, displacement, and isolation”. He referred to these specifically as different “forms of repression”; at the same time, he used “defense” as a synonym to refer to the same mechanisms (29).

Cheryl H. Cohen comments that libertarian feminists think that sexuality has been under the “control and repression” of patriarchy. In this sense they also agree that the “self and sexuality” are socially built, but they claim that the “sexual fringe” is a repository for repressed sexuality, that pornography, woman-constructed erotica, and fantasy can help women regain contact with repressed desires. Besides, according to Cohen, libertarian feminists assume that human sexuality is a need that is best filled by a maximum of sexual pleasure. Besides, they also assume that power is intrinsic in human relations and is a part of sexual pleasure. Freedom, in terms of “sexual liberation”, refers to the freedom from oppression and injustice, freedom

from patriarchal values and heterosexual reproductive norms of sexuality, and freedom from sexual repression. It is also therefore a freedom to experiment with fantasy and desire in the pursuit of pleasure (76).

Khushwant Singh has made a similarity of the city of Delhi with Bhagmati, as both are subjected to use and abuse, but, both retain their attraction. Bhagmati is presented as an important metaphor throughout the novel which is symbolic of the very spirit of the city of Delhi, surviving through centuries. Both have similarity regarding the issue of their exploitation. As the city Delhi has been rampaged by the invaders from time to time, so is the condition of a eunuch in our society, an object of easy sexual exploitation. Singh's sarcastic tone is expressed through his comparison between a city and a living being made of flesh and blood in this issue of exploitation. Halina Marlewicz thinks that *Delhi: A Novel* is revealed as a work "embedded in human instincts, sexual drives, violent, sometimes uncontrollable, emotions, and the need to satisfy desires". It is shown to reflect and at the same time to become a reflection of individual lives as they are driven and shaped, founded on and destroyed by the strongest forces to be found in man (162).

The text *The Company of Women* is based on man-woman relationship. The novel presents multiple sexual companions across limiting boundaries of religion and class. Singh's sarcasm is abundantly alive. He chronologically presents the women characters with whom Mohan Kumar, the protagonist gets involved in physical relation, including his wife. The novelist seems to have been supporting the notion that love and sex do not follow any caste, class and community bar. It is the social liberty which the novelist pleads for through his work.

Singh has exposed the fact that it is not only Mohan who remains unsatisfied in sexual life, other women who give him company too present no better examples. The story describes the life of Mohan Kumar and a series of sexual exploits with various women. Underlying this story line however is the theme of relationship between men and women. It is a study in love, sex and passion. It is a book on the need for connection and companionship. The women characters in this novel do not shy away from sex. They are strong women who like their male counterparts' desire company, whether that is of lust or love. Mohan succumbs to AIDS at the end of the

text. It is perhaps a compensation for his carefree life. But the central focus is not on AIDS but on question of sex and companionship.

Judy Long remarks that the sexual relationship is a “major part of marriage for contemporary young adults” and enters into wooing as well. He also says that sexuality is also a part of “individual development”. Besides, the quality of the sexual relationship is often observed as an indicator of the quality of the relationship. It is also expected that people who love each other will “automatically have a good sexual relationship” (34).

. *The Company of Women* involves the aspect of hyper-sexuality in the character of Mohan Kumar the protagonist, while the text projects the female characters involved with Mohan in sexual relations influenced with pleasure principle. In Mohan Kumar’s character the influence of “hyper-sexuality” is found through his series of sexual affairs with different women. The way the character of Mohan Kumar has been portrayed, this can be said that Singh has made his character befitting to the term. It would be appropriate to acknowledge that Singh’s art has not merely engaged in producing erotically exiting or pornographic details, as some have felt. His portrait of Mohan succumbing to venereal disease is a strong objectification of death by unhindered sexuality. Moreover, Mohan’s chanting of the Gayatri Mantra at the last hour of his life does not speak a word in favour of faith, but provides advises against thoughtless love and lust beyond which there is life’s peace and liberation.

The *Burial at Sea* is full of references to sexual relationships between Victor, the protagonist and Ma Durgeshwari, a tantric woman. In one occasion after having sex between them it is found that Durgeshwari regrets for having “nail and bite marks”(Burial 105) all over her body by Victor. She expresses her anxiousness to “face the people in the ashram” (Burial 105). As Victor proposes to marry her, she refuses. She says that as she is a Kshatriya and Victor a Brahmin so there can be no marital relationship. Besides, she also cannot leave her sadhvi life. But she assures Victor that she will go to him “whenever and wherever” he wants her (Burial 105).

Through all the above instances, it is clear that Singh has boldly ridiculed the people who live a deceitful life and even in the guise of religious garb, and who

cheat innocent believers and thus mislead the society. Through the examples given, Singh has artistically explored that sexuality, religion and power have a complicated nexus. But one thing is clear in these works that express boldly, that is, sex is instinctual and needs fulfilment. Political and social power, religious knowledge, and personal recognition may come from external activities and affairs; but the sexual being is given internally. It is Singh's insistent provocation that all dogmatism regarding the sexual being needs to be shunned, and sexuality is to be more tolerantly accepted and more healthily satisfied. In this respect, Singh has achieved a unique place in artistic writings what other of his Indian contemporaries have not reflected or ignored.

Among all the power-driven machineries, society plays a very important role in affecting personal relations. Frank Tannenbaum remarks that the society is not totally "malleable to the hand" of man. The society is controlled by a series of "irreducible institutions" from time to time; those both describe man and define the basic role he plays. Man is therefore not only a product of the society, but also, he is the very child of a "complex institutional system" that conditions his survival and "sets the stage for the drama of life" itself (482).

In India and worldwide, union strikes in industrial establishments are common phenomena. In *Burial at Sea*, Victor's workers are found to be manipulated by politician Nair. Therefore, in such a social space of vested interests and contestations, it is hard to pin-point the exact source of power, which instead vindicates Foucault's power relations. The point is not that power is characteristically negative or positive for all times. As Foucault holds, power circulates and functions in relations and nexus, it does not reside in a single arm of authority. Khushwant Singh's novels show that society is a complex network of interactions and interrelationships, and life's movement is always possible in this complicated social space. When the matter comes glaringly to an immoral end, Singh does not spare a moment criticising and castigating the involved persons as unhealthy forces. The illegal relationship between Victor and Durgeshwari brings ill fame to Victor. During the demonstration organised by the mill workers' union this issue is made public by the union leader.

While narrating the power of trade unionism in the industrial sector, Singh criticises the role of trade union. Trade unions must play a key role for the welfare of the workers, and should fight for a genuine cause. But if it goes on strike on irrelevant issues, its image is tainted. Besides, the strike hampers in the course of production of the factory. In the text *Burial at Sea* it is clear that the trade union leader is a man supported by Nair. It is due to Nair's sly persistence that the union leader provokes the workers to the strike. While addressing the mill workers' assemblage the union leader says: "I am not a mill worker; I am the leader of a trade union which represents workers of many mills in Bombay including yours" (*Burial*116). In this novel, through the character of Nair Khushwant Singh shows that power not only comes through honest actions or socially beneficial practices; it also may come through destructive actions that may ruin social stability.

The influence of 'ideological state apparatus' developed by Louis Althusser is contextual here. According to Althusser, man's identity is constructed and his socio-political position is fixed by the ideological state apparatuses which include churches, different public and private 'schools', the family, the political system, including the different parties, the trade-union, the communications, namely, press, radio and television, etc. and the cultural apparatuses including literature, arts, sports, etc. Jared D Margulies remarks that Althusser develops the theory of the Ideological State Apparatuses in parallel with the conceptualisation of the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), the apparatus of the state that "exerts itself primarily" through violence and the threat of violence (the army and the police). Althusser identifies 'many' ISAs, including schools, religious institutions, the media, the family unit, etc., and notes that this list is not finite (185).

In Khushwant Singh's novels several characters like Nooran in *Train to Pakistan*, the first person narrator in *Delhi: A Novel*, Buta Singh, Sher Singh, Sabhrai and Champak in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, Mohan Kumar in *The Company of Women*, Durgeshwari in *Burial at Sea* may be understood as denizens signifying the presence of all-powerful social control or social gaze. Thus Foucault's Panopticon is relevant to realise the aforementioned characters in Singh's narratives. According to Marcelo Hoffman, the play of visibility enabled by spatial arrangements and lighting

served to make inmates the very “conduits of the power mechanism” embodied in the Panopticon. As Foucault clarifies that whenever one is dealing with a “multiplicity of individuals” on which a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic scheme may be used. Foucault detailed all of the panoptic features of the architecture of the asylum in the early nineteenth century; but its effect continues even in today’s social life. This cross-institutional takeover of panoptic architectural dispositions intensifies the spread of disciplinary power (32-33).

In *Paradise and Other Stories* Singh has displayed the role of power and sexuality in the society. In the story “Paradise” Margaret, a foreign visitor is found guilty of getting involved into “lesbian affair”. This is considered a sin in the society. Margaret is compelled to leave the Ashram. In this story, while the wish to enjoy lesbianism manifests the urge of sexuality in Putli, Margaret’s banishment from the ashram by Swamiji is the display of the civilised norm controlled and monitored by the principal of civilised society.

Contrary to this textual scenario narrated by Singh, in the year of 2013, in a historic decision, the honourable Supreme Court of India has ruled that gay sex is no longer a criminal offence. The ruling overturns a 2013 judgement that upheld a colonial-era law, known as section 377, under which gay sex is categorised as an “unnatural offence”. The court has now ruled that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a fundamental violation of rights. ¹

The story “Zora Singh” narrates the illegitimate physical relation between the protagonist Zora Singh and the house maid Deepo. Zora Singh, on the one hand is sympathetic to the helpless family of Deepo with her two children, but on the other, he is interested in enjoying extramarital affair to maximise sensual pleasure with the widow. The castration complex in the character of Deepo, who being a widow searches for protection from another male figure, plays a big role in building and continuation of this illegal relationship. The story “Wanted: a Son” narrates the life of an issueless couple, both are police cops by profession. The aspiration to get a child pushes Baljit to a dargah where she gets involved in a sexual relationship with the care taker of the dargah out of her urge for sex as her husband has already denied

his incompetency. Baljit conceives a baby. The roles of repressed sexuality, pleasure principle and social apparatus besides the aspect of panopticon is present in this story. Though Baljit is eager to have sex with the caretaker of the dargah, she is afraid of the society, lest is noticed by someone that may bring end of her marriage and her career as well (*Paradise* 137).

Khushwant Singh deals with a galaxy of characters with their individual traits, and also the impact of different types of powers active over them in the book *Malicious Gossip*. In the part of the book 'To Pakistan with Love', it is found that state-power produces a socio-political disorder in man's life. Singh is acutely observant of the moves of power, especially the political power. The piece on Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto "From the Death sentence to the Gallows" artfully captures a man's life-journey through the power corridors in Pakistan. The biographical narrative comes to an end with the death of Bhutto by hanging according to the verdict of Supreme Court of Pakistan. Through the life of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the writer has shown how power of politics can raise a man to a powerful position and the same politics can doom him too. What Singh wants to suggest that as time and tide wait for none, the same way power does not cling to anybody.

George H. Sabine remarks that the state has become a concept, "the hypothetical will" in whose name every law is enacted and every official act is done. This hypothesis of a "unified state power", abstracted from any agency of government, must be examined in the light of some of the prominent features of political organisation (311).

Religion appears as a form of power in the travelogue "Pakistan: Sweet and Sour". The travelogue shows how faith system may play a role in the social life of people of a nation. Singh sustains his view by citing the example that at Lahore, "the morning azaans blare forth in succession" from a large number of mosques enduring for twenty-five minutes, "followed by recitations from the Quran" (*Malicious* 67).

Khushwant Singh can be brought close to Foucault's observation that, "religion" is not a category of thought to be trusted in his most important writings. Foucault neither projects a fixed essence behind the term nor uses it with a single judgement. The church is, for Foucault, a part of network of institutions (an

apparatus) which seeks to control speech and silence. Religious power governs the individual self and nation-states through the operations of the said and unsaid; and it is precisely this “mechanism of coercion” which enables Foucault to develop his ideas of a “political spirituality” (Carrette 31-32).

In another travelogue “Plane to Pakistan” religion appears as a major factor in every-day life. The role of religion on the life of a nation like Pakistan is so unbending that the Pakistan Radio broadcasts the Arabic news ignoring common people’s understanding as the “Qoran was in Arabic” (*Malicious* 75).

J.Murickan. S.J’s comments on power relations are relevant to evaluate the life of Rajiv Gandhi. According to Murickan, power resides not only in the “formal organisations”, but it also lies in “communities, families and friendship groups” (6). While portraying the life of Rajiv Gandhi, the writer examines the impact of “illusion of invulnerability” in the form of negative aspect of power as a result of sympathy-propelled massive victory in election in all over India under his leadership after his mother’s death. This led him to feel himself unbeatable and the resultant decaying of his image within two years of his second Prime Ministership. The short story “Why Isn’t Aditi Married” displays that Aditi, a girl fights sexuality by dint of her passion for work and remains unmarried. Aditi’s characteristic power of self-control triumphs over sexuality. Singh might be suggestive of his age and time when a tendency is marked towards over-insistence on sexual relations which he ironically devalues in support of Aditi who presents individual choice and freedom by not submitting to the social bondage of marriage and stereotypical life of a woman.

Khushwant Singh has explored in his novels and writings how power is mixed up with faith, and its unholy relationship with religious institutions is obviously marked. As a creative writer he does not exude belief in dogmatic practices in the name of faith. He finds all established religions have shortcomings, which suggests that without clinging to dogmas, mankind may behave and live sanely. Most times, he comes to view as a realist, rationalist and satirist, and objectively materialist and his moral sense are driven by such tendencies. He expresses his view that faith is to be personal. The belief in the omnipotence of the Guru and simple faith in his mediatorship as Sabhrai in *I Shall Not Hear the*

Nightingale displays, supports his view. His writings would throw more light on his belief, if the *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!* (2012) is undertaken. It is a nonfictional work, which deals with Singh's views about God and different rituals. According to Singh the religion may play the role in the life of a man to decide the holistic vision bounden to God. In his book, Singh seems to satirise the image of God as well as the power of religion believed to form man's existence or being. Singh holds the view that the formation of a man's idea about his own identity happens through his own acts and opinions. So, instead of entering into unending debates on whether or not God exists one is to believe in one's action.

The book *Agnostic Khushwant: There is no God!* begins with a chapter on the 'need for a new religion – without a God' where Singh questions the relevance of God. He also moves on to describe how religion had proved to be more harmful than beneficial and in the process, exposes astrologers and the breed of so-called 'godmen'. The author also tries to dispel the prejudices held by non-Muslims against the Muslims by citing examples. Singh's description of the life of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and his analysis of the *Granth Sahib* through new light on a particularly troubled period in India's history.

According to Singh all scriptures are held in awe either as words of God or divinely inspired utterances....Those which enshrine codes of conduct and ethics undoubtedly serve a useful purpose in providing stability to society. Singh also parodies the alleged power of religion by refereeing to its destructive aspect with the example that some years back the most sacred site in Islam, the Kaaba, at Mecca in Saudi Arabia was the scene of a "pitched battle" (*Agnostic* 24 – 27).

Susan Curtis in "The Sovereignty of the Secular and the Power of Religion" observes that the relationship between "sacred and secular", however, is not "unidirectional". That is, it is not just a question of the shaping power of culture and society on religion. Rather, one must also recognise the power of "religious ideas, images, symbols, and moral systems" to add depth and meaning to other aspects of cultural life (337).

The moral ideas which Khushwant Singh projects through his works are strongly moulded by power structures and sexual relations existing in society and

culture. In *Train to Pakistan* Singh humorously raises his accusing fingers at the power politics, deception and the societal constraints predominant in the multi-religious as well as multi-cultural Indian society. While on the one side of the moral standard, there appear the miscreants who kill the innocent people, do massacre and plunder for pleasure, there is Jugga at the other end without whom the vision of morality would not have been completed in this book. As Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru is a symbol of harmony between the Hindus and Sikhs, so also Jugga's love for Nooran, and his rescue of the Muslims in *Train to Pakistan* justifies the morale of harmonisation between the Sikh and Muslim communities to live together.

I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale can be defined a moralistic novel as the full strength of this novel depends on the main character Sabhrai and her moral and spiritual integrity. By portraying the characters of Peer Sahib and Shunno in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, Khushwant Singh indicates that sexual urge may appear as a dominant factor in the life of any human being, as it does not hesitate to cross the barriers of social, moral, ethical and religious restrictions. Singh as a social critic also exposes the conventional morality that society ignores a widow's physical urges through his portrayal of the characters of Shunno and Peer Sahib. He thus pleads for the manifestation of human need of physical contentedness in sexual enjoyment.

Religion is generally accepted as a great aid to morality. Man is subject to enticement. Though he is born with certain good qualities, the temptation for sin is so strong that he easily succumbs to it. In such moments of difficulty, when a man is likely to be overcome by sin, only the Guru, or true spiritual leader can give him proper guidance to resist it. Ethics and morality are the basis of Sikhism. Evolution of the spirit is not possible without righteous conduct and adherence to social morality. The Sikh follows personal ethics like telling the truth, gentle speech, fair play, service, humility and tolerance.

Nirbhai Singh, a critic on Sikh morality, states that the Sikh Gurus formed the concept of the sacrifice into the doctrine of martyrdom. The concept is assimilated in *The Guru Granth*. The Sikh way of life advocates heroic action in the world and creates no false hope for the "utopian other world". Guru Arjundev is

revered in the Sikh history as the “king of the martyrs”, for his sacrifice of life he did for the sake of humanity and truth. He represented “the dharma” as a “collective moral responsibility” and commitment to the deliverance of humanity. The martyrdom of Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur is also another historical fact (187 - 228).

J.S. Grewal in his observation on Sikh morality comments that according to Sikh concept of morality, to appropriate salvation offered to man by the Guru in the world, the individual has to attempt to “cleanse himself of all evil”. Inward devotion is to be found not in external practices, but in the innermost disciplines of “love, faith, mercy and humility”, expressed in righteous and compassionate deeds and in upholding all that is true (134).

The Company of Women casts the human being into immoral shreds, and the Delhi society is presented in its dark sensual dimensions. Khushwant Singh appears as a cynical observer, but his moral conviction has a point to defend. Singh as a moral observer has satirised the society, where a corrupt person can live pompously if his misdeeds are not caught. The society remains silent against any vice until that is caught. But now the clandestine relationship between Mohan and Susanthika Goonatilleke is not known to anybody and he is considered to be a man of high quality (*Company* 213).

Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi observes that *The Company of Women* brings the issues of “socio-psychological problems of women” with a deep sense of connection with the “male-dominated” society. Sarojini Bhardwaj, Yasmeen Wanchoo, Mary Joseph, Molly Gomes and Susanthika are faced with socio-psychological problems. The conflicts between the values imposed by patriarchal society, impact of education and economic independence are traced in these women. Since these women fail to get any befitting match, they desire for the “real companion”. Being instigated with the pleasure principle they go on for gratifying their aspirations in the form of “clandestine affairs” with men they like (132-33). In brief, *The Company of Women* serves as a morality story; ending with the scene of Mohan Kumar’s committing suicide as he finds that he is infected with AIDS, thus paying for his life-long immorality.

In *Burial at Sea* Singh speaks against the falsehood prevailing in the society. Singh turns his focus on the superstitious beliefs and bogus religion. The text provides many references to illegal sexual relationship between Durgeshwari, the tantric woman and Victor, the industrialist. Never the less, a moral relationship is healthy with a healthy sex life, bare of hideous intentions and social masks. In one of the issues of the 'Thunder' a tabloid, there are pictures of Victor with Ma Durgeshwari and Bharati with Swami Dhananjay Maharaj. Media also reveals that Ma Durgeshwari's "real name was Shanti Devi" who had been thrown out by her husband in Jhansi because of his suspicion of her adultery (*Burial* 125). Singh, himself being a journalist, has highlighted the role of media to convey the message that in this present age where immorality is prevailing everywhere, media can play the moral role of social vigilance.

From the discussion above, it can be said that power as it manifests itself in Singh's work is generated in different forms from different quarters as Michel Foucault states in his *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Vol – I* that "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (93). The social institutes, the interconnecting mechanism as Foucault would argue and something which finds its reflection in Althusser's own idea about state politics are ever present features in Singh's texts. Singh looks at the roles of these institutes as they regulate lives of private individuals, be it in terms of sex or religion or everyday life.

The study sums up how Khushwant Singh is so blatant about exposing the power structures that regulate people's lives. This power structure is to be discerned in state apparatuses as well as in the institution of sexuality which is governed by a fixed set of ideas. Singh looks at the institutions of state power and sexuality not only as individual entities but also in which these interact and relate with one another. The institutional repressions of alternate ideas are the major concerns that the thesis deals with. Singh's characters are drawn from quotidian experiences. They are real life characters that are controlled by institutional power structures. Singh's humanitarian self sympathises with the weak and the oppressed. His speciality lies

however in his ability to choose and expose powerful structures that have strong control over people's social and sexual life.

Singh looks at the different aspects of state apparatuses, like Police, family and religion, trade unions, media in regulating people's life. As his characters seek to forge their own individual identity, they are placed face to face with these different apparatuses seeking to curtail their advances. This is truer on the questions of sexuality. Mohan Kumar, Ma Durgeshwari and Victor are stock examples of what it means to take the power structures heads on. As these characters negotiate their own individual taste vis-a-vis the social constrictions and venture out to non-transgressive territories, the readers are drawn to the tensions produced within the text.

As a creative writer, Khushwant Singh is an embodiment of the blend of the pragmatist and the humanist. Singh's works are full of comments and criticisms on contemporary life. They are social and moral criticisms. In his works Singh satirises the falsehood prevailing in the society. Singh turns his focus on the superstitious beliefs and bogus religion. Singh has tried to execute his duty as a moral observer through his writings. These aim at a humanistic ideal spun in society. Another fundamental quality of Singh's writing is his 'rebellious spirit' which enlivens his fictional world. His selected works is found linked with social and moral criticism. In doing so he surpasses the short comings of his time and reaches out to a life beyond the narrow-minded realities. His works broaden one's awareness about the rhythm of life. Singh's works lift the covering from the concealed prettiness of the world. His works are derived from everyday experiences which involve different aspects of life.

This research work comes with certain limitations. The larger part of the thesis is devoted towards understanding of power and sexuality as these manifest themselves in the selected texts of Khushwant Singh. But Singh is a versatile author whose works carry multiple narratives that lap and overlap one another and jostle for space. A case in point is the portrayal of characters and the narrative technique that he uses in course of the texts under discussion. But this research work does not go into these details since the focus of the thesis has been on role of power and sexuality. Besides, this research work includes both fictions and non-fictions. There

may be a further research work on the art of characterisation in the non-fictional texts of Khushwant Singh. There may be a comparative study too on the perspective of migration between Khushwant Singh and one of his young contemporaries Amitav Ghosh as both the writers have dealt with the same issue in their works. Moreover, patriarchal order and religious aspects in Singh's texts may be chosen as area of further research.

Note

1. India court legalises gay sex in landmark ruling, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-45429664. Accessed: 10August 2020.

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BIODATA

Name : PRASENJIT DATTA ROY

Date of Birth : 14.05.1981.

GENDER : MALE

FATHER'S NAME : Shri Paritosh Datta Roy

Mother's Name : Lt. Sabitri Datta Roy

Permanent Address : East of Durga Chowmuhani,
Sarat Sarani, P.O. – Agartala,
West Tripura, Tripura, Pin- 799001.

Educational Qualification:

Name of the Examination	Subjects	Board/ University	Year of passing	Division	Percentage of marks
Madhyamik	English, Bengali, History, Geography, Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Science & Biology (Additional)	T.B.S.E.	1998	I	61.25%
H.S. (+2stage)	English, Bengali, History Political Science, Education, Economic Geography (Additional)	T.B.S.E.	2000	II	56.8%
B.A. (Hons) Part I	English (Hons), English, History, Education, English Foundation Course	Tripura University	2002	QH	46.5%
B.A.(Hons)Part II	English (Hons), Bengali (Foundation Course)	Tripura University	2003	2H	44.17%
M.A.	English	IGNOU	2007	II	52.50%
M Phil.	English	Vinayaka Missions University	2009	I	61%

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE: PRASENJIT DATTA ROY

DEGREE : Ph.D.

DEPARTMENT : ENGLISH

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Head

Department of ENGLISH

(Prof. K.C.LALTHLAMUANI)

ABSTRACT

**DYNAMICS OF POWER AND SEXUALITY IN SELECTED TEXTS OF
KHUSHWANT SINGH: A STUDY**

BY

PRASENJIT DATTA ROY

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SUPERVISOR

Prof. SARANGADHAR BARAL

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Dynamics of Power and Sexuality in Selected Texts of Khushwant Singh: A Study

Khushwant Singh occupies a significant place among the Indian-English writers. His achievements are far ranging and they bear ample evidence to his versatility. Rajvinder Singh situates Khushwant Singh beside his contemporaries and observes that he is being noticeable among the members of a “group of five masters and vanguards” of the Indo-English literature, which include Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya. Singh’s literary works cover a wide gamut of genres including novels, short stories, biographies, history and poetry. He was born on 2nd February, 1915 in Hadali in Punjab. He got his early education at Modern School, New Delhi, and graduated later from Government College, Lahore. Singh’s career was also interrupted by journalistic occupation. He served as the editor of several literary and news magazines, as well as two newspapers, through 1970s and 80s. He was awarded with the Padma Bhushan in 1974. But he returned the award in 1984 in protest against the Operation Blue Star in which the Indian Army raided the Golden Temple at Amritsar. In 2007 he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian award in India. Singh breathed his last on 20th March 2014 in Delhi.

This research work deals with the dynamics of ‘power’ and ‘sexuality’ in selected texts of Khushwant Singh. It makes an attempt to study on the power relations between society and individuals as well as explore the complications of sexuality in Indian society as the author has tried to figure out in his texts. The following texts have been chosen for the study: *Train to Pakistan*, 1956 (abbreviated *Train*), *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, 1959 (abbreviated *Nightingale*), *Malicious Gossip*, 1989 (abbreviated *Malicious*), *Delhi: A Novel*, 1990 (abbreviated *Delhi*), *The Company of Women*, 1999 (abbreviated *Company*), *Burial at Sea*, 2004 (abbreviated *Burial*), *Paradise and Other Stories*, 2004 (abbreviated *Paradise*) and *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!*, 2012 (abbreviated *Agnostic*). The thesis looks at these texts with the critical premises offered by Foucault, Althusser, Freud and Lacan among the others.

Singh has often been referred to with epithets like ‘India’s most prized dirty old man’ ‘scotch and sex’ and ‘greeted by an army of lustful readers.’ But such a way of seeing his works is only a simplistic studying and does not do justice to his wide scholarship and experience that is manifested in his texts. Chitvan Singh Dhillon comments that it is his style of writing, armed with “impeccable repartee, candour and malicious” gossip was combined with a “liberal vision and breadth of scholarship”(5).

Singh’s concern is for a morally stable and secular society, the very nature of which is defeated and devastated in his times, since power structures play deleterious impacts upon the society’s wholesome existence. He maintains a straight narrative approach to present his accounts of Sikh life in the Punjab villages and cities. He had written for a long period on a variety of subjects like Indian politics, erotic, morality, secularism, and political conflicts. The present thesis undertakes to study some fresh aspects in his works. While Khushwant Singh has been probed into from other paradigms, a look into how his texts hold numerous subtexts within it in the domains of power and sexuality is an area that has ample scope for research. This research work attempts to situate Khushwant Singh as an important writer whose works deal with the dynamics of power and sexuality. ‘Dynamic’, according to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, is the way in which people or things behave and react to each other in a particular situation. Dynamics of ‘power’ and ‘sexuality’ in this sense refer to the complex and subtle ways in which ‘power’ and ‘sexuality’ operate to shape popular and serious issues. The thesis seeks to explore how power is manifested indifferent institutions as they appear in selected texts of Khushwant Singh and make things complicated. The thesis also intends to highlight how Singh and his contemporaries viewed sexuality. The thesis highlights the different aspects of sexuality like lesbianism, repressed sexuality, state of sex-mania, clandestine love affair, hyper-sexuality, lascivious gestures, castration complex and also pleasure principle. Obviously, conventional expectations about sexuality in India are questioned or upset, while power including political power is relooked into as active in contemporary postcolonial India. And these aspects are either undermined by critics or overlooked under other critical considerations of Singh’s narratives.

Premises of power and sexuality are abundantly to be discerned in Singh's novels. *Train to Pakistan* deals with the reversal of human values in the aftermath of partition violence and the indelible scars the same has left on the psyche of the survivors of both the countries, i.e., India and Pakistan. It is a picturisation of the ordeal of partition of a nation. The text foregrounds the politics of 'power' manifested in the dubious conspiracy on the part of colonial British Government to divide India. Set in the fictional village of Mano Majra on the frontier of two countries, namely, India and Pakistan, the text looks at the political consequences of partition, most noticeably discerned in the growing discomfort and suspect between the Sikhs and Muslims. The text investigates the role of power mechanisms like religion and government administrative structure in perpetuating an atmosphere of violence.

I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale is set in Amritsar during the topmost hour of India's independence movement. The novel deals with the colonial encounter between the Indians and the British Government against the background of Punjab. Basavaraj Naikar in his article "The Conflict between Imperialism and Nationalism in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*" writes that Khushwant Singh has tried to give a very "microscopic picture" of the Punjabi life in the novel even when he concentrates his attention on the "political theme" (147). The text is built on a series of conflicts, such as submission versus liberation, old versus young, British colonisers versus Indians. The text develops on the ideological conflict between these factors mentioned above. It is an important text in relations between the government and the governed. It tries to focus on the dynamics of power politics in exploring their relationship within the sphere of pre-independence social, cultural, religious and economic life.

Delhi: A Novel (1990) is a confederation of history, romance and sex. The novel comprises the picturisation of the history. It starts from the Mughal period of Zahiruddin Babar and ends with the assassination of former Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The novelist has wrapped with sexuality and romance the historical events narrated in various chapters of the text. According to Pramod Kumar Singh, the narrator's, being the novelist himself, "sexual encounter with Bhagmati", ahijda; engender an uncanny feeling among the readers. (166). In this novel both the aspects

of sexuality and power are present. Though temporarily it may seem that the narrator rescues the eunuch on the road on humanitarian ground, he brings the hijda at his house, instead of shifting the ailing one to any hospital. The Freudian concept of the elements of repressed sexuality to explore the unique physical feature of a eunuch might have played a role behind such behaviour. On one occasion while narrating the presence of Bhagmati at the narrator's apartment, the narrator has also admitted that he failed to refrain from thinking and exploring the physical feature of a eunuch in the long run.

The Company of Women presents the story of man-woman relationship: the mingling of love, sex, and passion. However, the text includes an enchanting and engrossing appeal for the readers. Besides, the novel serves as a morality tale with the scene of committing suicide by Mohan Kumar as he comes to know that he has developed AIDS, thus, paying for his sexual immorality practised throughout his whole life. After going through the aspect of "pleasure principle" and thus enjoying a lavish life of serial sexual abundance for the whole life, Mohan Kumar, the protagonist finally faces the state of an AIDS patient, in fact, paying for his promiscuity for the whole life. The state of an AIDS victim generates the feeling of inferiority in his mind as he thinks that he is no longer fit to go through sexual relation with any woman. It is this feeling of inferiority that plays the role behind his committing suicide by consuming Calmpose.

In the novel *Burial at Sea* the novelist focuses on different issues like twentieth-century Indian history, fake religious personalities, and sexuality. The hero of the novel is Victor Jai Bhagwan, a brilliant young man with the spirit of leadership and dedicated to his nation. Though Victor has love and respect for Mahatma Gandhi, he differs from Gandhiji's vision for the future of the nation. Victor returns from England with the determination to bring the benefits of modern industry to India, and within a few years of India's independence he becomes the country's biggest industrialist. But this is not the only ideal of Gandhijithat he defies: facing a midlife crisis, he falls passionately in love with a tantric god-woman who introduces him to the pleasures of unrestrained sexuality. The text narrates the story of an illegal sexual relationship between the protagonist Victor and Ma Durgeshwari, the tantric woman. The result of the two years long hidden relationship is Durgeshwari's illegitimate maternity. "Pleasure principle" plays a big

role in the two prime characters of Victor Jai Bhagwan and Ma Durgeshwari, the tantric woman. The two are so much possessed by the charm of enjoying each other's company that Durgeshwari becomes pregnant with the illegitimate child of Victor.

The book *Paradise and other Stories* is a collection of short stories. The text hinges on questions of repressed sexuality, alternate sexualities, castration complex, pleasure principle and the role of social apparatus. It explores such thematic concern as extramarital affairs, policing of peripheral sexuality and the transgression involved therein. Such relationships stand outside the agreed morality. The story "Paradise" narrates a lesbian sexual incident and how the ashram, being one of the agencies of the state apparatus punishes both the offenders, namely, Margaret Bloom and Putli. "Zora Singh", another story, narrates a peripheral sexuality between the protagonist Zora Singh and the house maid Deepo. The influence of castration complex is found present in the character of Deepo, a widow. The story "Wanted: a Son" deals with the story of an issueless couple, both are Police cops by profession. In this story Singh furnishes the manifestation of sexual pleasure and a woman's natural desire to become a mother.

The nonfictional text *Malicious Gossip* spans Singh's long, chequered career, in which he recollects the people he came across, befriended or fell out with. Written in his characteristically impudent manner, each sketch exposes keen observation about the characters and also throws light on the unknown aspects of their personalities. Almost every profile offers captivating perceptions into the multifaceted human psyche. In the biography of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto named "From the Death Sentence to the Gallows"; the crucial role of the politics affecting the rise and fall in a man's life is found. Besides, in this book Singh has portrayed the biographies of Rajiv Gandhi (1944 – 91), Sanjay Gandhi (1946 – 80), and V.P.Singh (1931 –2009). While portraying these characters Singh has shown how a character may be influenced by different aspects of power in life from time to time. In the non-fictional piece "Why Isn't Aditi Married", the writer might be suggestive of the time's tendency towards over insistence on sexual relations which he ironically devalues in support of Aditi who presents individual choice and freedom by not succumbing to the social bondage of marriage and stereotypical life of a woman.

The part entitled 'Around the World' is a series of stories. The pieces chosen for study are "Indonesian Fortnight", "Polonaise", and "In Gaddafi Land". In all the stories the writer has brought different aspects of power and sexuality. Singh in his works has shown how the different aspects of power including "state authority" and various aspects of "ideological state apparatus" can influence the life of a man as well as a nation. Besides, the author has shown the role of sexuality in man's life. But in the travelogues of "Indonesian Fortnight", "Polonaise" and "In Gaddafi Land" Singh has used his usual sarcastic tone to criticise the life of the nations. In the travelogue "In Gaddafi Land" the writer continues to examine the impact of the state-power in moulding the socio-political life of the country.

Another non-fictional text *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!*(2012) expresses Singh's opinions about the concept of God and different rituals. According to Singh, instead of entering into a useless debate on "whether or not God exists" (23), it is more significant to accept in mind that trust in the "existence of God" (23) has little bearing on building a person a good or a bad. One can be a holy person without believing in God and a hateful scoundrel believing in Him. Singh, over the decades, has built up his name for coming up with something new and controversial in each book, and he does not dissatisfy his readers this time too. The book begins with a chapter on the "need for a new religion – without a God", in which he questions the relevance of God. He then moves on to describe how religion has proved to be more harmful than beneficial and, in the process, debunks astrologers and the breed of so-called "godmen" (214). However, Singh is not indifferent totally to religion. Through his writing, he brings out the beauty and significance of the holy books such as *The Bhagvad Gita*, *The Quran* and *The Granth Sahib*. The author next tries to dispel the prejudices held by many non-Muslims against their Muslim nationals by giving down-to-earth examples. He also emphasises the importance of the Ramzaan fast. Singh's description of the life and times of Guru Nanak and Guru Govind Singh and his in-depth analysis of the *Granth Sahib* throw new light on a particularly troubled period in India's history. The chapter is dedicated to the interaction of the author, a self-proclaimed "agnostic", as Singh himself claims "I am an agnostic. I don't believe in God" (238) in an interview with Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader. In the chapter "Religion versus

Morality”, he talks about the power of religion. According to him, religion extends its sphere of activity including making laws for the society.

It is important to situate Khushwant Singh among other Indian-English writers including his older contemporary Mulk Raj Anand and two young contemporaries, namely Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy. These writers have also focused on social power structures and exploitive mechanisms in the society. Here, this is to briefly stress and compare Singh’s social perceptions and observations with that of his contemporaries, on order that his creative as well as critical artistry gets better placed. Mulk Raj Anand’s first novel, *Untouchable* was published in the year of 1935. The story is based on the life of the most downtrodden, hated and oppressed section of Indian society, the outcastes – those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. Anand is critical with questions of religious sectarianism, communalism and caste-bar in society. Questions like religious sectarianism, communalism and caste-bar are something which Singh also explores in his texts. While Anand does it for his pre-independent readers, Singh does it for the post-independent readers. The *Coolie*, like *Untouchable*, draws on the relationships between the underdog of the society and its established power structure. Singh inherits the tradition of tolerance, social justice, and the celebration of human life itself. Singh, just like Anand, questions the institutional power structure that operates in the society. And just like Anand, Singh’s protagonists and other characters are drawn from quotidian experiences.

An important thematic concern in Singh is the question of migration and violence. For Singh violence stems from powerful structures of the society. This is an idea that Singh’s young contemporary Amitav Ghosh also visits. Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace* (2000) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004) deal with forced migration of people and the hardship they face. The migration is limited not only up to the Burmese royal family and its associates, but refers to the people from colonised India who are also transported to Burma to work in oil camps and other menial jobs. But Ghosh’s characters are more fortunate in that they do not have to deal with tragedy of mass murder. In Singh the fear of being raped, robbed, killed lurks in every page. What however is important in this relative study is how the two authors view human beings under the constant gaze of power. Both Singh and Ghosh have a penchant for discovering the numerous ways in which people feel suppressed under

oppressive institutions. Both the authors are well aware of the political nature of migration.

Arundhati Roy is another writer who has consistently explored and critiqued power structures in her texts. Her *The God of Small Things* examines and cross-examines different aspects of life like gender, caste and political formulations. Roy writes about the social issues that plague Indian society. She portrays how the caste system, though being outlawed, still continues to coil its net over the social life of India. She portrays gender inequality through her female characters. Roy looks at the power structure in society and shows how the more powerful exercise their power and victimise the less powerful. This is something which Singh also explores. But Singh and Roy differ in a very important way. Roy's women characters are victims of social structures. The women characters in the novel are forced to stay true to their feminine self. While in Singh the women characters are liberated, more importantly in terms of sex both within and outside marriage. While Roy's character like Ammu are as transgressive as Singh's Molly Gomes and Champak, what differentiates the latter is their confidence in those transgressive relationships. Singh's characters enjoy great freedom within and outside marriage. He creates a world which is less oppressive for women.

As observed earlier, Singh's novels are studied in the light of socio-political interests that the India of the 50s and 60s mostly aroused. His knack for satire has undoubtedly made socio-political topics more fascinating and critically viable. However, more interesting premises of power in social and political life and that of sexuality have not been studied with equitable critical awareness. In the present study Foucault's critical notions of power and sexuality as part of methodology is relevant to use. These concepts have been utilised and applied in a greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

As this thesis proposes to study the selected texts and explore the dynamics of power and sexuality, so the research work attempts to examine the relevant and different aspects of power and sexuality applicable to the selected texts in the light of literary theories developed by Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Thus the study has gone through an interdisciplinary approach by applying the relevant dimensions found in above thinkers. Therefore, this thesis

attempts to organise the analysis and critical assessment of all the relevant issues by the six chapters that follow.

Chapter – I: Introduction

The first chapter titled “Introduction” provides a brief biographical sketch of Khushwant Singh and gives an overview of his works. The chapter briefly narrates the works of Khushwant Singh. It also gives a brief overview of ‘power’ and ‘sexuality’ keeping Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan in mind. It further attempts to study how power and sexuality interact and express themselves in blended nuances in the Indian English fiction in general and in the works of Khushwant Singh in particular.

Foucault says that power originates from everywhere or operates in the conduit of power relations. Singh is no theorist to reflect this exactly as the former did. However, in his narratives, power and sexuality are dynamically interactive, and each is deployed to further the ends of the other. Power and sexuality as in action are seen as transgressive and upsetting Indian traditions. Singh’s works concern themselves with different institutions that maintain power over private individuals. These include institutions like Police, family, religion and society etc. Singh’s texts deal with these different institutional power structures. According to Foucault, power is exercised socially and institutionally to control or repress free expression of sex. More important than sex though is the discourse on sexuality which is produced to control and manipulate nature-born sexual behaviour. The institution of traditional marriage has claimed the discourse on sexuality as its exclusive property having its absolute authority to speak about sexual relations. Effectively, most cultures ban any conversation on sexuality that occurs outside the conventional boundaries of marriage. In this study of Singh’s selected texts repressive sexuality is seen as expressing itself in strange and unconventional modes and manners.

Chapter – II: Exploring the Power Relations in the Selected Texts

The second chapter titled “Exploring the Power Relations in the Selected Texts” is an attempt to understand the perspectives of power in the selected texts of Khushwant Singh. For this Michel Foucault’s idea of power and Louis Althusser’s concept of “Ideological State Apparatus” is important among other relevant ideas.

According to Althusser, man's identity is constructed and his socio-political position is fixed by the ideological state apparatuses which include churches, different public and private 'schools', the family, the political system, including the different parties, the trade-union, the communications, namely, press, radio and television, etc. and the cultural apparatuses including literature, arts, sports, etc. This chapter has taken up *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, *Delhi: A Novel*, *The Company of Women* and *Burial at Sea* for discussion.

In the selected texts Singh shows the power of political conventions and wrong concepts imposed by the social customs for different religious practices. While *Train to Pakistan* shows the power of British Administration to divide the nation, the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* presents the impact of power of throne on a normal human being through his bending in front of the ruler as cited by Buta Singh, a Magistrate by profession at the cost of his son Sher Singh. The novel shows the dark dealings on the power corridors. Louis Althusser's concept of 'ideological state apparatus' is found relevant here. Althusser discusses how, a state institution, especially, Police on the street, calls an individual to answer, and how the subject is fixed, identified or ideologically constructed. This is in other words, the gaze of the authority of power to fix the individual as the other. *Train to Pakistan* similarly fixes individuals, and the state power's surveillance produces identities even if falsely. The text *Delhi, A Novel* testifies for the power of destructive psycho machinery moulded by socio-political context through the depiction of the sectarian riot in Delhi. The novel also relates the instinctual power of sexuality secretly lurking towards its opposite gender in the characters of both the anonymous narrator and Bhagmati, a eunuch. In the novel *The Company of Women*, greed plays a powerful role in the characters of Mohan Kumar and his father. They built up marital relation with a superior family richer than theirs in their dream to become rich by receiving dowry from the bride's house. The novelist has critically exposed such a marriage which shows moral emptiness and lust for wealth. The dream to become rich overnight and thus to enjoy a luxurious life by receiving dowry from the bride's house comes into reality and material fulfilment for a certain period of time. Besides, Mohan Kumar, the protagonist is steered with the random sexual enjoyment throughout his life. The power of sexuality and social principle of morality are traceable in their interaction in the novel *Burial at Sea*. But

the ultimate role is played by the forces of social restriction which brings separation between Victor Jai Bhagwan, the protagonist and the tantric woman Ma Durgeshwari.

Foucault's Panopticon¹ concepts are relevant to understand the aforementioned characters in Singh's narratives. In Foucault's judgment the Panopticon is a "magnificent machine" not only for "subjection" but also for "self-subjection". By persuading inmates an awareness of their "own constant visibility", the Panopticon compelled them to structure their own behaviour consistent with the power mechanism. In Singh's novels several characters like Nooran in *Train to Pakistan*, the first person narrator in *Delhi: A Novel*, besides, Buta Singh, Sher Singh, Sabhrai and Champak in *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, Mohan Kumar in *The Company of Women*, Durgeshwari in *Burial at Sea* may be understood as denizens signifying the presence of all-powerful social control or gaze.

Chapter – III: Aspects of Sexuality in the Selected Texts

The third chapter has been titled "Aspects of Sexuality in the Selected Texts". It explores different aspects of sexuality as they appear in his select texts. Over a career of long six decades, Khushwant Singh with his honest and bold exploration of human sexuality has tried to explore the different problems of sexual relations, such as, repression, infidelity and ethics in marriage in addition to social impingements.

Through his works Singh seems to convey the message that sexuality is an essential issue in human life. Besides, the characters found involved in sexual activities in the above-mentioned texts are more or less influenced with the aspect of "hetero-sexuality". Heterosexuality refers to a romantic attraction, sexual attraction or sexual behaviour between persons of the opposite gender. In *Train to Pakistan* the affair between Juggut Singh (also known as Jugga) and Nooran comes under the category of "hetero-sexuality". In spite of being followers of two different faiths of Sikhism and Islam, the two persons do not feel hesitation to build and continue physical relationship. In *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* the characters of Madan Lal, Champak, Beena, Shunno and Peer Sahib all are attracted to each other as obsessed with attraction for the opposite gender. The novel testifies that they get involved into sexual relation finally. The aspect of repressed sexuality is seen in the novel *Burial at Sea* in the prime two characters of Victor Jai Bhagwan and Ma

Durgeshwari. Victor lost his wife at a very early age, i.e., immediate after the birth of his daughter Bharati while Durgeshwari originally named Shanti Devi had been banished by her husband on account of infidelity. It is their repressed sexuality which forces them to come close to each other and get involved into illegitimate sexual affair. *The Company of Women* involves the aspect of hyper sexuality in the character of Mohan Kumar the protagonist, while the text projects the female characters involved with Mohan in sexual relations influenced with pleasure principle.

J. E. Barnhart in the article “Freud’s Pleasure Principle and the Death Urge” says that Sigmund Freud states that the “Pleasure Principle” dominates the process of the mental apparatus from the start. What this statement he means is that at least the “human organism is naturally predisposed to gain positive experiences of pleasure and to hold on to this pleasure.” That is only “one fork of the pleasure principle.” The other is that the human organism is predisposed also to escape or avoid “pain and displeasure”. Thinking that he is being descriptive in talking of the pleasure principle, Freud does not purport to be prescribing that men ought to be concerned with pleasure; rather he is saying that they are so concerned in a most fundamental way. Psychoanalysis is seen as an instrument for helping an individual in achieving pleasure and avoiding useless displeasure as he comes to terms with his own body, the external world, and other human beings (113).

In the selected novels Khushwant Singh also has narrated some moments of extramarital affairs. Some characters in the texts are found involved in extramarital sensual relationships. In *Train to Pakistan*, Hukum Chand, the Magistrate of Mano Majra is involved with Haseena, a prostitute who is perhaps younger than his own daughter. In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* Madan, son of Buta Singh’s colleague Wazir Chand and Champak, wife of Buta Singh’s son Sher Singh are found involved in extramarital affair. In *The Company of Women* Mohan enjoys extra marital sex with the sweeper woman Dhanno. According to Moirangthem Linthoingambi Devi, in *The Company of Women*, the writer deals with the “socio-psychological problems of women” with a deep sense of connection with the present “male-dominated” society. Sarojini Bhardwaj, Yasmeen Wanchoo, Mary Joseph, Molly Gomes and Susanthika are faced with socio-psychological problems. In these women there have been the conflicts between the values taught by patriarchal society, impact of

education and economic independence. As these women fail to get any befitting match, they desire for the “real companion”. Being instigated with the “pleasure principle” they go on for gratifying their aspirations in the form of clandestine affairs with men they like (132-33).

Different critics have expressed their different views on Khushwant Singh’s handling of sexuality in his writings. Pramod Kumar Singh in his book *Indian Fiction in English* comments that Singh is intensely aware of “various social evils, oddities and eccentricities” of society. He “ironically highlights” how minor girls are sexually exploited by their relatives. Moly Gomes in *The Company of Women* expresses how she had been sexually abused by her uncle, who was nearly twenty years older than her (7). S K Dubey comments that Singh brings in sex as a professional writer to arrest the attention of the readers. He is however not elaborative on his characters, who are suggestive and types of their own, but his sex scenes are fully elaborative (87). Dubey also observes that in the text *Delhi :A Novel* Khushwant Singh, who is known for his “love for sex” has openly dealt with all “kinds of perversities” and depicted it with its “horrifying nakedness and used filthy epithets” which make the “conscience of the readers itch” (100). In “Khushwant Singh: A Critical Study of his Works,” critics Birendra Sinha and Dinesh Mishra write that “Khushwant Singh is not a bore” and people of all ages “feel at home with him”. To Singh “a frank discussion about sex” is not an offensive. This is his frankness, which unethically sticks a label of “dirty old man” to him (215). According to R.K Dhawan, for Khushwant Singh “a favourite subject” in his writing is “love and sex”. In his works he has “dealt at length” with the “emotions of love and passion” (15).

This can be said about Khushwant Singh’s approach to female characters that though they look interesting but do not stand out as extraordinary in comparison with their male counterparts. They usually shine by their sexual activities. Their other interests in spirituality, intellectual life and social responsibility are ordinary or little. In fact, Singh has explored sexuality as one of the fundamental drives behind a person’s feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. It outlines the means of genetic reproduction, describes psychosomatic and sociological representations of self, and places a person’s attraction to the other. Moreover, sexuality shapes the intelligence and physique to be pleasure-seeking.

Chapter – IV: Power and Sexuality in Selected Short Stories and Non-fictions

The fourth chapter has been titled “Power and Sexuality in Selected Short Stories and Non-fiction”. The texts that have been taken up for analysis are *Paradise and Other Stories*, *Malicious Gossip* and *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!*. Michel Foucault does not see power originating from any particular source or group. According to Foucault, power is “omnipresent”, that is, power can be found in all “social interactions”. In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Vol-I* he says, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (93). Power as already discussed is conceived as a critical relation between all involved and idle partners in socio-political arenas. In *Malicious Gossip*, Khushwant Singh has dealt with a galaxy of characters with their individual traits and also the impact of different types of powers over them. How the role of power imposes socio-political condition in a man’s life is evidenced in different parts of the book.

In the *Agnostic Khushwant: There is No God!* the powerful role of religion in the life of a man is to decide the holistic vision of bounden to fall in God. In the chapter titled “The need for a new religion – without a God” Singh satirises the image of God as well as the power of religion believed to form man’s existence or being. Singh holds the view that the formation of man’s idea about his own identity happens through his own acts and opinions. So, instead of entering into pointless debates on whether or not God exists, one is to believe in one’s action. Singh has on the one hand shown the constructive power of religion through the implementation of certain rules and rituals, as followed by the two prime religious families of “Hindic” and “Judaic”. On the other hand, he criticises the power of religion by citing its destructive aspects.

Singh himself has not done prophesy, and remained committed to live a life by reason and logic. Even in his non-fictional works, he has examined human frailties as well as socio-political systems that fail humanity at large. While being critical of state-power relations, sexual and religious cults as exploitive, Singh appears as a friendly spirit close to Michel Foucault in many respects if not in most others. However, it would be incorrect to see Khushwant Singh as a theorist of any

kind or a philosopher of original vision. He appears as an agnostic, moralist and also a pragmatic free from dogmatic beliefs.

Chapter – V: Moral Issues in Selected Works of Khushwant Singh

The fifth chapter has been titled “Moral Issues in Selected Works of Khushwant Singh”. Morality has become a topic mired in debates and controversies. What constitutes morality and who decides what is moral or immoral is a subject of fierce discussion among the critics. The question of morality, just like identity, is seen today as a construct shaped by the collective discursivities of the society. Foucault phrases this as a conflict between the ‘universal’ code of conduct and the ‘subjectivation’ of the self.

This chapter explores the moral issues in the selected texts of Khushwant Singh. Ideas of power relations and sexuality affect the moral principles in Khushwant Singh’s works. In other words, the moral principles which Singh advocates and projects through his fictional characters are strongly moulded by power structures and sexual relations present in the society and culture. This chapter explores the dynamics of these relationships being intricate yet active in shaping the socio-political and cultural life of people. This chapter attempts to understand the perspectives of morality in selected texts of Khushwant Singh.

The socio-political context and sexual milieu with multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic background as discerned in Singh’s writings mostly point to the Indian society. Thus, the moral dimensions in such a complex socio-political culture as these emerge in the fictions is reflective of the broadly Indian panorama deserve to be looked into in specific ways. *Train to Pakistan* brings up the moral issues like truth, justice, love, ethical and unethical to the fore in the days of partition. The text suggests that the narration is concerned more with important moral issues than in narrating violent incidents. It is in the factual and detailed descriptions of hostility and atrocity that the text prepares the ground for intervention in moral and ethical lessons. It may well be said that the thematic interest of the text revolves around the consideration of the nature of man and enigma of human fate through a juxtaposition of violence with the concept of

morality. The narration seeks to re-evaluate the position of man vis-a-vis other human beings and to establish the victory of humanity and moral cause.

Singh writes the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* on the Indian political context of Quit India Movement in the year of 1942. The novel can be treated as his moralistic novel because the full strength of this novel depends on the main character Sabhrai and her moral and spiritual integrity. The novelist portrays her as a conventionally moral character. The noble verses and spiritual ideals of the *Adi Granth* present throughout the narrative are intended to provide not merely insights into the Sikh ways of life but also a perspective in the light of which the characters can be morally judged. Khushwant Singh appears as a cynical observer, but his moral conviction has a point to defend. In *Delhi: A Novel* Singh has compared the Delhi city with a eunuch Bhagmati, both have similarity regarding the issue of their exploitation. As the city Delhi has been rampaged by the invaders from time to time, so is the condition of a eunuch in our society, an object of easy sexual exploitation. Singh's sarcastic tone is expressed through his comparison between a city and a living being made of flesh and blood in this issue of exploitation.

The Company of Women is Singh's most liberated world where sexual freedom reigns supreme. Singh makes no difference between genders and allows a liberated environment for both men and women. However, the text also upholds the underlying moral standards. The protagonist's catastrophic end has a moral point to defend and which is that illegal relationship cannot bring ultimate satisfaction in life. In the text *Burial at Sea* Khushwant Singh also mocks the falsehood prevailing in the society. He exposes the hypocrisy that has crept into the religious world. Singh sharply criticises the fake religious practises. Through his satirical works, Singh has pointed out the various social evils and also hypocrisy practised by people of different social status and thus befool the society. His writings are in this way a vigilant for the society to make people conscious of the deceitful traps in the walk of life.

Chapter- VI: Conclusion

The last chapter titled "Conclusion" summarises the relevant points discussed in the previous chapters and brings out the final outcome of the research. It sums up how Khushwant Singh is so blatant about exposing the power structures that regulate people's lives. This power structure is to be discerned in state

apparatuses as well as in the institution of sexuality which is governed by a fixed set of ideas. Singh looks at the institutions of state power and sexuality not only as individual entities but also in which these interact and relate with one another. The institutional repressions of alternate ideas are the major concerns that the thesis deals with. Singh's characters are drawn from quotidian experiences. They are real life characters that are controlled by institutional power structures. Singh's humanitarian self sympathises with the weak and the oppressed. His speciality lies however in his ability to choose and expose powerful structures that have strong control over people's social and sexual life.

Singh looks at the different aspects of state apparatuses, like Police, family and religion, trade unions, media in regulating people's life. As his characters seek to forge their own individual identity, they are placed face to face with these different apparatuses seeking to curtail their advances. This is truer on the questions of sexuality. Mohan Kumar, Ma Durgeshwari and Victor are stock examples of what it means to take the power structures heads on. As these characters negotiate their own individual taste vis-a-vis the social constrictions and venture out to non-transgressive territories, the readers are drawn to the tensions produced within the text.

Note

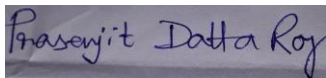
1. For 220 years the Panopticon has stood as the concrete symbol of total surveillance, discipline, and control. Always it has been the “utopian dream” as well as a hellish nightmare. Its initial, architectural manifestation was promoted heavily in the late 1700s. Its pure form disappeared after a few decades but left an “indelible mark on social practice and discourse”. Since the mid-1970s, scholars of surveillance studies have insisted that the Panopticon should be taken not literally but as a “metaphor for surveillance” of all types, with emphasis on power relationships.

Source: Dobson, Jerome E. and Peter F. “The Panopticon’s Changing Geography.” *Fisher. Geographical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3, Geosurveillance (Jul., 2007), pp. 307-323. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/30034174.

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Scholar

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Prasenjit Datta Roy".

Prasenjit Datta Roy

Supervisor

Prof. Sarangadhar Baral

Dept. of English