

CHAPTER III

SUBSTANCE AND ANALYSIS OF

SHORT STORIES

1. Posthumous

Substance of the Story:

Khushwant Singh has portrayed the kaleidoscopic picture of his own death and the procession up to the cremation ground imaginatively. The protagonist imagined that there would be 'tribune' on the front page of newspaper. His lawyer friend Qadir, getting the newspaper, he only glanced at the headlines in bed. When he got to page 3, column 1, he stopped smoking for a moment. He knew that his wife would burst out crying when he would tell her the sad news of demise. Qadir knew his wife well. His wife also knew him and no use arguing with him. He always won the arguments. His wife intended to go to the protagonist's house to meet his wife. But Qadir shrugged his shoulders. Qadir was at the tribunal all day and his family stopped at home. Khosla, a judge, is his another friend. That morning Khosla happened to be in a mood to write. He was more interested in social affairs, births, marriages and deaths than national and international affairs. While getting the news of death, he informed his wife who just yawned and opened her eyes. The Khoslas did not attend the funeral.

A little crowd had collected at 10 o'clock. There were some lawyers in their court dress. Other friends like an artist, a writer, and a Communist also gathered there. The crowd did not have to wait very long. The corpse was put inside the hearse. Meanwhile another friend with a copy of the *Gita* came there. He wondered what new garments his dead friend had donned. On the way, the tonga-drivers gathered round the hearse and peered in from all sides. One of them said 'Must be someone rich'. But there is no one with him', queried another. Now there were three ways open to him. One was to take the route to the cremation ground and give himself up to scorching flames, perhaps to be born again into a better world. Another road was forked off to the right towards the city where harlots and other people of ill repute lived. The third one was to take the way back. It was difficult to make up one's mind. So he decided to toss the coin for choosing the right way.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story presents man-man and woman-man relations vividly. The reactions of male friends of Khushwant Sing on his death are realistic. Mr. Qadir, a lawyer thought of his duty to clients at first. He simply shrugged his shoulders:

‘I am afraid I can’t manage it. Much as I would like to condole with his wife -- or rather widow -- my duty to my clients comes first. I have to be at the tribunal in half an hour’ (3).

Khosla, a judge, was a genius. He was more interested in social affairs, births, marriages and deaths, than events of national or international importance. He and his wife reacted to the news of death as:

He just tapped his notebook with his pencil, and after a wake-up cough informed his wife of the news. She just yawned and opened her large dreamy eyes wide.

‘I suppose you will close the High Court today?’ she said.

‘I am afraid the High Court doesn’t close at just any excuse. I’ll have to go. If have any time I’ll drop in on the way -- or we can call on Sunday’ (4).

The Khoslas did not go there.

A Communist and a writer also visited the place. Deaths were unimportant events for them. The Communist consulted the writer in a polite whisper:

‘How far are you going?’

‘I plan dropping off at the coffee house,’ answered the other. ‘Are you going the whole way?’(5)

The reactions of Mr. Qadir, Khosla, a Communist and a writer towards another male person are quite natural. These reactions are as natural as anyone has in real life.

The story is most remarkable for its man-woman relationship. At first we have the relation between the author and his wife. His wife would be busy pottering around his corpse. This is a common situation all over India. If the situation is other way round, we don’t find such act from men. Secondly, the relation between Mr Qadir and his wife is noteworthy. Mrs Qadir is a bundle of emotions and explosions. This description of Mrs Qadir is rooted in patriarchal

conception of female nature. Mary Wollstonecraft compared such “privileged” women to members of “the feathered race”, birds confined to cages who have nothing to do but plume themselves and “stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch” (Tong 1998:12). Mr Qadir knows that his wife would burst out crying while listening to the news. It is a tendency of male parson to show how he knows each and everything:

‘What are you making all this noise for?’ he said sternly. ‘Do you think it will bring him back to life?’

His wife knew that it was no use arguing with him. He always won the arguments (2).

It describes his power relation with his wife.

Similarly, Khosla has the same view towards his wife. Khosla is a judge. He has to spend some time with the children and fussing with his wife. Another friend of Khushwant Sing carries several books. He has different kind of intention towards the wife of narrator. He has tears in his eyes and hands over the book to her:

‘I’ve brought you a copy of the *Gita*. It will give you great comfort.’

Overcome with emotion, he hurriedly slipped back to wipe the tears which had crept into his eyes (5).

This incident breaks the patriarchal stereotype that only women weep. Men also have the same emotions and some men have courage to display those emotions. Though they are full with such emotions, they cannot show at public place. This shows the breaking of stereotype view about men. It is an example of author’s attitude towards emotional make-up of men.

Mr Qadir worked very late at night. On the other hand, Mrs Qadir believed in sleep anyhow. Khosla also gets up early in the morning:

He made himself a cup of tea and settled in a comfortable armchair by the electric radiator. He stuck the pencil in his mouth and meditated. He couldn’t think of what to write. He decided to write his diary. He had spent the previous day listening to an important case (3-4).

Through this example the author has shown the stereotype that wives mostly indulge in sleep and husbands are industrious and work hard.

Male characters are described in detail with their place in the family. Such details are not given about female characters. As per Wollstonecraft's estimation, they are 'kept' women who sacrifice health, liberty, and virtue for whatever prestige, pleasure and power their husbands could provide (Tong 1998: 12). Some elements in the story for example Khosla, a judge, who makes his tea do help in breaking some stereotypes.

2. Karma

Substance of the Story:

'Karma' is a ridiculous story of Indian people who disowned their own people in the days of the raj, and aped their British masters. Sir Mohan Lal is the representative of those Indians. He was in the first class waiting room at the railway station. He had Balliol tie and sank into a large cane chair to drink and ruminate. Lachmi, Lady Mohan Lal sat outside the waiting room chewing a betel leaf. She asked the coolie whether the trains were crowded those days. When asked she said that she was travelling with her master, a vizier and a barrister. She was fond of a little gossip but her husband never had any time to spare for her. After finishing her meal, she dried her mouth and hands with the loose end of her sari. She found a seat by the window. She sat gazing idly at the jostling crowd on the platform. Mohan Lal continued to sip his Scotch. He was fond of conversation with English people. But he never showed any sign of eagerness to talk to the English as most Indians did.

Mohan Lal retired to his corner by the window and took out a copy of The Times which always attracted his attention. His handsome gold cigarette case was full with English cigarettes. He was disturbed by the bearer's announcement of the installation of the Sahib's luggage. He walked to his coupe with a studied gait. He sat down in a corner and opened the copy of The Time he had read several times before. Then he looked out of the window down the crowded platform. He saw two English soldiers looking for room. He decided to welcome them, though

they were entitled to travel only second class. But the two English soldiers called him nigger and threw him out of the train. Sir Mohan reeled backwards, tripped on his bedding and landed on the suitcase. His feet were glued to the earth and he lost his speech. Lachmi, fair and fat, was in the inter-class zenana compartment. Her mouth was bloated with betel saliva. As the train left, the lighted part of the platform, she spat and sent a jet of the red dribble flying across like a dart.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story 'Karma' covers only two types of relations of woman-man and man-man. The writer has focused both the relations very effectively. Firstly, the story focuses on woman-man relationship and particularly wife-husband relationship. Sir Mohan Lal always is westernized and imitates them artificially:

He wanted everything 'tickety-boo' and orderly. In his five years abroad, Sir Mohan had acquired the manners and attitudes of the upper classes. He rarely spoke Hindustani. He was fond of conversation, and like a cultured Englishman he could talk on almost any subject -- books, politics, people. How frequently had he heard English people say that he spoke like an Englishman!

(10)

He waited for the train in a first class waiting room. On the other hand, Lachmi, his wife, sat outside the waiting room chewing a betel leaf. She wore a dirty white sari with a red border. She sat on steel trunk.

Being educated and due to the impact of imperialism, Sir Mohan Lal doesn't like his illiterate wife. He didn't want to live for a long time in the company of his wife. The writer states:

Her husband never had any time to spare for her. She lived in the upper storey of the house and he on the ground floor. He did not like her poor illiterate relatives hanging about his bungalow, so they never came. He came up to her once in a while at night and stayed for a few minutes. He just ordered her about in anglicized Hindustani, and she obeyed passively. These nocturnal visits had, however, borne no fruit (9).

Lachmi, on the other hand, tolerates the situation passively and lives life happily. She doesn't bother about the absence of her husband. She has respect for her husband:

He travels first class. He is a vizier and a barrister, and meets so many officers and Englishmen in the trains -- and I am only a native woman. I can't understand English and don't know their ways, so I keep to my zenana inter-class (9).

She is portrayed as an assertive and submissive kind of woman. Though both are native and married, there is class difference between them. The end of the story tells us the effects of having such kind of relation between wife and husband.

The relationship between Lachmi and railway coolie is another example of woman-man relationship. Though she is illiterate, she frankly spoke to coolie. Coolie also talked to her affectionately:

'Are you travelling alone, sister?'

'No, I am with my master, brother' (9).

The words 'sister' and 'brother' indicate cordiality in the interaction between a passenger and coolie. Thus, woman-man relationship is presented in two different ways. In one case, we have power relation. The husband tries to show how he is superior to his wife and the wife accepts without questioning it. In another case, though coolie comes from lower socio-economic stratum, she treats him with due respect. They are interacting on an equal footing.

Secondly, the story focuses on man-man relationship. Sir Mohan Lal was alone in the first-class compartment. He wanted to have an impressive conversation with the Englishman. Two English soldiers walked towards his compartment. Sir Mohan decided to welcome them. Both the soldiers came up and looked at Sir Mohan:

'Get the nigger out,' he muttered to his companion.

They opened the door, and turned to the half-smiling, half-protesting Sir Mohan.

'Reserved!' yelled Bill.

‘Janta -- Reserved. Army -- Fauj,’ exclaimed Jim, pointing to his khaki shirt.

Ek dum jao -- get out!’

‘I say, I say, surely’, protested Sir Mohan in his Oxford accent (11).

‘Keep yer ruddy mouth shut!’ And Jim struck Sir Mohan flat on the face (12).

The word ‘nigger’ is an offensive word for Negro. So we have racial discrimination between man and man. Indians are outcasts to British. Again there is power relation. British have shown that they are superior to Indians. The soldiers have to travel by second class but by race they are supposed to be superior. Though Sir Mohan Lal wanted to welcome them, English soldiers threw him out. It shows how relation between men is governed by racial discrimination. His misplaced friendliness gets rudely shaken when calling him nigger and throws him out of compartment. English soldiers have dual power i.e. white race supremacy and as British rulers. Soldiers are able to overpower the educated Sir Mohan Lal inspite of the title ‘Sir’.

Thus, gender relations presented in this story are the examples of showing power over the others. Sir Mohan Lal is the representative of egoistic husbands who try to dominate wives. He is also representative of anglicized Indians who imitate the manners and attitudes of the British upper class. Two English soldiers represent the power over colonized people. It represents the dominance of men over the other men.

The language used by the writer is also gender biased. Only two evidences are enough to prove it. While writing about Sir Mohan Lal, author writes:

He was fond of conversation, and like a cultured English-man he could talk on almost any subject -- books, politics, people. How frequently had he heard English people say that he spcke like an Englishman! (10)

And about Lachmi:

Lachmi chatted away merrily. She was fond of a little gossip and had no one to talk to at home (9).

The two sentences 'she was fond of little gossip' and 'he was fond of conversation' show the gender bias clearly. It is generally considered that women gossip and men discuss. Patriarchy made us believe women are engaged in gossip and men in conversation.

Though Sir Mohan Lal is superior to Lachmi, Lachmi is submissive and assertive. She doesn't feel inferior. She is a powerful figure leading life without confusion or any inferiority complex. She is well composed and emerges as a far more powerful character as compared to vulnerable Sir Mohan Lal.

3. The Mark of Vishnu

Substance of the Story:

The main purpose of the story seems to expose the folly of superstition and blind reverence. It is presented through the character of Gunga Ram. Gunga Ram, like all good Hindus, believes in the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, the creator, preserver and destroyer. He is most devoted to Vishnu. Every morning he smears his forehead with a V mark in sandalwood paste to honour the deity. All life is sacred to him. He feeds a king cobra every night. The teacher tells us that a snake eats only once in several days. Snakes don't drink milk. Gunga Ram is more devoted to more dangerous animal. Gunga is squashed. The children of the household make fun of him. But Gunga Ram sticks to his faith in the sanctity of life. He would feed and protect snakes because snakes are the vilest of God's creatures on earth. He leaves the saucerful of milk by the snake hole every night and finds it gone in the mornings.

One day the muddy ground is littered with crawling worms, centipedes and ladybirds. The rain has flooded Kala Nag's hole. Kala Nag is almost six feet in length. As Gunga Ram is not at home, people surrounded Kala Nag with long bamboo sticks. They kill it half dead. They put it in tin and give it to the science teacher. They wait for him to open it and admire our kill. When the teacher opens the tin, the snake, not quite dead, springs up and goes for the teacher's face. The teacher pushes himself back on the chair. While surveying the scene with its bloodshot eyes, Kala Nag drags itself painfully to the door. Kala Nag finds its

path blocked by Gunga Ram with a saucer and a jug of milk. Gunga Ram goes down on his knees and pours the milk. He holds his hands folded in prayer. The enraged snake bites him on the forehead leaving a V mark, 'the mark of Vishnu' which Gunga Ram used to smear on his forehead every morning with sandalwood paste.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

In this short story, the female character is totally absent. Only the relation between man-man and man-animal is described. The purpose of the story is to express the folly of superstition and blind reverence. As a need of the story, it focuses only on one character i.e. Gunga Ram. Gunga Ram is illiterate and full of superstition. All life is sacred to him, even if it is of a serpent or scorpion or centipede:

More dangerous the animal, the more devoted Gunga Ram was to its existence. Hence the regard for snakes; above all, the cobra, who was the Kala Nag (14).

Children tease him regarding his faith. But he never seems to shake his faith. The narrator tells him that they would catch all cobras and send them to Bombay. They would milk them there for anti-snake-bite serum. Gunga Ram reacts:

Your doctors must have udders. I never saw a snake have any. But don't you dare touch this one. It is a *phannyar* -- it is hooded (14).

The narrator remarks:

'That just proves what a liar you are. *The phannyar* is the male, so it couldn't have laid the hundred eggs. You must have laid the eggs yourself.

'Must be Gunga Ram's eggs. We'll soon have a hundred Gunga Rams'(14).

The story is male-dominated. Women characters have no place at all. Women are generally believed to be more superstitious and kind, affectionate. But the author has portrayed man as superstitious. It was possible for him to show a

woman offering milk, crying to children or supporting Gunga Ram. Still children tease Gunga Ram as hen leading eggs i.e. female. Though the story is widely read and purposeful, it does not serve the purpose of gender equality like the other stories. The story is remarkable for its characterization. The writer has focused on only one character in detail. Minute details about Gunga Ram are given from the beginning to the end of the story. Gunga Ram is portrayed as an object of fun. The expression like 'Must be Gunga Ram's eggs' indicates that even how children dominate elder person. Though Gunga Ram is pivot of the story, he is subordinate, submissive. This also breaks the stereotypical characterization of male nature.

4. The Butterfly

Substance of the Story:

The story is a satire on anglicized Indians and their love for India and Indians. Charles alias Romesh Chandra is the central character of the story. He met the narrator in the University. He came to the University from a mission school in Simla with a batch of Anglo-Indians. Others called them the 'Me-shun Squad' and they did not mind the description. The Indians in their lot had English names. Charles wore a sola topee at a jaunty angle with the strap tightly passing under his chin. His jackets had leather patches at their elbows just as the English. His pronunciation was different even the Oxford dictionary did not know. He had a habit to use 'Yus mun,' or 'No mun', or 'Say mun' before each sentence. He spent the day with Anglo-Indian friends. The narrator wanted to know about the Anglo-Indian colony from Charles. When Charles was asked about fun, he replied with a studied silence and a smile.

Charles began to change and told about his Indian origin. He also told them that his real name was Romesh Chandra. He gave inside information of white women. He added that there was nothing to them except their white skin. He was very patriotic in his preference for Indian women. He loved Betty Brown until she got married to Jacob, a Punjab Police. Charles was a nigger. A girl from Shahpur came to join the University. She was only sixteen but having signs of

young womanhood. She wore a sari. Charles missed his heart-beat. She was like the goddess Saraswati.

Charles used the title '*Shriyut*' to emphasize the change. He carried books written in Hindi or Urdu. He had made a list of Englishmen to shoot. He joined a secret organization and began to feel heroic after the oath. His Saraswati left the University and married a pot – bellied bureaucrat.

Reading Karl Marx and Engels, Charles became a Marxist. Shriyut Romesh became Comrade Romesh. He joined the Communist Party. He organized a strike of the tonga-wallahs. But his countrymen deserted him alone in the vast square. Jacob hit Charles and drew blood. His friends took him home.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story presents relations at two levels i.e. man and woman and man and man relationship. It presents Charles as a transformative character changing within a short span of short story. He has relations with many people. Though he is Indian he lives in the company of Anglo-Indians. He rarely talked to Indians. He always tries to imitate western manners. His friends call him 'Charles' but he corrects 'the name is Romesh Chandra'. He also considers himself as superior. Whenever asked anything, he answers with a studied silence and a smile:

'One evening he was communicative. He asked us if we had ever slept with a white woman. We confessed we had not. We hadn't even with a black or a brown one. But what was a white woman like? Good? Charles did not answer. He just rolled his eyes up and showed us the whites. We begged of him to let us into the details. He gave them to us with all the genius of an amorous artist and we left for our room envying Charles and feeling uncomfortable (18).

This type of relation may be possible among the students who live in the hostels. They discuss such topics and make fun of each other. Its another side is what we call ragging. Charles discusses in low tone with his friends about white women:

'One evening Charles gave us inside information of white woman in low, subdued tones. He said they were much overrated -- and added

with a whisper in our ears that there was nothing to them except their white skin and the Indians were much better (18).

Charles hates Jacob for two reasons. Firstly, Jacob gets married to Betty Brown whom Charles loved. Secondly, Jacob lashes out with his baton and hits Charles till blood comes out. Jacob is the representative of power and white supremacy as well as embodiment of success. His behaviour shows the tendency of white people. On the other hand, Charles is the representative of black, nigger and a struggler. Though he is a slave, he tries to rise against the rulers. He is a communist. Both Charles and Jacob represent racial difference and the effects of it. Thus, the relation of Charles with his friends in the University is different from his relations with Anglo-Indian beau Jacob.

Charles is a romantic person who comes in contact with three women-- Betty Brown, Saraswati and European nurse. His relations with these three women reveal his character:

He had been getting on famously with Betty Brown until her Anglo-Indian beau, Jacob, got a job in the Police as a sergeant. Charles was dropped. He didn't have a khaki uniform, nor a Sam Brown belt, nor the silver letters 'P.P.' for Punjab Police on his shoulders. He didn't have a motorcycle with a pillion seat. In any case, all said and done, Charles was a nigger (18-19).

Being a jobless nigger, Charles has to leave his beloved. It happens in real life situation. The writer has not given details about their relations. But this evidence throws light on the condition of a male character of Charles after the heartbreak.

Charles then comes in contact with another girl. She is only sixteen. But the signs of young womanhood have appeared on her bosom. She has coy, bashful appearance. She has worn a sari and sandals. While looking at her, Charles has missed his heart-beat. She greets him with folded hands and says, 'Namaste.' Charles thinks:

She was like the goddess Saraswati in a picture which Charles' mother owned. Charles had been in love with that picture since his infancy.

The goddess stood in celestial white on a large pink lotus with the snow-clad mountains behind her. In the corners in the foreground, a couple of elephants raised their trunks in salutation. Charles decided this girl was Saraswati. From the tiny red spot on her forehead down to the tips of her pink toes it was the Hindu goddess come to life -- stepping out of the Vedas, descending from the heights of snow-bound Kailash, floating down the Ganges on a gorgeous lotus, and somehow, face to face with Charles (19).

This shows that Charles has different view in his preference for Indian women. He feels affinity towards Saraswati and also remembers his mother and the picture owned by her. But Saraswati also left the University and married a pot-bellied bureaucrat as Betty Brown married Jacob. At the end of the story, Charles comes in contact a nice-looking European nurse who has to take care of him:

‘Barricades of hearts and souls’

‘Hurl your song like a bomb,’ he went on with gusto.

‘Now, now, Mister,’ said the pretty nurse severely, ‘didn’t excite yourself.

Charles hadn’t noticed her. He did now, and smiled.

‘The name is Romesh Chandra. Charles for short. Pleased to meet you’(24).

Charles has three-fold relation with women from different classes. Each relationship is different from the other. Charles-Betty relation represents the racial as well as class difference. Perhaps Charles has love-relation with Betty because of his living in the company of Anglo-Indians. Superiority complex is seen in his attitude towards white women and Indian women. Charles-Saraswati relation is a relation between two Indians. But they are from different backgrounds. Charles is from a mission school in Simla with Anglo-Indian manners whereas Saraswati is from barren wastes of sandy Shahpur with coy, bashful appearance. Though they are Indians, they are not equal in their attitudes. The result is that Saraswati gets married a pot-bellied bureaucrat. It is an example of class difference. Charles-European nurse relation includes both racial difference as well as class difference.

Being a nurse, she takes care of Charles. Charles is in happy mood and does not notice the presence of her. While noticing the presence of the nurse, he smiles and says: 'The name is Romesh Chandra. Charles for short. Pleased to meet you' (24). Here Charles considers the nurse as only a nurse and say what he says when he meets any person i.e. 'pleased to meet you'.

The character of Charles has dual identity. Initially, he considers himself superior to other Indians. But his appearance and name cannot make him superior. He comes down to the earth because of Betty Brown. The writer has presented Indian and Anglo-Indian racial difference through the character of Charles. Charles' journey starts with aspired identity, proceeds to an assertion of Indian identity and ends with communist consciousness.

The language used by the writer is sexist. The expressions like '... had ever slept with a white woman', '... nothing to them except their white skin', '... signs of young womanhood had appeared on her bosom', are representing the view. But these expressions can be considered as the need of the short story.

5. The Interview

Substance of the Story:

The story depicts pitiable condition of a person lacking the knowledge of numismatics. Once Mr Stan Towers came to meet the narrator without an appointment. He was a hulking man in shirt sleeves. He was with a blonde in her fading forties and a little girl, Pam. The narrator shook hands with Stan Towers' wife, Margery. She stared at the wallpaper looking utterly bored. Mr Towers asked for cream and sugar for him and his wife. He pulled out his packet of cigarettes and asked the narrator to get it. But the narrator shook his head and said, 'No thanks, I----.' Towers came there as they didn't know what to do. Mr Towers was a numismatist. His articles had appeared in the best numismatical journals like *Calcutta Numismatical Journal*. He asked about German, Russian numismatists as well as Dr Banerjee. He asked the narrator to meet Banerjee while getting back. The narrator is totally overpowered by Mr Towers. He asked

many questions one after another. But the narrator didn't know the meaning of 'numismatics'.

Miss Forbes, an assistant, brought in coffee and biscuits. The narrator felt like a boxer saved by the bell on the count of nine. He handed over a chit for Miss Merriman, his secretary. He started a conversation with Marge. He asked her about India and Indians. She liked both India and Indians. Again Mr Towers started discussion on Banerjee and numismatics. Miss Merriman came in with an open book. She mumbled, 'Numismatics. Numismatics. Here we are – from the Latin word numisma; pertaining or relating to ...'. The narrator introduced Mr Towers as one of the world's greatest numismatics. He also told him that she was very interested in numismatics. While getting dictionary from Miss Merriman, he got the relief. Mr. Towers shook the hands and told about the contribution of numismatics in reconstructing ancient history. He also emphasized the importance of numismatics which helped to fix the chronology of all historical excavations. The narrator intervened the conversation and said, 'Mohenjodaro has yielded valuable material to the numismatician.' Mr Towers asked whether it was Banerjee's book and got the dictionary out of his hand.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story depicts the different kinds of relations. It has two types of relations – man-man and man-woman. Mrs Margery Towers is a stranger. The narrator has polite conversation with Mrs Towers:

'And what do you think of India, Mrs Towers?'

'Oh, fine.'

'Wouldn't you like to go there?'

'Yeah, very much.'

'Oh yes, you would like it very much. So different the people and the country. I am sure you would like it.'

'Sure' (27).

In fact, this conversation comes as a relief to the narrator from the overpowering presence of Mr Towers and his bombarding of about numismatics an area the narrator is totally ignorant of. Ignorance of the narrator creates a strange hierarchy

between him and Mr Towers and while also creating a strange gender equality between the narrator and the three female characters in the story, who one after the other come to the rescue of the narrator who is virtually crushed under the overpowering presence, knowledge and bombarding sentences of Mr Towers. The narrator gets Mrs Towers ideas about India and Indians. This interaction is somewhat egalitarian relationship between the two characters.

On the other hand, relation between Mr Towers and Miss Merriman is merry making. Actually she comes with a dictionary getting the meaning of numismatics. Mr Towers considers her as a person having knowledge of numismatics. He speaks about the importance of numismatics:

‘Oh, are you now?’ beamed Mr Towers, gripping the hand of his new victim and shaking it vigorously. ‘It is a pleasure to meet someone interested in numismatics. As I was saying, people do not realize the contribution that numismatics has made in reconstructing ancient history.’

‘Don’t they?’ queried the baffled Miss Merriman.

No, indeed they do not,’ emphasized Mr Towers, warming to the subject. ‘Numismatics is the one science which has helped to fix the chronology of all historical excavations (27-28).

If there may be male instead of Miss Merriman, the situation would be the same. There cannot be change at all because of the behaviour of Mr Towers. In both the evidences, one person is stranger to the other. But they discuss as they are intimate to each other. Both males and females answer the questions without any hesitation. They feel comfortable in each other’s company. So there is no hierarchical gender relation between them.

However, the most interesting interaction is between the man to man relationship in the story. Mr Towers visits the narrator without an appointment. Though an intruder, Mr Towers takes the control not only of the situation but also the office of the narrator. He asks for cream and sugar for him as well as for his wife. The narrator receives him politely:

Towers sat down on my desk and pulled out his packet of cigarettes. He pulled one half an inch out of the pack and held it out to me. I shook my head. 'No thanks, I....'

Towers lit it himself and calmly surveyed the room, charging it with smoke and expectancy (25).

Mr Towers controls the conversation between the two. He poses the questions and also offers answers to the questions without letting the narrator speak. He renders the narrator utterly powerless, speechless and dumb founded. Mr Towers is the representative of the persons who without any intention visit the house of other person:

We were passing through and didn't know what to do. We've seen the sights and Marge doesn't care for them anyhow. So I says to Marge I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll go and see the American Ambassador and the Indian High Commissioner (25).

Mr Towers is talkative. He goes on speaking though not asked. Though unknown, the narrator welcomes Mr Towers with out of compulsion and responds to every question raised by him:

'Do you know the Calcutta Numismatical Society?'

'Oh yes. It's very well know' (26).

The relation between unknown people portrayed in this story is very useful to reveal gender equality. The relation between the narrator (PRO) and Mr Towers is the crucial aspect of the story. Generally it is considered that men know everything and they know how to deal with any situation. Mr Towers is knowledgeable person, no doubt. But the narrator, though a PRO, doesn't know about numismatics. This creates a challenging situation for the narrator. Mr Towers makes PRO feel inferior. The PRO feels uneasy, uncomfortable and inferior. He even has to take the help of his secretary. So the PRO has somewhat inferiority complex. He turns to Mrs Towers and a little girl to get rescued from Mr Towers. The whole situation is under control of Mr Towers. Though he is totally intruder, everyone has to behave as per his suggestions and commands. His behaviour brings all persons i.e. his wife, daughter, the secretary to the strange

equality. Mr Towers speaks with the secretary as fluently and unhesitatingly as he speaks to PRO. He doesn't think of her as inferior. This hints at the gender equality. Both males and females are on equal footing.

Mr Towers, Mrs Towers, the narrator (PRO) and Miss Merriman are the important characters in the story. Generally women are considered to be talkative and men silent. But here the character like Mr Towers is talkative. He goes on speaking. The writer has nullified the notion regarding women as talkative with the help of the example of PRO and Mr Towers. One male is ignorant and speaks less and another male has power relation over the other. Thus, two men in the story have hierarchical relations. Generally male dominates female and female feels inferior. But here the narrator, the PRO, feels inferiority complex.

The dialogues and the language are gender sensitive but not sexist. Technically, the story is very important as it depicts hierarchical man to man relation and an equal man to woman relationship.

6. The Portrait of a Lady

Substance of the Story:

The narrator has presented a memorable pen-portrait of a grandmother. The narrator and his grandmother were great friends. She used to wake him up in the morning and get him ready for school.

They went to live in city and that was a turning point in their relationship. She no longer went to school with him. As there were no dogs there, she took to feeding sparrows. She was unhappy with the teachings in English school because there was no teaching about God and the scriptures. To her music had lewd associations. It was the monopoly of harlots and beggars and not meant for gentle folk. She rarely left her spinning wheel to talk to anyone. She sat by her wheel spinning and reciting prayers from sunrise to sunset. Only in the afternoon she used to feed the sparrows. It was the happiest half hour of the day for her. She was not sentimental when the narrator left for further studies abroad. She did not show any emotion. Her lips moved in prayer, her mind was lost in prayer. She kissed his forehead.

The narrator came back after five years. She did not look a day older. She still had no time for words. Her happiest moments were still with her sparrows. A change came over her. She collected the women of the neighborhood, got an old drum and started to sing. The next morning she was taken ill. She said that her end was near. She did not want to waste more time talking to them. She lay peacefully in bed praying and telling her beads. A peaceful paleness spread on her face and she died. When she was taken to be cremated, all over the verandah thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirping. The narrator's mother fetched some bread and threw it to them as his grandmother used to do. The sparrows took no notice of the bread. As the corpse of his grandmother was taken off, the sparrows flew away quietly.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

As only man and woman gender relation is presented in the story, it works at different levels – grandmother and a child, grandmother and an adolescent, grandmother and young man. In the beginning of the story, the narrator tells us about the relation between him and his grandmother in the village. His parents had left him with her and they went to live in the city. They are good friends at this stage:

She used to wake me up in the morning and get me ready for school. She said her morning prayer in a monotonous sing-song while she bathed and dressed me in the hope that I would listen and get to know it by heart. I listened because I loved her voice but never bothered to learn it. Then she would fetch my wooden slate which she had already washed and plastered with yellow chalk, a tiny earthen ink pot and a reed pen, tie them all in a bundle and hand it to me. After a breakfast of a thick, stale chapatti with a little butter and sugar spread on it, we went to school. She carried several stale chapattis with her for the village dogs (29-30).

Many grandmothers do something for their grandchildren. His grandmother goes to school with him. During those days, schools were engaged in temples. Old people were the devotees of God. His grandmother carries several stale chapattis

with her for the village dogs. This creates positive attitude in the mind of a child. A child learns so many things from the grandparents. But in the modern age, we have nuclear family. The grandparents have lost their place in the family. So such type of stories are very useful for providing insides into the relationship that a child may have with its grandparents and how such relationship contributes to develop the personality of the child.

The relation between the narrator and his grandmother has changed in city:

That was a turning-point in our friendship. Although we shared the same room, my grandmother no longer came to school with me. I used to go to an English school in a motor bus. There were no dogs in the streets and she took to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of our city house (30).

His grandmother does not go to school with him as the narrator goes to school in a motor bus. She does not like whatever the narrator learns in the English school. She thinks that music has lewd (lustful) associations. She rarely talks to the narrator. It happens in city life. Children are kept lonely in their rooms to study all by themselves. Grandparents have no place in the life of children in city areas particularly.

When the protagonist parts with the family to go abroad, it is a very touching moment. But here grandmother is not sentimental as she was when the narrator learns something like music in English school. She keeps herself busy in her activities:

She came to leave me at the railway station but did not talk or show any emotion. Her lips moved in prayer, her mind was lost in prayer. Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary. Silently she kissed my forehead, and when I left I cherished the moist imprint as perhaps the last sign of physical contact between us (31).

The relation between the narrator and his grandmother has different shades. The relation in village is different from the relation in city. The role of grandmother is very important in anybody's life. The gender relation between

grandmother and the narrator would help in creating gender equality. Woman has secondary importance in society. But the example of grandmother shows that woman is the pivot in the life of grandchildren. It focuses on the strength of women in certain roles like the mother and the grandmother.

The character of grandmother is depicted in detail. Changes in her attitude at different levels are notable. She is different in village and in city. She loves village dogs in the village and sparrows in the city. Her behaviour emphasizes importance of nurturance not simply in case of relations of human beings but also with all living things. She goes with the narrator to his school in the village but not in city. In city she could not help the narrator with his lessons. She doesn't like English school as there was no teaching about God and the scriptures in city. On the other hand, in the village, the school is attached to the temple and the priest teaches the morning prayer. Thus, the character of the grandmother is strong as well as sensitive. The language is gender sensitive. It is said that women are emotional. But the writer has shown that women are also able to control their emotions.

7. The Voice of God

Substance of the Story:

The present story is a satire on democratic election procedures. Bhamba is a village mainly inhabited by Sikh peasants. The Moslems till the lands of their Sikh masters or have lesser trades as potters and weavers. There are some Christians who live on the outskirts of the habitations and do the menial work. There are also Hindu shopkeepers who sell provisions. All people come together at the tomb of Syed Bulhey Shah once a year. Their womenfolk make offerings at the tomb and buy charms to induce their barren wombs to yield. The only excitement is provided by periodical visits of the police. In the morning, men work in the field and boys graze cattle; women work at home grinding corn, cooking or spinning. After midday they all relax.

One spring afternoon, the men from Bhamba sat on their haunches listening to the music of the mill. The women sat on their string cots gossiping

and rubbing clarified butter into each other's scalps. Suddenly the village was astir. A motor car with five or six people came to Bhamba and halted in the village square. Mr Forsythe, the English Deputy Commissioner with Sardar Sahib Ganda Singh, Honorary Magistrate stepped out of the car. The Sahib had never been to Bhamba before. Though Ganda Singh did not need an introduction, Forsythe introduced him in eloquent terms. Everyone knew him. He was a well-known patron of thugs. His liquor stills worked in broad daylight. His hospitality was lavish. He even provided dusky village maiden for men. He was most hated man in the district. He was tall and corpulent. Forsythe announced that the Sardar was proposing to contest the election. Ganda Singh canvassed the people with his arms round their shoulders. He promised to do all things and got the promise of 100 per cent poll in his favour. He also added that it was a matter of prestige for the Sikh peasantry.

Next day, a lorry with a loudspeaker came in the village square. Sardar Kartar Singh stepped out of the car. He was an advocate and a nominee of the Nationalists. Several villagers knew him in European dress with black coat, tie and striped trousers. Now he was in long shirt, pyjamas and sandals. He introduced Seth Sukhtankar, a well-known Nationalist leader who had been elected unopposed. He requested people not to vote for a man who trimmed his beard and drank liquor. He was not too prosperous for a lawyer.

One spring afternoon, the Kisan, Baba Ram Singh came riding upon a mare as white as his turban. He had long beard. Everyone in Bhamba knew him. He had been arrested several times in peasant movements. All his property had been confiscated and he was homeless. People touched his feet. He was popularly known as Babaji because of his age and piety. He was like the Guru. He did not drink nor trim his beard. He wanted their votes because he would fight for their liberation from foreigner as well as exploiting landlords. He would fight against corrupt administration. Before the polling, he was arrested on a charge of making a seditious speech.

Villagers went to the polls drinking Ganda Singh's liquor by Seth Sukhtankar's lorries. They were illiterate. They named their candidate and walked

back home. The lorries did not take them back nor get more liquor. Sardar Ganda Singh was elected. The people had spoken, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God.'

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The setting of the story is election in Bhamba. Though there are 50 percent female voters, the writer has not considered the value of their votes. As a voter female has no importance at all in the election process. Even not a single female character is projected in the story. Female characters as voters are totally invisible. The writer has not tried to bring female character in a positive way. It was possible for him to show the attitude of women towards election with at least one character. We even cannot see any female character observing the situation as a passive spectator. It was again possible to show how women react to the election.

There are three male figures from the Sikh community. They are Sardar Ganda Singh, Sardar Kartar Singh and Baba Ram Singh. They are the rivals of each other because of election to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. They attack one another. Everyone tries to show his superiority over the other. Sardar Ganda Singh remarks:

It was a matter of prestige for the Sikh peasantry, he added. More than that, he was of the same sub-caste as they were. As for his rival, the Nationalist candidate, he was not even an agriculturist! He was a lawyer from the city. The Kisan candidate was one of them, but then he had no religion. Besides that, the Government strongly disapproved of him and had frequently put him in jail for reasons of security (36).

It is a determined relation and only for getting victory in election. Sardar Ganda Singh has never been to Bhamba before it. For getting votes, he is ready to do anything for the villagers. He makes the note of all sorts of work in his diary. He promises the villagers to fulfill all their needs. He knows the tactics of getting votes. It happens only at the time of election.

Sardar Kartar Singh is another rival in the election. He is an advocate and nominee of the Nationalists. He has not been to Bhamba before but several

villagers knew him because he is engaged in criminal cases for exorbitant fees. He takes the help of another party leader Seth Sukhtankar who is a millionaire. Like Ganda Singh, he appeals the villagers:

He knew all about Ganda Singh. No one, he said, should vote for a man who trimmed his beard and drank liquor. He also warned the villagers against the insidious propaganda of the Kisans, who had no religion or morals, and who besides wanting to share everyone's property, would share everyone's wives (37).

Kartar Singh attacks both Ganda Singh and the Kisan. He also tries to show his goodness to the villagers. He is only a city lawyer backed by Hindu moneylenders. The villagers have nothing to do with him. As he is not a prosperous lawyer, the villagers think about the money he has got for lorries, posters and voters.

Baba Ram Singh is another rival of Kartar Singh and Ganda Singh. He is representative of the Kisan. He rides upon a mare and not motor car like Ganda Singh and Kartar Singh. Everyone knows him. People touch his feet wherever he goes and mothers bring their children to be blessed by him. He is popularly known as Babaji. He wants to contest the election for the liberation of villagers from foreigners as well as exploiting moneylenders. The Government had put him in jail for nearly twenty years and robbed him of his property. He did not drink nor trim his beard. Baba Ram Singh has great ambition to win the election. But he is arrested before the polling is taken place.

Relation between these males is based on conflict of interest where three of them are computing for power. Ganda Singh won the election because of his power over the others. He is Honorary Magistrate and a big landowner. He does all sorts of business because of his relation with the government. Though all are from same community, they have different attitudes towards each other as well as villagers. Their remarks on each other are not suitable for social equality and behaviour of Ganda Singh is not suitable for gender equality. In fact, it is very exploitative of women. Money is the source of strength for Ganda Singh and

Kartar Singh. But Baba Ram Singh has no such advantage. His strength is his work for the society.

Actually women have right to cast their votes. But we get information only about drunkard voters. We don't know whether women have had an opportunity to vote in that election. So the question arises: What about female voters? Not a single female character or situation is presented to show the value of female voters. Only traditional ideas regarding women are presented. They are shown as 'gossiping and rubbing clarified butter into each other's scalps', 'grinding corn, cooking or spinning'. The writer has not shown even sensitivity towards the exploitation of women when he mentions Ganda Singh's act of providing 'dusky village maidens'. As far as elections are considered, females are not only subordinated but also kept totally away from the elections. The writer does not take cognizance of women as citizens with political rights on par with men. The story depicts patriarchy with men's access to resources and rewards of authority structures inside and outside the home, the whole story is patriarchal in nature that depicts women as faceless, powerless, invisible person.

There are people from all communities with their business. But they gather together to the fair as a gesture of their sense of belonging to their culture. Women are described only with respect to their reproductive role as housewives and mothers or women aspiring to be mothers. The sentence 'Their womenfolk make offerings at the tomb and buy charms to induce their barren wombs to yield' is an attack on women. Stereotypical image of women is portrayed.

8. A Punjab Pastoral

Substance of the Story:

The story depicts a typical pastoral Punjab scene with views on different religions. Peter Hansen was a young American from Illinois. He wanted to serve humanity. He came to Amritsar (Punjab) to preach the gospel of Christ among the Sikh peasantry. He brought an old American army motorcycle with him. He was a missionary but with a difference. He believed in reform by example and personal

contact. He met the narrator who had also a heart for humanity. They decided to preach socialism through example and personal contact.

One hot May morning they set out of Amritsar for their work. Riding after fifteen miles, they flew over a ditch at some 40 miles per hour. The cattle and the cowherds lay in deep slumber under the trees near Soorajpur. It was a typical pastoral Punjab scene on a summer afternoon. Hansen narrated that last time there was quarrel between Sikhs and Christians. The Sikhs would not let the Christians into their temple because the Christians were sweepers and skinned dead buffaloes. Hansen met Moola Singh and everything was settled in right way. Hansen was very popular. No one noticed the narrator. They proceeded to Moola Singh's house. The crowd was with them. The two wives of Moola Singh were sitting under the shadow of wall. One was rubbing clarified butter into the head of the other. They were reticent (reserve in speech) about Moola Singh. Moola Singh was about sixty but a youthful smile was on his face. He was drunk. He requested, 'If you forgive me this time and promise to come again, I will not touch drink any more.' Hansen forgave him. He insisted that Christians were much nicer; they didn't drink and grow long hair and beards. They also visited Christian habitation. Hansen saw a girl of sixteen emerged from Moola Singh's courtyard. She wore a man's striped shirt without buttons. Hansen saw the girl with wide open mouth and felt like writing a poem about her.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The relation between Peter Hansen and the narrator is a complement for racial equality. Hansen is American whereas the narrator is Indian. They are good friends and both want to serve humanity. They ride on motorcycle to visit neighboring villagers. There is complete understanding between them. The narrator listens to Hansen attentively. Hansen considers Christians as good persons:

The Christian folk, he insisted, were so much nicer. They didn't drink. They didn't grow long hair and beards which stank of sweat and stale clarified butter. Since he had got to know them, they were living a

clean Christian life – free of pagan superstition which beset the life of the hirsute Sikh (43-44).

This remark upsets the narrator. But the narrator remains calm and quiet. There is no racial discrimination. Though the narrator is Sikh and Hansen, a Christian, he listens to the views about his community from a foreigner. This is very useful to enhance gender equality. Otherwise there is always quarrel between two groups, castes, races etc. Such good relation would play an important role in gender equality.

The relation between Moola Singh and Hansen has another quality which could improve the condition of people in villages. Moola Singh is a grand old fellow of sixty. He takes drink and feels guilty in the presence of Hansen:

‘Never again, Sahib. This is the last time -- *toba toba*. You come to my house and I am stupidly drunk. If you forgive me this time and promise to come again, I will not touch drink any more’ (43).

Moola Singh is a representative of the villagers who have habit of drinking as well as humanity towards the others. He asks for forgiveness and Hansen forgives him. Hansen, Moola Singh and his daughter are portrayed with minute details. Hansen is a central character. The details about him are given at the beginning of the story. Serving humanity by spreading Christianity is his motto. Moola Singh has two wives and a daughter. He has good personality. He has affinity towards Hansen. He says ‘toba toba’ in the presence of Hansen. The story is wholly patriarchal in nature. Moola Singh is the representative of male dominated tradition in Punjab. He has control over the situation. Though he has two wives, the author has not shown sensitivity towards polygamy. His wives are subordinate and meek. They are sitting under the shadows of a wall rubbing clarified butter into the head of one another. They even do not speak about Moola Singh. Similarly Hansen perceives Moola Singh’s daughter as sex object. She plays a traditional role of woman brining water on her head. Her labour of getting several buckets of water from the well is not important for the writer. On the other hand, her dress and slim figure is important and makes Hansen romantic and he tries to compose a poem.

Hansen is disgusted, demoralized and demotivated with Sikh community because of their appearance and behaviour. He says: 'you do not know where to start. When you've begun, you are not sure if you are going about it the right way. When you look back to see how far you've got, you find that you've got nowhere. It's like a stream losing itself in the desert sand. It dries up so quickly that you cannot even find its traces' (44). Though he had bad impression about Sikh community, the girl from the same community makes him feel better even romantic. Thus, the story presents her as a sex symbol, sex object. Hansen's looking towards the girl is the description of a typical "Male Gaze".

9. Kusum

Substance of the Story:

The story deals with the author's obsession with sex. Kusum Kumari was a good girl of eighteen but she looked twenty-eight. She was short and somewhat fat with stubby nose. She had dark oval face with spotted darker small pox marks. She worked hard and had first classes to her credit. She was no trouble to her parents. She got up early and cycled to her college. She had no engagements. She had no distractions and she did not distract anybody. She shunned sex. She had no modern fashion and cosmetics. She believed in virtue and kindness. She was popular with old men and women, but young men took no notice of her.

On Kusum's 19th birthday, college girls sent her cosmetics and Kusum took it as insult and turned the face of her mirror towards the wall. She knew it made her uglier. Her university life came to an end. Other girls could look forward to matrimony, but Kusum had nothing to look forward to. While coming back from the examination, she took the wrong side of road and ran into a young hawker. Her glasses were smashed. The hawker smiled pleasantly. It made her angry. She asked him whether he was blind. He answered that he was not blind but one-eyed. He shut his one eye and made the sound of a loud kiss. She called him pig and ass. He was enjoying the situation. She rushed home and buried her face in a pillow. She still remembered lewd suggestions by hawker. Nobody had ever done that to her before. A thought came to her mind whether the hawker

found her attractive. She was thinking of the hawker. She got her lipstick and turned the face of the mirror. She untied her hair and stuck a rose in her hair. She moved her head sideways to admire herself.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Kusum is a leading character of the story who lives a lonely life. She thinks of herself as ugly and unattractive. She believes in 'virtue and kindness;' and 'work and propriety.' She was popular with old men and women. She shunned sex. Even college girls mock at her. Young men took no notice of her. She seldom smiled. But her meeting by accident with the hawker changes the whole scene. When she falls on the hawker, she becomes angry. The hawker enjoys the situation:

The hawker looked around. The road was deserted. His smile became roguish.

'No, Miss Sahib, I am not blind, but I am one-eyed.'

He shut one of his eyes in a long, lecherous wink and made the sound of loud kiss.

Kusum's face coloured. She was furious. She picked up the bicycle and got on hurriedly. In a hoarse voice she wore at the hawker.

'Pig ... ass.'

The hawker was not offended. He seemed to be enjoying the situation (47).

This is the turning point in the life of Kusum. She changed her attitude:

She turned the face of the mirror towards her and pouted her lips to put on the lipstick. She undid her hair and shook her head to loosen it. The hair fell in profusion about her shoulders. She picked a rose bud from a vase and stuck it in her hair. She stepped back and tilted her head sideways to admire herself (48).

Kusum is the only important character in the story. The writer has portrayed all the necessary details about her. Her physical appearance is given in the first paragraph of the story:

Although she was only eighteen she looked twenty-eight, and her manner was that of a middle-aged woman, in her forties. She was short and somewhat fat. Her dark, oval face was spotted with darker small pox marks. On her stubby nose was a pair of gold-rimmed glasses whose thick lenses magnified her eyes to bovine proportions. The hair on her head was short and sparse. This she oiled till it looked as if it was glued to her scalp. It was tightly plaited at the back, stretching up her forehead and arching her eyebrows (46).

Kusum is good and clever girl without trouble to her parents. Though she is 19 years old, she has no engagements. She lives lonely life. She has no interest in sex. She only believes in hard work. She never tries to look attractive. But there is a change in her attitude after the accident with the hawker: 'She turned the face of the mirror towards her and pouted her lips to put on the lipstick. She undid her hair and shook her head to loosen it' (48). The details given by the author about Kusum creates the sense of change in her attitude. Kusum before the accident with the hawker is totally different from meeting with the hawker.

The entire story is based on patriarchal notion that beauty alone can make women's life meaningful. Influenced by this notion Kusum experiences a very low self-esteem inspite of her other virtues. This low self esteem makes her so desperate that being noticed by a lecherous hawker increases her worth in her own eyes. The character of Kusum is portrayed in such a way that denies any intrinsic value of woman as a person if she is not beautiful or if she is not noticed by men.

Though Kusum becomes furious, the hawker enjoys the situation. She calls him pig and ass. She is too much desperate because of the encounter with the hawker. She is with all plus points except 'beauty'. She is not happy with all that. Beauty when defines the worth of woman becomes a patriarchal value. The lack of feminist consciousness on the part of the author makes him narrate the incident of Kusum's sexual harassment on a lonely road in a broad daylight with even naming it as harassment. 'Beauty' is a patriarchal concept that made Kusum desperate. Even a hawker, unknown person, impresses her. She has changed her attitude. If the writer may be feminist, he may have portrayed 'Kusum' in a

different way. There may be classmate of Kusum instead of hawker. Then the story would be of great importance. Kusum thinks of hawker despairingly. Its dangerous to gender equality. Still the negative is made positive by the author. Though Kusum is not subordinate and submissive, her 'daughter figure' stands alone against both the community and herself. She is a symbolic representative of many girls from our society who are heavily influenced by patriarchal values who allow patriarchy to determine the worth of their existence rather than questioning it.

10. The Riot

Substance of the Story:

The story portrays two different worlds i.e. animals and human beings with different views towards riot. Ram Jawaya, a Hindu shopkeeper, saved Rani, a pariah bitch from starvation. Every year in spring Rani would loiter around the stall of Ramzan, the Moslem greengrocer with Moti, a cross between Newfoundland and a spaniel. Ramzan had lopped off Moti's tail and ears. Rani had many rivals. That night Rani came to Ramzan's stall but was disappointed as Moti was not there. She gave up on Moti and a train of suitors followed her. Ramzan did not allow Moti to go. Moti tugged at the rope and leapt across the road. Putting a knife under his shirt, Ramzan went after Moti. Moti leapt at Rani's lover and the quarrel started. Ram Jawaya slept with a heap of stones because of war cries to the Moslems. There were soda water bottles filled with acid close at hand. The noise of dogs woke him. As a human being emerged from the corner, Ram Jawaya threw the stone towards the figure. Ramzan didn't hurt much. Producing his knife from under his shirt, Ramzan yelled 'Murder!' Ram Jawaya and Ramzan eyed each other for a brief moment and ran back to their houses. Listening to the shout, men emerged from their houses making hasty inquiries. Hundreds of people with armed knives, spears, hatchets and kerosene oil cans proceeded to Ram Jawaya's house. They emptied oil cans and flames shot up enveloping Ram Jawaya's home and the entire neighborhood, Hindu, Moslem and Sikh.

Ram Jawaya escaped with his wife. Some months later he came to inspect his old house. He saw that Rani was there with her litter nuzzling into her dried udders and Moti guarding his bastard brood.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Gender relation between human beings and animals is presented. The world of human beings is different from that of the animals. The quarrel between Moslems and Hindus is the backdrop of the story. Everyone thinks of his/her own religion. Ram Jawaya is the representative of Hindu community. He has fear of riot. So he is always alert:

He slept soundly with a heap of stones under his charpoy and an imposing array of soda water bottles filled with acid close at hand (51).

Similarly, Ramzan is the representative of Moslem community. He also knows the situation well while leaving the house; he puts a knife under his shirt. His cry of murder awakens the people. Both Ram Jawaya and Ramzan meet each other for a brief moment but it's the only reason for riot. Human beings are biased. They always think of revenge on one another. It's a conflict between two religions. It is well said that a mob has no face. Without taking into consideration the fact, people burnt the house of Ram Jawaya. Mob, a party of goondas, had actually assaulted a woman and killed her children. In such conflict situations, the men emerge as victimizers and the women as victims. Such relation between male and female is very detrimental for gender equality.

The gender relation between animals for example the dogs is presented in such a way to sent out message of co-existence. Rani visits the house of Moti. Once she is disappointed because of the absence of Moti. She takes another partner. Later on Moti comes and leaps at Rani's lover with anger. The other dogs make the noise and the riot happens. Everything is burnt. But Rani and Moti do not leave the place:

In the corner of what had once been his courtyard there was a little clearing. There lay Rani with her litter nuzzling into her dried udders. Beside her stood Moti guarding his bastard brood (52).

The relation between Rani and Moti is an ideal example for human beings. Rani is a pariah bitch and Moti is a cross between a Newfoundland and a spaniel. It means they are from different races. But they never think of such racial difference. On the other hand, human beings fight each other on the issue like caste and religion. The riot takes place as part of jealousy towards other religions. Everyone tries to assert his/her communal identity. Ramzan keeps a knife under his shirt while leaving the house. Ram Jawaya keeps heap of stones under his charpoy and acid filled soda water bottles while sleeping at night. This shows the low level of trust among human beings. Human beings are prejudiced and prone for the riot. Their preparedness is not for self-protection but to attack and create violence in society. Ram Jawaya loses everything in it except his wife. He has to leave the place. On the other hand, though everything is ruined and burned, Rani and Moti remain at their place as usual. They have love and affection for each other. So human beings have to learn a lesson from these animals. Human beings are superior to animals. Ram Jawaya and Ramzan try to keep control over Rani and Moti respectively. There is gender disparity. Even Moti possesses Rani and tries to show power over the other dogs and over Rani as well. Patriarchy among animals is also shown through this example. Male control is symbolized in Rani-Moti relation. There is no freedom or choice to Rani as is the case with many girls in India.

The author has portrayed animals in detail and not human beings. He has an intention in his mind to show how animals behave in a better way than the human beings. Rani is described as:

Rani was a pariah bitch whose litter populated the lanes and by-lanes of the town. She was a thin, scraggy specimen, typical of the pariahs of the town. Her white coat was mangy, showing patches of raw flesh. Her dried-up udders hung loosely from her ribs. Her tail was always tucked between her hind legs as she slunk about in fear and abject servility (49).

While describing Moti and his relations with Rani, the author points out:

Moti was a cross between a Newfoundland and a spaniel. His shaggy coat and sullen look were Ramzan's pride. Ramzan had lopped off Moti's tail and ears. He fed him till Moti grew big and strong and became the master of the town's canine population. Rani had many rivals. But year after year, with the advent of spring, Rani's fancy lightly turned to thoughts of Moti and she sauntered across to Ramzan's stall (49-50).

The relation between Rani and Moti is an example of patriarchy in animals. Human patriarchy is projected through Rani and Moti. Moti possesses Rani and tries to show power over other dogs. On the other hand, Rani has no choice. The condition of women in India is somewhat like Rani. They have no free access at the time of getting married. They have to marry as per their parents' will. Then they have to behave as per their husbands' will. They are supposed to be only liable to produce children. Such male control over female possession and reproduction is shown through animal world. Thus, the writer has presented symbolically the world of human beings through Rani and Moti.

Although the language is not particularly gender sensitive, it is not sexist either. Everything is narrated in a very simple language. The story is without dialogues. So we cannot get the emotional evidences in the story as we have in other stories. Still some expressions like 'with an angry growl Moti leapt,' 'she was disappointed,' 'besides her stood Moti' evince that the author is somehow gender sensitive even in the world of animals.

11. The Rape

Substance of the Story:

The story deals with the author's obsession with sex colours through Dalip and Bindo. Dalip Singh lay on his charpoy. Some mosquitoes got entangled in his beard and some on his blood. Banta Singh, his uncle, slept with utter abandon. There were several women sat fanning themselves and talking softly. Banta Singh had servants to look after his cattle. His black-eyed daughter did nothing but went showing off her Japanese silks. But Dalip Singh had work and more work. Closing his eyes, he tried to recreate the picture of Bindo. He desired her and in his dreams he possessed her. His mother shook him after several hours. He looked across to the adjoining roof. Bindo lay fast asleep. Dalip Singh went to his field with his bullocks. But his mind was not in it. Dalip gave up the ploughing. He bathed himself and splashed water over his bullocks. His mother brought him food. He slept right through the morning and afternoon. Getting up in the evening, he went round his field. Banta Singh's fields were being irrigated by his tenants. Since he had killed his brother Banta Singh never came to his land in the evening.

The sun went down. Dalip could hear the shouts of women at the well. Opening the water exit to his field, he lay on his back listening to the noises from the village. Then he saw a woman on the opposite bank washing herself. She was Bindo whom Dalip possessed with a maddening desire. He bore her down on the soft grass. Bindo fought like a wildcat. She bit his nose till it bled. Being exhausted, she gave the struggle. Dalip was full of remorse (regret). He had never intended hurting her. As one of the Bindo's companions came nearer and shouted for help, Dalip Singh lost in the darkness.

Many people gathered in the court to hear the case of Dalip Singh. His mother was weeping and blowing her nose. Bindo also wept and blew her nose. The clerk proceeded with reading the charge. Dalip Singh pleaded for mercy, 'ask her if she was not willing, I went to her because she wanted me. I am innocent.' The Magistrate asked Bindo to answer whether she went to the accused of her own free will. Bindo answered 'yes'.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story projects rape as a form of male dominance over woman. The author has depicted prominently man and woman relationship. It is an uncomfortable relation where

the male is portrayed as the predator and the woman as victim. Dalip Singh's relation with his mother is patriarchal. She has to do all the household activities as scrubbing the pots and pans with ash and gather cow dung for fuel. She wakes him up to go out ploughing. She brings him fresh food and sits by him fanning away the flies. She even brings the wooden token from the canal timekeeper to water the field. She takes every care of her son Dalip Singh as it happens in any traditional patriarchal family in India. Dalip Singh listens each and everything of his mother. The relation between mother and son is typical still it is not a power relation. Mother's role has been typically portrayed like a care giver/care taker.

Dalip Singh has another kind of relation with Bindo, his neighbour. He sees all her activities and feels infatuation for her. The image of Bindo always lingers in his mind. Once in the field Dalip catches the sight of Bindo with a maddening desire. Bindo tries her level best to rescue from Dalip: 'Bindo fought like a wildcat. She caught Dalip's beard in both her hands and savagely dug her nails into his cheeks. She bit his nose till it bled' (56). The incident shows how Bindo tried everything possible to stop Dalip Singh. But the situation in the court shows that the power of patriarchy is on the side of Dalip Singh. Though Dalip is poor and not able to provide evidence and lawyer, patriarchal situation helped him. On the other hand, all the evidences are with Bindo. But 'mental trauma' in the court makes her to answer 'yes' to the question 'Did you go to the accused of your own free will?' Presence of male judge and his tone of asking question is totally patriarchal. Bindo is shown as a typical example of traditional woman who tolerates each and everything without questioning it. She even cannot speak against male dominance. She doesn't dare to blame others. She has power to fight against Dalip Singh. She even fights 'like a wildcat.' She has caught his beard and bits his nose till blood comes out. It shows that she is not meek and submissive. She tries her level best to escape from Dalip Singh.

Bindo is portrayed as a traditional woman. There are many women who do not dare to speak against male dominance. The situation is changing nowadays. The story is ended in this way because perhaps the story is written in the mid twentieth century where women were not as bold as in late twentieth century.

The language is gender biased. Women are portrayed as to be engaged in gossip: 'His womenfolk found time to sit and gossip into the late hours of the night while his own mother scrubbed the pots and pans with ash and gathered cow dung for fuel' (53). On the other hand, men are considered to be engaged in 'consultation.' Similarly women are shown to be 'weeping' and 'sitting together in circle' whereas men are with 'their bamboo poles' and moving here and there 'laughing.' The adjustment of clothes is not allowed to women. Bindo is the victim of it: 'She picked up her shirt from the two corners which fell just above her knees and held it across her face with both hands, baring herself from the waist to her neck, letting the cool breeze envelop her flat belly and her youthful bust. Then someone said something in an angry whisper and Bindo let down her shirt.' This is not considered to be dignified for women. On the contrary, men are allowed to be in any kind of clothes. Dalip is 'half-naked' and allowed to sleep in the same condition at daytime. The end part of the story represents the emotions of Dalip Singh, Bindo and the magistrate also.

The end of the story reminds us the 'twist' ending of many stories of O' Henry. It is surprising. It is totally unexpected. If the story has been written by a feminist sensitivity and sensibility writer, the end would have been different one. A feminist writer either male or female would convert the end of the story other way round. It may either be shown as the rapist is punished or the rape has not taken place at all. It is possible that one can resist one in such act of rape then the message of one to one relation can be given to the readers. Though modern women are doing every job successfully, Bindo is shown as unable to speak against Dalip because of the situation in the court and male dominance. Bindo doesn't like to be considered as 'raped' instead she is ready to accept her fate as a woman.

12. The Memsahib of Mandla

Substance of the Story:

The story depicts the effects of supernaturalism on human beings. John Dyson with his wife Mrs Dyson and daughter Jennifer came to live in the rest house that was built by old Jean Memsahib fifty years ago. No one knew about her in detail. She was a social worker, or teacher or missionary or something. After her death, the government

converted her bungalow into a forest officers' rest house. The Dyson family surveyed the scene in silence. The coolies and the overseer left for the village before sunset. Mrs Dyson and Jennifer went round inspecting the rooms. Dyson lit his pipe and ordered a scotch. They took dinner in yellow light that fell on walls discoloured by age and monsoon rain. Jennifer saw a picture on the wall. Mrs Dyson asked her not to frighten her. She told John that she didn't like that place. Dyson was asleep and snoring but Mrs Dyson could not sleep. She decided to take a walk in the moonlight. While returning back she saw footprints on the lawn and collapsed.

Next day, the family had their dinner in silence. Mrs Dyson told John that she couldn't sleep at all. Dyson got his gun and asked her to wake him up if she heard any jackals. Dyson and Jennifer were fast asleep. But Mrs Dyson was looking at the lawn. She saw a figure of a woman in a long white dressing gown. She tried to scream but only muffled. With the sound of jackals Dyson got up and took the aim. Mrs Dyson asked Dyson about a woman in white. She showed him footprints but he didn't believe it. The old Mali narrated the whole story of Memsahib. People had spread tales about her cursing the place. As the Mali stayed there for fifty years, Dyson also decided to stay there and settle that ghost. That night Mrs Dyson fell fast asleep. Dyson dimmed the lantern and just smoked. There was lightning and thunder after midnight and began to rain. Dyson saw the human figure standing at the foot of his bed. In the lightning he saw the woman in white. He tried to shoot. There were two loud reports. Dyson fell with the full discharge of the gun in his face.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story has all types of relations - man and man, woman and man, and woman and woman, man and supernatural and woman and supernatural. But the main focus is on the relation between the human and supernatural. The story shows gender difference in this relation. As Dyson has power over all the persons, the story is patriarchal in nature. His relation with his wife is the example of male chauvinism. He is male chauvinist. When Mrs Dyson told him that she didn't like a place, Dyson asked her to go to bed. Next day Mrs Dyson repeats the same: "Before her husband could speak, she stood up and said in a hoarse whisper: 'John, I don't like this place.'" Every time Dyson dominates

his wife. Mrs Dyson has to listen to her husband. He is not considerate and sensitive about her feelings. So there is gender disparity between them. Even Dyson says that in any case he is going to stay there though she doesn't like the place.

The relation between Mali and his Memsahib is another example of man-woman relationship. Mali lives there with Memsahib and even after her death. But he hasn't any kind of trouble from her. Mali has great respect for his boss. Though Memsahib is a boss of Mali, she never hurt him when she was alive as well as after her death. She is a professional lady. Portraying women as working women in those days is useful for gender equality.

Dyson's relation with the Mali and the overseer is an example of man and man relation. Again Dyson has power over these two persons. He asks many questions to them. As Sunder Lal asked the Mali on behalf of Dyson the Mali also provides details about Memsahib, her work and about her death. Dyson dismisses these two when the work ends. He uses them only to get the information. There is hierarchical relation among them. Even Sunder Lal has power over the Mali.

Mrs Dyson has a daughter, Jennifer. Jennifer is restless in the house. She asks her mother, 'Look, mummy, there's a picture on the wall.' Mrs Dyson shudders and looks at the wall and asks Jennifer to stop frightening her and get on with her dinner. Mrs Dyson behaves with her daughter as a boss. She always tries to dominate her:

'I saw you walking on the lawn, Mummy,' butted in Jennifer.

'You eat your pudding and go to bed,' answered Mrs Dyson (62).

Thus, mother-daughter relation is again power relation. She doesn't take her daughter seriously just as her husband doesn't take her seriously. Though they are mother and daughter, they are not on equal footings. They represent the fact of Indian families. Mother always tries to dominate her daughter. But the situation should be changed. The mother has to listen to her daughter though she is elder. Otherwise there cannot be healthy relation between mother and daughter.

Though the relation between Dyson and his wife is patriarchal, they have similar experience related to Memsahib's ghost. This creates gender equality with respect to their relationship with the supernaturalism. The story suggests that treating wife as subordinate and not paying attention to her is dangerous for men. If Dyson has listened to his wife at

right time and has left the place, should not have to face such a bad experience. He even does not listen to his daughter. Here the author has given warning that one should have good relations and respect for the others as well as one's wife otherwise it would lead to great loss. Though there is supernatural experience, it is gender neutral. The same things are experienced by all: Dyson, Mrs Dyson and their daughter Jennifer. There is lack of trust among them. When daughter says, 'I saw you walking on the lawn,' Mrs Dyson doesn't believe. Similarly, when Mrs Dyson says, 'I saw a women in white,' Dyson doesn't trust her. Still the fear of supernatural brings these three members of the family at the same level where each of them is equally scared of the existence of that supernatural element in that house.

Women in this story are considered subordinate. They have secondary positions. Though Memsahib runs a school for children, the government acquires the house and she has to close the school. As a result she dies. She has no one else so she is buried in the forest. Whenever John Dyson is referred, he is referred by his own identity. On the other hand, Margaret Dyson is never referred to as Margaret but only as Mrs Dyson. The story begins with the name of John Dyson. But his wife is introduced only as Mrs Dyson until the middle of the story. The name of John comes in the story many times whereas the name of his wife Margaret comes only once. It shows gender disparity in man and woman.

The author is slightly gender sensitive in this story. Dyson's relation with his wife is very much patriarchal whereas his relation with his daughter is affectionate:

'Oh, this is all hooey. Come on, Jennifer, finish your pudding and off to bed. I'll get my gun and shoot one of these jackals. Would you like a jackal for a fur coat, Jennifer?' said Dyson, affecting a hearty manner (62).

13. The Great Difference

Substance of the Story:

The author has given an account of his observation of two people from different religions. Haji Hafiz Maulana from Delhi was a short man with a closely trimmed beard and oval face in glossy black. He wore loose-fitting chogha and a massive silk turban. He was a man of learning and a gifted orator and the representative to the World Congress of

Faiths meeting at Paris. He sat in the same compartment of the writer. He was with the message of Islam to the peoples of the West. Swami Vasheshvra Nanda, a doctorate stepped in the same compartment at Muthura Railway station. He was a learned person in Sanskrit and the Vedas and was invited to represent Hinduism at the World Congress of Faiths in Paris. The writer moved out the Maulana Sahib on his right and the Swamiji on his left.

Maulana had a bundle of leavened chapattis and a plateful of meet for lunch. He invited the Swamiji and the writer to join him. Swamiji refused but the writer went to share it. Swamiji was with a packet of dry fruit and bananas. He ate all by himself without taking any notice of others. When the writer was alone with the Swamiji, he asked the writer, 'Then why did you eat the food of that Moslem? Doesn't your religion forbid you to eat beef? Swamiji also added that Moslems were outcastes and dirty people. A few minutes later the Maulana and the writer were left alone. Swamiji sat down on the crowded platform to have a bath. The Maulana's tone was of pity and contempt. He said, "I wonder when God will teach these Hindus some sense!" He also added that Guru Nanak tried to unite Hindus and Moslems but the Hindu was incapable of reason and only understood the sword. The writer did not tell him what Swamiji said about him.

They were introduced by their names, religions and nationality in the World Congress of Faiths. Meanwhile a girl came to them with her autograph album. They signed their names. As she wanted to discuss her spiritual problems with them, firstly they fixed Maulana to discuss Islam with her. The Swamiji was hurt. He insisted the lady must know about Hinduism before she could decide finally. So another appointment was made for Swamiji. The writer also intended his religion should get a chance. The lady, Mlle. Jeanne Dupant, did not know there were so many religions. She would soon get to know the difference.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Chauvinism about religion is the dominant theme. Actually Chauvinism means unreasoning enthusiasm for the glory of one's own country. But here all the three characters have unreasoning enthusiasm for their own religions. Though all are from the same country, every one thinks his religion is greater than of the others. The relation between these three people illustrates their love for their own religion and contempt for

the religion of others. Maulana Sahib is the representative of Moslem community, the Swamiji represents the Hindu and the narrator represents the Sikh. Maulana Sahib doesn't feel guilty having leavened chapattis and a plateful of meat in presence of the Swamiji and the narrator. On the other hand, the Swamiji has a packet of dry fruit and bananas whereas the narrator joins the Maulana Sahib. The Swamiji asks the writer:

‘You are a Sikh, aren't you?’

I admitted that I was.

‘Then why did you eat the food of that Moslem? It may have been beef!’

Doesn't your religion forbid you to eat beef?’(69)

The Swamiji has different attitudes towards different religions. He hates Moslems and appreciates Sikhs. His attitude is harmful for social fabrics. Similarly, the Maulana Sahib has also different attitudes towards different religions. He has tone of pity and contempt: ‘I wonder when God will teach these Hindus some sense!’(70). He hates the Hinduism and the Hindus. Though the narrator comes to know the views of both the persons, he does not tell one's idea of religion to the other person. The narrator remains balanced. He listens to both calmly and enjoys their opinions. Such attitude of the narrator is very important for the social fabrics in the country like India where there are several different religions. The two fellow passengers of the author have disrespect, intolerance towards each other's religion. They want to have the Sikh on their own side.

The narrator has also unreasoning enthusiasm for his religion. When the Swamiji and the Maulana Sahib get the time and place fixed to discuss spiritual problems with the lady, the narrator also has the same intention in spite of the fact that the Swamiji and the Maulana are preachers by profession and the author is not:

I insisted that my religion also should get a chance. ... She did not know there were so many religions. She would soon get to know the difference. (71)

But the narrator doesn't get the chance to discuss on his religion with the French lady. Though these three people don't know French, they want to preach their views regarding their religion to the lady. The lady could only speak French. It means that they want to meet the lady in isolation and spend some time with her. The silence about the meeting between the lady and the Maulana and the Swamiji leave great scope for wide range of imagination. What did actually happen? Why isn't there the third meeting? The story

leaves us with so many unanswered questions. The narrator has left it to the readers' imagination.

The narrator has presented man and man relation very vividly. There is no social stratification between them. Everyone has his own method of eating, sitting dressing and so on. Every one man always tries to undermine the views of others. So such attitude is harmful for religious harmony.

All the characters are portrayed as they appear in the society. The Maulana is contrasted with the Swamiji. There is remarkable contrast between these two persons. One eats meat whereas another eats dry fruits. The Maulana Sahib sits facing west with his hands raised to his ears whereas the Swamiji sits cross-legged with his hands resting on his knees and his eyes shut fast. The Maulana preaches Islam to the World Congress as well as Mlle. Dupont whereas the Swamiji preaches Vedanta. It was possible to the author to handle the same subject differently regarding women. He could have shown how different religions have treated women differently and how all of them are unfair to women though in varying degrees. Although it is considered to be the duty of women to perform religious rituals at home, for example, fasting, preparation of pooja etc. preaching religion has always remained male dominated area. Today we see a huge crowd of women at religious gathering but during the period of this story writing women are not visible in the big crowd to bid farewell for both the Maulana and the Swamiji.

14. When Sikh Meets Sikh

Substance of the Story:

The author tells us about the manners and etiquettes of Sikhs when they meet each Sikh. When a Sikh meets another Sikh they both say '*Sut Sree Akal*' means 'God is truth'. One may say, '*wah guru jee ka Khalsa*' means 'The Sikhs are the chosen of god' and other may join loudly '*wah guru jee ke Fateh*' means 'and victory to be our God'. There are other communities in India that belittle the Sikh and have lots of stories making fun of them. But a Sikh refers to himself as equal as to an army. They are a peace loving people. They have the spirit of pioneers. The Sikhs are found in many countries doing all sorts of businesses.

Once the narrator met Narinjan Singh, a wrestler in Toronto. Narinjan Singh was known as Nanjo the villain. Being an interesting character, he went to the auditorium. While buying a ticket policemen said, 'You be careful.' There was a fight between Nanjo Singh of India and Iron Mike of Hollywood, California. The crowd applauded Mike but hissed and booed Nanjo. Then the fight started. The crowd yelled, '*Kill the nigger.*' Nanjo caught the man's head between his thighs and twisted his arms behind his back. This was his famous 'cobra hold'. A voice came out: '*Mar day Saley ko*' and he also heard '*Mar dey*'. People threw empty cigarette cases, paper balls on my head and roared: 'Get up'. The Monty warned him: 'Better keep quite, mister, if you want to go home'. Nanjo got the victory. When the crowd had dispersed, he went to Nanjo's dressing room to collect the facts of his life. Nanjo was happy to see me. With an Indian gesture he showed his stomach and said, 'All for the belly. But when I have made enough I will show you what I can do. I want to show my village to my wife.' He called his wife who greeted the narrator with: 'How dyedo.' Now she was a Sikh and Nanjo taught her some Punjabi. The blonde spoke: '*Wah guru jee ka Khalsa*', '*wah guru jee kee Fateh*'.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Gender refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behaviour patterns of women and men. Gender relations are relations of power between women and men, women and women and men and men. Though the story reflects the relation between man and man as well as man and woman, major focus is on man and man relation. It has different shades. Sometimes it is the class difference and sometimes racial discrimination. The narrator's relation with the policemen and crowd in Toronto is different from his relations with Nanjo Singh.

The relation of Narinjan Singh alias Nanjo with two males - the writer and Mike Mazurki is totally different. His relation with Mike is of rivalry. He has to fight against him in the presence of crowd. He gets the victory. The crowd doesn't like it. But the relation between Mike and Nanjo is also friendly in the dressing room:

They were the best of friends. Nanjo and Mazurki were pounding each other's bellies with friendly blows and being obscenely intimate – 'You son-ov-a-gun,' 'You son-ov-a-bith,' and so on (76).

The relation between Nanjo and Mike lacks integrity. It is not believable whether they have superficial or good relation. They lack honesty. Though there are some women spectators, the world presented is essentially masculine. Though the writer boasts that there is hardly any country in the world without a Sikh, they are in minority in all the countries. There is multicultural society in Canada. But racial element is very strong in Canada. It is well said that gender and gender relations change from time to time and culture to culture. So the relation of Nanjo with Mike is different in the ring and in the dressing room. Even Nanjo's relation with the narrator is different because of socio-cultural pattern. The writer is from the same community of Nanjo. So Nanjo speaks into pure rustic Punjabi. He has affection for the narrator. He even introduced his wife to the narrator.

The relation between woman and man forms a very central portion of the story. Nanjo's wife meets the narrator and greets him with a loud 'How dyedo' and vigorous chewing of gum. She is a convert Sikh and her name is Mahinder Kaur. She has learned some Punjabi. Whatever she says is not correct. She tries to impress the narrator but the artificial act tells the narrator the reality. She tries her level best to learn the language and adapt Punjab Sikh culture. She is portrayed as a woman of an adjusting nature.

The gender qualities, behaviour patterns, roles and responsibilities of all the characters are portrayed realistically. It is common to greet with different expressions while meeting the persons. There are different expressions such as 'namaste', 'namaskar', 'hello', 'hi', 'good morning' etc. to greet each other. Similarly, in Sikh community, they use expressions like '*Sut Sree Akal*', '*Wah guru jee ka khalsa*' etc. to greet each other. Even the convert Sikh lady makes the use of such expressions. While giving the cheer up to the players, everyone yells or cries loudly. The writer also joins his countryman saying '*Mardey*'. It's quite natural. Nanjo's introduction of his wife is also natural. It's a tradition of Indian people to introduce wife, husband, friend, and parents in the first meeting. Thus, the situation described in the story is helpful for good gender relations.

The language of the story is derogatory to female sex. The expression 'the incestuous sistersleepers' is one example of it. Nanjo tells the narrator that he has taught his wife some Punjabi and asked her, 'Baby tell the gentleman what I taught you'. The

word 'baby' has a patronizing attitude and also shows a lack of respect while introducing a wife.

15. Death Comes to Daulat Ram

Substance of the Story:

The story deals with the father-son relationship on two different levels. Ranga, the son of Daulat Ram, recalled the death of his father. Ranga was a regular visitor of the restaurant. The barman knew him very well. Many of his friends knew his habit of having coffee at 11 a. m. and of his preference for the restaurant. Ranga got the message: 'come home at once, your father has been taken ill'. Ranga drove home straightway. Daulat Ram was ill. He would insist on his guests having their scotch to prove his will-power. Daulat Ram knew that the source of all disease was the food that one ate. He had eaten boiled food punctually at home. He said, 'Man does not die, he kills himself.' He had read a great deal about food and knew all the vitamins from A to Z.

Ranga stepped out of the car. A beggar was sitting there. He was eighty years old. He didn't answer the questions asked by Ranga. Ranga got a feeling that he had seen the man before. The old man had put his head between his knees. Relations surrounded Daulat Ram. It was a family tradition to die surrounded by friends and relations. While talking to his brother, Ranga noticed the portrait of his grandfather (Daulat Ram's father). He recognized the face and turned pale. He rushed out of the house in search of the beggar. The old man was not there. Ranga came back and saw that Daulat Ram^o was not breathing.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story represents father-son relationship. Many women writers have presented mother-daughter relationship in their stories. Being a male writer, Khushwant Singh has also focused upon father-son relation very skillfully. The relation between Ranga, the son and Daulat Ram, his father is symbolic representation of modern world. Ranga has to take care of his father but what about Daulat Ram's father? Daulat Ram was rich and even Ranga was also rich but the condition of Ranga's grandfather was bad. Ranga used to visit a restaurant daily. He is a representative of young generation. On the other hand, Daulat Ram studies the effects of food and remarks, 'Man does not die, he kills himself.'

He has given up drinking after forty years and still accepts invitations and listens to his wife: 'You will not listen to me'. He is the representative of traditional Indian person.

Another section of the story focuses on the interaction between Ranga and the beggar. The beggar was old. He was sitting outside the door of Ranga's house. Ranga asks him, 'what do you want Babuji?' But the beggar remained silent. He also asked, 'where are you from, Babuji?' 'Have you no relation? No sons or daughters to look after you?' He asked the servant to provide him with food. The beggar didn't take the food. Ranga wants to help the beggar. But Daulat Ram does not know about his father. The beggar was no one else but Daulat Ram's father i.e. Ranga's grandfather. When Ranga comes to know about the relation between the beggar and him, Ranga turns pale. He feels ashamed of it. He wants to ask his father, Daulat Ram, about his grandfather but Daulat Ram died at the point when Ranga is no longer able to ask him. Thus, the father-son relation between Daulat Ram and his father (the beggar) is different from the father-son relation between Daulat Ram Ranga.

Characterization is a plus point of the story. There are only three male characters. They are portrayed in detail. Ranga is the central character. He has a habit to visit the restaurant daily. He has friendly relations with everyone. He behaves properly with the beggar as well as his brother. Daulat Ram, the father of Ranga is also portrayed in detail. He is old. He falls ill many times. He has his own philosophy. He lives the life happily eating boiled food punctually. He has his ideas about scotch:

He would insist on his guests having their Scotch to prove his will-power. 'Do have one', he would say persuasively and add with a smile of beatific righteousness, 'I have given up drinking. After forty years of hard going, it is not easy but I don't miss it at all. In fact, I feel much better' (78).

The beggar who is the grandfather of Ranga has also important place in the story. He is also described vividly. Though the beggar doesn't speak a single word, we understand many things even in his silence. His disappearance at the end of the story is remarkable. Ranga says, 'The beggar. He's gone. He's gone,' It refers to two persons - Daulat Ram and the beggar. There is a very brief reference to female characters in the story. It refers to some sort of husband wife relationship:

If his wife went out of the room, he would gulp that down, and get another. He would drink this leisurely pretending it was the first. And a small second one before dinner could do no harm! It his wife as much as raised her eyebrow, he wanted to know why she nagged him (78-79).

In patriarchy, particularly in husband-wife relationship, men do not tell a particular thing repeatedly to women. But women keep saying the same thing repeatedly especially about the 'Dos and Don'ts.' So the word 'nagging' is used invariably in about women. Here the relation between Daulat Ram and his wife is portrayed to represent 'nagging'. Another character, sister of Ranga, has also been portrayed stereotypically as a woman indulging in shopping and minor works. On the other hand, Ranga's brother has also been portrayed stereotypically where he has been engaged in conference. So the thread in Khushwant Singh's other stories continues here where women gossip and men discuss, women go for shopping and men attend conference.

The story is notable for its different kind of point of view regarding son and daughter. Ranga meets the beggar and asks: 'Have you no relation? No sons or daughters to look after you?' The words 'sons' and 'daughters' show the gender equality. It crosses over the concept 'sons take care of parents.' As per Indian tradition only son takes care of his parents. He is considered as helping hand in old age, heir of the family. But the author has shown that not only sons look after old parents but also daughters. Here the author has given equal importance to both male and female. So this part of the story has the grain of gender equality.

Patriarchy offers freedom to men that cause addiction. Addiction is a curse to men. Women don't get easily addicted like men. As equal partners give support to one another, junior partner cannot be expected to support the senior. Gender relations are mainly based on hierarchy in patriarchy. Men have power over women. Women don't have such power. Because of this women neither can support men nor prevent men from drinking or liberate them from addiction. The author has portrayed the condition that was dominant in 1960s. There is no change in it at all. It is continued even after fifty years. As far as husband-wife relation is considered, men and women ensure each other's 'tempered' behaviour.

16. The Insurance Agent

Substance of the Story:

The story is about an insurance agent alias Mr Swami and his occupation. Wherever he goes, he has friendly relations. Once he met me in a party and asked, 'How's life? How is the wife, and the children?' But I didn't know who he was. I thought he might be a friend's friend. He also asked about my friend, about the health of his wife and children. He also didn't know who he was. We decided to ask him who he was. Then the man remarked that the party was wonderful and offering thanks, simply vanished. Everyone was asking about the man. No one knew the answer. Malicious people said the man was a gate-crasher. Though he was newcomer to the city, we saw him everywhere in private parties, religious meetings, social gatherings, weddings, and funerals. He was the centre of attraction. He was a great favourite of the press. Offering his card, he asked the photographer to send a copy to him. Malicious people said that Mr Swami loved publicity.

Mr Swami spoke on international affairs also. He said that Winston Churchill was his friend and had given him advice regarding war. He was equally familiar with the national figures in the political and industrial field. Malicious people said that Mr Swami was a snob. Mr Swami had consulted others about many countries. He spoke like an ambassador. Malicious people said his work was of no importance. We did not know what work Mr Swami did. He was well dressed sometimes in European and Indian costumes. He belonged to all the clubs and societies in the town. His motto was, 'Never carry small change'. We discovered his occupation. He had visited everyone in his or her homes and talk on every subject under the sun. Malicious people said this was only sales talk. But he had nothing to sell. Malicious people did not expect Mr Swami at the funeral of retired president's wife. But they were wrong. He was in distress like a close relation. Actually he had never met the retired president or his wife. He talked philosophically of the transitory nature of life and how everyone had to die one day. He reached the cremation ground with the old man. He produced a piece of folded paper. We thought it some sacred text and saw the old man scribble on the paper at several places. He said he had to go to another one. Malicious people said that Mr Swami was an insurance agent and had sold old man a life insurance policy.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

We have only man and man relation in this story. Mr Swami has relations with many male persons. Only common thing is that he asks everyone about the health of wife and children. His relation is changed according to the situation. No one knows who he was but he explains politely:

‘It does not matter. He seems to know so many people. My friends’ friends are always welcome in home – particularly if they are the friendly type’ (84).

Though the people do not know him, he embraces them and remarks about the wonderful party. People with malice consider him a gate-crasher. This is the first label he gets because of his relations to the strangers.

As there is change in the attitude of Mr Swami from time to time, place to place, people have different thoughts about him. If someone helps somebody without any prior intention, people take it negatively and have different opinions. We find such evidences in day-to-day’s life. The writer points out that people with malice can only have such intentions. The end of the story gives us clue that Mr Swami is an insurance agent. But his earlier behaviour brings him titles like a gate-crasher, publicity lover, a snob and a salesman. As a part of his occupation he has to develop such relations but people take it differently. In modern age, there are so many agents of different schemes, policies, savings who have to develop such relation. Mr Swami is the representative of this class. His helping nature is complementary for good man-man relation. Still there are some people with negative attitude whom the narrator calls people with malice. Such malice is harmful for good social relations among people.

The character of Mr Swami is portrayed according to the situation. Situational changes are given in detail to create the atmosphere. His behaviour, way of speaking, philosophy, presence of mind all are described in detail. He speaks as an authority on any subject. He holds power over the all people but the story doesn’t provide any essential scope for gender and gender relations. The invisibility of women in the story mars the study of gender relation. The woman is portrayed only as a dependent person. It is shown through the example of Mr Swami’s interaction with many people: ‘How’s life? How is the wife? And the children? How’s everyone?’ There are only references to wife. There is no direct reference to any woman. A woman has not been given importance in the party.

Though the story presents a big canvas of evidences, not a single woman character is portrayed as important character in the story. There is only description of the wife of retired president who is dead. Thus, the story focuses only on masculine world of men.

17. The Fawn

Substance of the Story:

It is an account of hunting by the narrator and his friend:

My friend and I went for hunting. It was 6 o'clock in the morning. The moon was in its last quarter. We could see the outlines of the village. My friend told me that he had been doing so for nearly twenty years. He also added that his father died and he had to look after his relation. To escape from them, he wanted to get away. An outing in the country with a gun gave him the break he wanted. He did not mind if he killed nothing. In fact I find killing somewhat wicked. We followed our guide round the village on to the open fields. As there were no trees, my friend looked uneasy. He was right because the animal could see us from a mile. His uneasiness gave way to agitation. He slapped the butt of his gun irritably. My friend looked hot because of a long walk with gun on shoulder. Suddenly, a doe cleared our path in one big leap. We crouched in the tall grass.

My friend guessed a fawn must be there. Truly a fawn came to the path. My friend took a quick aim and fired. The fawn turned round with a look of surprise. The mother bayed in warning. My friend took careful aim and fired a second time. The bullet pierced the fawn's belly and brought out its entrails. My friend rushed to his prey. Tears rolled down the fawn's eyes. My friend cut its throat with the razor blade. He asked me to wait for its mother. We sat under a tree drinking beer and eating sandwiches. The doe was moving here and there. She never came close enough to be shot. We started back with the shikari carrying the dead fawn. Whenever we stopped to rest we saw the doe somewhere about following us. Putting the fawn in the luggage bunk at the back of the car, we sat away from the car to sip our scotch and soda. My friend felt happy and said, 'No backbiting, no hatred, no unkindness. It is a clean life'. The head of the dead fawn dangled from the rear fender in twilight. Behind the car was the mother sniffing at the corpse. With a loud report, the doe collapsed near the mudguard of the car. My friend

rushed towards his prey with his razor blade. He yelled 'In the name of God – Bismilah'. It was time to go home.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story is remarkable for its varied relations. The relation presented in the story is of two kinds – human beings and animals. The protagonist is with him as a supporting actor. He only follows his friend. He has no freedom of doing anything he likes. When he looks at the wrist watch, his friend laughs and says:

'Wrist watch says 2 p.m. It is time to be hungry. I thought you were escaping from all that. All right, let us get over the lunch. We must not lose the mother' (92).

The protagonist is in need of lunch but his friend thinks of getting of the mother of the fawn. Two persons have different attitude towards their activities. One gives importance to lunch and other for hunting. His friend has power over the writer as well as others also. Thus, the protagonist does nothing and just follows his friend. The protagonist is a contrast to his friend. The protagonist is there only to enjoy countryside scene and rescue from the tyranny of the clock: He likes 'the peace and quite'. His friend has interest in shooting animals. He always thinks of hunting. An outing in the country with a gun gives him the break that he wants. Thus, the relation between the protagonist and his friend is power relation. The protagonist is subordinate. He listens to his friend. The relation between the doe and the fawn is a mother-kid relation. As mother is considered as loving and caretaker in human beings, the same relation is portrayed through the doe and the fawn:

The fawn turned round with a look of surprise. It sprang into the air and come down on the same spot. It frisked round in a circle twice. It stopped and held up its head to display its tiny antlers. The mother bayed in warning. The fawn ran up to her and then back towards us. It stopped a few yards way, sprang into the air three or four times and wagged its little stubby tail. The doe bayed again. The fawn turned round to look at its mother (91).

When the protagonist's friend kills the fawn and put it at the back of the car open, the doe follows for the sake of the fawn. The mother is sniffing at the corpse behind the car. The protagonist's friend shoots it and ends the life of the mother.

There are only two human characters - the protagonist and his friend. They are contrasted to each other. They have different attitudes towards life. His friend has had a raw deal in life. His father died and he has to look after his relations. Though he finds killing somewhat wicked, he does it as a sport and thinks as a clean life. According to him, hunting is such exercise where there is no backbiting, no hatred and no unkindness. His act of killing animals is a religious cruelty. While killing the fawn he pronounced a pious 'Bismillah' which the protagonist cannot listen. But while killing the doe the protagonist listened: 'In the name of God – Bismillah'. It shows authors specification of religious deeds by a person from particular religion. On the other hand, for the protagonist, there are ups and downs in everybody's life. He loves peace and quite. He goes with his friend to get relax from routine life and enjoy the sight of the deer leaping over the corn and scrub. He hasn't the intention of killing the deer like his friend.

The story is written in that period when the laws regarding animals were not as strict as today. Hunting was the symbol of valour, heroism in that age. Today such deeds are not treated as heroism but are considered cruelty to animals. But many people think that hunting is implicit in masculinity because in the history of humankind man has been portrayed as hunter and woman as farmer. The protagonist doesn't like killing animals. But he cannot prevent his friend from the act of killing. He even cannot discredit his friend. His friend represents violence and cruelty whereas he is opposed of it. Had the protagonist been portrayed to be more powerful than his friend, the story would have delivered the message that masculinity doesn't involve cruelty, would have been delivered more effectively. Nevertheless, portraying the protagonist as peace-loving non-violent character has contributed a great deal to redefining masculinity.

The author has portrayed animal world vividly. Mother-child relation is projected through the relation between the doe and the fawn. The doe just walked into that trap. It represents the motherly love. But perhaps the same thing would have happened with the father of the fawn.

18. Man, How the Government of India Run!

Substance of the Story:

The author has criticized ironically bureaucracy, the working of the government offices and the people working in it. Sunder Lal was working in the government office with Ghosh Babu and Sambamurthy. He remarked that all sorts of secretaries attend meetings, drink cups of tea, dictate a few memos and go home pretending tired because of day's work. They agreed as they knew the mechanism of offices of government of India. They knew the rules and regulations of bureaucracy by heart. Their analysis was simple and based on experience. If typists and stenographers did not pay attention, matters would come to a standstill. They felt that the administration rested squarely on their shoulders. Sunder Lal was late and his boss was angry with him. He narrated the whole evidence to Mr Ghosh who remarked that there was no justice in this world. As Sunder Lal ordered for tea and coffee the three relaxed for a half-hour from work. They discussed the condition of European workers and went back to their seats.

It was 11.15 am and Sunder Singh asked the chaprasi to bring papers from the Ministry library. The three plunged into the papers with eagerness. Sunder Singh came across the news of volleyball match between the Home Ministry and Defence. He had to play the match as the great stand-by of the team. It was a quarter to twelve. They read different ads and commented on them. This was a part of their daily routine in office. Giving appropriate message to the chaprasi, Sunder Singh went down to the canteen. After having a large meal, he joined the canteen manager in pan-chewing and office gossip. He told him that he had no time for his hobbies because of office work. He also added that many people run private business to supplement their service salaries. But he had no moment to raise his head off the table. Then he went to the volleyball ground. The match started at 1.30 pm. Sunder Singh played well and won the match. He came back to his office at 3.45.

Sunder Singh was greeted by Ghosh Babu, Sambamurthy and other well wishers. It was 4 pm. It was time of afternoon tea. Sambamurthy talked about the secret of success in government service. Sunder Singh didn't like the way of boot-licking. All the three wanted to compete with anyone on merit and hard work only. It was 5 pm. Sunder Singh came home and welcomed with regular pattern. Without a word of greeting to his

wife he stretched himself on the charpoy. His wife asked, 'Are you tired? Did you have too much work to do today?' He answered that Government of India could not run if he did no work.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Sunder Singh is the pivot of the story. His relations in his office and house are well illustrated. Sunder Singh is working as steno-typist in government office. His relations with the boss and his colleagues are based on class difference. As he is late his boss asked him, 'Sunder Singh, you are late. How do you think the Government of India can run if everyone comes late to office?' Sunder Singh takes this remarks seriously and becomes upset. His behavior is changed. He remarks:

But you know how I am. I said this little fellow, this yesterday's child, why should I speak rashly to him: it will only spoil my mouth (95).

He also talks about the behaviour of his boss who never comes to office before 11 a.m. This was the first time he was punctual and Sunder Singh was for some reasons five minutes late. His boss still remarks that he didn't like people being late. It is a hierarchical relation of power between man and man. Though the boss never comes to office in time, he asks Sunder Singh to be in time. Sunder Singh makes fun of his remark and mimics his boss's voice 'I don't like people being late'. Sunder Singh doesn't like the behaviour of the boss. He spends his whole day doing nothing. This type of relation and also the work culture tend to hamper the progress of society.

Sunder Singh's relation with his colleagues Ghosh Babu and Sambamurthy are on equal footing. They are working in the same office as clerks. They support each other. When Sunder Singh makes complaint against his boss, Mr Ghosh supports him saying 'There is no justice in this world'. Even Sambamurthy also supports by adding the clause, 'Absolutely no justice'. They make fun of matrimonial advertisements from the papers. Sunder Singh asks, 'why you people want horoscopes and not photos? What you see in horoscope?' In old days, people believed in horoscope while getting married. In later 20th century people turned to photos with horoscope. So the author has also given importance to photos and his persona has the same view. There is change in attitude of the people in

modern age. Had the story has been written in 21st century, the author would have perhaps turned from photographs to blood group and even HIV tests.

Sunder Singh is also representative of hierarchical relation of power between man and man that tend to disadvantage his subordinate. As his boss asks him reason for being late, he also asks the chaprasi, 'Why you smile? Don't we do this for you?' The relation between people from two unequal statuses is sometimes interesting. The chaprasi has to speak lie because he has also got the benefit from him. Sunder Singh makes the use of his power over his subordinate.

Sunder Singh is very much patriarchal while behaving with his family members. He has hierarchical relations of power with his wife and children that tend to disadvantage them. Though he has won the match, the joy of his victory is marred because of the remark of his boss. Whatever he has to take from his boss doesn't stop with him but he simply passes on that frustration and anger to his family members and its effects are seen in his behaviour with his children and wife. That evening Sunder Singh brushed his son off a little irritated. He did not greet his wife. He even asked his daughter to go away. On any normal day, he is loving family man. But his behaviour is changed because of his strange relation with his boss. He pours his wrath on his innocent children and wife. There are many women who are the victims of wrath of their patriarchal husbands. As Sunder Singh has power and greater access to resources inside and outside the home, he dominates not only the chaprasi but also his wife and children. Although he has not done any work the whole day, he behaves with an air of authority:

'Are you tired?' asked his wife at last. 'Did you have too much work to do today?'

'There is too much to do everyday. Woman, how you think the Government of India run if we did no work?'(103)

Sunder Singh is the representative of government servants who just pass the time discussing unwanted subjects and doing nothing. There are many Sunder Singhs in many government offices. They sit in the office only for short period of time. They pretend that they work hard. They behave rudely with the persons who come to their offices. Such unequal power relations are not very healthy form of human relations. So the author has

criticized such relations. It gives some pointers useful for understanding and improving gender relations and other power relations inside and outside the home.

The author has vividly described how men from government offices waste their time. As there is total absence of women characters in the office, playground and canteen, the workplace is totally masculine. The story is portrayal of mid 20th century. Now the situation is changed. There is always gossip in the office that is traditionally considered as the job of women. Their topic of discussion is 'females'. But the writer doesn't consider it as 'gossip'. The people have aimless and purposeless attitude towards their job. They only make a show of how they work hard in their office. Traditional gender roles have been reinforced where women are given household duties and men work outside. Women are portrayed as gullible and men as conspiratorial and scheming:

'Never before three o'clock, man! Don't you know how to appear busy?
Always go late for lunch even if you have nothing to do so that your wife at least thinks you have been working very hard' (97-98).

Reading matrimonial advertisement, Sunder Singh tells Ghosh Babu, 'Wanted a match for an issueless virgin widow' and comments himself, 'If she is virgin she has to be issueless'. While paying for the tea, everyone says, 'No, no, no, my turn today'. Sunder Singh calls his boss 'yesterday's child' and 'little fellow'. With these examples we receive particular kind of impression towards the character like Sunder Singh. Sunder Singh has described his office as 'sister- sleeping office' and his wife 'Woman'. He reads the ad 'issueless virgin widow'. These expressions show derogatory attitude, total lack of sensitivity and male chauvinism of the central character.

19. The Man with a Clear Conscience

Substance of the Story:

The author gives us an account of his clear conscience through an incident about a thief. He is a man with a clear conscience because he is a good man. All are born good but evil circumstances turn them bad. He is not intolerant. He does not pass judgments on people. As he reads many books on sociology, he knows the causes of crime. He knows well that God's ways are infinite. Some people will consider him an insufferable sort of prig. That is not so. He smiles most of the time because to smile is better than to scowl or

have a face without any expression at all. He does a lot in his own way. He settles the quarrel of the people in the street. He never lets a tonga driver flog his horse when he is a passenger. Coming to theft, he knows his servants pilfer. But he is shrewd to tackle the situation. His nights are never disturbed because he sleeps the sleep of the just. He has said that because without that you may not appreciate the incident he relates.

The incident is about a thief. It took place in Calcutta. As he is against resting in the afternoon, he was walking along a footpath. The road and the maidan were deserted. Suddenly, there was a commotion under the tree. Two Sikh taxi drivers began to beat Bengali man. Men came running from all directions shouting, 'Stop, stop. Don't kill the man'. He also ran there. Being a Sikh, some people appealed to him to intervene. He got courage and roared angrily to stop beating that man. The poor Bengali wailed to save him from those men. The drivers told him that he was a thief. He was caught red-handed. The blood flowed from his mouth. He asked him why he had stolen the valve-caps. He answered that hadn't anything to eat for three days. He was ready to pay for whatever he has taken. The drivers wanted to hand him over to the police. The narrator appealed to the crowd to think of his innocent family. The thief again clutched his knees. He was a habitual thief and a liar. He probably had no family. But the narrator had done his duty. His conscience was clear. Walking back to his hotel, he took whisky and paid Rs. 16. He still thought of the thief and his family and even to give Rs. 16 to them. When he picked up his trousers to put them under the pillow to be pressed, he noticed that the sides of the legs below were spattered with blood.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story is focused on only one kind of relation that is man and man. The protagonist tells about his own personality and behaviour. He doesn't pass judgments on people who are in difficulty. There are many people who pass judgments and bring others in difficulty. But the protagonist doesn't have such attitude. He always thinks of the benefit of others. He even asks to leave arrogance. He does everything possible for him. He has moral sense of right and wrong. Though the protagonist is rich, he has friendly relations with not only his servants but others also. Though the servants are from lower socio-economic strata, the protagonist thinks of good relations with them. Such relation is certainly useful for social equality between men and men.

The protagonist's relation with the poor Bengali man on the road is another side of the nature of the protagonist. The protagonist even thinks of the family of that man. He appeals to the crowd that man is a thief, a lie but he has enough punishment. He also asks why they want to send him to prison, his innocent family will suffer. The protagonist interacts with the man cordially even while speaking with him:

‘Why did you steal?’ I asked him.

‘I haven't had anything to eat for three days. I was hungry’ (107)

This expression focuses light on both the persons and their condition. There are many people but no one asks the reason of theft. The protagonist understands the man is a thief because of his answer. Still the protagonist saves him and thinks it as a part of his duty.

The protagonist has cordial interaction with the subordinate people in both the situations. He never considers himself arrogant, boss and a bystander. No one takes risk for others. But the protagonist struggles for a thief and listens to a taunt, ‘Does this put any sense in your head?’ For the escape of the man and to make the crowd calm and quiet he announces that he would pay for whatever the thief has taken. He asks the crowd to forgive him. The protagonist has positive attitude towards the man:

The man was a thief. But what made him thief we did not know. Perhaps he was one of millions of refugees from Pakistan who swarmed the city looking for a livelihood. Perhaps he had a wife and children who would starve if this man was goaled – which he undoubtedly would be (108).

Everywhere there is hierarchical power relation between master and servant. There is class consciousness. But the protagonist has no such superiority complex in him. He intends to help any one, anywhere and simply thinks he has done his duty. Both the servants in his home and the thief on the road are from lower socio-economic strata, the protagonist is compassionate towards them and helps them. Thus, the character of the protagonist is very significant to enhance equality among men. Traditionally, women have been portrayed as objects to be raped. This manifests in the expression of Sikh driver, ‘This to rape your mother... this to rape your sister... this to rape your daughter...’. These gender specific words tend to promote gender based violence and are very derogatory to female sex. Here mother, daughter, sister, in short women are considered to be raped. Reference to ‘rape’ is not only verbal abuse but also a mechanism

to settle the quarrel against the thief. The language is sexist. These verbal abuses reinforce abuse of female body as a site of exploitation. The expression 'might he have a wife waiting for him...' about the thief suggests that women have to wait for their husbands and not vice versa. It is a traditional role given to a wife to wait for her husband.

Men have used women related words for abusing other men. The thief is constantly speaking lie. No one can believe such a person. The author has presented power relation between – the thief and the other bystanders; the thief and the protagonist. The thief is an accused one and the protagonist is savior who wants to help him. But others want to teach the thief a lesson. So both the protagonist as well as others have power over the thief. It is a violence based story that describes barbarous episode of beating a thief. It was not necessary to beat the thief. It would have been possible to let him go after a close search. But the story represents cruel, uncivilized behaviour of men with each other. Here masculinity is portrayed in its very crude form which has grave implications for the relations between men and women as well.

20. Black Jasmine

Substance of the Story:

The story is about the relation between Miss Martha Stack, an American Negro and Mr Hiren Bannerjee, an Indian which was suddenly revived after a gap of thirty years. Martha, the old girl friend of Bannerjee, came to meet him after thirty years. She had no family yet. Bannerjee had a wife and a son of twenty years and a daughter of fifteen. He remembered his past history as a student at the Sorbonne. Martha and Bannerjee were the only coloured students in the class. Martha wasn't too bad to look at but Negroid with thick lips and fuzzy hair. She attracted attention from the very first day. She was taller than most of the men. Everyday they met in the class. The fragrance of Jasmine spread about her. Her parents should have to name her 'Yasmeen'. Boys from the class teased Bannerjee 'you lucky blighter! You're the only one she seems to notice'. Then Bannerjee thought it was a bit silly to come all the way to Europe and bed a woman blacker than himself.

Martha took the initiative. They took coffee together everyday. She came close to him. He felt her breath of the Negroid smell much nicer than the sour-milk smell of the white women. As it was last weekend, they decided to get out into the open country. They got to their destination without getting closer to each other. Martha swam and sunbathed on the sand. Bannerjee sat only turning the pages of American magazines. After coming back Martha arranged a drink in her room. She told him that she was going to miss him. His eyes dropped to her bosom. She refilled the glasses and gave him a gentle kiss on the forehead. She showed her nice figure to him. He remained glued to the nude and mumbled beautiful. Martha grabbed him by his hair and he went limp in her embrace. Her breath and the odour of her body felt unpleasant to him. Wrapping her dressing gown, she lit a cigarette and said, 'Thank you for the nice day'. He left the place.

Bannerjee remembered the vision of Martha stark naked in the room for many years. But she was now with him after a gap of thirty years. There was a change in her appearance. She was like the picture of Aunt Jemina advertising good, wholesome, instant pudding. She fared better at his home. She complimented him, 'why you old so and so, where did you pick up such a lovely wife?' She handed out gifts to his children. The evening passed off well. Mrs Bannerjee was much affectionate to Martha. She said, 'wish you could have stayed longer'. Bannerjee knew that if Martha had been an attractive woman, his wife would have 'volunteered' to keep him company or asked one of their children to take a little fresh air. Bannerjee went back with Martha to her room in the Ashoka. They got Scotch. Bannerjee gave her a gentle kiss on the lips. She offered thanks saying, 'this has made my journey worthwhile. I was wondering if you'd ever kiss me again'. She sat impassively and he kissed her again more tenderly. He remembered the vision of Martha in Paris and that warmed his limbs. Her eyes remained closed. As his hands went searching for her undergarments, she protested weakly: 'What will your wife have to say!'

Analysis and Critical Comments:

There are two types of relations - woman and man, and woman and woman. Though the main focus is on man-woman relation, woman-woman relation is also important differently. Martha is the central character of the story. Major part of the story

covers the relation between Martha and Bannerjee. They are best friends from their college life. Martha is bold. She always takes initiative.

As Martha has friendly relations with Bannerjee, she doesn't feel shy to show her naked body to him. She asks him, 'If you promise not to touch me, I will let you see me. I have a nice figure'. She also asks, 'Do you like me', come and kiss me'. She always behaves boldly. She is as she was. It means there is no change in her even after a gap of thirty years. When she comes to meet him in India after thirty years, she behaved with him in a similar way. She has arranged drink in her room for him. Thus, her behaviours before and after thirty years are the same. On the other hand, Bannerjee is changed in every respect. He is married and is a father of two children. He has gone somewhat gray and fat. Thirty years ago, he only followed whatever Martha did. He was submissive. He never took initiative in anything else. He even didn't understand the meaning of what Martha said. Traditionally, men are considered to be active and female passive. Actually, patriarchy has constructed men and women as active and passive respectively. But the relation between Bannerjee and Martha breaks this stereotype. Her initiative and his failure show the deviation from the traditional concept.

Martha's relation with the wife of Bannerjee has different dimensions regarding the relation between woman and woman. Martha is old girl friend of Bannerjee. Though Bannerjee is married and a father of two children, she does not hate him or his wife. She has the same attitude towards Bannerjee as it was before. She feels better at the home of Bannerjee. In most of the situations, a woman cannot tolerate his lover or husband loving the other woman. But Martha is happy with the situation and so is Mrs Bannerjee. She is kind enough and offers her own lipstick to Bannerjee's daughter and a compact to Mrs Bannerjee. As a result Mrs Bannerjee is also kind and condescending towards her even if her husband had ever desired Martha. The author has portrayed healthy relation between two women from different context. There is no rivalry between them for a single man although it is a triangular situation.

Bannerjee's relation with his wife is not hierarchical relation of power that tends to disadvantage women. He has healthy relation with his wife. He behaves favorably and treats his wife on equal footing. He gives importance to his wife's views. But there is no source to decide whether the author considers proactive sexuality good or bad.

Bannerjee has changed his attitude when he gets an opportunity. He has lost loyalty. He has projection of Martha in his wife. So the male protagonist is promiscuous. On the other hand, Martha and Manorama are not promiscuous. So there is a question whether the author wants to give men a license for promiscuous behaviour. It is similar to patriarchal prototype. There is no place for emotional involvement, intellectual discussion, etc. in the story. There is only reference to physical attraction.

All the characters in the story are with positive attitudes. Martha is American Negro. Bannerjee is Indian. He does have a complex of racial superiority with respect to Martha. Martha is so bold that she takes initiatives. But she never imposes her decision, views, and ideas on others. Her behaviour with Bannerjee and his wife stands for female strength and identity. So the author has titled the story against her name as 'Black Jasmine'. Martha is considered as a flower i.e. Jasmine. The Jasmine cannot be black. But the author calls her black Jasmine because of her bold and attractive nature. Both Martha and Manorama are brought on equal terms with Hiren Bannerjee. So all the characters are on equal footing.

The language is gender sensitive. As gender is the culturally specific set of characteristics of men and women, the expressions used by the author befit the situation. Though there is a description of physique of Martha, it is not derogatory to female sex. The remarks made by the boys to tease Bannerjee are gender sensitive. 'You lucky blighter! You're the only one she seems to notice' tell us the attitude of the boys as well as their social behaviour. It's quite a natural situation in many institutions. Students pass on such remarks and declare the relationship between the boy and the girl. Martha's remark about Mrs Bannerjee gives us her feelings towards her. She said, 'Nice family you have. That wife of yours is certainly pretty. Must have been quite a smasher in her time'. Mrs Bannerjee has similar feelings. She said, 'that's not what you told me first! Isn't she the one in your album? Must be quite a smasher.' Both Martha and Manorama use the same expression (a smasher) to describe one another. Thus, the author has made the use of appropriate expression to suit the situation that point out the specific features of that particular character.

21. The Bottom-Pincher

Substance of the Story:

This is the most misogynist and sexist story in this whole collection. The use of first person singular form of the narrative identifies the author with the protagonist. Though I am not a bottom-pincher, I would like to be one. No city has allowed such freedom to anyone. I am a law-abiding citizen. I am a respected member of the community. The thoughts of bottom-pincher bring sweat to me. It has been a spectator-sport for me. Bombay provides more varied examples than anywhere else in the world. The best time is the lunch hour when it is most crowded. Once I witnessed a memorable performance of bottom-pinching. A thin, tall gentleman in his sixties gave a coin to every beggar. I followed him. He continued to dip in his right-hand pocket and drop a coin in every outstretched hand. Right hand to give alms to the needy, left-hand to stroke or finger unguarded, unwary female bottoms. Next day, he went through the same motion.

I saw him with his family some weeks later. He had a wife and a daughter of sixteen. He was Lalkaka. I got the name but there were fourteen Lalkakas in the Bombay telephone directory. My repertoire of Parsi first names beginning with P was limited to one, Phiroze. I rang up at his home and left my name as Bottom-pincher. Lalkaka didn't come there for the whole week. I felt sorry for the beggars. I also thought of the condition of Pesi Lalkaka at home. He came back after a fortnight. He looked around to see if he could recognize anyone. I followed him. His left hand was firmly embedded in his coat pocket. Again I rang him up and asked to use his right hand which was more fun. He changed his route to the office. I tried to contact on phone but failed. On Parsi New Year, Pesi Lalkaka came there with his wife and daughter. His right hand rested on his wife's shoulder; his daughter held the left to help him down the temple steps. His daughter, Missy Baba, wore a pleated mini-skirt. Her buttocks swayed as if keeping beat to a tango. I followed the trio and touched Missy Baba's. A voice behind me called 'Mr Bottom-pincher'. He asked me to come to the police station. If I had protested the crowd would have given me a rough time. I went to police station like the proverbial lamb to the slaughter-house.

I was asked to consult a lawyer. But I told them that I wanted to see Mr Lalkaka. The man asked to keep Lalkaka out of that case because he was a respectable citizen. I

said, 'I am every bit as respectable as he'. I decided to take Pesi Lalkaka with me. The sub-inspector discussed something with Lalkaka and warned me. I did not want to prolong the agony by protesting my innocence. I got up quietly and left the room. Pesi Lalkaka was outside the police station in his car. He pleaded, 'Gentleman, can I drop you anywhere?'

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Here women are nearly reduced to sex object and it also reduces men to persons seeking sex and sex alone. The story represents gender relations that are hierarchical relations of power between woman and men and tend to disadvantage women. It is presented through two different examples. The behaviour of Lalkaka with the all women walking on the street and the protagonist's behaviour with Missy Baba show how women are disadvantaged. Firstly, Lalkaka has a power because he is wealthy. He is a gentleman. He helps beggars. But his behaviour with the women beggars and other women is not appropriate. He uses right hand to give help to the needy and left-hand to touch unwary female bottoms. Lalkaka has an obsession with bosoms and bottoms. He has constant exposure to such temptation. He has a daughter of sixteen and a wife. But he is not allowed to touch the bottom. The author feels that that is the reason for constant frustration. He is constantly frustrated and resorts to bottom-pinching. The author seems totally insensitive to male female relations that are above sex and beyond sex. Therefore, he views Lalkaka's relation to his daughter from the lens of sexual relation. The protagonist who is perhaps the author himself is so obsessed with sex that he fails to transcend sexual instincts and reach the higher level of affection, love and emotional involvement.

Lalkaka never takes into consideration the risks of being caught:

The triumverate of bottoms thus served up proved too powerful a temptation to resist. His hand come out of the pocket and caressed the three in quick succession. By the time the women straightened up and turned round Pesi had gone ahead and I was directly behind the three. The old woman glowered and swore, '*Badmash* – rascal.' Her younger companion hissed, 'Mummy, don't create a scene.' I had a narrow escape (123).

The protagonist, like Lalkaka, is also obsessed with the idea of bottom-pinching. He even tries the same act:

I walked close behind Missy Baba with my eyes glued to her posterior and languorous music ringing my ears. By the time I came to the parting of ways I was in a high state of exaltation. When would I ever get such a chance again! The desire to caress overcame direction. I quickened my pace, came alongside the Missy Baba and let my right hand give the silken contour of her behind a loving caress (125).

He is caught red-handed. Though he is 'a respectable citizen', he has to listen whatever the sub-inspector has asked him to do because of his misbehaviour.

In both the cases, men oppress women through social and economic institution. Both males see woman as sex object. What is a motive behind exposing Lalkaka is not clear. The protagonist himself tastes the happiness of watching 'bottoms' easily. Happiness is not achieved at emotional level but at physical level only. They have only lust for women. Lalkaka has greater access to contact many people particularly women because of his status in society. But he takes the undue advantage of it and becomes 'a bottom-pincher'. He oppresses women beggars offering money to them. Even he is rewarded with a smile. It happens at many places in India only because of economic condition. There are many people like Lalkaka who take the disadvantage of the situation. The protagonist is also of the same view. He also tries to take the disadvantage of the situation. But he is caught red-handed. There are many people like the protagonist who are caught red-handed and sent to jail.

The author does not think of the value system and never tries to bring the story at proper level. Observing physical structure of women is a wide-spread tendency. But the author has failed not only to suggest remedy to stop misbehaviour but also seems to belong to the camp of people who tend to take disadvantage of women where they seem to be vulnerable. Basically the story itself begins with the protagonist's views on bottom-pinching. The author is not sensitive to the effects do such act cause on women nor does he have the notion of any emotions other than the lust even when he thinks about the relation between Lalkaka and his daughter.

All the characters are portrayed so as to suit the situation. Both men and women are described in detail particularly their physical appearances. The language is sexist. The following expression shows it:

One was a young girl in blue skin-tight jeans; her buttocks were like two nicely rounded, unripe water melons. Besides her was older woman in a bright red sari. She was massive like one big pumpkin (123).

The story is an evidence of an insensitivity of the author to the issue of sexual harassment of women. The content of the story has taken it on the verge of pornography. Pornography is the symptom and symbol of male-controlled female sexuality. It is an intentional degradation and subordination of women to men. In the entire collection this story is the most problematic for gender relations. The author has not only advocated sexual harassment of women, he has also described the ways of going about it. It is a pity that the author who has depicted finer aspects of relation of human beings with their pets has miserably failed in capturing the emotional aspect of man-woman relationship, let alone the finer aspects of a love relationship. The story has very grave implications for gender relations because there is a danger of it acting as the prescription for bottom-pincher. Instead of condemning this act, the author has unabashedly identified himself with the protagonist by using first person singular narrative. When the author of the stature and fame Khushwant Singh writes such stories it not only enables the lecherous men in society to justify their exploitative actions but also encourages other passive persons to actively perceive sexual harassment of women in various crude and subtle forms.

22. A Bride for the Sahib

Substance of the Story:

It is a satire on anglicized Indians. Mr Sen had got married that morning. He was first class gazetted Government servant. His staff members wanted to greet him. But Sahib stopped them and asked to put the garlands on the table. A new chapter had begun in his life. Being studied in Anglo-Indian school, Santosh Sen became Sunny. He was an un-Indian Indian. His mother was an orthodox Hindu widow. She shaved her head, wore a plain white sari and went in bare feet. She did not insist on him joining her in worship.

She did not object to his taking his evening Scotch and soda or smoking in her presence. She wanted to see him properly settled and to fondle a grandson before she died. Mr Sen gave his consent to marry any girl chosen by his mother. His mother gave ad for the matrimonial columns. The applications of those who offered substantial dowries and of the same caste were considered. He told his mother and uncle that he would be married at the Registry or not at all. The registrar's fee was only Rs. 5.00. Mr Santosh Sen married to Kalyani Das, the eldest of Das's five daughters.

Santa Singh, his colleague, asked Sen about a feast and to meet sister-in-law. Sen behaved like an English gentleman. Then Mr Swami, the Director of the Department, visited Mr Sen to get the truth about his marriage. He ordered him to go back to his wife. He remarked, 'My God, you are a Sahib! I hope your wife is not a Memsahib'. This remark began to upset Mr Sen. His wife was an M.A. in English Literature. He and his wife went for honeymoon. They got to the rest house in jungle. He asked her to come out for a walk. But she refused. He went alone. While coming back, he poured himself a large Scotch and lit his pipe. Strange thoughts came to his mind. If he had married one of the English girls in his University day, they would have kissed; walked hand-in-hand through forest; made love till the early hours of the morning. He felt an utter stranger. Being Hindu woman, she sat patiently at the table. The dinner was eaten in silence.

Mr Sen took his radio and tuned in to Delhi for news. Then there was concert of vocal Hindustani music on radio. By the final movement he was fast asleep with the cigar in his lips. After midnight, he switched off the radio. He stared at his wife but didn't have the slightest desire. The bearer woke him up at 9 o'clock in the morning. His wife bent down to touch his feet. He was her husband, lord and master. She sat at the table. He avoided looking at her. Again they ate their different food without saying a word to each other. He got the copy of memo sanctioning leave. With a strange idea, he pretended that it an urgent letter and returned back to home from his honeymoon. His wife knelt down and touched her mother-in-law's feet and received blessings. She was sent to her parental home for few days.

After a week, Sen rang up the Director and told him that he came back because her mother's health was not good. Some weeks later, Kalyani came with her mother to fetch her things. Sen had to fetch his wife from her home. But he didn't bother about it.

The relations between the two families became very strained. Sen got a letter from his father-in-law and realized the seriousness of the situation. His mother asked him to fetch her. She decided to go away to her brother. She wanted to get settled everything and had a grandson. Sen felt angry with his wife. His mother asked him to try and understand his wife's point of view. After leaving his office, Sen went to the Gymkhana club. He saw European women, pretty Punjabi girls, and young college students there. He thought why he couldn't have married one of those girls. Then he went to the bar and met several friends. Well fortified with Scotch, he came back at 1 a.m. His wife had obviously come back.

The bearer woke him up. She had bolted her door from the inside. Sen felt uneasy. He went to the window and peered in. He saw the woman on the bed who didn't stir. She was dead. There were two envelopes on the table - one on her mother's name and other on his name. A haunted smile came on his lips as he read the English address.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

All kinds of gender relations are presented in this story. The relationship between women and men is useful for understanding social processes. The story works at different levels like boss-servants, mother-son relation, husband-wife relation and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relation. The relation between Mr Sen and the clerical staff is power relation. Similarly, Mr Sen's relation with the Director is also power relation. Clerical staff wants to wish Mr Sen on account of his marriage. But he doesn't like and stops them with a wave of his pipe rudely telling them to put the garland on the table. On the other hand, the Director ordered Mr Sen: 'I as your boss order you to go back home to your wife. I will put in a demi-official memo. What do you say?' (132) As Mr Sen assures to go home, the Director again remarked: 'My God, you are a Sahib! I hope your wife is not a Memsahib. That would be too much of a joke' (152). Mr Sen becomes upset because of this remark. He thinks over it. The relation between boss-servants is power relation where one tries to be superior to the other.

Mother-son relationship is typical example of Indian culture. Being an orthodox Hindu widow, she shaved her head, wore a plain white sari. She worships goddess but never insists on his son to join the worship. Even she does not object his smoking in her

presence because she wants a grandson. As every woman wants her son to be settled properly, his mother also expects that he would marry one of the countrywomen. Being an obedient son, he said: 'All right Ma, you find me a wife. I'll marry anyone you want me to marry.' (129) When there is tense situation, Mr Sen thinks of his mother only and not of his wife. His mother asks him to fetch his wife. Even she is ready to go to her brother for a few days. But he doesn't like that and asks his mother: 'No, Ma, I will not have anyone making insinuations against you, in any case you must not leave me' (141). Sen's mother has been portrayed as a very considerate lady who understands the need for privacy and space that a newly wedded couple needs to have. However, Mr Sen doesn't like his mother staying away from him. Mr Sen is ready to do anything for his mother. Both mother and son think of the welfare of each other.

Husband-wife relation is mostly patriarchal. Mr Sen gets married as per his will at the Registry. He behaves like an English gentleman. Mr Sen is not satisfied with his marriage. He married Kalyani only for the sake of his mother's happiness. He has no interest in her. He always wonders and thinks of the alternatives. It is troublesome for wife and his mother also. There are many 'Sens' in our society who display affection for their mothers but are not demonstrative of their feelings towards their wives. It brings ruin mainly for women. Here both his mother and wife are in difficulty. His mother left the house and wife left the world. So the man-woman relation presented here is vivid description of Indian society. There is wide cultural gap between Mr Sen and his wife. It can be seen through different kinds of food they eat. Mr Sen always thinks of modern culture. Kalyani is typical example of traditional Indian woman. Both are the victims of cultural differences. She is the victim of Indian traditions which is very sorrowful. A divorce may be an optimistic view for her. But it is not an option for her because she is totally helpless. And suicide is the result of it.

The woman-woman relation focuses on mother-in-law's relation with daughter-in-law with positive attitude. She wants to fondle a grandson just before died. She has given free choice to his son. She accepts register marriage though an orthodox Hindu widow. As daughter-in-law touches her feet, she says, 'God bless you, my child'. Mother-in-law is ready to accept her and even warns her son: 'you must try and understand her point of view; she has been brought up in different world. But love and

patience conquer all' (142). The relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has positive impact on society. Many times both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are shown as rivals of each other. Even many serials on TV have such rivalry. Many times mother-in-law perceives daughter-in-law as a challenger to her own power. But the author has shown a very positive element in this relation. She is only craving for grandson and not granddaughter. This displays and reinforces traditional son-preference in Indian families. This tendency has resulted in female feotocides and a very negative sex-ratio that currently stands at 933 women per thousand men.

All the characters are portrayed in detail. The story is so long that we get the details of all the happenings in the life of all characters. Kalyani is shown dead at the end of the story. The end could have been written differently had the writer wanted to give positive message. It is clear that she has committed suicide because of the behaviour of her husband. Mr Sen is social, no doubt. But he should have to see what kind of the girl his wife was before going to marry her. Mismatch creates problems. Mr Sen and Kalyani are the example of it.

If the people from the home of father-in-law rejects the girl, she has no longer any support from anyone else. Kalyani is sent for the home of father-in-law against her will and the result is suicide. Even today the same situation is continued in India. Traditional way of match making tends to ruin several lives that Sen and Kalyani represent.

23. Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia

Substance of the Story:

It is an uproarious farce describing a strange voyage of a British ship called Jal Hindia. There were a large number of English passengers. There was a Pakistani hockey team returning from a triumphant tour of Europe. There were Europeans, Pakistanis and Indians -- people of diverse races and religious creeds. In a socialist state, there could be no class distinctions and the Jal Hindia was the first passenger ship of socialist India. Dr. Chakkan Lal, M.A. (Alld.) D. Litt.(Eng. Lit., Leeds) was one of the passengers. He handed a visiting card to the blonde and said, 'I am in the tourist class, but I will be coming over to see you, surely'. There was an after-dinner dance. Dr Lal bowed to the blonde and held out his arms like one about to send a semaphore signal. The blonde also

took one of the Dr Lal's hands in hers and put the other on his shoulder. He laid his head sideways on her ample bosom and closed his eyes with a smile. Then other couples, including the Tysons, had taken part in dance. Dr Lal established monopoly over the blonde. She was delighted. But his amorous movements sent others into giggles. The Tysons left the floor in disgust. Dr Lal was too much of a gentleman to take notice of vulgarity. He led his partner by the hand to the bar and offered her a drink.

Professor Lal ignored all the remarks and jokes about them. He took the blonde to the deck for fresh air one night. They discussed about stars there and then participated into dance. He asked her the number of her cabin. At midnight, he made his way to the first class deck. A number of thoughts came to his mind but he dismissed them. To verify whether the cabin is 21, he decided to peep into the portholes. He knew that his blonde had a single-berth cabin. In one cabin he saw two children on the upper berths and on lower berth a beautiful nude lying with her face towards the wall. Lal stopped there and watched her changing her position. His feet lost the mobility. It was Mrs Tyson. The child screamed that there was someone at the porthole. Professor Lal quickly stepped back into the dark. Mrs Tyson asked the child to go sleep. That was a narrow escape. Again he came to the Tyson's porthole. Though he realized the hazards, he refused to move. Again the screaming of child woke Mr Tyson who rushed out of the door. Tyson caught the collar of Lal and called him dirty nigger. Some people gathered there to know the fact. Lal protested that he was just standing there. The Pakistani asked Tyson that he could report to the Captain and could not take the law into his own hands. Another group of Europeans joined the party. One of them grabbed the collar of the Pakistani diplomat. But Tyson pointed out the mistake and the man apologized the Pakistani.

Tyson smashed the Professor and blood came from his head. He moaned that he had done wrong. The Pakistani told Tyson that he had murdered an Indian national and he would learn a lesson. Mrs Tyson was under tension. She asked about the Professor to doctor. The Professor was all right and the Captain asked the crowd to go back to their cabins. The Professor accused the blonde, 'You are responsible for this' and closed his eyes and fainted again. The blonde proclaimed that she had nothing to do with that and went to her cabin.

Next morning there was racial conflict between the white Europeans on one hand and Pakistanis and Indian people of colours on the other hand. As Patel said about sending a notice to the Captain, a young lady from Oxford asked to find out the truth about that affair. There was controversy in the thought of Patel and the young lady. Then Patel asked to deal with insult to a senior diplomat and the united front stood against the whites. Patel handed over the legal notice to Tyson and Wilson. Miss Oxford became angry and said, 'If you are men, now is the time to give them a suitable reply!' The Indians and Pakistanis got irritated. Patel and the Pakistani diplomat drafted another notice. It was addressed to the Egyptian chief of Police and not to Tyson and Wilson.

Mrs Tyson visited the Professor. He took her hand and clasped it with great warmth. She ran her fingers through his hair and asked him if it hurt. She asked him, 'Do you want this sordid business to go on, Professor?' He was embarrassed and blushed like a woman, 'Forgive and forget. We are friends'. Mrs Tyson told Patel and others that the problem was solved. The bandages round Professor's head made him look like a hero. The passengers were eager to know the answer to the mystery: 'What had taken the Professor to the first-class deck at midnight?' The Captain announced a fancy-dress ball. Patel and the blonde were judges. The Captain dissipated the racial ill-will. The competitors came in fancy-dress. Mrs Tyson appeared leading Professor by the hand. Without warning she kissed the Professor on both his cheeks. Before the declaration of result, Mrs Tyson announced about one more entry and about the answer to the question in their minds. Tyson entered with a black eye and torn shirt. He was on crutches and with bold letters on his back: 'Wrong Cabin'.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story portrays all aspects like gender relations, class distinction, racial discrimination and national identity. The relation between Lal and the blonde, Mrs Tyson and Lal, Mrs. Tyson and Mr Tyson are the examples of gender relations. The tourist class and the first class represent class difference. Calling a nigger to Lal is an example of racial discrimination. The quarrel between Europeans on one side and Indian and Pakistani on other represent pride for one's national identity. The author portrays that sex is not backed by emotional involvement. Chakan Lal's peering through porthole is an attack

on Tyson' privacy. His behaviour is indecent and amorous. Though there is no signal from the blonde, he conveniently believes that she had solicited him due to her expression 'one last danz and zen to bed.' The author never goes beyond sensuous pleasure while portraying man-woman relationship.

The story also presents a striking contrast between the freedom enjoyed by western women and very rigid restriction by Indian women. In western culture, women enjoy freedom regarding clothes. They use different clothes in different situations. They experience liberal atmosphere. Mrs Tyson is one example of it. She is perceptive and represents women of such kind. During hot humid night Mrs Tyson takes the liberty of not wearing clothes. Whereas the character of Bindo in the short story titled 'The Rape' not allowed to pick up her shirt to clean her face. Whenever she tries to do that as a reflex action someone's angry whisper controls even her reflexes. So the character of Mrs Tyson and Bindo represent contrast between some types of liberty enjoyed by women or denied to women according to their cultural context.

Mrs Tyson's relation with Professor Lal has another dimension. Mrs Tyson is under tension but she takes an initiative to resolve the quarrel. Her positive thinking and her idea of participation in fancy-dress competition show that women have power to do the work which is mainly considered of men. She never minds class, race or gender difference. She has been portrayed as a very strong character having a decisive impact on the entire situation. Gender relation between Mr Tyson and Mrs Tyson is not hierarchical power relation. Mr Tyson follows his wife in resolving the quarrel and even takes part in fancy-dress competition.

The interaction between Tyson and Professor Lal represents racial discrimination. People from different countries as well as different religions and races take part in quarrel because they want to show their power over the others. It shows how men quarrel among themselves to overpower others.

Interaction between blonde and Lal breaks the stereotype of male-female interaction at least in one respect, with respect to the height of persons. It is always considered that man should be taller than the woman. But the blonde is taller woman than Professor Lal. They dance together and accept each other. It breaks the stereotype of

having man taller than women. Even people don't like odd couple. They don't like breaking of stereotype. So people laugh at Professor Lal and the blonde.

A large number of characters are included in the story. They are from different strata such as children, young, married, unmarried, quarrelsome, etc. Still the story is built around, as Kushwant Singh mentioned, a series of incidents portraying the equation between Professor Lal and other characters. Professor Lal is the pivot of the story. He is responsible for every incident that took place in the story. He is described in detail with his education, likes and dislikes, attitude towards unmarried and married women. The author has also described the women in detail. Mrs Tyson is a contrast to the blonde. Mrs Tyson is married and in a snow white dress sparkling with sequins who looks like a marble statue of Diana. On the other hand, the blonde is unmarried in a bright red sari with a blue blouse cut low down in the center who looks like a sexy Juno. Mrs Tyson's figure is apt to bikinis whereas the blonde's is not. As per patriarchal view, women do not tell their true age. But the blonde has falsified this notion saying: 'a lady never tells her age, but I will tell you as a special favour. I am twenty-one.' Thus, the blonde is also not submissive, like other women. Miss Oxford has also strong views and puts in appropriate way. So all the women characters Mrs Tyson, the blonde, Miss Oxford are proactive, assertive and peacemaker, moreover, they break the stereotypical images of women that are constructed by patriarchy. The author has portrayed that men are responsible for quarrel. This is indeed some consolation to the viewer of modern TV serials who is being made to believe it is women who have all the vices like being cruel, scheming and quarrelsome.

24. India is a Strange Country

Substance of the Story:

The story is an account of Tyson's love for his dog Martha. Foreign people have different reactions to India. The author mentions Mongol emperor Babar and most Europeans of the upper classes hate India. There are some foreigners who loved India. Indians divide foreigners into three categories - a) 'haters'- dislike both India and the Indians, b) 'half-haters'- dislike Indians but like the Indian landscape and the conditions of living c) 'lovers'- like everything about India and the Indians. People from third

category learn Indian languages, eat with their fingers, their women wear saris. But this category is very small. There is fourth category according to the author that arouses the liveliest speculation in Indian circles. Kenneth Tyson is one example of it.

Tyson was the first English man in the bar of the Gymkhana Club since it had passed into Indian hands. He was bald. Different people had various attitudes about him. Some thought him the white man with the blackest thoughts about India; quite willing to make friends with Indians; not a bad chap Tyson; accept drinks from the blacks. Punjabi lady remarked that Tyson's wife accepted gifts from Indians but did not allow her children to mix with Indians. Then Bengali lady argued why they lived there in India. Others took Tyson's remarks on Indian sculpture, literature, and music with due consideration. Then question arose, 'What then kept him in India?' And why did he forgo his home leave year after year?' Tyson had a dachshund named Martha. He passed the years without taking his home leave. He always took Martha with him.

One summer evening, Tyson stopped for drink. He let Martha out of the car. A host had an equally aged bull terrier bitch. Both Martha and bull terrier waddled about in the flower beds. The two snorted in unison and began to cry with excitement. Every now and then they looked up at their masters for instructions. They ran after a bandicoot. When Martha was on the middle of the road, the headlights diverted her attention. She stopped and the car had gone over her. Tyson brought her in. His eyes were blurred with tears. Martha died and Tyson wept like a child. He resigned his job and decided to leave India. His English friend remarked that Tyson was going to settle down in India and taken Indian nationality. Tyson answered that there were uncivilized laws for animals in England.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The author has presented man-man and woman-woman relation that show the attitude of people to one another. The relation between woman and woman shows racial discrimination. The Punjabi lady calls Jennifer Tyson a half-hater, occupational disease of the hater. She also considers her worse than Tyson. Bengali lady remarks if Mrs Tyson doesn't like India, why should they be here in India.

The relation between Tyson and the protagonist is good relation. There is no racial discrimination. They discuss various topics and both have positive attitude towards

each other. The gender relation between Tyson and Indian ladies also plays an important role in this story. Though Indian ladies have bad opinion about Mrs Tyson, they are kind enough to Tyson. According to them, Tyson is not a bad chap; he accepts drinks from the blacks. Tyson does not mind the difference between black and white. This kind of attitude is very important to increase gender equality.

Usually the servant takes care of animal and the owner only plays with the pet. But this story depicts Tyson's love for his dog vividly. Patriarchy does not portray men as having such kind of attachment. Khushwant Singh has handled the relationship between the human being and his pet in a far better way than he has handled human relations especially relation between men and women. Men do not have such kind of attachment. Tyson took the decision to live in India only for the sake of his dog. He even wept at the death of his lovable dog. After the death of dog, immediately he decides to leave for England. He criticized the uncivilized laws of England for animals. His nurturing, caring nature breaks all the stereotypes of masculinity.

The character of Tyson is totally in contrast to the friend of the protagonist in 'The Fawn'. Tyson loves animals from the depth of his heart whereas the friend of the protagonist in 'The Fawn' enjoys killing animals. The author has positive attitude towards animals and it is presented through the views of the protagonist and Tyson.

25. Mr Kanjoos and the Great Miracle

Substance of the Story:

The story is a heavy-handed satire on Indian abroad. 'Eat, drink and be merry' was the motto of Mr and Mrs Kanjoos (miser). The Kanjooses had pot-luck many times with me. They were a most thoughtful couple. The protagonist knew their dietary and other habits very well. They were members of the same Golf Club. They were regular club-goers. Once the protagonist joined them. Mr Kanjoos ordered one beer for him, a small whisky for his wife and a large one for him. He also remarked that the person who offered drink must be generous. Then the protagonist ordered two double scotches as his turn. Mrs Kanjoos also supported the theme of generosity. She spoke about the hospitality. When the bearer came with bill, Mr Kanjoos had gone to the lavatory. The protagonist had signed the bill. Then Mr Kanjoos came and exclaimed, 'What! You've

signed for the whole lot! All right, next time it will be on us. Then you come home'. Next time when the bearer came with the bill, Mr Kanjoos had gone to make an urgent telephone call. Third time Mr Kanjoos was busy talking to a friend. Then the protagonist began to avoid Kanjoos.

As fate had ordained, the Kanjooses and the protagonist were together for an international conference in Germany for several months. Mr Kanjoos took his wife and two children at his own experience. They were lodged in the same hotel. The little Kanjooses visited picture galleries and museums where there was no charge for admission. They attended any one's reception party. They never had class discrimination. When children joined Mrs Kanjoos, she recited a *mantram* in a rustic dialect of Punjabi that meant: 'my little rubies, eat all you can. We won't have to go to a restaurant'. Everyone knew Kanjooses. Bhooki was the elder daughter of Kanjooses. She was eighteen years old. They fixed her marriage with Budhu Sen, an Indian in foreign services. The 15th of August was the date of marriage. Mamma Kanjoos made arrangement of wedding in Indian Embassy. She had not forgotten that the 15th of August was Independence Day. Papa Kanjoos spent a considerable sum on wedding cards. Mamma Kanjoos asked the recipients that a bride was looked upon as a daughter and had to be sent off with a gift. Bhooki Kanjoos got married to Budhu Sen. The Kanjooses were in their element. Papa Kanjoos began to orate: 'one is so happy when one can do one's duty by one's child. ...You can't take your money with you. Spend it, I say, spend it while you live'.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Traditionally, the father of bride is always in agony and miserable condition. He is humble and submissive. He always thinks of the way out. He is mostly vulnerable. But this story deconstructs the whole traditional idea of bride's father. Kanjooses, both father and mother of bride, get the way out easily. They never bother about the situation. There is no gender difference in the story. All are on equal footing. Kanjooses are able to live anywhere though they don't have enough money. They have got habituated to attend parties though not called. The family has become empowering trait. It is an egalitarian

family. No one feels shy, uncomfortable to go anywhere. The author has put it in a lighter vein. It's a parody on the behaviour of many people in society.

As per Hindu tradition, relations, acquaintances, friendship, wealth, etc. are the strong points or strength of many people. They ask one another to attend the different occasions. But as name indicates shamelessness and miserliness are the strong points of Kanjooses. So the story is a deconstruction of traditions. The father of the bride is portrayed as a miser father who checkmates the whole situation. Similarly, mother of the bride is portrayed as a miser. She makes the arrangement in such a way to cope with the situation. She is not submissive. She does every possible thing to save the money. She makes an appeal to get gifts, 'It doesn't matter how trifling it [a gift] is - even a sugar cube will do, but it is inauspicious to come empty-handed'. She is not submissive. She is always with her husband and bold enough to make all arrangement of daughter's wedding.

Both Mr and Mrs Kanjoos are the important characters in the story. Mr Kanjoos knows the art of not paying the bill. Though he is miser, he asks to spend money because we cannot take them with us. The protagonist is also tempted to be like Mr Kanjoos. Mr and Mrs Kanjoos deconstruct not only the traditions but also entire value system, which celebrated generosity, self-reliance and self-respect.

26. Mr Singh and the Colour Bar

Substance of the Story:

The story deals with the cultural inconsistency and manners and etiquettes of different cultures. Mr Singh had examined the problem of race prejudice. He remarked that their boys must be taught European etiquette before they left India. It was resolved that a school should be set up in Bombay to conduct a six-week course of table and bathroom manners. Then they discussed about the sex that causes troubles in the world. Lots of men had given up their studies in pursuit of women and return home with nothing better than an LLD, a landlady's daughter. Mr Singh spoke about Mrs Wilkins and others knew only about Mrs Jones and Mrs Henry. He suggested that bringing girls to boarding houses was not decent. When asked about sex problems, he answered that you could not get sex off your minds and obsessed with it. He didn't find it a problem. He had also

become a bit of palmist. He remarked about Indian women who are like *devi* and should regard all women other than your wife as mothers, sisters or daughters. The protagonist also bears that in mind. Mr Singh left on his ambassadorial goodwill mission smashing all bars of colour and race.

The protagonist and others kept in mind the words 'mother, sister or daughter'. They did say 'please' and 'thank you'. They did not stretch their hands across the table. They did not belch. They sat on lavatory seats as if they were armchairs. They even used toilet paper instead of water. Once they were staying at a very large fashionable hotel. Young girl dressed like boys were operating the lifts. A dark brunette welcomed them in the lift. She almost looked Indian but for her dress. They looked at the girl. She put her hand together in the manner of an Indian greeting and said, 'Jai Hind'. They remembered Mr Singh's words. She was ready to go for a drink after one o'clock if they pleased. They answered, 'Sure, sister.'

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story represents incompatibility between two cultures. The author has depicted incompatibility in detail:

Our boys stretch their hands across the table to help themselves before even the ladies have taken anything. They belch loudly. They sit on their haunches on lavatory seats and make them dirty. They splash water in the bathrooms by pouring it over themselves with a *lota* instead of lying gently in the long baths (175).

The character of Mr Singh and his views are very important for better gender relations. He is of the view that anyone who rapes anyone should be hanged ten times. He considers Indian women as *devis*. He asks not to forget the priest's advice to regard all women other than your wife as mothers, sisters or daughters.

The protagonist has kept in mind the advice given by Mr Singh. So he answers the brunette who is on duty at the end as 'sure sister'. Thus, the author has presented cultural differences vividly and made aware of the gender relations between the protagonist and the brunette. The story suggests that if we learn etiquettes and manners of any culture, we don't have any kind of colour bar. The author has described all the characters to suit the situation. The gender relations between the protagonist and the brunette are very

remarkable to develop better gender relations at any place. In the entire collection of short stories the protagonist in this story stands out as someone who doesn't treat women as sex object.

27. The Morning After the Night Before

Substance of the Story:

The story represents author's obsession with sex colours and a satire on male attitude. It was Sunday morning. I decided to resume my sleep. In a few moments my magic carpet mind went back to the pleasant world of the evening before. We had gone dancing in a party of five couples. All were friendly. Though I was not fond of drink, I decided to get it. There was the concept of a good fellow and a he-man. I had an obsession for popularity. I had also to prove my manliness. I emptied several tankards of beer. Then the effects began to register. The girls were looking at us suspiciously. I warned myself to be steady. It was going to prove that I was not drunk. I started dancing but couldn't recall who my partner was. She began to look dangerously attractive. She was smiling and laughing all the time. Next time I decided to dance with someone safer. I searched for a suitable partner. She wasn't good-looking. She was vulgarly desirable. I danced with her. I didn't know what I did. I was too drunk to remember.

In the morning I saw a foreign object in my trouser pocket. It was a silk brassier. My forehead covered with cold sweat. I remembered my wife's warning, 'If you do it once -- I'll do it a hundred times.' My wife asked me to get up. I went to bathroom and tore the brassier up and flushed it down the water-closet. Then I asked my wife whether I misbehaved much last night. She answered that I had certainly done so. She asked for her what-nots that I put in my pocket. I got relief and went back to my bed to dream the sequel to my interrupted dream.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story is androcentric and it focuses on the protagonist. It describes how men behave with the wives of friends. The author has described 'manliness' ironically. Manliness is found only in a person who empties more and more glasses of beer. It is also related the idea of 'he-man'. The protagonist wants to be he-man. On the contrary, he is

timid towards his wife. The author has shown his timidity for two reasons. Firstly, he is afraid of his wife for having a brassier in his pocket. So he has run into bathroom and torn up the brassier. Secondly, he is afraid of the warning given by his wife:

She had warned me that the one thing she would never condone was physical disloyalty. Had I ruined my home life by one senseless flying? She had often threatened, 'If you do it once – I'll do it hundred times' (182).

The author shows how men are frightened not out of any sense of commitment with the spouse but because of their wives. The protagonist is so frightened that he tears up the brassier. He thinks of adultery whenever he gets chance. But he is afraid of his wife's adultery. If he has remained loyal to his wife it is only due to threats of his wife regarding committing adultery herself. Although the protagonist feels like committing adultery several times and nearly commits it on the night of the party, because he is not aware that he doesn't like the adultery of his wife. This shows his patriarchal views that expect a man to be loyal to his wife even if he is promiscuous and adulterous.

The wife of the protagonist is portrayed in a totally different way. This character deconstructs the concept of traditional housewife who has no control over the sexual behaviour of her husband and simply curses her luck when the husband does not remain loyal. The wife of the protagonist is not a traditional woman who never speaks against her husband. She is assertive or even aggressive. She warns her husband against committing adultery. This very really threatens her husband because of her explicit threat 'If you do it once – I'll do it hundred times'. Thus, it breaks the stereotype of traditional husband and wife. Her assertiveness or aggressiveness is contributory to egalitarian gender relations because it drastically changes the power relation between husband and wife.

The male gaze of the author is very pronounced in this story. The description of women's dress is patriarchal. The author describes it as:

The size of her clothes remained what it had been when she was in college. She had tried to squeeze all her protrusions in tight-fitting clothes. But her flesh had voluptuously over spread its narrow confines. Her bulbous breasts were ever on the verge of escaping from the narrow strap of cloth which held them down (181).

Except this description, the story that breaks stereotype is very contributory to egalitarian male female enhance gender relations.

28. A Love Affair in London

Substance of the Story:

The story represents delicate effects of love on human beings through Kamini. Kamini was in the plane to London. She had only read and heard about England as a beautiful country. She wondered if she was enjoying her stay in England. Her family had suffered at their hands. She herself was in jail. She had never met an Englishman except Robert Smith, a magistrate. Her meeting with Robert was a curious affair. She took part in the 'Quit India' movement of 1942 and was sent to jail. She was produced before the district magistrate. Now she remembered the scene well. The magistrate was a youngish man with light red hair. The clerk asked Kamini whether she was guilty. She answered she was not guilty. She was seventeen. The magistrate looked at her and told her that he would lend her the book to read in jail for seven days. Kamini received the book with initials 'K.G.', Kamini Garve. She decided to tell it to the newspaper that would cause his dismissal. When she came home after seven days she heard that Smith had resigned and returning to England. Compliments from Smith changed her attitude.

Kamini reached England and observed different scenes and joined the crowds around the sop-box orators. No one spoke to her. She asked herself why she had come to that unfriendly land. Still she hoped that she might run into Robert Smith. She also knew it was silly. A number of questions came to her mind. She believed that if she willed, she would run into him. But neither her will-power nor any coincidence brought Kamini face to face with Robert Smith. One day Kamini met a beautiful woman who was afraid of soldiers. Kamini asked her about her boy friend. She answered that he had been killed in the war.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story is gynocentric like 'Kusum'. There are certain similarities between Kusum and Kamini. Both are not harmful to society. Like Kusum, Kamini is also hypnotized because of Smith and his compliments:

Thereafter, every time she looked at herself in the mirror, the words came back to her and she had the odd sensation of Smith staring at her, making her embarrassingly conscious of her young womanhood (186).

The author has given details about her career from which emerges her character. She is an activist. She doesn't feel guilty like her other friends. She goes to jail. She is independent and confident enough even to go to England. She has optimistic view towards life. Because of this even Smith has resigned his job and decided to go to England. Smith feels though Kamini is a woman, she behaves arrogantly. Having this attitude and being a magistrate and a male, Smith overpowers Kamini. Even he has resigned the job. He has love for her but never tries to meet her. On the contrary, Kamini visits London only for the sake of him. There are only two major characters and the whole story revolves around Kamini. The story has potential to empower women because the protagonist 'Kamini' has been portrayed as a very computable, independent, assertive and proactive character who has a sense of purpose and clarity of vision. She has the zeal and drive to perceive what she wants. The language is gender sensitive. Nothing is sexist in the story like other stories such as 'Kusum'.

29. Rats and Cats in the House of Culture

Substance of the Story:

The story is an uproarious farce which describes a strange act of keeping the House of Culture neat and ready for the General Conference. Langford was the Director of the House of Culture at Paris. He was thinking over 'rats' file and remarked 'Why not Cats? And 'Should be of the same sex.' Then the file was sent for the Englishman who was head of administration and asked for explanation. The then French director had asked for plans for the destruction of rats. The Italian director had considered plans for using traps. Now it was the turn of Langford. Langford saw the rats one night and wrote 'Why not cats' again. They brought kittens whose sex was not identifiable. After some months, the kittens become ferocious little tigers. The experiment proved a complete success within a half year. The non-profit-making canteen showed handsome profits. After six months, the cats started becoming a nuisance. Lady stenographers shrieked. The cats meauwed and fought in the corridors. Then there were more cats and there was great loss

because of 'depredation by cats'. Now the 'cats' file was started. The General Conference was organized. The conference room was packed. Langford opened the conference with a short address. He stated the importance of a cultural rapprochement between the East and the West. The Minister of Education of the Govt. of India spoke 'It [culture] knows no barriers of race, religions, caste or creed'. The secretary opened his mouth to translate it. But a loud meauw came down from one corner of the balcony. It was answered by a louder meauw from the other end. The assembly burst into laughter.

Langford ordered Mr Smith to look into the matter. Smith opened the 'cats' file and thought of cat-catchers. Roul Colin got the contract of catching cats. Roul Colin and his friends used tiger-sized traps. They collected all the cats and put them in three traps. Langford was very happy. They drove off their truck towards the river. They stopped in between to have a drink. The waiter told them that cats could swim. They thought over the problem. Colin unlocked one cage. Jean opened the other two cages. The General Conference opened on Tuesday. Langford opened the proceeding by introducing the Minister. The Minister spoke in Hindustani and turned to his interpreter. The interpreter opened his mouth. From the balcony came a strange sound: 'meauw'.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

Langford is the central character of the story. He takes the care of the House of Culture as it has a good reputation in the market. He thinks over the 'rats' and 'cats' files to keep the House of Culture neat and ready for the General Conference. He has power relations with his subordinates like Smith. Mr Colin the cat catcher and his mates don't like to kill the cats. So they open the doors of cage and let the cats go.

The story does not have potential for gender relations. The story is totally androcentric. Women are shown only to describe the stereotype that women are afraid of cats and rats. 'Lady stenographers shrieked with terror when they ran past,' 'Women in the balcony screamed and stood upon their chairs' are the only expressions referring to women.

30. The Red Tie

Substance of the Story:

The story focuses on misbehaviour of sensuous pleasure seeking man named Chisti. Chisti was a talkative man. Wherever he went conventions had to be overlooked. The hostess had friendly relations with him. She asked Chisti the definition of marriage. Chisti defined 'marriage is like chewing gum, sweet in the beginning, sticky in the end.' He was always the first to laugh at his jokes and then women joined him enthusiastically. Chisti never bothered about the reactions of men. They were jealous of his success with women. There were many miraculous stories about Chisti. Chisti got what other men only dreamt about. He narrated the story of red tie. He was alone in a first class compartment. He hung his red tie and coat on a peg. He knew he was handsome. Women talked about him and yet he had never succeeded in seducing one. There was another train going in the other direction stopped at a junction station. Chisti was eminently well bred and disliked vulgar curiosity. There was a zenana third class more colourful compartment. A woman staring at Chisti sat at one window. He changed his position to see the woman better. The woman stared at Chisti without blinking. Chisti was a bundle of nerves. The woman began to smoke a cigarette. Chisti stared at her with desire and fear. The opposite train began to move. When the woman came almost opposite him, he shut his left eye in a lecherous wink and sank back. His heart beat wildly. There was chaos on the opposite platform. The woman from zenana compartment looked at him and disappeared from the window. Chisti went for the lavatory and bolted it inside. He heard the sound of feet. When the train began to move he heard the sound of feet going out. Chisti found that his coat and attaché case were gone. Only red tie with saliva was there. A Woman had taken his wallet with its contents. Still he felt relieved and triumphant. Chisti ended his narration saying: 'She left me this tie as a memento. Let's join the ladies.'

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story presents a different kind of gender relation. The hero Chisti is portrayed as sensuous pleasure seeking man. He reminds us the anglicized behaviour of Sir Mohan Lal from 'Karma'. Though a woman loots him, he hides the whole episode and turns it into his victory by boasting of the tie as a gift from her. He prefers to tell the stories. He always says, 'I must tell you about an incident which happened to me ', or 'Have you

heard my latest joke? I think it is a good one.' Though he is timid, he doesn't show his timidity. He tries to boast over the others.

The author has put forth his idea regarding marriage through Chisti. Chisti always talks and is in focus for this or that miraculous story. The author calls Chisti eminently well bred ironically. Chisti is neither gentleman nor manly. His shutting of left eye in a lecherous wink and keeping inside the lavatory show the reality or fact about Chisti. The woman portrayed in this story is aggressive. She is not a traditional woman. She visits the man (Chisti) who has misbehaved. As Chisti is not there, she has picked up his all material except red tie. She is immodest and wants to teach a lesson to Chisti. Thus, the author has portrayed both the characters to break the stereotype that women are shy/timid and men are bold/immodest. As usual there is description of sexual behaviour. The language is sexist. The behaviour of Chisti is derogatory to female sex.

31. My Own My Native Land

Substance of the Story:

The main purpose of the story is to attack on the insensitivity of government servants and the agony that a common man has to face due to it. The Stratheden moved into Bombay harbor and the visitors came to greet their folk on board. Then we arrived at the customs shed. There were long queues of passengers with their scrutinized forms. I asked the lady where I ought to be. She asked me to see the number on the board above the Customs Officer. But there were no numbers on the board. So I rejoined the Inquiry queue. The lady then inscribed the numbers on the board. After half an hour the officer informed me that my declaration form was not with him. The lady checked the officer's file and then picked up one form from the floor and wave to me. Then I joined my queue. The officer asked me to fill in the form. After forty minutes I came across Customs Officer with the form of exemption duly filled. He asked me to see the Inspector. I was granted an exemption. But I had to fill in the declaration form again. Then I joined queue. One had to face the ordeal of customs inspection in half an hour. When my turn came the man asked for ten rupees. My packages were marked without an inspection. I had only a little change left in my wallet. I took iced lemonade which was better than Australian champagne.

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story is androcentric. The stress is only on the protagonist. There is reference only to the office lady. So there is less potential for gender relations. Still the lady helps him:

But she walked briskly over to the Customs Officer, looked at his file of papers and then picked up one from the floor and triumphantly waved to me (207).

The only woman character in the story has been shown as more sensitive to the needs of passenger than her male counterpart.

Then there are power relations. The relation between passengers and officials is very much based on power. The officer tells 'the rule is clear'. The relation between officials and the Inspector is again power relation:

He went over to the Inspector and an argument with much gesticulation followed. Apparently the Inspector triumphed (207).

The author has also described how it is dehumanizing to take the help of extra-legal person. Even he clears that how it is necessary to take the help of such person offering him money. The protagonist's packages are marked without an inspection. It shows the power of money as well as the deep rooted corruption and insensitivity in our entire system.

The language is simple, gender sensitive. Though there is little potential to study gender relations, in this story at least, the language is not sexist or derogatory to the female sex.

32. The Convert

Substance of the Story:

The story depicts the transformations due to gossip in the life of human beings and its effects. Mrs Sarla Sethi, her husband and their friends Mr and Mrs Robinson were playing the cards. Mr Sethi didn't pay attention to the game. So Sarla became angry and flung her cards in her husband's face. Then she ran into her bedroom. Mr Sethi apologized the Robinsons. He didn't bother about his behaviour. Sarla was familiar with such situation. She wished that she could divorce him but it was not easy. She was afraid

of others' remarks. Neither of them referred to the incident of the evening before. Mr Sethi went to the office. Sarla remembered philosophy of Buddha that we should make our minds as silent as a wooden gong. Mrs Moore came in and asked, 'Can I talk to you for a few minutes, my dear?' Mrs Moor was from the Love Group. She asked with maternal tone 'Whats troubling you, my child', which was not used by anyone. Sarla gave her five rupees but Mrs Moor rejected. Mrs Moor told that she wanted Sarla and not money. She advised Sarla regarding hate: 'Go to the person you hate and make a clean breast of it'. The life would become sweeter, nobler and worthwhile. Mrs Moor had suggested a practical way. Sarla thought over the names she hated -- her husband, her sister-in-law and Pakistanis.

Sarla became calm, determined and distant. She became the member of Love Group. Life became a challenge for her and accepted with zeal of a new convert. She finalized the names that could be confessed -- G.S, her husband; Kamla Berry, her sister-in-law and Mr Ali Consul-General Pakistan. Now Sarla felt light-hearted. She confessed her mistakes and asked for forgiveness to her husband. Her husband though already late for office made love to her. She crossed the first hurdle. Sarla also rejoined her sister-in-law who didn't speak for almost two years. They celebrated the re-union with the two families getting together. Children of both the families played together. The two ladies consulted each other on menus and recipes. Sarla even told her sister-in-law about the Love Group and Mrs Moore. Then a question came to her mind 'was it necessary now to make a confession to the Pakistanis?' Sarla visited the Consulate and met Consul-General Mr. Ali. Taking enough time to compose, Sarla explained her view on hate. Mr Ali became nervous and thought whether she had been going to declare her love for him. Sarla told him that it was not possible to go to every Muslim and Pakistani and ask for forgiveness. She was there because Mr Ali represented the whole of Pakistan. Ali got relaxed. He narrated the same evidence at every party. He enjoyed telling the story. Mr Sethi heard from one of his colleagues. A number of ladies gave that account to Sarla's sister-in-law. Sarla avoided parties and went to the office of the Love Group. She was eager to know what people were saying. At last she went to Mrs Soni, the city's most celebrated gossip-manger. Sarla asked her who told the evidence to her. Mrs Soni answered that the whole world was talking about that. She heard it from dozens of

people. She also added that it might have been heard from either her sister-in-law or others. Sarla went directly to her sister-in-law. She was unable to control her temper. Sarla gave a stinging slap on the face of her sister-in-law saying: 'you bitch... you bloody bitch...'

Analysis and Critical Comments:

The story is remarkable for gender relations as well as breaking up of the stereotypes. The relations between man-woman, man-man and woman-woman have different dimensions. The writer presents both positive as well as negative views very successfully. Sarla Sethi, the central figure of the story is proactive and bold. She is playing the cards with her husband and others. When her husband doesn't pay attention she asks 'will you pay attention to the game!' Even she flings her cards in her husband's face. It is a deviation from the feminine stereotype. Sarla also represent feminine point of view. Though she has changed herself and loved all, at the end of the story she gives a slap to her sister-in-law without interacting with her. The author shows another side of her personality and how two women quarrel each other.

There is dominance of racism. Sarla prefers white race supremacy. She doesn't like Indian woman in contrast to white woman. If there is Indian woman she has to dismiss her. On the other hand, she is more courteous to a white woman. 'She actually preferred to mix with the English rather than her own countrymen'. She plays cards with Robinsons. Sarla hates Pakistan because she loves her own country. She has misconceived notion of patriotism, nationalism and she tries to get out of it.

The author has portrayed different kinds of women. One of them is Mrs Moore who helps for the benefit of the society. She is shown as a woman struggling for reconciliation. She brings about reconciliation between Sarla and her sister-in-law who have quarreled two years ago. Positive attitude of the writer is seen through the character of Mrs Moore towards women. The attitude of the male characters is patriarchal. Both Mr Sethi and Mr Ali do not take women seriously. They consider women as an object of ridicule. Their behaviour is patriarchal. Mr Sethi doesn't pay attention to what Sarla says while playing cards. Mr Ali also doesn't take seriously what Sarla tells him. He quotes the evidence as a fun in many parties and makes joke of Sarla's visit to him. Lack of

thinking on the side of Mr Ali, Consul-General is responsible for changed behaviour of Sarla. Fear is common for both men and women in an unexpected situation. But the author has not considered this view in this story. We are aware of it as readers. Generally, women are considered to be fearful. But Mr Ali's condition is very fearful. His nervousness grows when Sarla says, 'Hate can only be overcome by making a clean breast of it, cleansing your heart by a candid confession. Then you make room for love to enter; isn't that so Mr Ali?' (p.217) The author has shown that women are at the front in spreading the misunderstandings. Even general consideration is that all women are gossip-mongers. But male are also responsible for such act. Mr Ali tells about Sarla's visit in every party. It causes to the quarrel between Sarla and her sister-in-law. Only women are gossip-mongers is the misconception among all people. Sarla is the victim of this misconception. Though there is reconciliation and unity in the relation between Sarla and her sister-in-law, Sarla speaks badly without thinking over the situation. Such portrayals are presented in literature which constructs the images of women. The story has portrayed images of women in a stereotypical way where women are shown to be naïve, quarrelsome, unreasonable and impulsive. The character of Mrs Moore although not embedded any of these characteristics still fits the stereotype of women as peace loving characters or peacemakers. At least Mrs Moore's character is in the position of making an impact, even a positive impact. Sarla Sethi's character emerges as most vulnerable initially, to the feelings of anger and hatred then subsequently to the desire for overcoming anger and hatred and finally to the insensitivity of Pakistani ambassador who turns all her good intention into a party joke. He is a socio-politically mobile person having access to dozens of parties and gatherings and Sarla Sethi has absolutely no means and her disposal to counter the impact of the gossips and grape-wine get initiated due to his insensitivity. This story vividly describes vulnerable of an average woman due to the lack of access to power networks that an average man, let alone the Pakistani ambassador may have.