

CHAPTER - IV

**NARRATIVE
TECHNIQUES,
LANGUAGE & STYLE**

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

POINT OF VIEW

Khushwant Singh is a good story teller. In spite of his using traditional methods of story-telling, he is appreciated by the critics. A critic comments:

What attracts me to Khushwant Singh's stories is the élan with which they are told. They remind us of the eighteenth century English novelists on the one hand and the Punjabi story-tellers on the other. Though Khushwant Singh has not much to do with the intricate patterns and rhythms of sophisticate fiction or with meandering in the labyrinth of the conscious and semi-conscious, he has a knack of story-telling as gripping as that of Scheherazade in **The Thousand and One Nights**.¹

While most of his stories are first person narratives, there are also many stories in which the author makes use of third person method of narration. The point of view is single and steady and does not shift and shuffle. He makes use of both telling method and showing method judiciously.

Khushwant Singh employs the first person method of narration very effectively in his stories. In "posthumous" the central character tells the story from his point of view. It is about his imaginary death, and his expectations about the response of the people he knows. The story is narrated in such a way that the reader is required to discriminate between narratorial point of view and that of the implied author. The reader realises the ironic force of the text. The author is also able to show the gap between what one imagines about himself and what the reality is. "The mark of Vishnu" has an extraordinarily gripping narrative content. The technique of first person narration is used to tell the story. One of the minor characters- a schoolboy narrates the story from his point of view. The authorial objectivity is effectively communicated. The author

pronounces no judgment on what the children or the teacher do or what happens to Ganga Ram after the fatal attack. "The Butterfly" is narrated from the point of view of a minor character in the story. The narration is first person. He is an eyewitness of the action. The author makes use of this method to evoke humor as the narrator is biased against the character. He is prone to see the hypocrisy in his behavior and the central character's light attitude to love and patriotism.

In "The Interview" the story is narrated by the public relations officer, a central character in the story. This first person method of narration presents the story objectively. The narrator 'pretends to know Numismatics but his ignorance about the subject is exposed. The conversation between the narrator and the Towers adds to objectivity of presentation. It makes the dramatic end of the story "The Portrait of a Lady" is also a first person narrative. The narrator is a participant in the story. The narrator – a grandson tells the story of his intimate relationship with his grandmother. The narrator tells about his impression of his grandmother. The authority of the first person narrator appears immediate and compelling as far as its use in this story is concerned. He is an eyewitness to what his grandmother does. He summarizes, narrates some events about his grandmother describes and meditates on the past events in the story. Khushwant Singh is superb in his use of handling the first person skillfully. As it is a character based story the depiction of the character and his (the narrator's) close relationship with her sounds authentic as there appears to be no gap between the narrator and the implied author. The voice and point of view of the narrator appear genuine as our understanding of the story is pervaded by our sense of the grandson, his trustworthiness and objectivity of the grandson who is narrating the story.

In "The Great Difference" the first person narrator who is a participant in the story narrates the story, K. Singh is a minor character. The author narrates the story from his point of view. In all there are four characters in the story. One is a Moslem, another is a Hindu the narrator

is a Sikh the fourth character is a French Lady. The readers come to know the great difference between the Islam and the Hinduism. The narrator also let's us know about his religion that is Sikhism. The narration is partly subjective and partly objective as it is found the point of view of the biased narrator.

“When Sikh Meets Sikh”, is also a first person narration. A minor character who participates in the action of the story narrates the story. The narration sounds authentic and realistic. The portrayal of Punjabi identity emerges vividly before the reader's eyes.

The story “The Insurance Agent” is narrated through the first person method of narration. The narrator “I” narrates the story. The author looks at Mr. Swami, the insurance agent from the point of view of the narrator and what he calls ‘Malicious People’s’ attitude towards him (Mr. Swami). The narrator can be called personae of the author.

R. K. Narayan also makes use of such a device a R. K. Narayan's device of ‘Talkative Man’ to narrate a story objectively is very famous. The author becomes successful in exposing the snobbish pretentious professional minded persons realistically.

In “The Fawn” the narrator who is a participant in action narrates the story. The narrator is also one of the main characters. The story is narrated from his point of view. The narrator being a reliable character his attitudes towards killing animals, appears to be the attitude of the author. The author is able to evoke the feeling of kindness towards animals through the objective narration of the story from the point of view of the participant character.

“The Man with a Clear Conscience” is narrated by the Sikh humanist, a character in the story. the theme of the story is Punjabi identity. The story is narrated in such a way that the Sikh sensitivity gets reflected through the narration in realistic manner.

In “The Bottom Pincher”, one of the main characters narrates the story. The voice of the narrator and that of the author appears different. The author looks at the character ironically.

In “Maiden Voyage the Jal Hindia”, “India is a strange Country”, “Mr.Kanjoos and The Great Miracle”, “A Punjabi Pastoral” minor characters are used to narrate the stories.

With the use of first person narration the narration becomes personal in these stories.

In Karma – Limited omniscien narration is used.

“The voice of God” – is an example of objective or camera- eye narration. There is no little or no revelation of the inner side of the characters but the third-person perspective is maintained in this story. It is as if the author stands apart from the scene, records it but does not comment on it. The author here appears to be a mere reader of the descriptive passages and dialogues. The picture of the village going to the polls emerges vividly before the readers eyes.

The narrative perspective of “Kusum” though technically omniscient, is limited to the central character – Kusum. The author focuses on her through whom we see most of the action. We are able to see her character fully revealed, not only through external actions and speech, but also through her inner feelings.

In “The Riot” the third person objective perspective is employed to narrate the story. The theme of communal fanaticism is presented realistically and objectively. The juxtaposition of the story of communal frenzy and the courtship of dogs adds to the symbolic significance of the story.

The Rape – third person objective perspective is used to narrate the story about Punjabi identity. The third person objective method of narration is used to tell the story of “The Memsahib of Mandala”, In Man, How the Government of India Run!

Third person limited omniscient narration method is employed to deal with the theme of bureaucratic style of work and also the minor theme of Punjabi identity. The focus is on the consciousness of three main character – Sunder Singh, Ghosh Babu and Sambamurthy.

“Black Jasmine”– deals with the theme of man-woman relationship. It is narrated from the point of view of Mr. Bannerjee. It is a third person limited omniscient narration. For “A Bride for the Sahib”, “A Love Affair in London”, “Rats and Cats in the House Of Culture” – third person objective. The convert third person methods are used..

Plot Construction in Khushwant Singh’s Stories

Khushwant Singh short stories reveal an almost traditional deployment of the plot and structure. Although his stories tend to be episodic in structure and intent, the presentation of the dominant theme characterizes all his stories. Episodes seem to be linked with each other to make the eventual point or to delineate character or to bring out the significance and appropriateness of action. The dominance of action and episode characterize his stories and this characteristic accounts for their being in conformity with the traditional and conventional pattern. The stories seemingly derive from the structure of plot which is based on the conflict and crisis in the characters and situation. The development of action and events in his stories are in chronological sequence marked by progression in time rather than in space. He sometimes makes use of flashback technique to present the events in the past. A conflict between characters and situations are created, developed and there after resolved through a succession of scenes. The analysis and study of the plot construction of his stories ensue.

The plot of “Posthumous” comprises the responses and reactions of the narrator’s friends and acquaintances on his death and the funeral procession of the narrator. The element of surprise and open-endedness and technique of contrast make the story more interesting. The story is a humorous fantasia. The plot reveals the theme of human relationship.

The plot of “Karma” is episodic. The action of the story takes place in the waiting room of the railway platform and in the railway compartments. The climax is reached when the two soldiers throw Sir Mohan Lal on the platform.

The plot of “The Mark of Vishnu” is well knit and full of action. The events are used to narrate the Hindu superstitious beliefs. The narrator of the story and the school teacher and the Kala- Nag stand for an idea.

The ‘Butterfly’ has an episodic plot. The events are related to the central character namely Charles. The story demonstrates the process of unmasking the character of Charles in the sharply contrasted situations. The whole story moves around the main character or protagonist Romesh Chandra alias Charles.

The plot of “The Interview” is anecdotal. A single incident is narrated by the central character – ‘The Public Relation Officer’ - with the specific aim of showing the public Relation officer’s lack of knowledge of numismatic which he pretends he have.

“The Portrait of a Lady” has a thin story as its plot is subservient to the characterization. The story develops the theme of intimate relationship between the grandson and his grandmother.

The plot of “The Voice of God” is episodic. The element of conflict is provided by Ganda Singh, a notorious leader of dacoits and thugs. Mr. Forsythe, the British officer, Kartar Singh an advocate, Seth Sukhtankar a millionaire who poured money in the election for Kartar Singh, the nationalist nominee, on the one hand and Baba Ram Singh who is a genuine worker among poor peasants and has served several terms of imprisonment for the participation in nationalist movements, on the other hand. It is quite surprising that Ganda Singh wins elections with a thumping majority and Baba Ram Singh is not only defeated in the election but he loses his deposit.

The plot construction of “A Punjab Pastorale” is simple and thin. The action is chronologically arranged and it is straightforward. The climax is reached when the central character, an American is poetically carried away by the dazzling beauty of the village girl – a rustic beauty. The story “A Punjab Pastorale” gives a vivid picture of a Punjabi village in its greenery. It can be read for its pictorial quality and the description of Soorajpur.

The plot construction of “Kusum” is very thin. The story is straightforward and the time scheme is linear. The conflict is shown between Kusum and the Hawker and finally it is resolved as Kusum realizes that the Hawker is attracted towards her. It is a pleasant surprise to her that she can be liked by a person like Hawker. The story is distinguished for the ironic twist in the end. The element of contrast is used to show that Kusum who never bothers to look attractive changes her attitude and tries to look beautiful after her encounter with the Hawker.

The plot of “The Riot” is episodic. The conflict between the Hindus and the Sikhs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other gives us idea of communal fanaticism. The element of contrast is also used effectively.

“The Rape” is a story of action. The element of conflict is provided by the two families which are not on good terms. Singh portrays the preponderantly physical reality of woman’s passion for man and man’s irresponsible desire for women. The elements of suspense and surprise are dexterously combined with those of physical reality in Singhpura, a typical Punjabi Village. The story is straightforward and linear in time-scheme. But it is distinguished for its ironic twist in the end. It is also open ended.

“The Memsahib of Mandla” is eventful. The conflict is created through the conformation between the extrarational minded John Dyson on the one hand and the phantom figure in the white gown on the other.

The supernatural being in the form of the figure of woman in the white gown adds to the element of mystery in the story..

The plot of “The Great Difference” is simple. The narrator and the Maulana start their journey from Delhi to go to Paris. The Swami joins them at Mathura. The religious difference of the three- the Muslim, the Sikh and the Hindu - become clear through their talk and behaviour. They take part in the world congress of Faiths in Paris. A young French Lady meets the two representatives of the faiths. The element of contrast is at work when the narrator tells us about their dress, food habits, and the way they worship God and express their religious sentiments. The end of the story is humorous.

The plot of “The Insurance Agent” is episodic and the events are related to the central character – Mr. Swami – with the specific aim of unmasking his character and of creating a ludicrous effect. The primary technique in this story is suspense. The element of surprise adds to the interest of the story.

“The Fawn” is based on the incident of killing a fawn and a doe by a hunter in the countryside. It shows the conflict between the two opposing tendencies in man’s mind: one is taking interest in hunting game for joy and the other feeling bad for killing an innocent animal. The element of contrast is beautifully used to present the two words: one of man and another that of animals.

“Man, How the Government of India Runs!” is an episodic plot. Sunder Singh is rather late to go to the office. He passes time along with his colleagues. Then he goes to play a volley ball match. He passes time, then goes home. But he leaves the impression that he is tired because of too much work in the office. The incidents in the story show the reality of the bureaucratic tendency to shirk duties in the office.

“The Man with a Clear Conscience” has episodic plot. The beginnings of the story deal with the incidents of theft and remind us of the limitations of the humanist. The element of the conflict is provided

through the two taxi-drivers and the spectators on the one hand and the thief and the narrator on the other. There is also conflict in the mind of the narrator who wants to forget the incidents but he is reminded of it again when he sees the blood of the thief spattered on his trousers.

“Black Jasmine” is a story of a Negro girl and an Indian who meets at the Sorbonne and meets again after thirty years in Delhi. The plot construction is episodic but the chronological time sequence of events is broken as the flashback technique is used to present a past event.

“The Bottom Pincher” is based on episodic plot. The narrator sees the Pesi Lalkaka pinching bottoms and brushing the breast of the woman. He rings him up and gives him the idea that he is being watched by somebody. The narrator tries to caress the buttocks of Miss Baba Pesi Lalkaka’s daughter and he is caught red handed and he is taken to the police station. He is let off after giving the warnings. The beginning of the story gives description of the narrator and his interest in bottom pinching and how a crowded city like Bombay provides ideal conditions for bottom watching. In the middle of the story the narrator tells the incidents of bottom pinching by the narrator and his predicament. The element of conflict occurs through the confrontation between Pesi Lalkaka and the narrator, the two bottom pinchers who learn a lesson for their indulgence in the dangerous pastime.

“A Bride for Sahib” is based on episodic plot. Sen’s wedding without any fanfare, the so-called honeymoon; Sen’s wife’s leaving and returning home of her husband and committing suicide are the important episodes in the story. There is conflict between the husband and the wife as they look at the marriage differently because they are brought up in an altogether different socio – cultural atmosphere.

“Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia” is an instance of Khushwant Singh’s use of farcical and melodramatic elements. The plot construction of the story is developed to bring together characters of different races

and countries and expose their weaknesses. The conflict between the coloured people and the white people is focused on in the story.

In “India is a Strange Country” the plot is based on the ironic situations. The central character Tyson is found in conflicting situations. He has to live in India for the sake of his dog though he does not like India from the bottom of his hearts. He wants to go to England, his country but the English laws do not permit him to take his dog along with him to his home immediately. The incidents in the story bring out Tyson’s love for his dog. The situations created through the incidents appear dramatically convincing.

In “Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle”, the plot is based on the Kanjoos family’s frequent visit to the club to enjoy hospitality at the expense of others and the wedding of the Bhuki Kanjoos on the embassy premises in Germany. The element of conflict is served by the Kanjoos family on the one hand and the hosts showing hospitability to the Kanjoos on the other.

“Mr. Singh and the Colour Bar” is based on the verbal action. The story is developed to expose the hypocritical nature of the central character, Mr. Singh who looks at the problem of race prejudice from the wrong point of view. In this story the centre of interest is Mr. Singh the narrator himself. He is both an individual and a type.

“The Morning After the Night Before” is an excellent example of the farcical and the melodramatic flourishes in Khushwant Singh’s stories. The narrator attends a hilarious party, drinks too much, dances with other women partners. He is brutally rowdy. He is afraid of his amorous adventures. The element of suspense and surprise add to the interest of the plot of the story.

“A Love Affair in London” has a very simple story based on episodic plot. Kamini’s air journeys, the confrontation between the Satyagrahi and the District Magistrate’s wife in London at the time of the royal procession are the three episodes. The element of conflict is created

through Kamini on one hand and Robert Smith on the other as they represent two opposing countries. The writer makes use of the element of coincidence to let Kamini know about the death of Robert Smith.

In “The Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” the plot construction is episodic. Episodes show the bureaucratic tendency to stick to the procedure without caring for the practical outcome of them. It is surprising that the bureaucrats fail to control rats and cats which have become a menace in spite of the officer’s rigorous implementation to that purpose.

The plot construction of “My Own My Native Land is very simple. The narrator is quite happy to return to India from Europe after four years. But he is upset as he is harassed by the customs officers. Finally he regains his earlier happy mood as he is helped by the middleman in the customs office to clear the matter. The element of conflict is provided by the narrator on the one hand and the customs officers on the other.

A short story is a narrative. It is in the form of a series of events in a specific order – with a beginning, a middle and an end. We move from a state of equilibrium through a disturbance of this stability, and back to a state of equilibrium at the end. The beginning in Khushwant Singh’s short stories is generally direct, straightforward, economical and effective. Here are a few examples:

- i. “Someone asked Lord Krishna, ‘what is the greatest miracle in the world?’” Mr. Kanjoos turned the tumbler of whisky in his hand and gave us the Lord’s reply. (“Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle”, P.85)
- ii. It was the proverbial morning after the night before. (“Morning After The Night Before”, P.108)

The stories began in this way have sequential time- scheme and linear development of course, there are stories which begin and develop in a more dramatic manner, viz. “Black Jasmine”, “The Butterfly”, “The Insurance Agent” and “A Bride for the Sahib”

Interspersed with some lively descriptions and minutia of manners, the tales of Khushwant Singh keep screwing up the note of suspense while they move towards the probable built unexpected climatic end. Bannerjee meets Martha after thirty years. When he has expected to fulfill the call of Martha, he proved to be inadequate and now when nothing is expected of him, he refuses to let her down second time ("Black Jasmine"). Kusum, a good girl with a capital G, who considers the present of a lipstick a personal insult, ends up, because of a brief encounter with a lewd hawker, by asking her mirror – "Mirror , mirror, on the wall who is the fairest of all?" (Kusum" P.85)

Similarly, the case for rape against Dalip Singh comes down like a house of cards when Bindo answers 'Yes' to the magistrate's question, "Answer, did you go to the accused of your own free will?" ("The Rape", P.97). Other instances of this type are not far to seek, but the most emphatic and meaningful is that of "Karma". Sir Mohan Lal , an adorer of his Balliol tie, looks down upon everything Indian including his own wife. This man who thinks he is on the top because of his Englishness is seen lying stunned and bedraggled on the platform, thrown out of the compartment by two white tommies, while his very Indian wife passes him sitting in the inter-class **Zenana** compartment :

As the train sped past the lighted part of the Platform
Lady Lal spat and sent a jet of Red dribble flying across
like a dart. ("Karma", P.12)

Who knows if the 'red dribble' might have landed on Sir Mohan Lal himself? The twist in the tail or surprise ending reminds us of O' Henry's short stories. But Khushwant Singh eschews the overt moral tug, the native predilection for observatory comments at the end. Venugopal observes about the endings of Khushwant Singh's stories: "He has given up the traditional sentimental and philosophic outlook and has presented the contemporary scene keeping himself totally aloof. His stories particularly of 'The Mark of Vishnu' and 'The Voice of God', end most

naturally and if an Indian writer has at all thought of a indeterminate ending, it is Khushwant Singh in stories like “The Interview.”²

Characters and Modes of Characterization

Khushwant has taken characters from different fields, professions, classes, age-groups, and socio-cultural background. His short stories include a lawyer, a judge, a clerk, a teacher, a professor, a public Relation Officer, an Insurance Agent, a hawker, a businessman, a farmer, a social reformer, a wrestler, a manager, a hunter, a political leader, thief, a saint, a beggar etc. His protagonists are mostly from the upper strata of the society. In his stories we come face to face with the sophisticated Indian of the higher social import in which the scene rather than the person that is generally the focus. So the characters in his stories tend to become types. Khushwant Singh presents the sophisticated Indian in his snobbery and the political and social high ups in their arrogance. He has also used characters that represent. Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. Women characters in Khushwant Singh’s short stories are portrayed in such a way that they leave the impression that they live in a male dominated society. We see also the Westerner and the Indian confronting each other in his stories. The man from abroad in Khushwant Singh’s is more of a type. He has also portrayed school-going children and college going boys and girls. Dogs, cats and snakes are treated in such a way in his stories that they acquire the status of a character. We can also see Khushwant identify himself with his characters through the autobiographical method of narration and the substance of the story. “Posthumous”, “The Portrait of a Lady”, “The Fawn”, “The Man With a Clear Conscience” and “The Mark of Vishnu” can be cited as the examples of it.

Khushwant Singh has taken characters to his short story from all the strata of society. His stories are mostly the stories of social import in which the scene rather than the person that is generally the focus. So the characters in his stories tend to become types. It does not mean that he

does not make use of complex round characters. But their number is rather small. He takes characters from all walks of life, cultural background and age group. Women and children find place in his stories. He employs different methods of characterization. Characterizations in his short stories add to the realism and humanism.

The stereo-typed characters in Khushwant Singh's short stories have been constructed round a single idea and their nature can be summed up in a single sentence. The character of Sir Mohan All in "Karma" represents a social segment of upper class India during the heyday of the British Raj who takes pride in blindly imitating the English way of life and consequently scorns at everything Indian. Sir Mohan Lal stands for such cultural stereotypes. Lady Lal and the two English soldiers are also flat characters. In "The Mark of Visnu" Ganga Ram represents superstitious-cum-religious and blind belief born out of Hindu religious faith. The narrator, a school boy and the school teacher symbolize scientific attitude. The Public Relation Officer in "The Interview" who hails from the higher strata of society impresses he has knowledge of all the subjects. The story shows the discomfort of the Public Relation officer. In "The Voice of God" Ganda Singh, notorious leader of dacoits and thugs, Baba Ram Singh, a real leader of farmers are all types Ram Jawaya and Ramzan in "The Riot" are one dimensional characters. They represent their communities. The Maulana, the Muslim represents Islam, the Swami, the Hindu stands for Hinduism and the narrator K. Singh who is a Sikh represents Sikhism in "The Great Difference" Mr. and Mrs. Kanjoos in "Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle" stand for miserliness. Mr. Sen Das a Westernized Indian and his wife Kalyani, representing a traditional Hindu wife are stereotypical characters. The two bottom pinchers in "The Bottom Pincher" symbolize persons with desire or lust.

In "The Portrait of a Lady" the cultural character is effectively individualized. We can visualize the grandmother before our minds eye with the help of the pen picture given in the story. Dr. C.V. Venugopal in

his **The Indian Short Story in English** is all praise for Khushwant Singh. He appreciates his craftsmanship in portraying the character of the grandmother. He says “he is best when portraying something gentle as in “The Portrait of a Lady.”² Khushwant Singh is at his best in giving the physical description of the grandmother

She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a crisscross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere. (“The Portrait of a Lady”, P.29)

Surdar Khushwant Singh in Posthumous Kusum in the story of the same title, Kamini in “A Love Affair in London” and Sarla Sethi in “The Convert” are complex characters. They surprise us by behaving in an unpredictable way.

Khushwant Singh has employed various modes of characterization. He allows his characters reveal themselves through their speech and action. His characters reveal themselves in their interaction with a series of events and incidents. His characters and incidents are so interdependent in his stories that his technique exemplifies Henry James’s comment that character is the determination of incident and incident, “the illustration of character. He also makes use of the third person method of narration to describe his characters.

Khushwant Singh also makes use of the method of contrast to portray his characters. In Karma Sir Mohan Lal is a Wog – a Westernized Oriental gentleman and Lady Lal is a rustic Indian housewife. In “The Mark of Vishnu” Ganga Ram stands for superstitions belief and the school teacher symbolized modern scientific attitude. Ganda Singh, the notorious leader dacoits and thugs Baba Ram Singh, a good leader of the farmers are drawn in contrast to each other. The characters of John Dyson on the one hand and Margaret Dyson on the other stands in contrast. The farmer represents rationality and the latter stand for supernatural elements. The characters of Mr. and Mrs. Sen are based on contrast. One is westernized and another is orthodox Indian.

His characters and modes of characterization add to the realism in his short stories. The humanity in the form of characters adds to the liveliness of the world of Khushwant Singh in his stories.

Language

Khushwant Singh's language is found to be very close to the language of the newspapers and the magazines and shows sharing of his previous experiences as a journalist. His style is his asset : It is simple, crisp, racy evocative and fluent. One can easily understand is Khushwant Singh can readily put it to any service "to suit at once a pithy comment, a gentle delineation, an ironical observation or a loud guffaw." Venugopal, C.V., **The Indian Short Story in English** (Prakash Book Depot, Bareilly, 1976, P. 94). He is inventive enough to hit upon expressions highly suitable for Indian context. Let us look at a few specimens:

- i. Mr. Swami dropped Christian names of the mighty with the cool non-chalance of a man ejecting betel- spit ("The Insurance Agent") P.65
- ii. He got a wad of notes from his client to pay the government prosecutor. The Machinery of justice was fully oiled. ("The Rape", P.96)
- iii. Corks popped like fireworks at Diwali and the frothy nectar flowed like the waters of the holy Ganga ("Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle" P.85)

As most of the stories of Khushwant Singh are about those who can speak some kind of English, he is saved from the necessity of jarring translations from Punjabi vernacular. His quick ear for quaint accents and expressions stands him in good stead in these stories. "A Bride for the Sahib" offers a good example. Here is Santosh Sen reflecting on the pronunciation of the South Indians and Bengalis:

He smiled to himself as he recalled the Director instructing his private secretary to get Mr. M.M. Amir, Member of Parliament on the

phone. "I want yum yum yummeer yumpee". The Bengalis had their own execrable accent: they added an airy "h" whenever they could after a 'b' or a 'w' or an 's'. A "virgin" sounded like some exotic tropical plant, the "vharjeen", "will" as a "wheel" and the "simple" as a "shimple". ("A Bride for the Sahib", P.15)

Khushwant Singh shows variation in pronunciation on add accent by changing the spellings of the usual words. Here is an example of it from "A Bride for the Sahib."

Now his wife came out and asked in her quaint Bengali accent,

'Do you want to shit outside?'

'What? He asked gruffly , waking up from his reverie'

'Do you want to shit inside or outside? The deener sees on the table.' ("A Bride for the Sahib", P.136)

The conversational tones of a Punjabi steno are caught superbly in the following passage:

You don't talk mister, you never come to office before 11 am. Today for the first time you are punctual and I for reasons beyond control am five minutes late and you give me a lecture to drink. ("Man, How the Government of India Run", P.130)

To achieve authenticity of the experience to be embodied in English Khushwant Singh turns to experiments could be classified under three heads:

1. The introduction of words from the Indian languages, through transliteration(e.g. "Ek dum Jao" in "Karma", 'Badmash – rascal' in "The Bottom Pincher", 'Shri Vashesvra Nanda ki jai!' in "The Great Difference",
2. Experiments in diction and imagery through literal translation from the Indian Languages (e.g. 'this sister- sleeping office' in "Man How the Government of India Run!"

Two burly Sikh taxi drivers come out with some foul abuse in which Sikh peasants specialize. They hit the thief saying:

‘This is to rape your mother.....
 this is to rape your sister.....
 this is to rape your daughter.....
 and this to this and this.’
 In “The Man with a Clear Conscience.”

Khushwant Singh’s use of imagery also appears realistic.

1. Lady Lal spat and sent a jet of red dribble flying across like a dart.
 (“Karma”, P.12)
2. His (Kala Nag) eyes burnt like embers.
 (“The Mark of Vishnu”, P.16)
3. One side of his hat, he had stuck a grey feather. It was very much like a pigeon’s.
 (“The Butterfly”, P.17)
4. Romesh..... shook like an aspen leaf.
 (“The Butterfly”, P.17)
5. For many years the vision of Martha standing stark naked in the centre of the room had acted like an aphrodisiac.
 (“Black Jasmine”, P.115)
6. Her gums showed like red rubber.
 (“Black Jasmine”,P.117)
7. Her buttocks were like two nicely rounded, unripe water melons. She was massive like one big pumpkin.
 (“The Bottom- Pincher”,P.123)
8. I went like the proverbial lamb to the slaughter- house.
 (“The Bottom- Pincher”, P.125)
9. a monkey (the Indian professor) in love with a she – camel (the European blonde).
 (“Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia”, P.148)
10. The Captain was like a caged animal pacing between the two groups.....
 (“Maiden voyage of the Jal Hindia”, P.156)
11. Mr. Sethi followed Mrs. Sarla Sethi to the bedroom, as if he was a dog on a leash. (“The Convert”, P.115)

3. Experiments in syntax (fashioning English syntax on the syntactic lines of Indian languages)

e.g. 'Hey you, Mr, Madrasi!' Continued Sunder Singh turning aggressively to Sambamurthy....'What you say?' (Man, How the Government of India Run!") P.95

The point to note about these linguistic features is that they are all part of Khushwant Singh attempt to 'Indianise' English or in other words to evolve an Indian English to suit his purposes. These are mostly innovations by Khushwant Singh himself and not transcripts of actual Indian English speech or writing. these techniques are adopted by him for artistic purposes, to achieve authenticity.

Khushwant Singh's use of dialogues sounds natural as he employs Hindi words, distorts English spellings and presents the literal translation of dialogues from regional language here is an example from "My own my native Land"

It is dialogue between the narrator and the middleman in the customs office. 'Arrey Bhai, he whined. What phor you bother so much. Give me ten rupees and it will be hokay and my children will bless you too.' But I have an exemption. Diplomatic, you know? 'Arrey, array. I known all that. But A have to eat and my children, too. Ten rupees is not big sum and you will have no trouble. What say, you? P.208.

Khushwant Singh's characters make use of clichés, sayings and proverbs. These linguistic features in his style add to the authenticity of his language.

1. All work and no play make jack a dull boy.
(“Man, How the Government of India Run! P.96)
2. Beauty is only skin deep.
(“Man, how the Government of India Run!” P.98)
3. She took the bull by the horns.
(“The convert”, P.215)
4. She walks in beauty like the night.
(“A Punjab Pastoral P.45)

5. A good cause breeds courage even in a timid man.
 (“The Man With a Clear Conscience”, P.106)

Khushwant Singh is very particular about the use of adjectives in his language. These adjectives add to the felicity of narrative style. See how he describes Mrs. Moore when she comes to Mrs. Sethi by using appropriate adjectives like – nice, soothing, smiling and material.

A nice soothing voice, thought Sarla. But all that clap- trap about truth and purity and integrity! The voice stopped suddenly. Sarla looked up into the old woman’s smiling eyes. Had she asked her some question? ‘What is troubling you, my child?’ Nobody had used this maternal tone with Sarla. (“The Convert”, P.212)

Khushwant Singh is able to make a scene sentimental and evoke feelings of pity and sadness through vividly describing a scene. He describes the sparrows gathered at the place where the dead body of the grandmother is placed in a touching manner. Thousand of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirping. We felt sorry for the birds and my mother fetched some bread for them. She broke it into little crumbs, the way my grandmother used to and there it to them. The sparrows took no notice of the bread. When we carried my grandmother’s corpse off, they flew away quietly. Next morning the sweeper swept the bread crumbs into the dust bin. P.32 (“The Portrait of Lady”)

The story “A Punjab Pastoral” gives a vivid picture of an Indian villages with its greenery be read for its pictorial quality. Here is one example :

Soorajpur was just visible through the thick cluster of keekar trees. All around it stretched a vast expanse of wheat fields. The corn was ripe and ready for harvesting. A soft breeze blew across the golden cornfields like ripples over a lake. Under the trees the cattle and the cowherds lay in deep slumber; it was a scene typical of pastoral Punjab on a summer afternoon. P.42.

Humour and Satire

Khushwant Singh's stories are marked by a rich sense of humour. Most of his stories are anecdotal. Khushwant Singh is a great humorist. In some stories the humour is subtle. He shows faults of human nature in such a way that we recognize the failings of the characters and smile. Khushwant Singh's humorous treatment of the Sikh characters arouses healthy laughter. He is at home in exaggeration and mock – heroic. He evokes humour through his characters, incidents and the use of language in the story. Khushwant Singh has capacity to move but, he appears to be at home in the comic mode. Some of his highly amusing stories are "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia", "Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle", "Mr. Singh and the Colour Bar", "Rats and Cats in the House of Culture", "The Insurance Agent", "Posthumous" and "The Bottom-Pincher".

Libidinous compulsions and pretention of Dr. Chakkan Lal, M.A. (Alld.) D.Litt. (Eng. Litt; Leeds), 'the little man in horn-rimmed glasses'; drawn to Caucasian women irrespective of their shape and size as moths are drawn to the candle form the content of "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia." His love for the much taller blonde illustrates the joke about "a monkey in love with a she camel." (P.148). His voyeurism, his discomfiture, the tension at the ship, Jennifer Tyson's amends to the professor in the way he likes best and the end of the story with Tyson, with a black eye and torn shirt, entering the fancy dress show on the crutches and a placard on the back with the legend in the bold letters 'Wrong Cabin' are highly comic.

In "Mr.Kanjoos and the Great Miracle", the protagonist turns sponging into a consummate art which reaches its summit in the marriage of Mr. Kanjoos daughter with an I.F.S. Officer at the Indian Embassy in France without the expenditure of a single penny on the part of Mr. Kanjoos. Who can be angry with Mr. Micawber Similarly, when he preaches :

One is so happy when one can do ones duty by one's child.
 What else does one? Live for, I ask! You can't take your
 money with you. Spend it, I say, spend it while you live.
 ("Mr.Kanjoos and the Great Miracle", P.94)

The writer laughs at his own bloated ego in "Posthumous". Only a Sardar can tell a joke against himself. Sardar Khushwant Singh fancies that he is dead. The author narrator says that he has many friends. He is popular among them. His friends will miss him and the newspaper will take notice of his death. But to his surprise nobody cares for him. At one point he makes his professor- friend imagine Khushwant Singh's is being born as a pup:

No, no, he said to himself. He shouldn't allow such uncharitable thoughts to cross his mind. But he couldn't check his mind. It wasn't impossible. The Gita said so, too. And he bent down again and patted the pup wit more tenderness and fellow feeling. ("Posthumous", P.135)

"The Insurance Agent" is full of hilarious fun as "Posthumous". The Insurance agent who is so effusive, who knows everyone important, who is present on all important occasion whether invited or not , who is master of the art of inflicting himself on anyone he likes without making himself unwelcome, is not a figment of the writer's imagination but a life – like portrait. Khushwant Singh has increased its effectiveness by using the refrain of

Malicious people said the man was a Gate-crasher. But that, as I have already said, is what people with malice said. ("The Insurance Agent", P.61).

"Rats and Cats in the House of Culture" is an amusing story about the bunglings and cumbersome functioning of the bureaucracy. When the rats invade the House of Culture in Paris files get moving, budget provisions are made ,extra care is taken but nothing happens till the advent of Langford , an American with typical common sense who orders the purchase of the kittens of the same sex. Now the cats multiply mysteriously and instead of rats they become a nuisance and disturb the

speech of the Indian Education Minister at a special session. Langford orders that the House of Culture be at once freed from the cats. They are caught and transported, but by a quirk of fate are let off when they are some seven kilometers away. Now once again when the General conference of the House of Culture is being inaugurated by the Indian Education Minister 'Mew' is again heard from the balcony.

And finally, "The Bottom-Pincher" is full of humour. The narrator's interest in bottom-pinching, ideal conditions for bottom watching in a crowded city like Bombay, the narrator's watching the Pesi Lalkaka's act of bottom-pinching and brushing the breasts of women, the narrator's pitiable condition when he is rebuked by women and presented before the police are full of humour. He says he went to the police station like the proverbial lamb to the slaughter house.

Stories such as "Karma", "The Butterfly", "Kusum", "My own My Native Land", "The Interview", "The Red Tie" and "The convert" are by and large stories of humour, humour which is the natural outcome of an untamed, unsophisticated passion for life, so manifest in the Punjabi community. There may be a touch of satire here and there, but as a whole it is devoid of any pointed sociological motivation or malice towards anyone. Khushwant Singh's realism and humanism can be seen through his sense of humour manifested in his stories.

Though Khushwant Singh prefers to operate in the comic mode which is in keeping with his humanistic outlook towards life, he cannot avoid satire in his stories. He cannot always keep his cool. He writes against hypocrisy and pretentiousness, corruption and ineptitude, superstition and bigotry, anything which comes in the way of healthy living and humane living. Some of the stories in which he appears to be tilting at contemporary society are:

"Man, How the Government of India Run!", "A Bride for the Sahib", "The Riot", "The Great Difference", "The Mark of Vishnu" and "The Fawn".

In "Man, How the Government of India Run!" Khushwant Singh criticises the officials in the government of India. Messrs Sunder Singh, Sambamurthy and Ghosh want others to believe that people like them are running the government of the country. What they do to run the government is to observe the sanctity of tea times, utilize their time fully in gossip and idle discussion, scan matrimonial columns in the papers' in order to dwell on "the matrimonial conventions of their respective provinces and their eligibility if given another chance- for they were all married with children", (P. 98), and participate in sports events either as players or spectators. The most important part of the whole routine is to go home and be churlish and tell one's wife, "There is too much to do every day. Woman, how you think the Government of India run if we did not work?" (P.103)

The protagonist of "A Bride for the Sahib" and "Karma" are wogs (Westernized oriental gentlemen), antipathetic to whatever is India. Mr. Sen of the farmer leads his Indian wife to suicide because he is too much of a sahib. However, even this is not enough to break his illusion of superiority.

A haunted smile came on his lips as he read the English address :

"To, Mr. S. Sen Esq." ("A Bride for the Sahib", P. 143)

His contrast with his typically Indian colleges, especially Santa Singh, is both comic and satiric :

Sen Stood up quickly and put his hand across the table to keep the Sikh at an arm's length. Santa Singh ignored the preferred hand, came round the table and enveloped his friend in his arms. He planted his wet and hirsute kisses on the Sahib's cheeks. ("A Bride for the Sahib" P.12)

Mr. Sen, however, "Behaved with absolute rectitude- exactly like an English gentleman", (P.13) Sir Mohan Lal of "Karma" is his spiritual kin. He pities everything in this country "inefficient, dirty, indifferent" (P.21) by a queer irony of fate he is discomfited and disowned by the representatives of the very culture which he adores.

Khushwant Singh exposes the corrupt electoral practices in “The Voice of God”. Khushwant Singh offers a bitter comment on communal riot in “The Riot”, “The ark of Vishnu” holds religions superstition up to ridicule “The Great Difference” is the story of two religions fantastic, the Maulana Sahib and the Swamiji who though fiercely antagonistic to each other misbehave in an identical fashion towards the young French girl, Mlle Dupont, whose steatopygous behind was an invitation to lustfulness forbidden by the laws of man” (The Great Difference” P.12).

Irony

The technical skills of Khushwant Singh make also a large use of irony to flavour the narration and keep his distance from it. Khushwant Singh as a short story writer pursues and follows the art of short story as in its early twentieth century. He is considered as a realist and humanist in one, and its picture of him is revealed in his stories. The stories reveal his gentle irony and his faculty of being ironical on the basic countrymen. Irony forms one of the basic characteristics in his style of story writing. Irony in its literal sense is considered as a device with dual or two meanings: One the literal or actual meaning and the second which brings other meaning in the sentence or situation than the actual one. In other words irony is the word that says one thing but means another. Irony arises due to the interrelation between these two states of meaning. since one state seems to negate the other one and this contrast assumes a striking effect. Irony in Khushwant Singh is sometimes expressed by a sentence expressing different thing than what is said. It also arises from a discrepancy between the expression and realization. Even sometimes the character and situation as seen are different from what they mean. These types of description in all make the work ironical.

“The Voice of God” is representative of both verbal and situational irony, which makes the title meaningful and structure of the story ironical as a whole. It is a tale of people of two villages in Punjab Bhamba Kalan and Bhamba Khurd, its both cool place where nothing unpleasant happens

but the peaceful life of the people is disturbed by the election flu and gale of politics. Mr. Forsythe, an English deputy commissioner arrives at Bhamba apparently on an official visit but his actual visit is to campaign for Ganda Singh who previously helped British Government by subjugating the present agitation and the congress movement, in his bid for Punjab Assembly election. Ganda Singh is a chief of dacoits and thugs, as is said in the story, "his men robbed with impunity and shared the proceeds with the police." (P. 35)

Mr. Fersythe praises Ganda Singh and appreciates his work and pretends him as a pride of the district though the people hate Ganda Singh for his inhuman activities and injustice to the people. After the speech Gunda Singh distributes sweet to Zaildars, Lambardars and village officers with reference to their promise to vote for him in the election. His rival in the election is Kartar Singh, who is a Nationalist nominee and an advocate by profession. Seth Sukhtankar, a millionaire, who is involved in cloth business and owns cloth mills, supports him. He calls the people for a meeting to convince them, "if 400 million Indians united and spat in a tank, there would be enough spit to drown the entire English population in India." (P.37) This comment by Mr. Singh reveals deep irony and humour when he says, "But somehow the facilities for such a mass suicide had never been provided." (P. 37)

Baba Ram Singh is a third contestant. He is a devoted worker among poor peasants who calls himself a Kisan (an ordinary farmer) polling takes place on the specific date and Sardar Ganda Singh is declared elected one his nearest rival Sardar Kartar Singh by a margin of 2220 votes. Baba Ram Singh not only loses election but also forfeits his deposit. On this occasion his comment by Mr. Singh shows deep irony and humour, when he says, "The people had spoken. The voice of the people is the voice of the God." (P. 39)

Here the disbelief and hypocrisy of the people is shown by the ironical comment. During the time of election there the values are subsided by the pressure of the contestants and once the person is elected

he behaves as a Mini-God and forgets his promises and obligations to the people.

“Karma” reveals the psychology of an educated Indian in British India and his character is presented in an ironical way. Sir Mohan Lal’s encounter with the mirror shows the values of such Indians, their indifference and varied native feelings. The mirror is Indian made “the red oxide of its back had come off at several places and long lines of translucent glass cut across its surface.” (P.8) This comment is an ironical example of Indians with British likings in British Raj. The mirror is a symbol of everything Indian and native, inefficient and indifferent, dirty and intolerable to Mohan Lal.

Khushwant Singh shows Sir Mohan Lal ironically. Sir Mohan Lal wears the suit tailored at Saville Row, the symbol of British aristocracy and upper class culture; and Balliol tie, a symbol of exclusive Oxford upbringing and educated human being. He is married to Lachmi – who is ironically being called Lady Mohan Lal by the author but she has no resemblance to her husband. Sir Mohan Lal is depicted as an Indian in contrast to his illiterate wife. He is presented sitting in a first class compartment among with all educated and well placed people, whereas his illiterate wife is adjusted in ladies general class compartment.

Sir Mohan Lal is thrown out of the compartment by the two English soldiers. The irony of his fate is presented here, as he lay on the platform after humiliation whereas his wife is found comfortable in interclass compartment. “As, the train speed past the lighted part of the platform, lady Lal spat and sent a jet of red dribble flying across like a dirt.” (P.12)

Sir Mohan Lal tries to imitate the Britishers. He forgets his native values. He keeps himself away from the Indian dressing sense; even he challenges the strong bond of marriage, which for Indians is life time commitment. He loses pride and dignity of an Indian among Indians. He fails to practice the equality and understanding in man woman relation. It is a basic element in Western civilization. It is absent in Sir Mohan Lal

and Lady Lal, that is in their husband – wife relationship. This nemesis is the result of his actions and thoughts. The title “Karma” has double meaning the nemesis and the ironical turn of fate. What he wishes to attain are turned in other direction.

In “The Mark of Vishnu” the irony of the title is revealed through the story from which the author mocks at the superstitious Indian. This story has been ironically placed and structured. Irony is implied through the title itself. The title is symbolic as ‘The Mark of Vishnu’ means the divine function of preservation of life on earth. But here the irony the Mark of Vishnu is implied as the “mark of the snake bite”.

In Hindu religion the devotees of Vishnu (the preserver), called the vaishnavaites, normally bear three straight stripes of sandalwood on their forehead. But Ganga Ram place as ‘V’ mark on his forehead instead of three straight stripes. It shows that though the practice of bearing a three stripes of sandalwood is symbol of devotion Vishnu, the preserver, but here the ‘V’ mark acts as a symbol of devotion to Kala Nag. (Snake), the destroyer, and the mark of his fangs is also of ‘V’ shape. Thus Khushwant Singh sees irony in the practice of snake worship.

In other stories like “Posthumous”, “Kusum”, “Man, How the government of India Run!” , “The memsahib of Mandala”, “The Great Difference”, “Black Jasmine”, “A Bride for the Sahib”, “A Love Affair in London” and “The Convert”, we find instances of verbal irony, situational irony and dramatic irony. In these stories also Khushwant Singh’s deep ironical view of the world around him can be seen. Use of irony makes his stories interesting. His use of irony enables his readers to believe in what he believes in.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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