

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

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Khushwant Singh is one of the most prolific of Indian writer in English today. He first established his reputation as a writer through his short stories. His stories have appeared in smaller collections of his work and separately, in literary journals. All these stories are included **The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh** (1989). It is assumed in the present dissertation that Khushwant Singh can be categorized as belonging to the tradition of realist and humanist writers in the genre of short story. He employs the form, narrative techniques, language and style of the well-made short story. Literary criticism of Khushwant Singh's short stories also corroborates the assumption held in the present dissertation about the literary tradition of Khushwant Singh. Hence Khushwant Singh's short stories are assessed from the point of view of their themes, narrative techniques, language and style in view of his literary tradition and the form of well-made short story that he uses for his short stories. With this approach, it is possible by way of analysis and conclusion to assess Khushwant Singh as a writer of short stories.

In his short stories, Khushwant Singh treats a number of general themes, such as human relationship, love and sex. Punjabi Identity, socio-political themes, sensitivity to animals and the theme of supernatural and mystery. The range of his themes appears to be vast as he has handled a variety of themes under these general themes. we can get the idea of his selection of the themes and their treatment from the Chapters I and III.

“Karma”, “The Morning After the Night Before”, and “A Bride for the Sahib” deal with man-woman relationship. Man-woman relationship portrayed in “Karma” is devoid of love and understanding. Sir Mohan Lal represents typically an indifferent Indian husband. It is the result of his hypocrisy. The equality and uninhibited intermingling between man and woman which is a basic element in this type of relationship is totally

absent in his relationship with his wife. The wife is always eager to develop human relationship on the ground of humanism. The theme is presented realistically making use of irony, humour and technique of contrast. “The Morning After the Night Before” is about the restrictions on a married man in man–woman relationship. The story shows that the consequences of extra-marital relationship can be very grave. The theme is treated at both physical and psychological level humorously. The husband’s lust for another woman is shown realistically. But humorous treatment of the theme dilutes the gravity of the matter. As to the humanism of the story the author criticizes the hypocrisy of the husband who least bothers about the integrity and honesty in man–woman relationship.

“A Bride for the Sahib” brings out the temperamental, social and marital dissonance in man–woman relationship. Here the marriage is shown to be unsuccessful as it is without love and sex. Inequality in man – woman relationship leads to tragic consequences. It can have a dehumanizing effect on the life partner. The conventional marriage is described realistically. The story evokes feelings of pity in the mind of the reader about the woman.

“The Portrait of a Lady” deals with the intimate relationship between the grandson and the grandmother.

There are also stories which deal with theme of human relationships beyond familiar relationship. “Black Jasmine” is about friendship between person of opposite sex leading to love. The story implies that marital relationship should be based on true love, understanding and sympathetic outlook.

“Posthumous” shows that interpersonal relationship should be genuine and not superficial. “The Butterfly” demonstrates man’s inconstancy or fickle-mindedness especially in his relationship with women. “The Convert” suggest that human relationship is a complex matter and it is not easy to maintain human relationship with the help of a theoretical ready-made formula.

The theme of love and sex occupies an important place in the scheme of themes in Khushwant Singh's short stories. Khushwant Singh treats woman as an object of sex and lust in his stories. The characters in these stories appear to be obsessed with sex. They take interest in sex and love without inhibitions. Khushwant Singh describes women from the point of view of males who are interested in sex. For Khushwant Singh sex is not a taboo subject. So pornography and eroticism form part and parcel of his style of writing. In "The Riot", "The Great Difference", "The Bottom Pincher" and "The Red Tie" the theme of sex is treated realistically. Khushwant Singh looks at the theme of sex from the humanistic point of view. The beast of sex is there in each and every person. It is only the hypocritical people who denies its existence.

Love between two persons of opposite sex sometimes cannot develop their relationship into man- woman relationship due to social circumstances beyond their control. Khushwant Singh has explored this aspect of love in some of his stories. In "Love Affair in London", the author explores the theme of love at first sight between a young man and young girl as it leads to their attraction for each other. In "Kusum" the author treats the theme of repressed love of an adolescent girl who had become a prisoner of her own psychic fences. The author makes use of psychological realism in developing the theme. The author's sympathetic outlook towards the girl can be noted. "The Rape" portrays the preponderant physical reality of a woman's passion for man and man's irrepensible desire for woman. The author looks at the love between the lovers from the humanitarian perspective. The theme is developed realistically.

As far as Khushwant Singh's treatment of love and sex, man-woman relationship is concerned, he appears to antifeminist. He looks at these subjects and women from man's point of view.

Punjabi Identity is one of the interesting themes in Khushwant Singh stories. "When Sikh Meets Sikh", "A Punjab Pastoral", "The Voice of God", "Mr. Singh and the Colour Bar" and "The Man with a

Clear Conscience” illustrate this theme quite clearly. These stories exhibit that Punjabi ethos and sensibility are important in his stories. In “When Sikh Meets Sikh” the author shows that the Sikhs are a proud race. They are brave and fighting type. But they are not free from the minority complex. They face racial discrimination in foreign countries.

“A Punjab Pastoral” is about a typical Punjabi village and its ethos. Majority of the people in a Punjabi village are peasants or agriculturists. The Sikhs, the converted Christians, the Muslims and the Hindus live in the village doing their traditional jobs and work : The rural folk appear backward.

“The Voice of God” is rooted in Punjabi ethos; it deals with the life of the people in villages and also with the dirty politics in villages. Life in the villages is tedious and dull. Village people spent their day typically. Once in a year there is a village fair. The Sikhs go to Amritsar to visit the Golden Temple. Baba Ram Singh an agriculturist stands for Sikh identity. He is a god-fearing man. He is like the Guru himself. He fights for the liberation of the peasants from the foreigners as well as exploiting land lords. He tries to find solution to the problems of the peasantry in his own peaceful way.

“Mr. Singh and the Colour Bar” is about the Sikh diaspora. The author shows that the Sikh are aware of the problem of race and colour prejudice that the Sikhs have to face. A Sikh is singled out from the people of other communities or countries for his different appearance and behaviour.

“The Man with a Clear Conscience” is about a Sikh’s sense of duty in showing courage by putting one’s life in jeopardy to protect the weak. “Posthumous” deals with a Sikh capacity to laugh at himself.

In “Man, How the Government of India Run!” Punjabi people are shown to be humorous by nature. They take interest in sports. They mix up other people. They don’t like compromise with their sense of pride. They are honest, hard working and meritorious.

“Posthumous”, “Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia”, “Mr.Kanjoos and the Great Miracle”, “Morning After the Night Before”, “The Great Difference.” Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” manifest Punjabi lust for living, for the body and blood, for fun and friendliness. They are close to jokes so prevalent among Punjabis especially Sikh, when it related by them with great gusto even when they are against them. Khushwant as a representative of his community takes interest in life and reflects the spirit of his community.

“The Portrait of a Lady” exhibits a Sikh woman’s interest in religion and spirituality and piety. “The Great Difference” unfolds the tenets of Sikhism. “The Fawn” shows Punjabi lust for living, and Sikh’s aversion for violence and bloodshed of any kind.

Khushwant Singh’s many stories of social import deal with socio-political themes which comprise of smaller themes such as clash between superstition and science, unfair practices in elections, social problems in Indian villages, poverty, communal disharmony, problems arising out of differences in religious faiths, racial discrimination, corruption, race prejudice, hypocrisy and troublesome bureaucratic style of work. The author treats these themes realistically and from the humanistic point of view.

“The Mark of Vishnu” deals with the powerful theme of clash between superstition and reason or science. In this story the author launches a scathing attack on the blind faith of Gunga Ram, a pious and devoted Brahmin who worships a black cobra which eventually bites him to death. Khushwant Singh’s develops the theme realistically through the characters. The issue is presented between superstitions and science. Gunga Ram represents a superstitious belief which is representative of general Hindu religious belief. The school boys and their teacher and the class stand for the scientific attitude and the changed attitude visa-a-vis superstitious beliefs. The story shows the conflict between the two outlooks. As a humanist, Khushwant Singh disapproves superstitions and blind belief. In “The Voice of God” the author delineates the theme of the

use of unfair practices in the elections in a democratic system of governments. The story shows that muscle power, unfair means, pressure tactics and goondaism are used to win the elections. The story highlights the inherent evils of the democratic system of government in which elections play a dominant role, but these elections are often won by hardcore criminals like Ganda Singh at the cost of deserving candidates like Baba Ram Singh. As a realistic story, it gives voice to Khushwant Singh's experience, observation and tryst with politics. Khushwant was disillusioned with Indian politics. The story evokes pity for the candidate who is good but loses the election. The story is narrated in a light vein.

“A Punjab Pastoral” deals with social problems in Indian villages. Superstitions, caste-conflict, poverty, illiteracy, moral turpitude, oppression, corruption exploitation division among people on the ground of their different religions faiths are the social evils that spoil the life of the village people. Social reformation is shown to be the need of the hour in the village. The social reformers render humanitarian service for the cause of the village folk. “The Man with a Clear Conscience” explores the theme of poverty and its consequence. Poverty is shown as a social evil. It leads man to be criminal. It is illustrated through the incident of theft. The narrator says that people are basically good but they become victim of evil circumstances and turn bad. The causes of crime can be found in the society.

“The Riot” deals with the theme of communal disharmony leading to violence. This realistic story gives us a vivid picture of a town communally charged. It exposes the gross senselessness behind communal riots. Khushwant Singh obviously hints that the pariah curs are preferable to the human beings whose senseless hatred for each other leading to violence and arson was a common experience in the early years of our Independence. As a humanist Khushwant Singh suggests that communal disharmony leading to violence is a sheer folly. People should live peacefully.

“The Great Difference” deals with the theme of the problems arising out of different religions faiths. The author shows realistically that people are divided in India on the ground of different religious faiths. They look at each other’s faith critically. Foreigners fail to understand this diversity of faiths. Khushwant Singh as an agnostic suggests that one should be tolerant and broadminded with people of different faiths.

“Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia” is about racial discrimination. The conflict is theme of rapid developed realistically and it is shown that the situation can become explosive as racialism is a sensitive issue. It should be handled carefully. It should be avoided.

“My Own My native Land” is about the theme of corruption in government offices. It is a satirical portrayal of the narrator’s exasperating experience at the custom’s office on his return from abroad. The picture of the customs office and the procedure followed there is vividly depicted. The humanist in the author mildly satirizes the customs officials and the middle men who exploit the people. Good service is expected from them.

“Mr. Singh and the Colour Bar” treats the theme of the problem of race prejudice in a light vein. Realism is shown through the depiction of the plight of the coloured people in Britain. Khushwant Singh’s humanism disapproves racial prejudice as it is a social evil.

“Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” deals with the theme of bureaucratic style of work which gives more importance to formalities and procedures rather than good and quick results. The theme is developed realistically but humorously. Singh also hits out at bureaucracy in “Man, How the Government of India Runs!” As a humanist Khushwant Singh suggests that bureaucracy should not be slave to the procedure and formalities.

“Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle” treats the social theme of miserliness realistically. There are people like the Kanjoos who are parasitical in exacting money and benefits from other people. The

humanist in Khushwant Singh exposes such types of hypocritical people in a light hearted manner.

“The Interview” exposes the pretentiousness of an official. The story is sheer fun. The humanistic approach of the writer is seen in unmasking the pretentious nature of a person who poses to be a knowledgeable person and tries to impress others.

There are some stories by Khushwant Singh in which his sensitivity to animal world can be observed. “The Portrait of a Lady” shows the grandmothers kindness towards and close relation with the village dogs and sparrows in the city. “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture” deals with the theme of kindness towards animals. The theme is treated realistically but in a humorous manner against the background of the atmosphere in the “House of Culture”. Kindness towards animals is part of Khushwant Singh’s humanism. In “India is a Strange Country” the author shows the attachment between the owner of the dog and his pet dog. “The Fawn” brings out the unsavory reality of the double-facedness of man. Man takes interest in hunting for sheer joy but at the same time he realizes that he can not escape the guilty–feeling of killing a harmless animal. Singh’s humanism implies that cruelty to animals should be avoided.

“The Riot” also refers to the world of animal. The theme of sensitivity to animal world is presented realistically through the vivid description of the pariah dogs and the pet dogs and their relationship with human beings. Khushwant Singh’s humanistic outlook can be seen in his treating dogs as if they are human beings and even better than human beings in being free from the social evil of communalism.

Although Khushwant Singh is a pronounced realist, he quite often confronts the supernatural and mystery in “The Memsahib of Mandala”. His treatment of the intangible, inexplicable and supernatural elements of human existence and its differentiation from the actualities of existence bring out his view of the complexity of the life and the dangers of oversupplying it. He portrays characters and situations that are

outside the boundaries of the rational and yet seem truer than real life characters and commonly prevailing situations. The intangible and incomprehensible elements of human experience are expressed with great effect in "Death comes to Dault Ram". Khushwant Singh's humanism accommodates the supernatural and the element of mystery here in this story.

The analysis of Khushwant Singh's short stories from the point of view of narrative technique, language and style makes it clear that Khushwant Singh's short stories come in the category of well-made short story.

Khushwant Singh is a good story teller. In spite of his using traditional method of story telling he is appreciated by the critics because he has "a knack of story-telling as gripping as that of Scheherazade in "The Thousand and One Nights".¹

Khushwant Singh employs the first person method of narration very effectively in "Posthumous", "The Interview", "The Great Difference", "When Sikh Meets Sikh", "The Insurance Agent", "The Fawn", "The Man with a Clear Conscience", "The Bottom Pincher", "Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia", "India is a Strong Country", "Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle", and "A Punjab Pastoral." The author makes use of this narrative device to achieve the effect of immediacy and to add to the realism. In "Posthumous" the central character tells the story from his point of view. 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 realizes 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. The authorial objectivity is effectively communicated. The author pronounces no judgement on what happens in the story. In "The Butterfly" the first person narrator – a minor character – is an eyewitness of the action. The author makes use of this method to evoke humour as the narrator is biased against the protagonist. He is

prone to see the hypocrisy in his behaviour and the central character's light attitude to love and patriotism. The narration in "The Interview" can be appreciated for its objective presentation and the dramatic end of the story. Khushwant Singh is superb in his handling of the first person method of narration in "The Portrait of a Lady". The narration of the story sounds authentic as there appears to be no gap between the narrator and the implied author. The voice and the 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 his objectivity. "The Great Difference" is narrated from the point of view biased narrator so the narration is partly subjective and partly objective. The narrator "I" narrates the story. The narrator can be called the personae of the author. The point of view is that of the narrator and what he calls 'Malicious People's attitude toward him (Mr. Swami – agent). The latter is like R.K. Narayan's device of 'Talkative Man' to narrate the story objectively. Khushwant Singh becomes successful in exposing the snobbish, pretentious, professional minded persons like Mr. Swami, the insurance agent.

In "Fawn" the narrator is one of the main characters. The story is narrated from his point of view. The narrator being a reliable characters, his attitude 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. With the use of first person narration the narration becomes personal in rest of the stories where this technique is used.

Khushwant Singh makes use of the third person method of narration in stories like "Karma", "The Voice of God", "Kusum", "The Riot", "The Rape", "Black Jasmine", "The Convert" etc. we can see variation in the use of this method. Limited omniscience narration, objective or camera eye narration, third person objective perspective etc. are used to tell explore, reveal and present his characters, events and scenes. The author look at his subject from different points of view.

Khushwant Singh makes use of the devices of telling and showing methods, first person narration and third person method of narration – to show his realistic and humanitarian approach towards his subject.

Appreciating Khushwant Singh's art of story telling and compactness of his stories, Venugopal says : "The Indian writer has occasionally achieved the compactness of the Western writer and then he has come out with some brilliant specimens of the story-tellers art : Anand's "Lost Child" and 'Lullaby" and Khushwant Singh's "The Fawn" can stand comparison with the most notable creations of well-known masters in the field."²

Khushwant Singh's 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 episodes which characterize his 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 is in chronological sequence marked by progression in time rather than in space. He makes use flashback technique to present the events in the past. A conflict between characters and situations is created, developed and thereafter resolved through a succession of scenes. Suspense and surprise elements also form part of Singh's plot. The analysis and study of the plot construction in the previous chapter have made all these things clear.

Stories like "Posthumous" , "karma", "The Mark of Vishnu", "The Voice of God", "The Memsahib of Mandala", "The Fawn" and "Black Jasmine" have good plot construction. They are appreciated by critics. But there are stories such as "The Interview", "The Red Tie", "The Rape", "The Riot", "Kusum", "My Own My Native Land" which are anecdotal and the plot construction is very simple in them.

Khushwant Singh is able to filter his realistic and humanistic attitude towards his subject matter through the plot construction of his stories.

Khushwant Singh has taken characters from different fields, professions, classes, age-groups, countries and socio-cultural background. In his stories he has included 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, a thief, a prostitute, a saint, a beggar, an American, a German, A French person and an English man. His protagonist 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 the social high ups in their arrogance. He has also used characters who represent Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. Women characters in Khushwant Singh's short stories are portrayed by and large, 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. He has also portrayed school going children and college – going boys and girls. dog, cats, doe, fawn and snake are treated in such a way that they acquire the status of a character.

Khushwant Singh is also able to develop complex round characters. But their number is rather small. In "The Portrait of a Lady" the central character-grandmother is effectively portrayed and individualized. Sardar Khushwant Singh in "Posthumous", 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 different methods to draw his characters. He allows his characters to reveal themselves through their action and speech. His characters reveal themselves in their interaction

with a series of events and with each other. Khushwant Singh makes use of third person and first person methods of narration to develop his characters. He also makes use of contrast to portray his characters.

Khushwant Singh's characters and mode of characterization embody his realistic and humanistic approach towards his subject matter.

Khushwant Singh's stories are marked by a rich sense of humour. Most of his stories are anecdotal. Khushwant Singh's 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's 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", "The Bottom Pincher", and "Posthumous". Stories such as "Karma", "The Butterfly", "Kusam", "My own My Native land", "The interview", "The Red Tie", and "The Convert" are by and large the stories of humour, humour which is the natural outcome of an untamed, unsophisticated passion for life, so manifest in the Punjabi community. A critic observes about his comic mode :

Khushwant Singh has the capacity to move, but he generally prefers to operate in comic mode. His structural strategy consists in the juxtaposition of contrasts and contradictions. Irony and muted satire are his muted instruments, but he is also at home in exaggeration and mock-heroic.³

Khushwant Singh's realism and humanism can be seen through his sense of humour manifested in his stories.

Though Khushwant Singh's prefers to operate in the comic mode which is in keeping with his humanistic outlook towards life, he cannot avoid satire in his stories. As a realist he satirizes human tendencies and social evils which are harmful. But as a whole his satire is devoid of any pointed sociological motivation or malice towards anyone. He cannot always keep his cool. He is against hypocrisy and pretentiousness, corruption and ineptitude, superstition and bigotry, anything which comes in the way of healthy living and humane living. Some of his stories in which he appears to be satirical 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".

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 his stories. The stories reveal his gentle irony and his faculty of being ironical on the part of his countrymen. Irony in Khushwant Singh is sometimes 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, meaning and structure of the story ironical as a whole. The disbelief and hypocrisy of the people is shown by the ironical comment.

"Karma" reveals the psychology of an educated Indian in British India and his character is presented in an ironical way and this helps the author to present his irony of such people. Irony of the fate of the protagonist is also presented. In "The Mark of Vishnu" the title is weighed by religious values, but the irony of the title is revealed through the story in which the author mocks at the superstitious Indians.

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. Irony makes his stories realistic. His use of irony enables his readers to believe in what he believes in. Irony is the device he uses to make the erring to correct themselves. It is preferred to satire by Khushwant Singh, the humanist.

Khushwant Singh’s language is found to be very close to the language of the newspapers and the magazines and periodicals and shows sharing of his previous experiences as a journalist. His style as far as his language is concerned is simple, crisp, racy, evocative and fluent. It has got readability. One can easily understand it.

The 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 Bride for the Sahib” there is Santosh Sen who is reflecting on the pronunciation of the South Indians and Bengalis.

Khushwant Singh shows variation in pronunciation or odd accent by changing the spelling to catch the conversational tones. A Punjabi steno’s style of speech is shown in “Man, How the Government of India Run!”

To achieve authenticity of the experience to be embodied in English, Khushwant Singh turns to experimentation. Khushwant Singh’s experimentation could be classified in the following types :

1. The introduction of words from the Indian languages, through transliteration,
2. Experiments in diction and imagery through literal translation from the Indian languages ,
3. Experiments in syntax.

Khushwant Singh attempts to 'Indianise' English to suit his purpose and add to his realism. These techniques are adopted by him for artistic purposes also.

Khushwant Singh's use of dialogues sounds natural as he experiments with the spoken variety of English. His characters make use of clichés, sayings and proverbs, Hindi words, literal translations etc. Khushwant is also about to give pictures scenes and incidents. He is able to describe a person vividly. His description of the grandmother in "A Portrait of a Lady" and an Indian village with its greenery in "A Punjab Pastorale" appear quite realistic.

The foregoing analysis and discussion of Khushwant Singh's short stories confirms our assumption that Khushwant belongs to the tradition of realist and humanist writers of short stories in Indian English. The range of his themes is vast. He makes use of traditional well-made short story to develop his themes.

As a part of his assessment as a short story writer, we can say that Khushwant Singh's contribution to the genre of Indian short story in English in terms of themes is remarkable. He has a wide variety of themes. Perhaps it is the result of his performing several jobs at different times and making his mark as a short story writer through contributions to journals and periodicals. He has handled a number of small themes under the general themes such as – human relationship, love and sex, Punjabi identity, socio-political themes, sensitivity to animals, supernatural and mystery. In the treatment of those themes various aspects Khushwant Singh's humanism can be observed. His outlook and vision is characterized by humanism. He is also a realist. Social realism is a marked feature of his stories. Another achievement of Khushwant Singh is that he is a good story teller though it appears that he is not much interested in experiments in the art of story telling. Thirdly, Khushwant Singh is appreciated for his experimentation with language. He has command over English and he is able to mould it to suit his purpose. Khushwant Singh is at his best can be seen in a few stories which are also

favourite stories with the readers and critics. His stories which are good as works of art are: "The Portrait of a lady", "The Mark of Vishnu", "A Bride for the Sahib", "The Fawn", "The Voice of God" and "The Black Jasmine".

He is a realistic writer but he makes use of superficial realism. Perhaps Khushwant Singh's weaknesses are characteristic of his journalistic writing. A critic rightly observes. "His forte is journalistic realism. The snag in his writings is his journalism and not realism. It induces him to falsify the picture up he creates."⁴

Khushwant Singh is too broad and sweeping in his manner and treatment of themes, gets stuck at the comical surface life, and finds it difficult to probe deeper to get at the finer essence of things. The quality of experience and its presentation in majority of his short stories are journalistic and reportorial in nature, which develops into a pattern in Khushwant Singh's short stories. The experience seems to merely touch the surface of the life and does not form part of either of sensibility or sensation, the two principal strands in great modern English short stories.

Another limitation of Khushwant Singh as a short story writer is that he makes use of the traditional well-made short story. Various experiments in recording of his sensibility and developing his themes in an artistic manner can not be experienced. He shows his skill experimentation with language. Khushwant Singh makes use of a well made short story form to represent traditional realism. As a part of it he employs chronological plots, continuous narratives, relayed by omniscient narrators 'closed endings' etc. instead of the experimental forms of various kinds as a modern writer of short stories.

So on the basis of the foregoing objective assessment, we can say that within his limitations, Khushwant Singh is a successful short story writer.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. S. B. Shukla, "Khushwant Singh", **Contemporary Indian English Short Story** by A. N. Dwivedi (New Delhi : B.R. Publishers Corporation, 1991), P.86.
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3. S. B. Shukla, "Khushwant Singh", **Contemporary Indian English Short Story** by A. N. Dwivedi (New Delhi : B. R. Publishers Corporation, 1991), pp. 93-94.
4. Ibid., P. 104.
