

## CHAPTER - I

# **INTRODUCTION**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Khushwant Singh, one of the most prolific of Indian English writers today, was born at Hadali in West Punjab (now in Pakistan) on February 2, 1915. He was the second son of Sir Sobha and Lady Singh. His father was a building contractor. Khushwant Singh studied at various schools in Delhi and also at the Government College Lahore. He obtained his LLB degree from King's College, London and joined the Bar at the Inner Temple, London for some years. There after he started practising as a lawyer at the Punjab High Court in Lahore. He was wedded to Karnal (Malik), daughter of Sir Teja and Mrs. Raj Malik.

Khushwant Singh who now lives in New Delhi has spent a part of his early life in the rural area of Punjab. This rural environment of Punjab where he has spent his childhood has influenced his writings tremendously. He writes : "My roots are in the dunghill of a tiny Indian village."<sup>1</sup> Later on he visited England, Japan, United States, Canada, and several American countries on different assignments. His education in Britain has made him cultured and humanist. He writes, "I am the product of both the East and the West. I am, if I may coin the word, Orio-Occidental."<sup>2</sup>

The rural countryside atmosphere of Punjab, urban Indo – Anglian environment of Delhi and sophisticated city of London all the three have rendered dominant influence on the personality of Khushwant Singh.

At his early age, Khushwant Singh served as a Public Relation Officer and Press Attaché in Indian diplomatic mission at London and Toronto. He later became the editor of **The Illustrated Weekly of India** in Bombay. As a journalist, he served leading journals, news magazines and newspapers of India. Journalism, it seems, has influenced his style of writing.

Though Khushwant Singh was brought up in a religious atmosphere he liked to call himself an agnostic and an unorthodox Sikh. He had been brought up on Sikhism. Khushwant Singh's son Rahul Singh states in the biography - **Khushwant Singh** (2004) that Khushwant Singh had strong sentiments about the symbols of the Sikh religion. He advised his son :

“You have to be a Sikh or know the religion and the community well.”<sup>3</sup>

The influence of Sikhism on Khushwant Singh can be noticed in his writings.

Khushwant Singh's style of creative writing is substantially influenced by the Punjabi trend of literary writing, where 'sex' and 'violence' happens to be one of the most favorite themes. Balwant Gargi rightly says, “Violence and sex are the most important characteristics of modern Punjabi literature.”<sup>4</sup> All Punjabi prominent writers such as Amrita Pritam, Shiv K. Kumar, Batlavi, Kartal Singh Duggal, Khushwant Singh, etc. are influenced by this literary trend. Other prominent writers of fiction in Punjabi literature such as Jaswant Singh Kanwal, Gurdial Singh, Santok Singh Dhir, and Khushwant Singh Kir also deal mainly with violence and sex as their motif and in the course of their presentation, they wrote on riots, rapes, abducting, murders, violence and other similar aspects showing readers the fiery passions of rural Punjab. Obscenity is another interesting feature of Punjabi literature where 'legs', 'breasts', 'sex' etc. are used commonly and unhesitatingly. Khushwant Singh too forms the part of this virile and realistic tradition of creative writings in Punjabi literature.

Khushwant Singh appreciated the **Guru Granth Sahib**, the **Bible** and the **Kuran**. He expresses his opinion about good English in his autobiography thus: “.....in order to write good English one should be familiar with the **Bible** as well as European fairy tales, nursery rhymes and even nonsense verse like the limericks of Edward Lear. I read them

not for fun but as basics of literature”<sup>5</sup> Aldoux Huxley and Somerset Maugham impressed him most. He wished he could evolve the Huxleyan turn of phrase and malicious wit with Maugham’s ability to hold the reader’s attention. He admits that Mulik Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan inspired him to write fiction. Khushwant further adds from a Punjab rustic, he tried to make himself a middle-class English gentleman. He could evolve his own style of writing as a writer of fiction. He says about his familiarity with authors :

“.....I realized that knowing authors does not help anyone to become one. Writing is a solitary profession in which no one can help you except yourself. There is no such institution as the Guru-Chela, mentor-guide, relationship in the writing world. A writer has to be his own mentor – guide and ultimate judge.”<sup>6</sup>

Khushwant Singh is a versatile genius. Circumstances made him turn from law to public relations, teaching, and finally to journalism and writing. He is an author of about 88 books. He has earned international acclaim as a versatile genius: a novelist, a short story writer, historian, essayist, journalist and editor of various journals. He is best known for his novels: **Train to Pakistan** (1956), **I shall Not Hear the Nightingale** (1959), **Delhi** (1990) and **The Company of Women** (1999).

Khushwant Singh started his career of creative writing with his short stories. He first established his reputation as a writer through his remarkable collection of short stories, **Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories** published for the first time in 1950. He has to his credit other three collections of short stories, such as **The Voice of God and Other Stories** (1957), **A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories** (1967) and **Black Jasmine** (1972). Initially published in some English, Canadian and American Magazines, these stories of Khushwant Singh have been recently presented in one volume namely, **The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh** (Orient Longman, 1989). This volume contains stories by him that have appeared in smaller collections of his work and separately, in literary journals over nearly fifty years. It is a complete

collection of Khushwant Singh's writing in this genre.

Literary historians and critics have taken note of Khushwant Singh's short stories. They have looked at them from the point of view of their themes and narrative techniques. The literary criticism of his short stories gives us the idea of Khushwant Singh's literary tradition as a short story writer. M.K. Naik observes:

“Singh's most characteristic note is  
a rather heavy-handed satire on  
several aspects of modern Indian life...”<sup>7</sup>

According to S.B. Shukla, Khushwant Singh's stories are realistic (*Italics mine*). His forte is journalistic realism.<sup>8</sup>

He further adds more than his other writings his short stories are rooted in Punjabi ethos and his endeavour is to establish his Punjabi identity in the genre of story writing.

A. N. Dwivedi says that Khushwant Singh is a short story writer of free India, and he made his debut in this form with the publication of his work, **The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories** in 1950 to be followed by **The Voice of God and Other Stories (1957)**, **A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories (1967)** and **Black Jasmine (1971)**. These four volumes greatly consolidated the position of Khushwant Singh as a short story writer of outstanding merits. “He comes down heavily on what is repugnant, repulsive and hypocritical.”<sup>9</sup>

V. A. Shahane considers Khushwant Singh as a realist and his short stories are called the stories of social import. He has devoted one chapter for the study of Khushwant Singh's short stories in his critical book entitled **Khushwant Singh (1972)**. He further observes that the predominant quality of Khushwant Singh as a short story writer is his comic spirit. According to Shahane Khushwant Singh is “a realist and a humorist.”<sup>10</sup>

K. R. Srinivas Iyengar treats Khushwant as an anti-romantic and a critic of something false and hypocritical in the behaviour of man. He observes :

“An anti-romantic, Khushwant Singh is intolerant of cant and humbug especially when they masquerade as wisdom and probity.”<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Venugopal thinks that Khushwant Singh's short stories present him at his best in his role as a frank and forthright exponent of the contemporary Indian scene. He also observes that though it is the comic spirit that dominates most of his stories, Khushwant Singh is much in earnest exposing the darker, stupid and the hypocritical aspects of the Indian scene.

P.P. Mehta also says that Khushwant Singh's short stories are realistic and artistic. To quote him :

“... his short stories are superbly chiseled artistic pieces. His collections of short stories **The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories (1950)** **A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories (1967)** and **Black Jasmine (1971)** **The Voice of God and Other Stories (1950)**, reveal a sensitive writer looking ironically at Indian situations. Wit, satire and irony keep the reader smiling in his finely written highly realistic short stories.”<sup>12</sup>

Ritu A. Benjamin observes “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 this picture of him is revealed in his stories.”<sup>13</sup>

The foregoing review of criticism on Khushwant Singh's short stories makes it clear that Khushwant Singh's short stories are realistic as they reflect essential and significant aspects of contemporary India, Indian situations and culture. Rahul Singh in his biography namely **Khushwant Singh (2004)** expresses his view that Khushwant Singh is an iconoclast and a non-conformist. He further adds that his father does like to shock Indian society. He questions conventional wisdom incessantly, challenges political and religious orthodoxies fearlessly and flouts established norms and time honoured conventions relentlessly. We can find evidence of this practice in Khushwant Singh's short stories.

Khushwant, as a realist comes down heavily on what is repugnant and hypocritical. Without any outward signs of bitterness, he speaks out strongly against cant and hypocrisy through his stories. He handles his themes realistically in his stories. The critics have also noted that Khushwant Singh's realistic approach is coupled with his humanism. His outlook towards life is essentially humanistic.

Khushwant Singh as a writer of short stories belongs to the tradition of realist and humanist short story writers. Rahul Singh, Khushwant Singh's son writes in the biography that his father is a great humanist.

My father often likes to quote a Poem by James Henry Leigh Hunt entitled *Abou Ben Adhem* and the Angel. It touches a Sensitive cord in the humanist in him. He places humanity before a personal quest for salvation.<sup>14</sup>

Rahul Singh further says about his father in this context :

“Though good at heart ... my father does like to shock Indian society.”<sup>15</sup>

He questions conventional wisdom incessantly, challenges political and religious orthodoxies fearlessly and flouts established norms and time honoured conventions relentlessly.

Rahul Singh further adds:

“Khushwant Singh is tolerant, eclectic and intellectually committed to pluralism and multiculturalism. He is the quintessential liberal, one of the dwindling tribe in India today.”<sup>16</sup>

Khushwant Singh is cosmopolitan in the real sense of the term. He upholds the cause – the fight for justice. He admires the likes of Mother Teresa, spiritual minded people whose mission in life is to better the lot of their fellow human beings especially the poor and the deprived.

Khushwant Singh detests religion that is sterile, self – centered and full of rituals. He is intrigued by so- called ‘Godmen’ who are bogus,

making fools and money – out of the gullible. Khushwant Singh says in his **Autobiography** :

“The only religious principle I subscribe to is *ahimsa*—non violence. It is indeed paramount - *dharama* – the supreme faith. The rest is of marginal importance.”<sup>17</sup>

Khushwant Singh is realistic and humanistic in one but the narrative technique that he employs to handle his themes is that of a well – made short story. Khushwant Singh has stated clearly in his foreword to **The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh (1989)** what he values in a short story. According to him it should have a beginning, middle and an end, a “ring of truth”, “a message to convey” and “sting in its tail.”<sup>18</sup>

Critics and literary historians have placed Khushwant Singh in the tradition of realistic and humanistic writers employing traditional narrative technique of a well- made short story, but no full length and comprehensive study of his short stories has been made from this point of view so far. It is a fact that like other many short story writers writing novels, Khushwant Singh has also remained comparatively neglected as a short story writer. So the present dissertation seeks to make a modest attempt in this direction by analyzing, interpreting and evaluating his stories from the point of view their themes and narrative techniques to show the strength and weaknesses of Khushwant as a short story writer and make a comprehensive statement on Khushwant as a writer of short stories.

An overview of Khushwant Singh's short stories reveals that he belongs to the literary tradition of writers who are realist and humanist in one. The term realism has many meanings. In literature it is used to represent real life in fiction. It prefers an objective standpoint and is illusionist. A realistic work of fiction gives us the illusion of 'real'. Realism can be looked at as a technical description of accuracy and liveliness in presentation, as a concept 'opposed to idealization or caricature' as the commonplace in contradiction to the heroic or romantic



and then, as granting recognition to the unpleasant and the sordid. Besides social realism, the term realism implies ‘fidelity to psychological reality.’

In the realistic well-made short the formal devices are subordinated to the content- themes, ideas and references to reality. Realism’s central strategy is to disguise its artificiality, to pretend there is no art between it and the reality it shows us. In this respect, it does the exact opposite of ‘baring its device’ or postmodern self – reflexivity. Realism is expressed through the incidents, scenes, and characters in the story. In the present study, the term realism is used in a very broad sense and eclectic sense.

According to **The Oxford English, Dictionary** (Vol V, 445), the term ‘humanitarian’ means ‘One who devotes himself to the welfare of mankind at large – a philanthropist. Humanitarianism is an essential part of human nature. It is rooted in human consciousness. It is an inseparable part of culture and civilization. It asserts centrality of man in the scheme of things and in a system. Humanism seeks to dignify and ennoble man. Humanism helps to civilize man, to make him realize his potential powers and gifts, and to reduce the discrepancy between potentiality and attainment. Humanism concentrates on the perfection of a world life, rather than on the preparation for an eternal and spiritual life.

The humanitarian creed has been succinctly analyzed by H.S. Salt (**Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics**. Vol. VI.PP. 836-40). He points out that “the creed is not only a principle, but a faith... The faith of universal kinship...’ Humaneness is an integral part if not the actual basis of morals. It includes and comprehends both philanthropy – love of mankind and zoofily – kindness to animal.”<sup>19</sup>

Humanitarian compassion has animated the work of several writers. What effect do humanitarian tendencies in a writer have on his work? Understanding and compassion, sympathy and fellow feeling seem to endow such writer’s work a catholicity of outlook, a deep human worth, an insight into the human heart and nearness to life.

At the same time, there are some pitfalls in the path of the humanitarianism, the most obvious and dangerous being that of sentimentalism. Another danger is that compassion may sometimes sweep the writer off his feet and consequently, his work may suffer on the formal side.

The overview of Khushwant Singh's short stories also gives us the idea that he shares a number of thematic concerns with other major Indian English short story writers and also makes use of the narrative technique, language and style that we find in the well established or well made short story in English. In what follows an attempt is made to focus on these thematic preoccupations and narrative techniques, language and style in the short stories of these writers so as to place Khushwant Singh in his tradition as a short story writer.

## II

### **Themes in the Indian Short Story in English**

Manjeri S. Isvaran is a prolific short story writer. With about ten published volumes of short stories to his credit, he occupies a conspicuous place among our pioneers. He focuses on the lower and middle class people in the South India in general and Tamilnadu in particular. His themes are of a surprising and pleasant variety. They are the consequences of the World Wars and Nationalist Movement ("Between Two Flags"), the tender feelings between couples young and old ("Revelation"), the naiveté of children ("Kolu"), the love affairs of a confirmed thief or a bus driver ("The Motorman", or simply the inexplicable jealousy of a neighbour for your beloved lime tree ("Annihilation"). Whatever the theme, he goes deep into it and views it from all possible angles. His stories are remarkable for their fidelity to life. Through a study of the cotemporary scene he tries to get at the fundamental truth and values that govern human relationship. While depicting lower class life and characters Isvaran is more realistic than when he presents middle class life of all the objects Isvaran seems to

excel in the sympathetic revelation of female psyche. He shows families caught between traditionalism and modernity and the resulting predicament. As a keen observer of life and the predicament of the families caught in the web of traditional value-system, he enjoyed distinction among the writer of the pre-partition era.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the most noteworthy short story writers. The collections by Anand are: **The lost Child and Other Stories (1934)**, **The Barbers' Trade Union and Other Stories (1947)**, **Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories (1944)**, **The Power of Darkness and Other Stories (1959)**, **Lajwanti and Other Stories (1966)** and **Between Tears and Laughter (1973)**. The themes and subjects of Anand are aimed at depicting the contemporary social situation as seen as and felt by the individual. Anand is with the poor and the downtrodden, voicing the concerns and predicaments of the lower classes in our society and siding with the lost ones and the sufferers. The humanism of Anand is so evident in his stories and he lashes at 'the lies, shams and hypocrisies of our people' with relentless vigour and robust satire. The social injustices and he forcefully ventilates his strong feelings against them, as may be gathered from his stories like **"The Cobbler and the Machine"**, **"Boots"**, **"The Old Watch"**, and **"The Story of an Anna"**. Mulk Raj Anand's short stories also treat a theme of genuinely universal significance along with stories that deal with other matters- with social injustice to which individuals are subjected. "The Lost Child" can be cited as an example of a theme of universal appeal. Thus his themes of the stories are wide-ranging. As a short story writer Anand's commitment to realism and humanism is great. Venugopal observes "if only for his amazing variety of themes against all sorts of conceivable background- social, political, cultural or economic and they complementing one another in giving a fuller picture of India, Anand deserves a lasting place among the Indian short story writers in English."<sup>20</sup>

The short stories of R. K. Narayan are included in the following collections : **Malgudi Days (1941); Dodu and Other Stories (1943); Cyclone and Other Stories (1947); Lawley Road (1956); A Horse and Two Goats (1970); Old and New (1981)**. Narayan's short stories appear to be, by and large, a museum of minor motifs. They lack the kind of thematic weight and the richness of experience which the major stories of the world invariably possess. One can find its reason. R.K.Narayan began his career as a short story writer and obviously he could not free himself from the influence of the 'magazine story' which carries a limited purpose to amuse the reader. Naturally , he failed to develop his talent much beyond that. The thematic range of Narayan's stories is limited , though he has portrayed a great variety of characters drawn from the lower and middle strata of society. This variety is not matched by a corresponding thematic richness and urgent emotional involvement in Narayan's short stories. So Narayan's limited range and lack of richness in experience and imagination which are vital ingredients of great short stories don't impart him a superior rank among the great short story writers of the world.

Narayan usually fixes his gaze on those aspects of an incident or a character which are appealing to him. He is a fine painter of the ludicrous and the humorous in his stories like "Attila", "Engine Trouble", and "An Evening Gift." The stories contained in such collections as **An Astrologer's Day (1947), Lowley Road (1956) and A Horse and Two Goats (1970)** represent Narayan at his best bringing out as they do his strengths as well as weaknesses. At times, Narayan is highly engaging and entertaining while dealing with the various facts of human life, but at times he stoops to journalistic details and sensationalism. Occasionally he even slips into incidents of suspense and horror as in "Old Bones", "An Accident" and "The Snake Song". He can also delve deep into child psychology and portray children with perfect sympathy and understanding as in "Swami and his Friends", but he is weak in depicting women characters of flesh and blood , as one may gather from "Mother and Son" from "A willing Slave". He has also written some 'Animal

Stories and stories about the supernatural element or what may be called 'The Ghost stories.'

R. K. Narayan is a regional realist. Malgudi is 'the figment of his fictional imagination as inspired by his muse'. It is created and developed as a suitable and exotic setting for his short stories. In this connection Prof. P. S. Sundaram says, "Narayan's books spring from the mud and river of Malgudi. The scene is Malgudi, but the play is a human not merely an Indian drama."<sup>21</sup>

In his short stories, underneath the apparent change and human action the 'soul' of the place is witnessed. As K. R. Srinivas Iyengar says, Malgudi and Malgudi humanity are the theme of his short stories. He presents a microcosm of Indian life rarely touched by the impact of the English.

Raja Rao is Known for his two collections of short stories .They are **The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories (1947)** and **The Policeman and the Rose (1978)**. He is definitely of a different mental make up. He depicts philosophically the Indian reality with focus on social and political aspects of it. He makes profound use of the folktales, myths and legends. He has profound vision of life and is deeply rooted in Indianness. Rao is highly symbolic and philosophical.

Raja Rao is also a realist. Through the evocation of the village's sacrosanct belief in rigid caste system, in legends and superstitions, in the theory of Karma and transmigration of soul, and the sway of religion and God over their minds and above all their ignorance, simplicity and credulity, Raja Rao has painted the village life in such a realistic and forceful manner that one cannot but marvel at the intimate knowledge of Indian life within the limited compass of a short story and through the medium of foreign language. He seeks to communicate about Indian life and sensibility, Indian modes of feeling and expression through his short stories. He tries to capture the very spirit of Indian life in his stories. He reveals the woes and sufferings of the village folk, exposes the social evils and idiosyncrasies, oddities and weaknesses of human character.

The power of his stories lies in the pity of things which is born of one or the other kind of suffering, having particular relevance to Indian themes and yet remaining universal in significance. He is also humanistic in his perspective. He may not have a wide range of themes like Anand Narayan and Isvaran, but he commands greater depth and philosophical probing in his works.

K. A. Abbas has published four short story collections: **Rice and Other Stories (1947)**, **Cages of Freedom and Other Stories (1952)**, **One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and Other Stories (1957)** and **The Black Sun and Other Stories (1963)**. He has also created a place for himself as a short story writer. He is primarily concerned with the social problems. Unemployment, hypocrisy, ignorance, poverty communalism, red-tape, over population and selfishness disturb him. He is no less disturbed by the holocaust of partition of 1947. His two volumes : **Blood and Stones and Other Stories** and **Cages of Freedom and Other Stories** deal mainly with the problems people had to face in the wake of partition. **Rice and Other Stories** and **One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and Other Stories** highlight some of the glaring social evils which cause anxiety. Abbas' passionate commitment to the cause of the deprived and the down trodden betrays itself in the slackness of artistic control making his stories sentimental and melodramatic. As he aims at visual effects, he offers us a series of memorable images of events and experiences. He remains a hard-hitting realist who believes in social regeneration. His humanistic approach can be seen in his treatment of the theme of his stories. He was a committed writer. His commitment was like all other progressive writers, to the poor, the exploited and the underdogs. Like Khushwant Singh or Mulk Raj Anand he deals with socio-political themes critically. But his approach to his themes is anything but objective.

G. D. Khosla gives us a peep into the multifaceted personality of Mother India through his wide – ranging themes. He shows Indian life with a historian's perception. He produced four volumes: **The Price of a**

**Wife (1958), The Horoscope cannot Lie and Other Stories (1961) Grim Fairy Tales and Other Facts and Fancies (1966) and A Way of Loving and Other Stories (1973).** He too concerns himself with social evils, disparities in family and social life and so on.

Manohar Malgonkar brought out three collections of short stories. There are **A Toast in Warm Wine and Other Stories (1974), Bombay Beware (1975) and Rumble Tumble (1977).** His tales largely deal with the army life, hunting and the realm of business and politics. By attempting new subjects, Malgaonkar has added to the variety of themes in Indo- Anglian short story.

**Bhabani Bhattacharya's** writing pays close attention to the social, political and historical processes which mark his personal background. He consistently tackles issues centering around India's struggle for independence, its economic problems and the conflict of East and the West as experienced by the Indians in a changing society he things that a writer has definite function to perform in the task of social change. His works display a humanistic understanding expressed in a realistic manner. He has produced only one collection of short stories, i.e. **Steel Hawk and Other Stories.** Steel Hawk contains a variety of stories on different themes ranging from poverty religion, social and personal relationships.

"The Quack" depicts a commonplace scene on Indian roadsides where a large number of quacks advertise their medicines. Bhattacharya catches such a scene realistically and sympathetically. He characterizes the quack and his clients in a humanitarian manner. The quack makes an eloquent speech praising his medicine, but the audience remains unaffected.

Chaman Nahal dabbles in Indian reality and the middle class with Punjabi flavour but also gives an evidence of felt life in his realistic – satiric dig at stereotype attitudes notions taboos, customs, rituals and the straitjacket morality. Nahal's point of reference is the transition through which the feudal – patriarchal society is passing through, with new socio-economic changes, materialistic, emancipated order. His collection of

stories, **The Weird Dance**, unfolds ludicrous inconsistencies between conventions and material habits, authority and natural living, servility and free play of instincts. The in comprehensible social veneers lead to absurdities, banalities, tragic incidents, and comic situations. The writer's sympathies in such a static social system are evidently with the weak, oppressed, the peripheral marginal figures and the freaks. According to B.F. Nagpal "The chief contribution of Nahal as a short story writer lies in his unflinching faith in the weak denied cursed and carping. The fate of such a character may be unfortunate in the tumult of tradition and rationalism, but its possibilities lie in the new path assigned by the author."

Nahal is akin to Mulk Raj Anand , R.K.Narayan in pinpointing this fact of Indian ethos. His humane, compassionate outlook is truly his forte.

The author's humaneness comes out in full play in the story "The Silver Lining" Nahal's humaneness enables him to bring out the inborn, physical deformities in such a manner that the meaningful unfettered world opens up for such godless mortals.

Realism for Nahal lies not only in depicting earthiness but also in pointing out vicissitudes of a social situation. Bashir in the story, "The Release", is credible and convincing. His physical presentation is an index of his mental make up. His physiognomy is suggestive of brute lust and his flirtation with Rani whom he later marries justifies it. And in sketching the contours of social scenario Nahal is emphatic that the deprived ones are without an option.

Arun's is also a significant short story writer. His artistic vision filters through the ten short stories include in the slender volume: **The Survivor (1975)** As one goes through the short stories, one is struck by the technical virtuosity, the vivid representation of the various aspects of human personality, the ability to concretize the generally submerged facts of social reality and the individual consciousness, the authenticity of experience, the sense of detachment and the artistic integrity of the writer in projecting the image of national consciousness. The vision of Joshi is



humanistic and inclusive. No segment of social reality is taboo or considered improper for the purpose of his art. No class of society is favoured by the writer's predilection or marred by his prejudice for there is no room for narrow subjectivism in Joshi's narrative art.

From 1960s onwards women's voice has become an inevitable part of the domain of literature. Women have become more and more conscious of their status in the society and self – identity. A good number of women writers have come on the surface of the literary scenario with a view to making their voice audible to the society. R.P. Jhabvala Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Jai Nimbkar are the prominent writers of short stories . But R. P. Jhabvala often seems to be cynical in her collections of short stories like – **A Experience of India (1972) and A Stronger Climate (1968)**. Anita Desai has written **Games at Twilight and Other Stories (1978)**. She handles the subjects like, various psychological complex and the social sensibilities. She is known for her psychological realism and humanism.

Shashi Deshpande is a major short story writer today. She has five volumes of short stories to her credit. **The Legacy and Other Stories (1978), It was the Nightingale (1986) It Was Dark (1986) and The Intrusion and Other Stories**. She deals with the housewives and her problems like marital discord, separation and depression in love, boredom and lack of understanding in the marital life among others. Nevertheless, her female protagonist are not feminists. They still seem to be giving importance to reconciliation, stoicism and self denial as the guiding principles. The concerns of the writer shifts from society and community to individuals. Her philosophical G. S. Amur rightly remarks that “Woman's struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity... is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer and this appears in all her important stories.”

Jai Nimbkar, born in Pune and now settled in a small town namely Phaltan in Satara district in Western Maratha has published numerous short stories. Her stories appeared in various newspapers and magazines.

**The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories** a collection of her short stories was published by writers workshop, Calcutta. **The Phantom Bird and Other Stories** is her another collection of short stories. Jai Nimbkar focuses on the themes of imperfection in human relationships in her stories.

### III

#### **Narrative Techniques in the Indian short story in English**

An Isvaran's story usually begins leisurely but ends with some authorial comments or philosophical reflections. Comments and reflections are a normal feature of his narrative technique. But for this weakness, he is truly powerful story-teller, who is equally at home in narrations and dialogues. Isvaran is not an experimenter with the English idiom, as Anand or Raja Rao is.

Mulk Raj Anand is a great artist. In his stories we see that perfect blending of form and content which is literature. Anand employs a variety of narrative modes. His stories have various moods, persons, social surrounding and colours of life. Even his style varies remarkably. His stories are like fables, parables and folk tales and even like the well-made story. They also reveal Anand's reformatory zeal and psychological enquiry. Satire, realism, comedy, pathos and humour are the keynotes of his short stories. He handles them with equal care, reality and fantasy, romance and naturalism. But the beauty of stories is spoiled by his zeal for reform and incurable romanticism. Sometimes his excessive enthusiasm for satire or psychological probing of the individual as well as the situation result in his loss of grip over the facts of the tale.

Anand's characters are not fully individualized, or that they subordinate to something else can be seen in even in his most powerful stories like "On the Border", "A Rumour", "The Eternal Why", "Lottery", "The two Lady Rams". Anand creates his characters normally from the author- omniscient angle instead of through dramatization or dialogues. Anand builds his stories more through narration than through

dialogue. Anand is experimental with the idiom of the English language to convey nuances of Indian thought and culture. He makes use of flashback techniques, stream of consciousness method for narration. His experimentation is praiseworthy. This device helps him to evoke local colour and add to Indian-ness.

Narayan's technique of the short story clearly shows him subscribing to the idea of the 'well-made short story.' Almost all his short stories are compact and neatly structured. The only exceptions are some of the stories like "Uncle", "Annamalai" and "A Horse and Two Goats", which tend to be rather discursive. Narayan's forte is his narration.

The omniscient author's method of narration is obviously the most suitable one for his well-ordered narratives. The narration is sometimes put into the mouth of "The Talkative Man" in the manner of P.G. Woodhouse's 'Oldest Member' stories. A variant device is to use the autobiographical 'I' for narration. Most of the stories with a supernatural motif employ either the 'Talkative Man' or 'the autobiographical 'I' as a narrator in the hope of ensuring greater credibility for the yarns told, though they fail at times. The epistolary form is tried only once in "Uncle's Letters".

In the 'well-made short story' the beginning and the end are of critical importance. And Narayan, like O. Henry, rarely fumbles in handling either. A typical Narayan story may begin in a variety of ways but it almost always carefully establishes what H. E. Bates, referring to O. Henry described as "an instant contact between reader and writer."<sup>23</sup> One method of doing so is to plunge straight into the action.

As R.K.Narayan came under the influence of journalism many of his stories have the expected kick or sting or swing in the end. In this context C.V. Venugopal says "... They rather end the O. Henry way, with a sudden reversal of situation... a feature decidedly a strong point of the journalistic tradition."<sup>24</sup>

Like Anand, R. K. Narayan reveals his situations and characters by means of narration and not by means of dialogue. He has acted a great variety of characters drawn from all the strata of society except the highest. In his stories we meet clerks, doctors, archaeologists, tutors, school and college students, hunters-wives, shopkeepers, film actors, artists, sculptors, journalists, astrologers, postmen, 'ayah's, house-servants, gardeners, tree-climbers, food-vendors, coolies, beggars, vagabond, pickpockets and rustics, some from animal world dogs, squirrels and parrots. His characters appear real.

One of the typical features of his technique is that he does not bother to evolve an indigenous brand of English in order to cope with the local atmosphere or the social milieu. The sustaining power of a Narayan's story is its unmixed comic sense and its delight in the art of living. R.K. Narayan presents reality in a lighter vein. His stories end happily. He reveals ironies of life impressively.

What is remarkable about Raja Rao's narrative technique is that the socialistic point of view and the didactic sense are invariably controlled either by realism based on an objective detachment in some of his stories such as "Javni", "Akkayya" and "A Client", and by a powerful symbolic pattern in others like "Companions" or "The Policeman and The Rose", which are peerless in their symbolic presentation of a metaphysical truth, besides the interfusion of artless and straightforward descriptive narrations and naturalistic plane. As a short story writer, the real charm of Raja Rao lies in his profundity of vision and his deep-rooted Indianness. He appeals to us for his onrushing narrative technique— as though the tale has gushed forth from a dark, deep cavern — and his masterly handling of the English language.

K. A. Abbas' stories tend to present his weakness. His style of narration is not always felicitous. His stories are often sentimental and melodramatic. But his sincerity is never in question. The fact that he invariably has an axe to grind takes away much of the artistic value of the stories. He is tempted to exaggerate the social problems and political

causes. Mulk Raj Anand too attempts to expose the black spots in the contemporary social scene artistically and is normally successful in helping his reader trace the existing social evils to their origins, Abbas seems rather to lose a sense of proportion in violently expressing his grouse against the same evils. Abbas is so vehement in his censure that his picture of life is often exaggerated beyond reason and thus fails frequently to win the sympathy of his reader who rightly suspects that ideas are being imposed on him. Satire dominates the themes in his stories.

G. D. Khosla has undoubtedly earned an abiding place for himself. His characters are both among the practitioners of this genre-types and individuals and portrays them with rare sensitivity and objectivity. People from all walk of life from Rikshaw pullers to businessmen from film heroines to the housewives – all find place in his creative world. His stories are steeped in humour and realism. His stories are often long and dull despite the dashes of humour. His stories have logical conclusion.

Manohar Malgonkar is an entertainer. He is a good story- teller. In the three sets of tales written by Malgonkar, the idea of entertainment holds supreme sway. It makes his art a very limited one. There are in the vast spectrum of his narrative art short stories, yet most of them remain tales which produce only entertainment rather than moments of epiphany as we have in the modern masters of short story writing like Maugham, Joyce, D. H. Lawrence. Essentially a **Shikari** (hunter) and a soldier who turned to short story writing, he published his works in popular magazines like **The Illustrated Weekly, Shankar's Weekly, Cocktail and Onlooker**. It appears he catered to the taste of the readers. After reading his stories in **Rumble – Tumble and A Toast in Warm Wine**, we don't remember any character or any set of human relationships. They don't touch any chord in our hearts nor do we feel the anguish of any character or his human predicament. His tales don't make us feel as do the short stories of R. K. Narayan like Khushwant Singh, his tales tend to

be anecdotal in nature. They are basically two dimensional in character. However, within his limitations he is a successful entertainer.

The characteristic universe of discourse in Joshi's short stories is peopled with a cross section of Indian Society, viewed from a slightly quizzical point so that, there is a significant mix of the comic and tragic elements of life in the reorientation. Irony, fantasy and realism are the principal technical devices that one often observes in Joshi's stories and the urban milieu generally provides the fictional landscape in majority of them.

Women writers like R. P. Jhabvala, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande make use of the form and narrative technique of well-made short story. Their female protagonists are powerfully drawn when the stories deal with feminist issues. At times these writers appear experimental and innovative as far as their art and craft are concerned. Their command over English appears commendable. Jai Nimbkar probes with penetrating irony overlaid with a tinge of sorrow, the failure of communication between lovers, friends, parents and children, husbands and wives.

The foregoing survey of Indian short story writers in English shows that these writers follow the literary tradition of realist and humanist writers in one. Their stories deal with a variety of themes such as familial themes, human relationship, feminist issues, love, marriage and sex, search for identity, socio political themes, tradition and modernity, intercultural and interracial issues, minority culture, kindness to animals, supernatural and mystery. The survey also shows that these writers make use of the form of the well-made short story. Some writers also take interest in experimentation and innovation as far as narrative techniques are concerned.

Khushwant Singh, a realist and a humanist in one also makes use of most of these themes and employs the form of the traditional well-established short story. His short stories included in **The Collected Short Stories** are : "Posthumous", "Karma", "The Mark of Vishnu", "The

Butterfly", "The Interview", "The Portrait of a Lady", "The Voice of God", "A Punjab Pastorle", "Kusum", "The Riot", "The Rape", "The Memsahib of Mandla", "The Great Difference", "When Sikh Meets Sikh", "Death comes to Daulat Ram", "The Insurance Agent", "The Fawn", "Man, How the Government of India Run!", "The Man with a Clear Conscience", "Black Jasmine", "The Bottom Pincher", "A Bride for the Sahib", "Maiden Voyage at the Jal Hindia," "India is a Strange Country", "Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle", "Mr. Singh and the Colour Bar", "The Morning After the Night Before", "A Love Affair in London", "Rats and Cats in the House of Culture", "The Red Tie", "My Own My Native Land", "The Convert".

By analyzing and studying these stories from the point of view of their themes and the narrative techniques, language and style used in them in view of the literary tradition of the author, the present dissertation seeks to evaluate Khushwant Singh as a writer of the genre of the short stories by showing his achievement and limitations.

#### IV

The dissertation offers a detailed analysis of Khushwant Singh's short stories included in **The Collected Short Stories** not in terms of their chronological sequence, but in terms of their thematic grouping. It is hoped that this methodology of discussing Khushwant Singh's short stories in terms of its thematic grouping will help us in knowing the types and the range of the themes in Khushwant Singh's short stories and will also give us the idea of the way the author treats the theme in view of his literary tradition of realistic and humanistic approach. The dissertation also offers analysis of Khushwant Singh's stories from the point of view of their narrative techniques, language and style.

The dissertation is laid out in five chapters. **Chapter I, Introduction**, is devoted to place Khushwant Singh in his literary tradition. Details about the life and family and socio-cultural background of Khushwant Singh, explanation of the concept of humanism and realism

are given so that it becomes possible to study Khushwant Singh's short stories in their proper perspectives.

Chapter II discusses the **themes** of human relationship and also the theme of **love and sex** which occupy important place in Khushwant Singh's stories. "Karma", and "The Morning After the Night Before", and "A Bride for the Sahib" deal with man – woman relationship. These stories underscore different aspects of husband wife relationship through their narration. "The Portrait of a Lady" deals with the intimate relationship between the grandson and the grandmother. There are also stories which deal with human relationship beyond familial relationship. "Posthumous" shows that interpersonal relationship should be genuine and not superficial. "The Butterfly" demonstrates man's inconstancy in human relationship beyond family ties. It shows a man's fickle-mindedness with women. "The Convert" is about human relationship in general. The story suggests 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 also plays an important role in the stories of Khushwant Singh. The author handles the theme artistically. It appears that the author looks at women as objects of sex and lust. "Black Jasmine", "The Rape", "Kusum", "a Love Affair in London" deal with relationship between the two lovers. They love each other but social atmosphere and circumstances create problems in their way to develop their relationship into man – woman relationship. The theme of sex is treated realistically in "The Butterfly", "The Riot", "The Great Difference", "The Rape", "The Bottom Pincher," and "The Red Tie."

The theme of **Punjabi identity** is also explored by Khushwant Singh in a number of his stories. "When Sikh Meets Sikh", "A Punjab Pastoral", "The Voice of God", "The Man with a Clear Conscience", "Man, How the Government of India is Run!", "The Portrait of a Lady", "The Great Difference" and "The Fawn" show Punjabi consciousness, Punjabi ethos and Punjabi identity. These stories bring out various traits



in the Punjabi people as individuals and as a community. We also get the glimpses of the socio-political and cultural life of Punjabi people through these stories.

Chapter III analyses **socio-political themes**, the theme of **sensitivity to animals** and the theme of **supernatural and mystery**. “The Mark of Vishnu” deals with the powerful theme of clash between superstition and reason or science. “The Voice of God” deals with the theme of unfair practices in elections in a democratic system of governments. “A Punjab Pastoral” throws light on the social problems in Indian villages. “The Man with a Clear Conscience” explores the theme of poverty and its bad consequences. “The Riot” treats the theme of communal disharmony. “The Great Difference” is about the problem of religious differences affecting human relationship. Racial discrimination is the theme of “Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia”, “My own My Native Land” is about the theme of corruption.” Mr. Singh and the Colour Bar” treats the theme of problem of racialism. “Mr. Kanjoos and The Great Miracle” and “The Interview” deal with the theme of hypocrisy. “Cats and Rats in the House of culture” deals with the theme of bureaucratic style of work critically.

“The Portrait of a Lady”, “Rats and Cats in the House of Culture”, “The Fawn” and “The Riot” deal with the theme of sensitivity to animal world. Kindness to animals is the message that the author wants to give through these stories.

Besides these stories of social import and animal world, Khushwant Singh has also written stories which deal with the theme of supernatural and mystery.” The Memsahib of Mandala” deals with theme of the tragic play of the supernatural and mystery. “Death comes to Daulat Ram” is also about mystery and supernatural.

Khushwant Singh treats his themes realistically and from the point of view of humanism.

Chapter IV deals extensively with Khushwant Singh's use of **narrative techniques, language and style**. It seeks to show how Khushwant Singh makes use of the form of the well made short story. The discussion in this chapter foregrounds Khushwant Singh's judicious use of telling and showing methods of presenting stories, his clever use of the first person and the third devices of narrating stories, well-knit plot structure, scrupulous avoidance of any experimental technique except in the use of time, in terms of beginning, middle and end, contrived ending and flat, one dimensional stock characters.

The Chapter also gives a critical account of Khushwant Singh's use of the resources of **language** and his **style** in the shorter fiction. It highlights Singh's experimentation in the use of words and syntax. The chapter also studies his use of **dialogues and stylistic features** in terms of humour, irony, satire and imagery and symbolism.

Chapter V presents **conclusions** based on the earlier discussion under Chapters I to IV. The conclusion tries to show how Khushwant Singh belongs to the literary tradition of realistic and humanistic writers in treating his themes and narrative techniques , language and style. It shows the weaknesses and strength of Khushwant as a writer of the genre of short story. Finally he is evaluated as a short story writer and a comprehensive statement is made in view of his contribution to the form of short story in English.

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