

CHAPTER II

THEMES

1. Human Relationship
2. Love and Sex
3. Punjabi Identity

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1. Human Relationship

“Karma” deals with the theme of man- woman relationship. Sir Mohan Lal and Lachmi Lady Mohan, the husband and wife, travel in a train but by sitting in different compartments. Sir Mohan Lal symbolizes the slavish psychology of the educated Indian in British India. Such cultural stereotypes ape at the British culture. He wears the suit tailored at Saville Row which symbolizes British aristocracy and upper class culture and the tie which shows his exclusive Oxford upbringing and educational attainment. He considers everything Indian and native inefficient, dirty and intolerable. While he quietly sipped his ‘drink’ in the first class waiting room, his wife, the fat, illiterate, garrulous Lachmi sat on a steel trunk on the platform eating chapatti’s and pickles and chewing betel leaves. Whereas he, as a successful barrister, travels first class, she is contented herself with her place in a ladies interclass-compartment, eating, talking and having a good time in her own way. Thus the husband and wife are shown to be different in their attitude towards each other.

Man- woman relationship portrayed in “Karma” is devoid of love and understanding. Sir Mohan Lal represents typically indifferent Indian husband. It is the result of his hypocrisy. Sir Mohan Lal alienates himself from his native soil and cultural roots. He is English in his dress but he fails to maintain man –woman relationship expected by the English couple. The equality and uninhabited intermingling between man and woman which is a basic element of western civilization is totally absent in his relationship with his wife. Their married life amounts to mere physical coexistence in the same house and to all – two brief sexual acts. They remain childless. She lives in the upper storey of the house and he on the ground floor. He does not like his wife’s poor literature relatives’ having about his bungalow, so they never come. Lady Mohan Lal’s

husband never has any time to spare for her. Thus the author looks at the theme of man- woman relationship critically.

The theme is presented realistically making use of irony, technique of contrast and giving vivid description of characters scenes and situations. Humanism can be seen through the character of Lachmi, Lady Lal who is always eager to develop human relationship on the ground of humanism. While she eats, the coolie comes near her and inquires :

Are you traveling alone, sister?' 'No, I am with my master, brother. He is in the waiting room. He travels first class. He is a vizier and a barrister, and meets so many officers and English men in the trains – and I am only a native woman. I can't understand English and don't know their ways, so I keep to my zenana inter-class. ("Karma", P. 9)

Sir Mohan Lal pays the price for his artificially contrived exclusiveness from his culture and the people. It is his "Karma" – the unexpected turn of his fate to be thrown out on the ground of the railway platform from the first class coupe.

"The Morning After the Night Before" is about the restrictions on a married man in man – woman relationship. The theme is treated at both physical and psychological level humorously. A couple attends a hilarious party in which the husband dances with his friend's wife who is fair and buxom. He is attracted towards her bulbous breasts which are on the verge of escaping from the narrow strap of cloth which hold them down. He cannot keep his eyes off them. His mind is too befogged to realize what he is doing or what he should have done or not done. He however imagines that he would like to have undone the little strap that holds her buxom breasts and to have deposited it in his pocket. He is too drunk to remember what he actually has done.

He fears that he might have misbehaved with his woman partner. His amorous adventure is a proof of his infidelity towards his wife. His immoral act is responsible for outraging family piety. His wife had

warned him that one thing she would never condone was physical disloyalty. She had often threatened: "If you do it once– I'll do it a hundred times". P.182 The husband remains under tension and suffers from headache as he is not sure as to what he actually did. But he is relieved from the tension when he comes to know from his wife that his amorous escapade was actually an encounter with her.

Thus The story shows that the consequences of extra- marital relation on man- woman relationship can be very grave. So a married man should be aware of the restrictions on him in view of man –woman relationship.

The theme is presented realistically. The description of the party, men and women and the dance is vivid and photographic. The husband's lust for another woman is realistic. How the wife rebukes her husband for his misbehavior with her sounds humorous and real. The husband's fear for probably transgressing the limited of man – woman relationship in the party and its likely consequences are an evidence of psychological realism in the story. The husband is shown to be worried about man woman relationship but fails to care for the sanctity of the institution of marriage. 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 relation.

"A Bride for the Sahib" is a tragic tale of the Schism and the dichotomy between a 'wog'- a Westernized oriental gentleman and his unwesternized typically Indian wife.

A story of intense human predicament, It brings out temperamental, social and marital dissonance in man and woman relationship. Theirs is a marriage without love and sex.

Srijut Santosh Sen was married to Kumari Kalyani Das. Their was an arranged marriage in which race, religion, caste, horoscopes and dowry are given importance instead of the couple's liking and love for each other . Sen's wife was chosen by his mother and Uncle. The married

couple realized their differences in taste , life style, temperament and upbringing. They failed to consummate their marriage when they went to the honeymoon in the country. Sen was disappointed in his traditional Indian wife. He would not love his wife. He found his wife was not worthy of him. The writer showed this through the probing of Sen :

If he had married one of the English girls he had met in his University days how different things would have been. They would have kissed a hundred times between the wedding and the wedding night; they would have walked hand-in-hand through the forest and made love beside the river ; they would have lain in each other's arms and sipped their Scotch. They would have nibbled at knick-knacks in between bouts of love, they would have made love till the early hours of the morning. ("A Bride for the Sahib", pp. 135-136)

Kalyani Das realized that her husband was frustrated as she could not fulfill his desire, as his wife. She felt she was unworthy of him. So she committed suicide. It was the result of their arranged marriage.

The theme of man- woman relationship is reflected through the conventional marriage which is described quite realistically in the story. Inequality in man- woman relationship leads to tragic consequences. It can have a dehumanizing effect on the life partner. The author develops the theme in such a way that it evokes feelings of pity in the mind of the reader about the woman who loses her life due to her unsuccessful marriage.

The theme of "The Portrait of a Lady" is familial relationship. It deals with the intimate relationship between the grandmother and the grandson. The narrator who is the grandson has known his grandmother for nearly twenty years. The grandson likes her very much because she is pious and gentle. The grandmother and the grandson are good friends. They live together. When the grandson's parents go to live in the city the grandmother helps him to get ready to go to school. She used to accompany him up to the temple. When the narrator joins an English

school in the city, she is very much disturbed because she cannot help him in his lessons. She does not like her grandson taking music lessons. To her music has lewd associations. When the narrator goes up to the university, he begins to live in a separate room. The common link of friendship is snapped.

The grandmother is proud to see her grandson going abroad for further studies. The narrator thinks that she will be upset and become sentimental. On the contrary she kisses his forehead when he takes her leave. When he returns from the foreign country, the grandmother celebrates his home-coming by “by singing of the home – coming of the warriors.” (P.31) She dies peacefully after the grandson comes back from the foreign country. The grandson is quite happy with his relationship with the grandmother. Their relationship is based on love, understanding and feeling of respect.

The theme is developed realistically as it has autobiographical touch. Khushwant Singh's relationship with his grandmother namely, Lakshmi Bai, was very close and deep. She was very dear to him.

The narrator's attachment to his granny is a typical feature of the Indian family. He is more attached to his granny than to his parents. The realism is coupled with humanism in this story. Humanism can be seen through the grandmother's character. She is a unique character in the whole range of Indo- Anglican fiction. Alive or dead, she possesses a halo of unearthly brilliance around her. She does belong to the old world and has an old world dignity and charm about her. She possesses charity, compassion, faith, selfless service spirit of sacrifice, piety and spirituality. It goes to the credit of Khushwant Singh that despite her mystic traits she is not reduced to a personified abstraction. She is a full-blooded, vital character and has grace.

She looks after her grandson. She takes the responsibility of feeding the stray dogs in the village and after shifting to city in the absence of dogs. She starts taking care of the sparrows diet. She derives an extraordinary satisfaction out of this act of hers which is no less than

any prayer. The death scene of grandmother is rendered in a very touching manner and creates a feeling of vacuum in the members of the family as well as the readers. Venugopal in his *The Indian Short Story in English (A survey)* rightly says :

“Khushwant Singh is at his best when portraying something gentle as in “The Portrait of a Lady.”¹

“Black Jasmine” deals with human relationship beyond family ties between two friends of opposite sex. Their friendship is based on true love.

Hiren Bannerjee , an Indian and Martha Stack, an American Negro are the only coloured students in their class in Paris and so they are thrown together. They become good friends. Martha is an attractive girl. She is attracted towards Hiren who appreciates her beauty. He thinks that it is a silly idea to seduce and bed a Negro woman in Europe . So his first attempt to make love to her fails as he finds the Negroid body-smell unpleasant. Martha is disappointed both of them return to their countries. They get married. Martha leaves two husbands, and lives alone. Hiren has his wife and two grown- up children. But he cannot forget Martha.

“For many years the vision of Martha standing stark naked in the centre of the room had acted like an aphrodisiac.” (P.115)

Martha happens to meet Hiren after thirty years. They had become rather old but their feelings of love and sex got revived. They made love. Hiren Bannerjee forgets his lovely wife in the heat of his passion for his beloved. Extra- marital relationships made him forgetful of his wife. Obligation of love overpowered that of marital relationship.

The theme of friendship between persons of opposite sex leading to love is presented realistically. The affinity between them against the backdrop of racial discrimination adds to the social realism in the story. Khushwant Singh’s depiction of the attitude of the white men towards

Negro women and that of the Black towards the white women, Indian woman's attitude towards her husband's female friend sounds realistic. The author develops the theme realistically. Humanism in the story implies that marital relationship should be based on true love, understanding and sympathetic outlook. The author shows it artistically.

“Posthumous” deals with the theme of human relationship between the narrator and his so called friends, colleagues and acquaintances. It is a relation between man and man. The narrator thinks he would die as he is ill. The narrator imagines that perhaps the news of his death would be really hard on his friends. He had many friends. He was a popular person. The newspaper— **the Tribune** would give prominence to the news of his death. There would be a headline. The obituary notices would perhaps be full of praise for him and important men like ministers and judges would call at his house to pay their last respects. The narrator thinks his funeral would be most largely attended. Thus his imagination creates all kinds of situations and he visualizes a series of scenes of persons consoling his widow and his children for their irreparable loss but it actually so happens that **the Tribune** publishes only a very brief obituary notice at the bottom of page three, column one about the narrator. Probably the reporter was not having good relationship with the narrator and so he relegated him to an insignificant place. The narrator thought that he was mean to take revenge after his death. Mr. and Mrs. Quadric, lawyer friends of the narrator read the news of the narrator's death, they were expected to call his house but they did not arrive. Mr. Khosla, who was a high court judge and who knew the narrator also did not bother to come. A few others joined the funeral procession but they left the procession on the way. No mourner was with the hearse till the end of the last journey. The narrator felt very bad.

The theme of human relationship in this story is treated realistically. The author has used the device of irony, techniques of contrast and first person narration to make realism effective. See how the narrator began to look at himself critically in the new context.

I began to feel a little small. Lesser men than myself had had larger crowds. Even a dead pauper carried on a municipal wheelbarrow got two sweepers to cart him off. I had only one human being, the driver, and even he seemed to be oblivious of enormity of the soul whose decayed mansion he was transporting on its last voyage. As for the horse, he was positively rude.” (“Posthumous”, P. 6)

The author’s humanistic approach to the theme implies and indicates that human relationship between man and man should be genuine and not superficial. The rich can learn this from the poor. Furthermore, Khushwant Singh’s concept of human relationship is not bound by the four walls of the home. He has a broader vision of humanity. Relationship beyond family could be envisioned. Interpersonal relationship should be strong.

The story “The Butterfly” demonstrates man’s inconstancy in human relationship beyond family ties. It illustrates a man’s ficklemindness in his relationship with women and principles.

The story revolves around the central character, Romesh Chandra or Charles, who is the butterfly – a symbol of flippancy in love. The butterfly in him is unmasked in the narrative sequence of the story.

Charles was at first closely associated with batches of Anglo-Indian students. He had stuck a gray feather in his sola topee as a mark of his affinity with Anglo – Indians. His English speech pattern was extremely artificial, affected, and pompous. Charles vocabulary was extensive and also specialized to such an extent that some of the words he used were not to be found even in **the Oxford English Dictionary**. Charles created his own dream world in which he was in love with Betty Brown, an Anglo – Indian girl, who reciprocated his sentiment. But this dream was shattered when her favourite, Jacob, got a job as a police sergeant and married her. This was a signal for Charles to disown his Anglo- Indian heritage and assume the role of Romesh Chandra.

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Charles went native with a bang since his heart was captivated by his coy cousin from Shahapur. He gave up his Western dress in favour of *Khadi* and *Swedeshi* wear. He turned patriotic and revolutionary carrying a list of the intended victims in his pocket. Then he fell in for socialism and began to organize tangawallas for the righteous cause of their struggle against governmental tyranny. He organized a strike of tangawallas and was severely beaten up by Jacob and his policemen. Thus the butterfly had been bludgeoned. His friends took him home and arranged for a good-looking European nurse to take care of him. He quickly regained his spirits and shouted, 'Comrades, to the barricades.' The pretty nurse tried to pacify him and he smiled at her. He introduced himself to her. He is happy to meet her.

The treatment of the theme of love between man and woman is realistically. The character of Romesh Chandra stands for men who are not constant in maintaining their relationship with others. They are not men of principle. The author makes use of humour to expose such people. The unmasking of weakness in the character is done in light vein.

"The Convert" deals with the theme of human relationship in general. It is developed with reference to man – woman relationship, relationship between sisters-in-law, and relationship between people of different races and religions.

Mr. and Mrs. Sethi are married. They have children. But there is no harmony in their husband–wife relationship. Mrs. Sethi thinks of divorce. However she continues to live as Mr. Sethi's wife for the sake of money, her children and to avoid the gossip of so-called friends relatives about their separation. Mrs. Sethi is quite unhappy with Sethi. She hates him and thinks that she has wedded to a moron. Mrs. Sethi's relationship with Mr. Sethi's sister is also not good. Her sister in law was against her marriage with Mr. Sethi. Her sister-in-law tries to keep her brother under her influence. Mrs. Sethi hates her for her interfering in their man-woman relationship. Mrs. Sethi also hates the Pakistani Counsel – General as she is prejudiced against the Muslims since the Hindu-

refugee camp in India. These memories create a deep-seated hurt in her heart for everything Muslim, particularly Pakistani Muslim. Mrs. Sethi also hates the English people who remind her of the British rule in India and its aftermath.

Mrs. Sethi comes in contact with one Mrs. Moore, a member of the Love Group. She suggests Mrs. Sethi to make use of a formula based on love to have good human relationship.

The formula appears to be attractive and ideal. Mrs. Sethi applies it first to her husband and it has good result. Then she makes use of it on her sister-in-law. They feel happy after this. Mrs. Sethi also treats the English people according to the does and don'ts given in the formula. Finally she approaches the Pakistani diplomat and tries to do the same. But the Pakistani diplomat looks at her approach towards improving human relationship as an act of eccentricity. He makes fun of it. Gossip-mongers also make fun of her. Mrs. Sethi is told that she is making a fool of herself. So she loses control over her temper. She holds her sister-in-law responsible for the gossip and so she gives a stinging slap on her face.

“The convert” seems to suggest that it is not easy to maintain good human relationship with the help of a formula. Human relationship is a complex matter. Theoretical formulations applied artificially in improving human relationship may not work in reality.

The author's depiction of conflict between husband and with sister-in-law in the family and also the conflict between person of different races and religions at the personal level in a society sounds realistic. His description of the Love Group - an organization doing social work - is also realistic. The author makes use of mild satire and humour to add to his realism in the story. The author's humanism can be seen in the choice of the theme - desire to have good human relations in family are beyond family. Khushwant is all for love and sincerity. He is against artificiality, something, that is ostentatious.

2. Love and Sex

“Kusum” illustrates the theme of human relationship beyond familial relationship based on love. It is a romantic love story. It is the story of a repressed adolescent girl who had become a prisoner of her own psychic fences. She was short, fat, dark and wore gold-rimmed glasses which made her look older than what she was. She shunned sex and even the idea of the company of men frightened her. She looked like a virtuous ‘auntie’ and positively disliked the gift of a lipstick by her friends on her nineteenth birthday. Kusum felt that with the conclusion of her degree examination a vacuum had descended on her. As she rode a bicycle home, she encountered a poor hawker on the street. She lost her temper, but the hawker was so provoked that he manipulated a long, lecherous wink and the sound of a loud kiss. The street was deserted, and he accosted her this unexpected gesture which created an intense sensations in Kusum’s inner being. It acted as a stimulus to her repressed self to break all barriers. She became a natural, physically normal girl and assert her innate appetite. This gesture was the mark of the psychic release which enabled her to begin realizing her true self. She loosened her hair, used the lipstick and stood before the mirror, admiring herself. The story shows that both of them – Kusum and the hawker – are attracted towards each other and like each other.

The author makes use of psychological realism in developing the them. His humanism lies in the selection of the theme and presenting it sympathetically.

“Black Jasmine” deals with the theme of extra-marital love. Hiren Bannerjee, an Indian and Martha Stack, an American Negro are the only coloured students in their class in Paris and so they are thrown together. They become good friends. Martha is an attractive girl. She is attracted towards Hiren who appreciates her beauty. But Hiren thinks that it is a

unpleasant. Martha is disappointed. Both of them return to their countries. They get married. Martha leaves two husband, and lives alone. Hiren has his wife and two grown up children. He cannot forget Martha. "For many years the vision of Martha standing stark naked in the centre of the room had acted like an aphrodisiac."(P.115)

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Khushwant Singh describes sex organs in details. For example : Hiren was hypnotized by Martha's large bosoms and very black and oversized nipples. With difficulty he forced himself to look lower the fuzz of her pubic hair and the broad flanks of her muscular things. (pp. 114-115)

In "The Great Difference", sex and spiritualism are inxtaposed. A girl comes to the narrator and the two representatives of faith to discuss some of her spiritual problems with them. But the narrator looks at her as an object of sex. He thinks :

She looks too much creature of the flesh to be seen in realms spiritual. But there she was – fair and buxom with her fuzzy hazel hair scattered in profusion about her shoulders. Her breasts were protestingly straight Jacketed under a soft, silky pullover. Her steatopygous behind was an Invitation to lustfulness forbidden by the laws of man. (P.71)

The narrator looks at the young French lady romantically. This approach on the part of the narrator in the spiritual assembly appears odd and comic.

In "The Rape" Singh deals with the theme of human relationship beyond familial ties. He portrays the preponderantly physical reality of

In "The Rape" Singh deals with the theme of human relationship beyond familial ties. He portrays the preponderantly physical reality of woman's passion for man and man's irrepressible desire for woman and creates an effect of surprise.

The story takes place in rural parts of lovely, earthy Punjab. Dalip Singh, who was not on good terms with his uncle, Banta Singh, is presented as an adolescent young man in love with his uncle, Banta Singh's attractive daughter, Bindo. Dalip went to his farm to water the crops in the evening and heard women's voices in the adjoining field of Banta Singh. Her got up and saw Bindo washing herself on opposite bank. As he watched her, Dalip was possessed of a maddening desire, and before the girl could turn around he, smothered her face with passionate kisses, stifled her breath, and carried her to a posture where she could resist him no more. She looked at him with vacant expression, and tears rolled down her cheeks. After the event Dalip was charged with rape before a court of law. Banta Singh had hired a lawyer to help the police prosecutor. Dalip was too poor to hire a defense counsel but asserted that he had not committed any crime. He pleaded before the magistrate that before he is sent to jail, the judge should ask Bindo if she was not willing. He went to her because she wanted him; she loved him. So he was innocent. The magistrate asked Bindo whether she had gone to the accused of her free will. Bindo replied positively. The charge of rape was found to be baseless. So it is not the case of rape but of love.

The quality of man's response to woman in "The Rape" was mistaken. It was the result of family feuds and disturbed human relationship. The author described animosity between two relatives and its adverse effect on human relationship quite realistically. The author seems to suggest that egoistic feelings are dangerous and feeling of love are welcome in human relationship. The author looks at love from the humanistic perspective in view of the relationship between the lover and the beloved.

Peter Hansen, A young American from Illinois, who felt that his spirit was scrapped amid skyscrapers, took to the preaching of the gospel of Christ and chose India as the country of his mission. He arrived in the Punjab countryside and plunged himself into humanitarian work with American thoroughness. Peter Hansen was no ordinary missionary; he had a passion for social and economic reform. Though the narrator was a Marxist, he and Hansen became great friends. Hansen was all praise for Moola Singh because he had solved the problems of throwing opens the Sikh temple to Christians and of making payments to them for skinning dead buffaloes. These two friends visited Moola Singh and the habitations of other Christian folk who had pictures of Kali having on the walls. Hansen to see the superstitious people.

Soon Moola Singh's pretty daughter appeared "with two pitchers balanced on her stately head." (P.44). Hansen was electrified by the breathtaking, lovely sight and exclaimed: "She is like a flower in the desert, and desert flowers always smell sweeter." He at last, looking up at the sky endeavored to give poetic expression to his intense feeling: "She walks in beauty like the night." (P.45) This Byronic touch in Hansen was inspired by the village belle and suggests the climax of this rustic, Punjabi pastoral. A Punjabi pastoral is pictorial and romantically evocative.

"A Love Affair in London" explores the theme of love at first sight. Between a young girl and a young man. Kamini Garve, an adolescent girl turned Satyagrahi_ (A non-violent political rebel)is produced before the district magistrate in the court room in India during world war II for having participated in the quit India movement in 1942. Robert Smith sends her to jail. Kamini finds two lines in it marked in red and initialed 'K.G.': "Her face was like a king's command. When all the swords are drawn." (pp. 185-186) These lines are some sort of tribute to her facial expression. They show that he is attracted towards her. He loves her. Kamini also begins to feel attracted to him when she goes to England, She secretly harbours the hope that she might perhaps meet him.

her facial expression. They show that he is attracted towards her. He loves her. Kamini also begins to feel attracted to him when she goes to England, She secretly harbours the hope that she might perhaps meet him. It is a curious and complex feeling– very difficult to analyse and categories as love or fancy. She looks into the telephone directory and is dismayed by the large number of Robert Smith in it. She constantly thinks of him. Kamini is shocked to know that Robert Smith is killed in the war. The story is a lyrical quality and aims as making a poetic communication about life.

“The Bottom Pincher” deals with the theme of obsession with sex. It illustrates, theme of sex. It illustrates the character’s interest in sex related activities like pinching bottoms of women and watching the breasts of women by men.

The Parsi Lalkaka, a big shot in Bombay visits the Dadyseth Parsi Fire Temple every day. After praying in the temple, he comes out and gives alms with his right hand to the beggars and the needy gathered at the gate and indulges in pinching the bottoms, touching the bosoms of women, in the crowd with his left hand. The narrator is also interested in these sex-related activities. His perversion can be seen in the following expression :

If the bottom is nicely rounded, I would like the freedom to caress it In the cup of my palm. If it is very large or very small. I would like the freedom to run a finger up its crevice. Only if it sags would I want the freedom to take the sagging flesh between my thumb and index finger and tweak it. (“The Botto-Pincher”, P.119)

The narrator tries to teach a lesson to the so-called respected gentleman- the Pepsi Lalkaka but in the process he is also exposed as both of them sail in the same boat. Both of them appear sex hungry, they leave no opportunity to pinch bottoms, caress or watch breasts.

The author treats the subject of sex romantically. He looks at it through the eyes of the two apparently looking gentlemen. It is a reality

writing has the relish of humour and poetry which are coupled with the acts of banal and vulgar sex.

His humanity lies in exposing the hypocrites turning women into object offending their sense of morality.

In “The Great Difference”, the theme sex of is treated in a light vein. A girl comes to the narrator and to the other two representatives of faith to discuss some of her spiritual problems with them. But the narrator looks at her as an object of sex.

He thinks :

She looked too much creature of the flesh to be seen in realms spiritual. But there she was- fair and buxom with her fuzzy hazel hair scattered in profusion about her shoulders. Her breasts were protesting straight jacketed under a soft, silky pullover. Her steatopygous behind was an Invitation to lustfulness forbidden by the laws of man. (“The Great Difference” P.71)

The narrator looks at the young French lady romantically. This approach on the part narrator in the spiritual assembly appears odd and comic because the theme of sex is juxtaposed with spiritualism.

“A love Affair in London” depicts human relationship based on romantic love between a young man and a young girl. The author explores the theme of love at first sight between them as it leads to their attraction for each other.

Kamini Garve, an adolescent girl turned Satyagrahi (a non-violent political rebel) is produced before the district magistrate in the court room in India during world war II for having participated in the Quit India Movement in 1942. Roberts Smith, an English magistrate asks Kamini what her age is and when she tells him that she is seventeen. He suggests her that she should go back to school and mind her studies. But Kamini reports that he should go back to England and mind his country’s business. Robert Smith sends her to jail on the charge of the contempt of court. But he appreciates her beauty and courage. He gives her a book

business. Robert Smith sends her to jail on the charge of the contempt of court. But he appreciates her beauty and courage. He gives her a book of poems to read in the jail. Kamini finds, two lines in it marked in red ink and initiated 'K.G.'

Her face was like a king's command, when all the swords
are drawn. ("A Love Affair in London", pp.185-186)

These lines are some sort of tribute to her facial expression. They show that he is attracted towards her. He loves her. Kamini also begins to feel attracted towards him. When she goes to England. She secretly harbours the hope that she might perhaps meet him. It is a curious and complex feeling—very difficult to analyse and categorize as love or fancy. She looks into the telephone directory and is dismayed by the large telephone number of Robert Smiths in it. She constantly thinks of him. Kamini is shocked to know from Robert's girl friend that Robert Smith is killed in the war. The story has a haunting quality and aims at making poetic communication about life.

The treatment of the theme of human Relationship between the young man and the young woman based on love is romantic. Humanism is against war. War is a deadly evil. The author shows through the story that it is responsible for man's unhappiness or sorrow.

The representative of different countries had gathered in Paris to discuss spiritualism. The narrator was one of them. He is to speak on Sikh religion. There are other Indians who want to speak in Hinduism and Islam. The narrator's taking interest in the sex appears odd and comic. The young lady realizes the intention of the narrator in meeting and having discussion with her on spiritualism. So she cancels her appointment with him.

The narrator is shown to be K. Singh. The anecdotal story reads like a piece of autobiography and he looks at the theme of sex erotically. The author exposes the hypocritical behaviour of the so called spiritualists working for the spread of their religions.

3. Punjabi Identity

“When Sikh Meets Sikh” mainly deals with the theme of Punjabi consciousness.

It is shown in the story that when a Sikh meets another Sikh they both say ‘*Sut Sree Akal.*’ More frequently one starts loudly proclaiming ‘*Wah guru jee ke Fateh.*’ For instance, Mahinder Kaur, Nanjo’s wife meets the narrator. At that time they make use of these forms of greeting. The narrator describes the psyche of the Sikh. The Sikh’s believe that they are the chosen people of god. They have sense of superiority as they consider themselves to be brave and fighting type but at the same time they are peace loving. They also know that in India itself other communities belittle the Sikhs as an odd people and have stories making fun of them. They have spirit of pioneering and try to become successful in any type of profession and odd jobs they undertake. The narrator gives the example of Narinjan Singh – a farmer in the Punjab, a domestic servant in Shahghai, a fruit picker in san Francisco, an accountant in Vancouver, and an all – in wrestler in Toronto.

The Sikh is aware of racial discrimination that they have to suffer from as a minority race in the west. Nanjo has to face injustice as a wrestler. His manager and the spectators make him angry. But he has to tolerate the racialism for the sake of money. With a characteristically Indian gesture, he slaps his stomach and says” All for the belley.” (P. 76)

The Sikhs are proud of Punjab. When they are in foreign countries to make their living they become nostalgic about their native place and their hereditary work. Nanja tells the narrator he wants to go back to Hoshiarpur and till the land and show his village to his wife who is a foreigner.

Realism about the Sikh way of life, the Sikh psyche, their capacity to do any odd job and their sense of dignity and minority complex and emotional attachment with Punjab finds expression through characters, dialogues and scenes and incidents. The author’s humanism can be seen

emotional attachment with Punjab finds expression through characters, dialogues and scenes and incidents. The author's humanism can be seen through the two Sikh's fellow feeling as persons of the same community and country. Khushwant Singh as a writer of humanistic tradition does not approve of racialism practiced at the international level.

“A Punjab Pastoral” is about a typical Punjabi Village and its ethos.

Peter Hansen, an American missionary comes to Soorajpur, a village in Punjab not far away town Amritsar. The narrator who is a Sikh helps him in his work. The narrator is also a social worker but he is a Marxist. Both of them work for the peasantry as they have heart for the humanity.

As they work in the village, they appreciate the beauty of nature in the countryside. They like the wheat fields, the corn fields, keekar, trees, peepal trees, canal water, village wells, cart tracks, village folk and women carrying pitchers on their heads, huts and temples.

They note the social geography of Soorajpur. 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 Social reformers help them to be aware of their backwardness. They want them to denounce political oppression, corruption, and injustice. The missionary and the marxistry to reform them socially, economically, educationally and normally. So that rural folk can walk on the path of progress.

The author depicts Punjabi pastoral and social ethos of the village through various scenes and incidents. It helps to establish its identity. His humanism denounces social evils. The two social workers are shown to be doing service for humanity and taking interest in whatever in beautiful in the Punjabi village.

“The Voice of God” rooted in Punjabi ethos deals with Sikh peasants own the land, the Moslems till the land of their Sikhmasters or

The Hindus are shopkeepers. They sell provisions- oil , soap salt, spices, cloth, scissors, mirrors or Japanese toys.

Life in the village is tedious and dull. People look for diversions. Once in a year there is a village fair at Amritsar with their long swords carried on their shoulders.

The Punjabis spend their day typically. In the morning, while men work in the fields and boys graze the cattle, women work at home grinding corn or spinning. After midday they all relax. The flour mill provides music.

The author shows a real Sikh through the character of Baba Ram Singh who is defeated in the Assembly elections by a candidate canvassing on a basis of his religion, caste, community money and the support of the government officials. Baba Ram Singh stands for Sikh identity. He is a god – fearing man. An agriculturist himself , he spends his life serving the peasants. He is like the Guru himself. He fights for the liberation of the peasants from the foreigners as well as exploiting landlords. He fights the police bullies and the corrupt administrators. He finds solution to the problems of the Sikh peasantry in his own peaceful way.

Khushwant Singh's realism finds expression in the characters and scenes of the story. His humanism is represented by Baba Ram Singh who is an example of Sikh psyche.

“Mr. Singh and The Colour Bar” is about the Sikh diaspora who live in comfort in a foreign country.

Mr. Singh the protagonist is quite aware of the problem of race and colour prejudice that he has to face. He tries to adjust with the Europeans by acquiring their manners and etiquettes. He tries to mix up with them. He is obsessed with sex. But he is also able to solve his sex problem. He behaves gently with women and wins the confidence of some women. He tells the Indian students living with him that they should care for the image of their country. He says they are all ambassador of their country

tells the Indian students living with him that they should care for the image of their country. He says they are all ambassador of their country and should behave decently. He takes interest in telling jokes and anecdotes about the Indian students living in that country.

A Sikh is singled out from people of other communities and countries through his distinct appearance. Mr. Singh, the protagonist wears a gorgeous silk turban and a glossy black beard neatly rolled under his chin. His turban is made of gold. He becomes a bit of palmist. In fact, he has all the esoteric learning of the orient with its glamorous façade. He is very much Sikh in his appearance and behavior.

Mr. Singh and a group of students are the realistic characters. Sikh identity is revealed through the character of Mr. Singh the protagonist. The author shows quite convincingly how the Sikhs are required to make an adjustment with the people in the foreign country to survive there. As a humanist Khushwant Singh exposes the hypocrisy and prejudices of the people in the foreign country.

“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.

The narrator who is a Sikh is a good man. He is of the view that men are born good but they become victims of evil circumstances and turn bad. If he sees people quarrelling in the street, he stops to settle their argument. He never lets a tonga driver flog his horse when he is a passerby. He is also able to understand the psychology of the driver who beats his horse out of frustrations. The narrator is lenient about thieves. He blames the circumstances and not the individuals.

He narrates an incident about a Bengali who steals the valve-caps of the wheel of a cab. He is caught by the owners of the cab. The cab drivers are the two Sikhs. They beat the Bengali. The narrator who happens to passby sees the crowd and goes to the scene. He, being a Sikh is appealed by the spectators to intervene as the drivers become very

is neither big nor burly not brave but the good cause encouraged him to intervene. He becomes ready to pay for whatever the thief has taken. He appeals the Sikh drivers to forgive the thief. But they are not in the mood to ignore the matter. They take the thief to the police station. But the narrator says at least he could not let them beat him anymore. He tries his level best to help the thief in that situation.

As a Sikh his conscience is clear. He could fulfill his sense of duty.

The story is based on a real incident in the life of Khushwant Singh. He has mentioned it in his autobiography. He mentions in the book that he could dare to protect two Muslims who buy a cow from a Sikh and take it for slaughter. The crowd of the Hindu people notice it and violence to the Muslims Khushwant Singh helps them to escape from the nasty crowd by showing courage and cleverness.

The author describes quite realistically how the Sikhs abuse the thief and how the narrator a timid man shows courage for a good cause. The humanistic approach of the author is visible through the character of the narrator who plays an important role in the story. The story has autobiographical elements in it.

In "Man, How the Government of India is Run" Punjabi identity is reflected through the character of Sunder Singh who works as a clerk in the Government department of India Delhi. Khushwant Singh looks at the people of his community critically and humorously.

Sunder Singh's knowledge of his country is said to be conventionally Punjabi. For him any one South of Bombay is a Madrasi. Punjabi people are shown to be humorous by nature. This is seen through the character of Sunder Singh. He says there are so many secretaries such as additional secretaries, joint secretaries, deputy secretaries, under secretaries and God knows how many other kinds of secretaries. He makes jokes on the word 'Secretary' and laughs at his own little joke. According to him what all the secretaries do is attend meeting, drink, cups of tea, dictate a few Memos and then go home to their Mem sahibs

makes jokes on the word 'Secretary' and laughs at his own little joke. According to him what all the secretaries do is attend meeting, drink, cups of tea, dictate a few Memos and then go home to their Mem sahibs pretending they are tired because they have been so busy. Khushwant Singh shows a Punjabi clerk's style of speaking. Sunder Singh asks the colleagues if he wants any "biscuits shiskita?" ("Man, How the Government of India is Run", P.95) Punjabi people are said to be jolly. They take interest in friendly banter and telling and enjoying jokes. They also are interested in sports. For instance Sunder Singh participates in the sport matches held between the different departments of the Government of India. Before taking part in the game he eats several chapattis, a variety of curries, ice-cream and drinks tea and chews a pan. Being an energetic man he emerges as a hero in the holley- ball matches. The narrator says, "Sunder Singh leapt like a tiger and put the punch of a cannon behind each ball he sent smashing down over the net to the other side." ("Man, How the Government of India is Run", P. 100)

The author wants to show Punjabi people are honest and hardworking, meritorious. The Sikhs are said to be a proud- race. When one of the colleague's of Sunder Singh says promotion has nothing to do with work or ability or anything like that he says to be successful and to be promoted in one's job. One should follow the policy of boot – licking and pleasing the boss by doing anything for him. Sunder Singh's reply is that he can not do such thing.

Khushwant Singh treats this theme of Punjabi identity realistically. He exposes the character of Sunder Singh who is pretentious. The narrator shows that he was compromising with his sense of pride. When he goes home he tells a lie to his family. He says then too much work to do every day. That day he spent his time playing games avoiding his official duties. But he tells his wife that he is tired of because of too much work. Khushwant Singh's humanism doesn't approve of pretension and hypocrisy.

they are against them. Khushwant Singh as a representative of his community who takes interest in life, reflects the his spirit of his community. Many of his stories like, ‘ Posthumous’, ‘Maiden Voyage of the Jal Hindia’, ‘Mr. Kanjoose and the Great Miracle’, ‘Morning After the Night Before’, ‘The Great Difference’, ‘Rats and Cats in the House of Culture’ can be cited as cases in point. V.A. Shahane rightly observers about the author “Khushwant Singh reminds me, of the well known proverb : “He that is of merry heart bits loudly and unmistakably in his tales marry of his stories look like extended but aesthetically embellished jokes.”²

All the stories have a autobiographical element in them they sound realistic as they as based on experiences and observation of the writer. Humanism is also reflected through them.

“The Portrait of a Lady” manifests an orthodox Sikh woman’s religiosity and sense of her glorious tradition. The narrator’s grandmother wears a spotless white sari. Her fingers always remain busy telling the beads of her rosary. She recites her prayers. She feeds the dogs and the sparrows. She is full of peace and contentment. She takes her grandson to his school. The priest teaches the children the alphabet and the morning prayer. The grandmother goes to the temple to read the scriptures. When her grandson arrives from England, she collects the women of the neighbourhood, gets an old drum and starts to sing. She sings of the home- coming of warriors. It is only on the last day of her life she omits to pray and tell her beads.

“The Portrait of a Lady” exhibits a Sikh woman’s interest in religion and spirituality. The story is autobiographical. The protagonist that is the lady’s portrayal of character is based Khushwant Singh’s grandmother. The Sikh sensibility gets communicated through this Sikh protagonist who is drawn from life itself. The author’s humanism exhibits piety, contentment and kindness towards animals and birds.

It shows familial relationship and closeness in family relationship.

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“The Great Difference” deals with the theme of Shikhism. It is about the religion of the Sikh who hails from Punjab. The narrator Khushwant Singh is one of the characters in the story. He represents Sikh religion. He goes to Paris to represent his religion along with the representatives of Islam and Hinduism. They want to represent their religion at the world congress of Faiths in Paris. The story unfolds the tenets of Sikhism. Sikh is neither supposed to eat meat, nor worship an idol. The Sikhs and Moslems are traditional enemies. A Sikh is also supposed to rescue women in distress.

The theme is treated realistically but in a light vein. Important aspects of Sikh religion are revealed through the comparison of a Sikh with a Muslim and a Hindu. The author's humanism is seen through the broadmindedness of the representative of Sikh – the narrator Khushwant Singh himself. He shares meal with the Muslim Sahib though the Hindu criticises him for doing so.

“The Fawn” manifests Punjabi lust for living fun and friendliness. It also exhibits a Sikh's aversion for violence and bloodshed of any kind.

The narrator Khushwant Singh and his Moslem friend go to the countryside for hunting. They want to escape from the routine and tedium of city life. The narrator says, “An outing in the country with a gun gives me the break I want. I do not mind if I kill nothing. In fact I find killing somewhat wicked.”(P.90) How the narrator's Moslem friend kills a fawn with a gun and how the fawn struggles with pains is narrated to evoke sympathy in the mind of the readers. The narrator finally says he could not get the picture of the man slitting the throat of the fawn out of his mind.

Sikh who live in Singhpura, a typical Punjabi village. The people there are mostly agriculturist. Dalip Singh and Banta Singh are farmers. Dalip Singh gets up early in the morning and goes to his field to plough it. Other people also work on the field. The women folk help men after their work of cooking is over. The story evokes rustic atmosphere, Dalip Singh loves Bindo, Banta Singh's daughter. But there is enmity between Dalip Singh and Banta Singh. Banta Singh had killed his brother in their quarrel over land dispute. Family feuds are common occurrences among the Punjabi farmers. Dalip Singh being a farmer takes bullocks to plough the land. His mother helps him to irrigate the land. Bread, spinach, butter milk are the food items in his meal on the farm. There are other Sikh farmers who take interest in drinking *bhang*. Government officials are corrupt Bindo's father oils the palms of the officers involved in the court case. Bindo is not taken into confidence by her father. The rule of patriarchy prevails in the Punjabis. Dalip Singh rapes Bindo whose father makes court case against Dalip Singh. When Bindo is cross-examined, she tells the court that she is not raped by Dalip but she went to him on her own. It was the case of love-affair and not rape; the court gives the judgment. The story develops the theme of Punjabi identity through this love story.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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