

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Short Story

Any work of art has the potential to influence the views of people to a significant extent. Literature is one of the crucial art forms. The researcher intends to study the gender relations in "*The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh*". The short story as a form of communication is very old. It is almost as old as the human race. In good old days, people used to tell simple tales in order to please and teach moral lessons. The main feature of a short story is its briefness, brevity. The nature and the medium of short story have changed over a period of time. Still the function of story has remained the same and its importance is of great value. The short story is defined as a piece of prose fiction which can be read at a single sitting. It presents an artistic and unified impression of life through many devices, especially theme, characters and action. (Kumar 1975:5). The form short story is important because it is the most flexible form of writing and thus eminently suited to portray the variety of Indian life. (Melwani 1977:23). In modern time, short story plays the role of infotainment. People are more likely to read short stories than novels because of the brevity of the former. Short story in any language has remained popular through all ages. Story is the base of all kinds of literature like drama, novel, poetry etc. In short story, the plot is very small and simple. It covers only small span in the life of any character. Details are deliberately avoided. As one-act play is to full-length play, short story is to novel. Short story is used variedly for different purposes. The political leaders, social workers, industrialists, teachers and the like all use different tales to prove their point of view. Even the anchor or the person who offers a vote of thanks also quotes tales in his/her speech.

Literature has crucial importance in the life of human beings. There are many great personalities influenced by the great works of literature. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, was greatly influenced by Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. In his autobiography '*My Experiments with Truth*' Gandhi (1948:364-65) states:

The book (*Unto This Last*) was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I

determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book. I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life.

Similarly, Nelson Mandela's online biography shows that he was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Indian leaders like Gandhi and Nehru. Nelson Mandela says: "I was helped when preparing for my release by the biography of Pandit Nehru, who wrote of what happens when you leave jail. (<http://www.polity.org.za/html/people/mandela.html>). Many books have also influenced even one of the most distinguished social workers Anna Hazare, especially by Swami Vivekanand's small booklet titled *Call to the Youth for Nation Building*. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Hazare) This is sufficient evidence to show how literature influences the minds of people.

One of the main functions of literature is to teach something. Literature is supposed to be the mirror of a society. Both are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Taking into consideration the importance of short story, the researcher has tried to explore the study of gender relations in the short stories of Khushwant Singh.

The Indian Short Story in English

The Indian English short story is virtually a product of 19th century. It is because Kamala Sathianadan, an Indian writer in English, first published a collection of short stories titled '*Stories from Indian Christian Life*' in 1898. It evinces that the Indian English story is more than a hundred years old. Though the genesis of the Indian short story can be traced to the Puranas, the Panchatantra, the Katha-sarithasagara and the Jataka tales, it finds its due place in modern literature during Gandhi era. Khushwant Singh (2003:ix) writes about short story in his introductory essay 'On the Short Story':

The only literary form which had its roots in tradition, and could avail itself of the vast opportunities opened up by printing and the rapidly increasing demand for literature, was the short story.

Our early writers were mainly inspired by a zeal for social reform. They tended to make frequent philosophical comments, keeping themselves generally to the ancient Indian tale

form. Both the ancient Indian fables and the ancient Indian popular tale have developed the Indian short story in English in providing short stories a definite shape and form.

A Broad Canvas of Indian English Short Story Writers

The real beginning of Indian English short story was made by the 'Big Three' novelists of nineteen-thirties, that is Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao. They got their themes in Indian myths, folktales, epics and ancient tales. The origin of Indian English short story is presented by Shiv K. Kumar (1992:9) as follows:

Although the Indian Short Story in English is comparatively a recent phenomenon, its genesis may be traced back to the ancient fables of the sixth century A. D. Its origin lies in such ancient classic as the Katha-Sarit-Sagara, Yogavashishtha, Brihat-Katha or the Panchtantra. As stories, these fables and tales were tightly structured and ingeniously conceived, although their primary objective invariably was didactic -- geared more to instruct than to entertain their readers.

There are different generations of short story writers who have contributed to this minor form of literature and made it popular among the readers. The first generation who started their writing careers with short stories in 1930s are T.L. Natesan, A.S.P. Ayyar, S.K. Chettur and a few others. Another big trio who contributed to the development of short story in English is – Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao. They started their careers with short stories in the nineteen-thirties and continued publishing volumes of short stories in recent years.

The next generation of novelists like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal and others have published short stories in pre and post independence era. The women writers like Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nergis Dalal and Attiah Hosain too have contributed to enrich this genre. Though Khushwant Singh is the author of four volumes of short stories published from 1950 to 1971, he has brought out his new volume '*The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh*' in 1989. His stories are a satire on several aspects of modern Indian life like bureaucracy, democratic election procedures, anglicized Indians, and Indians abroad. He has his own theory of short story

writing. He is well known for his sense of humour. His best known story 'The Mark of Vishnu' deals with superstitions in the society.

During last fifteen years (1991-2005), many new writers have contributed to this genre. Manjula Padmanabhan, Jug Suraiya, Manju Kak, K. N. Daruwalla, Jayant Mahapatra, Shiv K. Kumar are the contributors of new generation to short story in English. Almost all the women novelists have published their short stories. Of the new writers who have published novels as well as short stories, Amit Chaudhari, Vikram Chandra, Githa Hariharan, Anita Nair and Esther David deserve a special mention. Shyamala A. Narayan (2006:94) has made an interesting comment on the recent situation of short story writer:

The leading new novelists of the last two decades have generally been men (Arundhati Roy is the exception), but the short story seems to be largely a feminine preserve... Male novelists seems to write short stories as a kind of subsidiary activity to their novels; the situation seems to be reversed in the case of women, whose favoured form is the short story... However, one should not overlook the male writers who have made their present felt as short story writers in recent decades.

Khushwant Singh turned to short story after decades to deliver a truly memorable collection called *Paradise and Other Stories* in 2004. The publishers have acclaimed this book as 'a sparkling collection of humorous, provocative, tongue-in-cheek, tender stories' and it proves his mettle in true colours as a short story writer.

Life and Works of Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh was born of Sikh parents in a tiny hamlet called Hadali on February 2, 1915. Hadali is now deep inside Pakistan. He was the second son of Sir Sobha and Lady Singh. His father was a prominent building contractor in Delhi. His family was the most prosperous family of Hadali. He has completed his primary and secondary education in public schools in Delhi and Lahore. He did his B.A. from Government College, Lahore in 1934 in the third division. He obtained his LLB degree from Kings College, Lahore and joined Bar as a lawyer in 1937. Practicing for some times at the Inner Temple, London, he started practicing at the Punjab High Court in

Lahore (1939-47). He got married to Kaval Malik, daughter of Sir Teja and Lady Raj Malik on 30th October 1939. He has two children – the eldest son Rahul was born in 1940 and the youngest daughter Mala was born in 1945.

In 1946, Khushwant Singh was appointed as public relation officer for High Commission of India in the U.K. and in the embassy of Ireland. He was appointed as information officer in Govt. of India services at Toronto, Canada in 1947. He has also worked on two teaching assignments in the United States as a visiting professor at Swathmore College and at Princeton University. He was the member of Indian delegation to the UNESCO Sixth General Conference in Paris in 1951. He began a distinguished career as journalist with the All Indian Radio (AIR) in the same year. He worked as founder-editor of *Yojana*, an Indian government publication, New Delhi (1951-53); editor-in-chief *National Herald*, New Delhi (1978-79); editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay (1979-80), chief editor of *New Delhi* (1979-80), and editor of the *Hindustan Times* and *Cantour*, New Delhi (1980-83). He was very popular for his Saturday Column in the *Hindustan Times* called 'With Malice Towards One and All'. His hard labour made him one of the greatest journalists of his time. During his tenure, *The Illustrated Weekly* become India's pre-eminent newsweekly. After his departure, it suffered a huge drop in readership. He was the head of the Indian Delegation for Manila Writers Conference in 1965.

Khushwant Singh is a very prolific writer. His genius as a writer has been recognized all over the world. He has touched almost all the forms of literature. He began his career as a short story writer and published *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* in 1950. He then became the author of three more volumes of short stories - *The Voice of God and Other Stories* (1957), *A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories* (1967) and *Black Jasmine* (1971). Later on he brought out the new volume putting all his four collections published between 1950 and 1971 named *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh* in 1989. He has also recently published one more collection of short stories called *Paradise and Other Stories* in 2004.

Khushwant Singh is also the best known for his novels. His masterpiece, *Train to Pakistan* (1956), was produced with a brilliant cast. It is originally published as '*Mano Majra*' as 'one of the best realistic novels of Indo-English fiction' (Singh 2005:130). The

same novel has won the 'Grove India Fiction Prize' in 1956. His second novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1954) is 'an absorbing story on Indian family affairs' (Singh 2005:131). It deals with the political philosophy in the pre-independent India and sexual relation among any class of people. Khushwant Singh has shown how Buta Singh, the central figure, like many other Indian officers, wanted to adopt a 'double faced' approach by keeping his loyalty to both sides. His third novel *Delhi* (1990) is based on 'history, romance and sex' (Singh 2005:134). It deals with the description of the capital city and mentality of people in it. It is a satire on the sexual abuse of minor boys and girls. It also provides vivid descriptions of killings of Bhindarwala and Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi. His fourth novel *The Company of Women* (1999) gives us an account of hero Mohan Kumar's 'innumerable sexual encounter in very vivid and lively manner' (Singh 2005:136).

Khushwant Singh has also had an extremely successful career as a history writer. He has published *A History of the Sikhs* I two volumes in 1963 and 1966. He also published a biography *Ranjit Singh: Maharaja of Punjab* (1962) which is based on historical facts of Punjab. About this biography, Khushwant Singh says, 'I realized that in the highly competitive world of writing, one had to specialize in some subject.... I decided my best bet was Sikh relation and history, no Sikh had published anything on the subject.... I went on to write a short history of the Sikhs entirely based on published works but brought up to data' (Mallik 2001:11). He also produced *Need for a New Religion* (1991), *India: An Introduction* (1990) and *The Illustrated History of the Sikhs* (2006). He has also produced miscellaneous work including *Not Wanted in Pakistan* (1965), *Khushwant Singh's India: A Mirror for Its Monsters and Monstrosities* (1969), *Good People and Bad People* (1977), *India Without Humbug* (1977), *Indira Gandhi Returns* (1979), *We Indians* (1982), *Sex, Scotch and Scholarship* (1992), *My Bleeding Punjab* (1992), *Men and Women in My Life* (1995), *Nature Watch* (1997), *The End of India* (2003), *Burial at the Sea* (2004) and *Death at My Doorstep* (2005).

He is also well known for his translations. He has translated many works like *Umrao Jan Ada: Courtesan of Lucknow* (1961), *The Skeleton and Other Writings*, (1964), *I Take This Woman* (1967), *Hymns of Guru Nanak* (1969), *Dreams in Debris: A Collection of Punjabi Short Stories* (1972), *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs* (1974), *Come*

Back, My Master and Other Stories (1978), *Amrita Pritam: Selected Poems* (1982), *The Skeleton and That Man* (1987) etc.

His most recent work includes the celebrated autobiography named *Truth, Love and Little Malice: An Autobiography* published in 2002. He has clearly explained his views about writing an autobiography in 'Prologue': 'I have not done things which anyone else may feel are worth recording. My only chance of not being forgotten when I am dead and rotten is to write about things worth reading' (Singh 2002:2). Amita Mallik (2001:11) remarks that the author in his autobiography 'typifies the man: honest, unpretentious and who pursues his likes and dislikes about the people all the Way'.

Khushwant Singh's talent of creative writing emerges from journalism to fiction. He achieved reputation as a writer by notable collection of short stories *Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* for the first time in 1950. He was honoured with 'Grove Indian Fiction Prize' for *Train to Pakistan* in 1956. He was awarded Rockefeller Foundation grant for research on Sikh religion and history in 1963. In 1970, he was awarded 'Distinguished Men of Letters in India' a title by Govt. of Punjab. Government of India awarded him 'Padma Bhushan' in 1974 and 'Padma Vibhushan' in 2007. He was honoured with the 'Honest Man of the Year' in 2000. He was also awarded 'Punjab Rattan' by Government of Punjab in 2006. From 1980 to 1986, Singh was a member of Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament.

Critics on Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh's success as a writer and man is remarkable. It is necessary to consider the opinions, views, attitudes of others regarding him as well as of his own, in order to study gender relations in his short stories. A Senior Editor Madhu Jain (1999:52), a longtime Khushwant-watcher remarks, 'Love him or hate him, there is more to the Sardar than just sleaze. Even in the autumn of his life the celebrated writer continues to fantasize.... He's always playing the jolly sarcar, the debauch, but in the autumn of his life, he just yearns to be recognized and remembered as a scholar'. The same opinion is found in the remarks made by a modern novelist Shobha De. 'He's one person who's definitely not a bore and does not take himself too seriously,' says De, adding, 'The downside of which is that others tend not to take him seriously' (Jain 1999:52).

Dwaraka Prasad Uniyal considers Khushwant Singh as advertising guru: 'As a guru one can imagine him sitting on huge chair, giving shape to another wacky idea and polishing it with all his skills to sell it to the masses. Because he knows the masses in and out which is what you require in advertising to know the nerves and touch the pulse. And hold them tightly until they scream!' He also adds, 'the man of wits and kisses, the womanizer, and the octogenarian literary genius whom all of us love to hate. Well you may ask, what for? For his brutal frankness, for his comments on the pseudoness of Indian public, and last but certainly not the least, for his crookedness. But at the same time we love this wily Sardar for his jokes, for his literary skills and not so common style of narration of events. The man who changed the face of Indian journalism and shape of things with "The Illustrated Weekly". Then Uniyal raises the question 'who'll gonna put his money on this Sardar whose reputation with liquor and woman is quite infamous'.

Ruby Gupta (2001) holds that the very name Khushwant Singh conjures up the image of an untidily dressed, flirtatious Sardar, fortified with scotch, and surrounded by a bevy of wannable women writers and socialites. The lay reader believes him to be an extremely superficial and frivolous man, who has a penchant for getting into soups due to his unrestrained opinions on disputable topics. They feel that neither he nor his writings ought to be taken seriously. The result is that when the merits of the works of Khushwant Singh are mentioned, it is usually taken with a pinch of salt.

Ruby Gupta goes on to highlight the merits of Khushwant Singh as the creator of such masterpieces as: the award winning *Train to Pakistan*, *Delhi*, *Religion of the Sikhs*, *Guru Gobind Singh - the Saviour*, *My Bleeding Punjab*, *Punjab's Tragic Story*, *Need for a New Religion in India and Other Essays*, *Indira Gandhi Returns*, and the incomparable masterpiece *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. I and vol. II.

According to Madhu Jain (1999), Khushwant Singh is 'a man for most professions - he's been a lawyer, bureaucrat, editor (*The Illustrated Weekly*, *The Hindustan Times* and *Yojana*), academic (taught at Princeton), scholar and Rajya Sabha member. But it's in his political avatar that he's tripped. Even his son says, "He reacts emotionally to politics. When he is fond of something, the rationality goes. He can be very foolish politically but absolutely honest emotionally."

Khushwant Singh is an excellent raconteur. He is very enthusiastic with his colleges. T.S. Nagarajan narrates, 'Khushwant loved sauntering in, going from desk to desk, talking to his colleagues. One morning, he strayed into his secretary's cabin and found him eating lunch well before time. "What happened? Didn't you have your breakfast?" asked the editor. Taken by surprise, the secretary stood up holding a piece of *chapatti* in his hand, dripping with oily *subzi*, and answered: "Sir, the doctor has asked me to have lunch before lunch and after lunch". Khushwant laughed and hastily left the room.'

Khushwant Singh had good relations with his wife. In this connection, T.S. Nagarajan (2004) writes, 'Kaval, his wife, (who is no more), was the shield between him and his unwanted world. She was house-proud and kept her home clean and bright. Most regulars in the Lodhi Gardens would see her walk every evening, but she did not talk to anyone. Kaval appeared reserved and tough. In reality, she was neither. Khushwant tries to give the impression that he is a drunken slob. He is not. He works very hard and never drinks during the day. He loves his Scotch and is equally generous with it to his friends and guests. Dinners in their home were great events. Kaval managed to wind up the party by 9 p.m. If some guests stubbornly stayed on, she would just retire to her room leaving the difficult job to her husband.'

Khushwant Singh has written many books on different subjects and most of the characters from his works are lifelike. Dr. Shujaat Hussain (2006) mentions, 'with nearly 90 books to his name, Khushwant Singh can rightly claim the title of the best-known, widely travelled and most studied writer in the Indian literary horizon who loves his reputation as a womanizer and philanderer. Born in Hadali (now in Pakistan) the grand old man of Indian English has enjoyed the affection and reverence of both critics and a vast readership. Readers have always identified themselves with his work. One of his novels *Train to Pakistan* has been made into film and many of his characters are alive and deeply steeped in local reality. His characters are real persons whom we encounter in our daily life, only names have been changed.'

Apart from the autobiographical elements, one may notice didacticism in the works of Khushwant Singh. His every work of art has this or that kind of moral. It is said that Khushwant Singh hadn't spent more than half his time in partying and drinking scotch,

then he would have been the most powerful voices in India, capable of transforming our society. He is an author who loves to get joked about and make other laugh, a journalist and known for his affinity to scotch and women. Warren French writes, 'His ironic short stories resemble those of Angus Wilson and express a similar disillusionment about man's rationality. Singh is a brilliant, sardonic observer of a world undergoing convulsive changes; and his novels provide a unique insight into one of the major political catastrophes of this century. His difficulties in fusing his editorial comments with the action in his stories, however, cause his novels to remain principally dramatized essays.' His most controversial novel *The Company of Women* (1999) has also didactic element: 'At the end of the novel, Mohan Kumar (the hero) is seen suffering from AIDS. Khushwant therefore, seems to warn people ironically against unsafe sexual encounters'. (Singh 2005:137)

Some people think that Khushwant Singh is a writer only concerned with sex, scotch and not with scholarship. He is not a nice man to know' for many people. A famous poetess Kamala Das wrote: 'He was very unkind to me and prejudiced against South Indians. May be if I had been fairer, he wouldn't have. I don't want to meet him in this world' (Jain 1999: 55) He is always indifferent to dressing. But Amita Malik puts him among the worst dressed men in India. Khushwant Singh confines: 'Yes, I am born joker' (Jain 1999: 54) But this is not true. Otherwise he cannot be the creator of great works like *Train to Pakistan*, and *Delhi* etc.

Khushwant Singh loves living in controversies and even writes unhesitatingly on the controversial issues like sex, hermaphrodites, etc. He is also popular for his acerbic pen, wit and humour and also for satires on social issues. His preference for scotch, his crude humour, and his public declaration that he has no faith show that he is secular person. Still he has faith in his religion. His retaining of turban and beard shows his attitude clearly. He says in one of his interviews, 'Yes, I am very interested in Sikhism but that is because it is part of my identity' (Zaidi 2006:40). He maintains an iron schedule. He's up by 5 am and straight to work - 'No wasting of time on prayers or anything, my only wasteful hobby is crossword puzzles.' (Random Stuff: 2) Then he compiles material for his columns, edits, writes, strolls around the garden, and entertains a regulated stream of guests until 9 pm, when he summarily throws everyone out.

As a prolific and India's best-known writer, Khushwant Singh has a multidimensional view towards life. Once in an interview he points out that love is an ephemeral and illusive concept, it doesn't last, but lust lasts (Jain 1999: 54). Nandini Mehta (1992) observes 'he [Khushwant Singh] is of course, through all his different avatars run several common threads -- his total lack of humbug, hypocrisy and prudishness (the "sexy passages" are, I am sure, part of his long-running crusade to rid Indians of their prudery and inhibitions); the vivid, lively style which makes him compulsively readable on any subject; and above all, the hugely infectious zest for life, for living and learning, that infuses all his work' (Singh 1993:xiv). Khushwant Singh has enjoyed the affection and reverence of both critics and vast readership. Readers have always identified themselves with his work. Considering above mentioned views about Khushwant Singh and Indian short story, it is apt to study gender relations in *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh*.

Significance of the Study

When Khushwant Singh writes anything it attracts immediate attention and has also potential for tremendous impact, positive or negative. It is necessary to analyze Khushwant Singh's writing from the prospective of gender studies, to show whether he is gender sensitive author and give him his due credit and also to criticize him wherever he turns pornographic or portrays gender relations to the disadvantage of women. Since Khushwant Singh is one of the best-known authors in English, critical study of his work would attract immediate attention of a vast readership. Then feminist reading of Khushwant Singh's short stories would lead to gender sensitization of the readers. This work would be relevant not only to the students of literature but also to journalists, social scientists and feminist scholars.

Feminist Reading

Feminism and Feminist Movement

The term 'feminism' is originated from Latin word 'femina' that means 'woman'. There is no single exclusive theory or practice called 'feminism'. There are multiple, diverse feminist discourses. 'Feminism' relates to 'the advocacy of women's rights, status and power at par with men on the grounds of 'equality of sexes' (Singh 2004:1). In other words, feminism refers to the belief that women should have the same social,

economic and political rights as men. It also attempts to study and solve the various gender-based problems. As the study is related to literature, the role of 'feminism' in literary texts should be taken into consideration. Feminism, in literary texts, points out, 'the portrayals of gender roles, which tend to impose social norms, customs, conventions, laws and expectation on the grounds of gender discrimination. Feminism throws a challenge on the age-long tradition of gender differentiation. It attempts to explore and establish a new social order to find pertinent resolves to the real life problems in the light of traditionally gendered role playing. It deals with new social and economic realism affecting the convention-ridden gender roles (Singh 2004:2).

Feminism has an interest in man-woman relationship regarding new desirable as well as accepted gender roles. Other thrust areas of feminism are 'the revisionary reinterpretations of writings by men and their effects on women, representations of women in the texts, texts by women and women's portrayals of men and their responses/reactions to the traditional gender roles (Singh 2004:2). Feminism is also 'a movement for recognition of the claims of women for rights (legal, political, etc.) equal to those possessed by men' (Oxford Dictionary: 315). Thus, feminism, in short, is assimilation of a doctrine of equal rights for women and an ideology of creating a world for women beyond simple social equality.

The concept 'feminist' means a person who is a supporter of feminism. Feminist may be a male or female. Shashi Deshpande has pointed out that there should not be distinction between male and female novelists because they produce novels and not male or female propaganda. She states:

It is a curious fact that serious writing by women is invariably regarded as feminist writing. As a woman who writes of women's experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feelings, I don't see why this has to be labelled as a feminist fiction. A (male) critic said about a novel of mine: 'She can be quite brilliant when she is not raising her banners of protest.' Any woman who writes fiction shows the world as it looks to her protagonists; if that protagonist is a woman, she shows the world as it looks to a woman. This view, I have realized, makes a man quite uncomfortable. But to present this view point is not necessarily to be a feminist. It seems that it is on the whole difficult for a

woman to be judged purely as a writer. To the critics one is a woman writer. I know that literature has to be valued in the social context. But to apply the tag of feminist is one way of dismissing the serious concern of the novel by labelling them, by calling their work propagandist (Singh 2007:133).

The work of a feminist is to analyze, comprehend and clarify how and why femininity or the feminine experience is different from masculinity or the masculine experience. In other words, a feminist has to take into consideration the 'psychosomatic, social and cultural construction of femininity verses masculinity' (Singh 2004:3). John Singleton points out:

Our sexuality and gender shapes us like no other. The construction of our sexual identities, which we call 'gender', how femaleness becomes woman and maleness becomes man, the script men use to become manly and masculine, the script women use to become womanly and feminine, was the first province of behavioural scientists (mainly men), and lately the concern of feminists (Singh 2004:3).

Feminist thinking starts with the realization that the things cannot be as they are supposed to be. Feminists share a fundamental, political goal to dispute 'the idea that 'the human condition' is a unitary experience that overrides" difference of gender, race, class, and sexual preferences. Chief among assumptions to be exposed are the "normative generalizations" of patriarchy which privilege – and naturalize – masculine preferences, behaviours, and life narratives. Because within patriarchal discourse, that which is "female" and/or "feminine" is ultimately defined as "lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness – in short, non-Being (www.gerardmanleyhopkihs.org/studies/feminist.htm).

Feminists have to take into consideration that women suffer from inequality, discrimination and violence. They also consider that the dominant model of masculinity is oppressive not only to women but also to men because it limits their choices. The feminists envision a world in which relations between men and women are peaceful, egalitarian, trusting and joyous; in which neither men nor women are confined to rigid, unhealthy and soul-destroying modes of living (Bhasin 2004: 58).

Feminism and Literature

Feminists have different attitudes towards portrayals of gender roles in literature. They give stress on gender construction presented in literature. While assessing the writings of any author, historical details are more critical. Feminists started their work with different movements like Suffrage Movement between 1890 and 1920. This was the 'First Wave'. First Wave feminists' work refers to the mobilization of the Suffrage Movement in America and England. Second Wave feminists' work refers to the formation of women's liberation groups in America, Britain and Germany in the late 1960s. It is related to patriarchy and oppression. It implies that first wave feminism ended in the 1920s. Many feminists of Second Wave disagree with Freud's biological determinism in the analysis of femininity. Kate Millet, Betty Friedan and others criticized Freud's theory. On the other hand, Juliet Mitchell, Nancy J. Chodorow appreciated Freudian theory.

Apart from those differences, the feminists felt that women had been victims of male oppression and exploitation. They think that male writers have portrayed women as inferior and weak. Women had to endure their pains in silence. They were not allowed to utter a word of complaint. So the Second Wave was very dominant in late 1960s to liberate women from the oppression by males. Feminist readings attempt to destabilize literary conventions, stereotypes, and narratives based on gendered identity. Many women writers produced such type of literature to raise their voice against male chauvinism. At the same time, male writers also produced literature. They portrayed man-woman relationship in their works as they experienced. The task of feminists as reader of text is to analyze the ways in which the meaning and representation of gender is constructed and contested. The present study intends to find out the process of gender construction and the treatment of gender relation in the short stories of Khushwant Singh. The feminist reading of Khushwant Singh's short stories aims at finding answers for different questions raised against male writers. It mainly focuses on whether Khushwant Singh is patriarchal, whether his language is gender sensitive or sexist, whether the source of strength for women is depicted, whether gender relations in his stories send out a message of gender equality, if not, what are the implications of gender equality. Thus,

the feminist reading of short stories would highlight the author's attitude towards man-woman relationship as well as attitudes of the characters to one another.

Sex, Gender and Gender Relations

Sex decides whether biologically a person is as a male or female. But it cannot say whether the person is masculine or feminine. Sometimes sex is misunderstood as gender. In common usage, the word gender often refers to the sexual distinction between male and female. But within the academic fields of cultural studies, gender studies and the social sciences in general, the term 'gender' often refers to purely social rather than biological differences ([www.http://en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)). Many people have distinguished sex and gender differently. Sex is biologically determined whereas gender is a social construct. Like Ann Oakley, Mary M. Talbot (1998) has also distinguished sex and gender in her book *Language and Gender*. According to her, sex is '.. a matter of genes, gonads and hormones' and it is 'essentially binary' as one is 'either male or female' depending upon the biological features. Gender, she states, is 'socially constructed'; it 'is learned' as people 'acquire characteristics which are perceived as masculine and feminine' (Singh 2004:3). Thus, gender suggests the masculine or feminine characteristics of a person. Dr. R. Brasch (1999) has also presented his views on sex and gender in his book *Library of Origins*. He speaks in term of etymology of 'male and female'. According to him, 'male' refers to begetting a child i.e. his act of insemination and 'female' refers to a mother's breast feeding her baby and therefore accounts for her role as the 'milk-giver' and 'the one who suckles' (Singh 2004:4).

Kanwar Dinesh Singh (2004) has similar views on sex and gender. According to him, 'sex is identifiable by the reproductive functions of an individual. Gender, on the other hand, is the 'social expression of the basic physiological differences between men and women -- social behaviour which is deemed to be appropriate to 'masculine' or 'feminine' roles and which is learned through primary and secondary socialization. Gender is, therefore, determined by society, culture, history, and not by nature. It is the active process of 'gendering' that people undergo in a particular social milieu, which cause among them 'sex-exclusive and sex-preferential differentiations'.

Kamla Bhasin (2004) has clearly sorted out the main differences between sex and gender in her book *Understanding Gender* as follows:

SEX	GENDER
Sex is natural	Gender is socio-culture and it is man-made.
Sex is biological. It refers to visible differences in genitalia and related differences in procreative function.	Gender is socio-cultural and it refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behaviour patterns, role and responsibilities, etc.
Sex is constant, it remains the same everywhere.	Gender is variable, it changes from time to time, culture to culture, even family to family.
Sex cannot be changed.	Gender can be changed.

As the study is related to gender relations, the concept of gender and formation of gender is considered to understand gender relations. This gender study focuses on the nature of gender as social and cultural constructions of masculinities and femininities. Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationship, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power and influence that society ascribe to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them (www.un-instraw.org). Gender has been popularized because it allows us to talk about both women and men and obliges us to look at relations between them. (Bhasin 2000:72)

Robert Stoller (1985) has defined 'gender' in his book *Sex and Gender* as:

Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations. If the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female', the corresponding terms for gender are masculine and feminine. These latter may be quite independent of sex. Gender denotes the degree of masculinity or femininity found in a person, and, obviously, while there is a mix of both in

many humans, the normal male has a preponderance of masculinity and the normal female a preponderance of femininity (Bhasin 2004:11).

Dubravka Zarkov (2002) has pointed out that gender operates at different following social levels:

1. Level of subjective identity
2. Level of institutional practice
3. Level of ideologies and doctrines
4. Symbolic level

Women and men have various identities of caste, class, race, nationality etc. Men have some privileges in gender system because they are men but 'gender is not only organizing principle of social life. Class relations, race, sexuality, ethnic and religious identities are equally significant. Thus, we cannot simply say that men and masculinity are privileged in most of the societies we know, and that women and femininity are oppressed. In every society, only certain groups of men are privileged and only certain forms of masculinity, those that belong to the dominant men, are dominant. In western societies, white heterosexual men and their form of masculinity are dominant. Forms of masculinity associated with a Muslim migrant homosexual man are marginalized or explicitly banned (*Dubravka Zarkov*, SANGAT Report: Bhasin 2004: 24).

Gender relations are gender-based relations between women and men, women and women, and men and men. Because of a patriarchal ideology and system, gender relations everywhere are unequal and hierarchical; women are subordinated and discriminated against (Bhasin 2004:7). The term 'gender relations refers to the relations of power between women and men which are revealed in a range of practices, ideas, representations, including the division of labour, roles and resources between women and men, and then ascribing to them of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavioral patterns and so on. Gender relations are both constituted by and help constitute these practices and ideologies in interaction with other structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste, and race. They may be seen as largely socially constructed (rather than biologically determined), and as variable over time and place"(Bhasin 2004: 26,27). Society determines the relations between women and men. Then society and

gender together determine the appearance, attitudes, behaviour, roles, rights, responsibilities, etc. of women and men.

Thus, gender relations are not static. But they are dynamic in every society. They can change over time. In almost all the societies, there is inequality in gender relations which are patriarchal in nature. Gender relations are relations of dominance and subordination everywhere. Most men and women try to avoid examining gender relations because 'they are afraid that if they allow themselves to become aware of the true nature of the man-woman relationship in our societies then the family, the last island of peace and harmony in the brutal world of moneymaking, power games and greed, will be destroyed' (Bhasin 2000: 80). But there are some feminists who want to change this situation because gender issues are not woman's issues alone. Now a days most of the people have realized that equality between men and women is essential for building just and peaceful relationships within families, and communities. So women and men have to join hands to achieve gender equality. If gender relations become more equal and just, then both women and men must change. The present study analyzes short stories of Khushwant Singh to find out their potential or its lack for sending out a message of gender equality.

Objectives of Research

1. To study the portrayal of women and men in the collected short stories of Khushwant Singh.
2. To study the depiction of gender relations in the collected short stories of Khushwant Singh.
3. To analyze the collected short stories of Khushwant Singh in order to assess their potential, if any, for gender equality.
4. To develop a feminist critique of the collected short stories of Khushwant Singh.

Research Questions

1. Whether Khushwant Singh meets us as a patriarchal person or a gender sensitive person?
2. Whether the language is gender sensitive or sexist?
3. Has Khushwant Singh evolved as a gender sensitive person over a period of time?
4. Has Khushwant Singh portrayed the gender relations in a way that would send out a message of gender equality?
5. Which areas have been depicted as the source of strength for women and men respectively and where does he find them vulnerable?
6. Do his short stories have any liberating potential for women?

Conclusion

The study is restricted to Indian English short stories and particularly to the volume *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh*. It is restricted to the study of different aspects reflected in the short stories such as the portrayal of women and men, the depiction of gender relations and the potential of short stories for gender equality. The study also covers a brief history of the Indian English short story and the concepts like sex, gender, gender relations and feminism in brief. There has been a steady increase in the study of Indian English short story as a subject of academic study. Indian writers have produced solid and significant work and dealt with the realities of life. They are attracting the attention of the research scholars and many have obtained M. Phil, Ph. D and D. Lit degrees in India writing in English. There are different examples of it and would be considered in the next chapter. The dissertation has been divided into four chapters – Chapter I Introduction deals with short story as a form of literature, life and work of Khushwant Singh, Feminism and sex and gender relations. Chapter II deals with the review of related literature. Chapter III includes the analysis of short stories regarding gender relations. Chapter IV covers the conclusions.

References

- Bhasin Kamla., 2000. *Understanding Gender*. New Delhi. Women Unlimited, pp.3, 26, 27, 72, 80.

- Bhasin Kamla., 2003. *What is Patriarchy?* New Delhi. Women Unlimited, p.25
- BhasinKamla., 2004. *Exploring Masculinity*. New Delhi. Women Unlimited, pp.7, 11, 24, 58,
- Brasch R., 1999. *Library of Origins*, Sydney. Harper Collins. p. 1402. Quoted by Singh K.D., 2004. *Feminism and Postfeminism*. New Delhi. Sarup and Sons, p. 4.
- Gupta Ruby, 2001. *Khushwant Singh: Reality and Myth*. New Delhi: Classical, p.v
- Glossary of Gender-related Terms and Concepts. Available from:www.un-instraw.org/en/index
- Higgins Lesley, Feminist Possibilities in Hopkins's Poetry. York University. Available from: www.gerardmanleyhopkins.org/studies/feminist.html
- Hornby A.S., 1989. *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. P.315.
- Hussain S., 2006. An Interview with Khushwant Singh. *Journal of Literature and Aesthetics*, vol. 6, No.1&2, p.124.
- Jain Madhu, 1999. King Leer. *India Today*, vol. xxiv No. 35, pp. 52, 54, 55.
- Kumar Shiv K., 1992. Contemporary Indian Literature in English. Shimla. Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. p.9 Quoted by Das B.K., 2003. *Postmodern Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic, p.95.
- Mallik Amita., 2001. 'Khushwant will be Khushwant' *The Hindu* Nov 11. Quoted by Singh P.K., 2005. *The Novels of Khushwant Singh*. Jaipur: Book Enclave, p. 137.
- Nagarajan T.S., 2004. With no Malice at All. *The Hindu*, 11 Jan.
- Naik M.K., 1989. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, pp.179, 252.
- Narayan S. A., 2006. The Indian English Short Story. *Journal of Literature and Aesthetics*, vol. 6, No.1&2, p.94.
- Singh Khushwant, 1989. *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh*. 3rd imp. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, p.xi.
- Singh Khushwant, 1993. *Not a Nice Man to Know*. New Delhi: Penguin, p.xiv.
- Singh Khushwant, 2002. *Truth, Love and a Little Malice: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Penguin, p.2
- Singh Khushwant, 2004. *Paradise and Other Stories*. New Delhi: Penguin.
- Singh K.D., 2004. *Feminism and Postfeminism*. New Delhi. Sarup and Sons, p.3.

- Singh P.K., 2005. *The Novels of Khushwant Singh*. Jaipur: Book Enclave, p. 130
- Singh V.K., 2007. Human Relationship in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds no Terrors*. *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, Vol. XLIV, p.133.
- Singleton J., "The Writing Self". *The Creative Writing Workbook*. New York, Palgrave. Pp.20-21. Quoted by Singh K.D., 2004. *Feminism and Postfeminism*. New Delhi. Sarup and Sons, p.3.
- Talbot M.M., 1998. *Language and Gender: An Introduction*. Cambridge. Polity Press. Pp.6-11. Quoted by Singh K.D., 2004. *Feminism and Postfeminism*. New Delhi. Sarup and Sons, p.3.
- Uniyal D.P., 2000. Khushwant Singh as Advertising Guru, available from: www.indiantimes.org.
- Zaidi N., 2006. Fiction, History and Fictionalized History: A Post-colonial Reading of Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel*. *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*, vol.34, No.2, p. 40.
