

Kushwanth Singh: Amultifaceted Personality

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Abstract

In this research paper focus Khushwant Singh a multifaceted personality arguably is India's most read and known author, columnist and journalist. Indian fiction in English specially, is no exception to this tendency. It picks up the strands necessary for its needs from the contexts of the available socio-political history and movements of its times for creative expression either in the urgency of their origin or in retrospect; The Indian political novel in English took its roots only with the upsurge of nationalism and revolt against the foreign rule, where Khushwant Singh has been immensely influenced by the historical, political and social milieu of the country. He had impact of the historical milieu in which he lived and the historical periods of an earlier time with which he wished to associate him-self by choice. The novels written by Khushwant Singh can be called historical and political novels as well. He was a man of many talents and served the Indian legal system, Indian journalism and literature all with equal passion and hard work.

Keywords: Khushwant Singh, multifaceted personality, human world realistic perspective

Introduction

Khushwant Singh's name is bound to go down in Indian literary history as one of the finest historian and novelist, a forthright, political commentator and an out-standing observer and social critic. He is known as one of India's distinguished men of letters with an international reputation, besides, being a significant post-colonial writer in English language. He is known for his clear-cut secularism, wit and a deep passion for poetry. His assessment and comparison of social and behavioral traits of people from India and West is full of outstanding wit. In July 2000, he was conferred the "honest man of the year Award by the Sulabh International Social Service organization for his courage and honesty in his brilliant incisive writing at the award ceremony. The then Chief minister of Andhra Pradesh described him a "humorous writer and incorrigible believer in human goodness with a devil may-care attitude and a courageous mind. The Indian External affairs minister said that the secret of Khushwant Singh's success lay in his learning and discipline and his belief in the veneer of the superficiality. Khushwant Singh has worldwide readership. He has written for almost all major national and international newspaper in India and abroad. He has also had numerous radio appearances at home and internationally and had an extra ordinary career as a writer. His book, "A history of Sikhs", remains of the best, well researched and scholarly works of the Sikhs. He has also written several novels, both fiction and nonfiction, which have been translated into many languages. His novel 'Train to Pakistan' won him international acclaim and Grove press Award in 1954; he is best-selling author of over 80 English publications. India today described him as 'the capital's best known living monument. Khushwant Singh was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1974. Ten years later, in an act of courage on June 8, 1984, a day after the attack on the Golden temple, he drove to Rashtrapati Bhavan and returned the framed citation to the president of India, Giani Zail Singh, also a Sikh in protest at the storming of the Golden temple, however in 2007 Indian government awarded Singh an even more prestigious honor, the Padma Vibhushan. In short Khushwant Singh is a man larger than life – a lawyer, diplomat, critic, Journalist, novelist, historian, naturalist and a politician, all rolled into one.

Review of Literature

Historical fiction is a genre in which the plot is set amidst historical events, or more generally, in which the author uses real events but adds

one or more fictional characters or events, or changes the sequence of historical events. Khushwant Singh's name is bound to go down in Indian literary history as one of the finest historians and novelists, a forthright political commentator, and an outstanding observer and social critic. His vast and profound knowledge and understanding of India's history, political systems, and literary heritage is reflected in his prose works which included a history of his own community, The Sikhs, and his novels like *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, *Delhi and Burial At Sea* etc, which are deeply rooted in the recent history and political situation of contemporary India.

Khushwant Singh came into the limelight as a crude realist with the publication of his *Train to Pakistan* (1956). In this novel he depicts the impact of Partition on a small village on the India-Pakistan border. His second novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) shows an ironic picture of a Sikh joint family symbolizing different Indian reactions to the freedom movement of the nineteen forties. Later novels include *Delhi* (1990), and *The Company of Women* (1999). His crude realism finds a place in each of his novels.

Multifaceted Personality

Most probably in India the great writers, poets and scholars are given great value after death that is why the writers who have left for their heavenly abode are put in the category of great writers while the modern writers are not given so much regard what they deserve. Khushwant Singh, whatever he writes is influenced by the social, political and individual's faults and lacunae. A vivid glimpse of the society is irresistibly fleshed in the novels of Khushwant Singh. It would not be wrong to call him an event recorder and a historian more than a novelist. Most of his novels are based on history and the reality of Indian history's vicissitudes. He turned the reality of Indian history into novels and made it readable to present before the readers.

Khushwant Singh's novels are very much close to the reality. A limpid glimpse of the era in which the novel was written, can be observed, like "*Train To Pakistan*" contains the greatest tragedy (Partition) of India's history. "*I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*" deals with the theme of freedom struggle before independence. "*Delhi*" got us closer to the Mughal dynasties. "*The Company Of Women*" unveiled the naked truth of high-class families and their uncontrollable sexual instincts. In *Burial at Sea*, twentieth-century Indian history, bogus religion, and sexuality. After Nehru, Victor Jai Bhagwan is Mahatma Gandhi's favourite Indian-a brilliant young man with the temperament of a leader and fiercely committed to his country. Though Victor adores and respects Gandhi, he disagrees with the Mahatma's vision for the future of India. He returns from university in England determined to bring the benefits of modern industry to the subcontinent, and within a few years of India's independence, becomes the country's biggest tycoon.

Discussion

Kushwant Singh, India's best-known author seems trapped in the literary image he has so assiduously cultivated, obsessed with sex and controversy. Here is plenty of both in this slim novel, a roman-a-clef that recreates the supposed sexual relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Shradha Mata, the sanyasin with considerable clout and a wide following for her strong views on Hindu India, who he met in 1948. Like any other person who was a first-hand witness to the bloodbath during partition Khushwant Singh's benign spirit believes in the path of righteousness in human affairs and his love for humanity, for his brethren irrespective of the community they belonged to or the religion they worshipped is all evident in his relations and writings. But at the slightest hint of bias or intolerance in one's behaviour puts him off permanently towards such a fanatic. He had great respect for Advani both as a man and a politician in the beginning but when the latter took the Rathayatra leading to the demolition of Babri Masjid and polarised the people of the country on the religious lines Khushwant became his bitter critic and vouched not to forgive him for the irreparable damage to the social, cultural harmony between the Hindus and Muslims.

The writer is dismayed that despite India claiming to be a secular state as per the constitution of country the Indians as a unit have failed to implement what is enshrined in our constitution in its true spirit. A fear psychosis prevails in the country where the minorities, particularly the non-Hindus have to prove their nationality and loyalty to the constitution of India. Such things vitiate the communal bonhomie of the all-inclusive Indian society where the delicate thread of peaceful co-existence is pulled apart from the opposite directions by the vested parties, and these narrow minded stake-holders instigate the communal instincts and pose a danger to the still peaceful but full of suspicion and mistrustful ambience toward one-another. He recalls in one of his essays how he felt chill down his spine during the Sikh riots in Delhi, thinking himself like a Jew in Nazi Germany or the follower of Russian communists during McCarthyism in the USA. The biggest contribution Khushwant Singh wanted to make to the mankind was to demolish and destroy the communal forces, and he did his best but still down the line feels that he could have done better in this regard and expresses his regrets for not doing much.

Conclusion

Khushwant Singh novel's is an effective medium through which the problems of life are being presented. The social, political and religious questions, which oppress human mind, are dealt with in the form of a story. A novelist takes infinite pains to make the story interesting not to a select few, but men and women in general. The characters are to be invested with life and individuality. Social realism is a significant aspect which a writer takes into consideration while creating a work of art. It is the writer's inner urge to create a work that he tries to go deep within his artistic creation in search of which his social familiarity, his perception of life along

with the facility of expression plays an important role. These novelists with their realistic treatment have the capacity to move the readers. These novelists have reinvented English language with their skillful use of stylistic techniques, modern myths and thematic variety.

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