

## HUMANISTIC APPROACH IN THE WORK OF KHUSHWANT SINGH

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### Abstract

*Interpretation of Khushwant Singh's novels and short stories brings home afresh the multiplicity and depth of his writings. Khushwant Singh has a modern mind and is a true humanist and upholder of the old values and traditions of which we used to be proud. He was a great story writer who is a true representative of secular humanism. His humanism is all pervasive for within there is reverence, love, not only for human beings, but also for the flora and fauna. His writing is a brilliant record of his concern for the environment as a whole with its various aspects. His vision of nature is that of romantic and mystic. Khushwant Singh gives a befitting expression to Indian's Urges, which comes from their cultural consciousness. While giving expression to these cultural patterns, he depicts facts of human experience, which are individual, social, racial and national in scope. He celebrates the humanizing qualities of nature. Thus Khushwant Singh believes in the Puranic Philosophy of Sage Vyas, who said. "Paropkaray Punayay Pappaya Per Pideenam*

**Key Word:** Humanism, sufferings, religion, sociological

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**K**hushwant Singh is primarily a sociological writer and realist. He always tries to rise above. The religion and communities to find conscience and ideal morality in all human being. In an interview given to 'Dom Moraes', Khushwant Singh said that "he would prefer to be in India now as a novelist, than anywhere else". By India he means mainly the villages where there is so much material. This indicates Singh's preference for Indian themes and characters. He further elaborates his point of view.

"From this point of view, this short of country is far preferable to England; say the London novelists write city novels, sex and sorrow and a lot of psychology for padding novels about a certain way of life. In a country like India one has the material of life itself".

This Indian reality, it would seem, begins with the conventional images of a venerable, wise, spiritual, unsophisticated Mother India, a land of contrasts and paradoxes, of old and new, of dust and bowl, plain and strangling jungle, of poverty and the parade of riches, of caste, festival and the interminable rituals of birth, marriage and cremation, of bullock carts and glass bangles, of confusion, mystery and religious love, a land where non-violence is preached and violence practiced. It must be remembered that there is illusion as well as reality in this image of India. Khushwant Singh has depicted human beings in their socio-political world. Emphasizing the sociological aspect of his art, Chirantan Kulshrestha writes.

"Sociological is perhaps this word to describe the chief concerns of Khushwant Singh's fiction. The adjective indicates not only the spirit of his work, but also the method

he employs to provide a focus to his view of reality. These Socio-cultural pre occupations define the nature of his fiction class of sensibilities and Life style in modern India, tensions in families resulting from the conflict between tradition and modernism, emotional responses to the partition by different communities there are some of the elements that constitute the matrix of his plots”.

Khushwant Singh gives a befitting expression to Indian’s Urges, which comes from their cultural consciousness. While giving expression to these cultural patterns, he depicts facts of human experience, which are individual, social, racial and national in scope. His humanism is all pervasive for within there is reverence, love, not only for man, but also for the flora and fauna. His writing is a brilliant record of his concern for the environment as a whole with its various aspects. His vision of nature is that of romantic and mystic. He celebrates the humanizing qualities of nature. Khushwant Singh’s attitude towards nature, is almost akin to that of Hindu’s who respect and worship the tree which offer shades and fruits, the fields and lands gives grains and water and fruits, and is a valuable asset to the life of man. The worshipping of tree and nature can be traced to Vedic times.

“The weaving of leaves of trees it was believed by primitive minds showed that the tree held spirits. Grooves of trees have been looked upon as a abode of Gods since time memorable.”

Singh also had his share of sad memories from his childhood which continue to haunt him till today. The village Haldai, where he was born, was largely populated by Muslims who were proud of their martial traditions. Sikhs and Hindu’s on the contrary, were tradesmen and moneylender. Singh writes:

“The muslims relied on them for their supplies of tea, soft species, vegetables and ready cash. They were usually indebted to us. If we refused to give them credit or became too insistent on being repaid, they thought nothing of instigating gangs of dacoits to teach us a lesson.”

Khushwant Singh's view on Humanism also has a close relation with the history of partition of India and Pakistan. He was an eyewitness of the whole tragedy. He was greatly moved by the harrowing events during these turbulent days. It was indeed one of the bloodiest upheavals of history that claimed innumerable innocent lives and resulted in loss of property. Khushwant Singh does not support any particular party or community. He finds both the Hindu's and the Muslims equally responsible for the inhuman deeds. He puts the blame squarely on both the racial factions.

In some of the stories, Khushwant Singh is similarly an exponent of crude impact. Brutality wears many guises; he generally presents such distasteful material objectively. He is not blind to the ameliorating possibilities of life. Thus in, the story 'The Rape' from 'The Mark of Vishnu', the savage love making of Dalip Singh, which results in a charge of rape, is complemented by the generous act of the girl concerned who says she was a willing partner, she makes due allowance for human desire, enticing circumstances, and Dalip Singh's genuine remorse. 'The Riot' is short story which exemplifies Khushwant Singh's objectivity of technique in writing about communal barbarism in describing the stupidity, evil and horror of such degrading acts. Detachment is preserved through Irony and Satire.

The story is an effective parable on the psychology of riot, demonstrating how a trivial and ridiculous incident can spark off fearful, ugly mass destruction. It is significant here that Rani and Moti belongs to different 'communities' but they copulate and life goes on. Here Khushwant Singh want to tell us that the animal can be superior to man at least in the basic matters of life and preservation.<sup>16</sup> Thus through his short stories and novels as a writer Khushwant Singh wish to propagate and project only love and faith as the supreme human values in life.

As M. Tarrinayya writes: "an intendancy human problem can be solved by a change of heart, by an essentially moral and spiritual approach to it, and not by politicians, policeman or soldiers."

In 1993, Atmaram, the Director of Education, Himachal Pradesh asked Khushwant Singh in an interview. "What is your philosophy of life"? He answered "I don't have a philosophy. My religion is to not hurting people (and animals) as much as I can otherwise live life by getting the best out of it. I do not believe in a life after death."

Khushwant Singh's delicate sensitivity to the animal world is beautifully reflected in his exceptionally touching and moving story 'The portrait of A Lady' and 'The Fawn'.

### **Need for New Religion – Based on Human Values:**

Khushwant Singh writes, "I was invited to teach courses on comparative religions by American Universities including Princeton, Swathmore and Hawai. These gave me the opportunity to study Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. What began to bother me was they had been envisaged as by their founders. So many rituals, practices and factions had grown up, each claiming sanctity in name of their founding fathers".

Thus Khushwant Singh believes in the Puranic Philosophy of Sage Vyas, who said. "Paropkaray Punayay Pappaya Per Pideenam" Sage Vyas has said that the essence of eighteen 'puranas' are contend only in its two lines that "When you do something good to others, it is sacred, and when you hurt some one, it is a great sin."

Khushwant Singh has marked on topics as varied as politics, the trauma of partition, the menace of terrorism, communal riots and oppression of man by man -the list is long and wide. Through this varied writing, however, runs a common cord of unity. They are all smoothly written and well researched pieces of writing style. Khushwant Singh believes that India requires a fresh religion and in this new religion India would be mainly based on the work ethic. The ultimate intention of religion should be to abstain from causing harm to all living things. It has been genuinely felt that majority of novels in India have been written in reaction to historical movements or events such as the Gandhian movement, partition, colonial rule of India and the materialization of free India .He had a

modern mind and has a true humanist and upholder of the old values and traditions of which we used to be proud. He was a great story writer who is a true representative of secular humanism.

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