



DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVITY IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Abstract: Khushwant Singh's personality gets revealed to us through the reading of his autobiography and other literary texts. In almost all of them, he appears to be jolly, carefree, a true but secular Sikh. He has witnessed the period of Indian struggle for freedom, the partition of the Indian subcontinent, the communal riots, transportation of exodes of people on both sides of the border. He has criticized division of people on the communal basis in his writings. In his literary works, he has attacked these things through his pen reveals his entire personality. He has worked on different positions in India and contributed a lot to the society in the form his writings as well as thoughts. In this sense, the multiple threads of his personality that developed his creativity is a very important topic to discuss and deliberate. His autobiography is a very good document that reveals almost all the traits of his personality as well as his development of creativity. The present paper is an honest attempt to reflect on the development of creative talent of Khushwant Singh as depicted in his autobiography.

Keywords: - craftsman, deadlines, affinity, blistering, stance.

Khushwant Singh is the most celebrated and genius writer of the modern age. He through his versatility and revolutionary writing has safeguarded his place in the minds of readers in India and abroad. His creative oeuvre imparted a lasting acknowledgement to his personality. He has secured an eternal place as one of the most splendid literary craftsmen in modern India. His life story, *Truth, Love and a Little Malice*, provide the substantial evidences of his slow and steady advancement in achieving the pinnacle of success as the creative writer. Creativity involves shaping certain ordinary thoughts into new, lofty and peculiar manner that needs an aptitude of identifying the uncommonly in common, keen eye to discover shrouded patterns, competencies in establishing productive relation between ostensibly dissimilar objects. Development of a creative writer is a systematic process affected by manifold elements. Writer's disposition adopts an appropriate form when he comes into contact with various persons and circumstances. A creative writer, overwhelmingly perceives the distinctive phenomena that ensue around him, find and seize the opportunity to avail his creative endowment to transform them into a beautiful piece of writing. This research paper is an honest attempt to search how Khushwant Singh has developed an urge to pen down their experiences and how his creative talent blossomed. An attempt has been made to trace the cords of inventiveness in the sphere of his autobiography.

Khushwant Singh's writing is not only didactic and motivational but also it is simply exceptional. Lucidity, straightforwardness and conciseness are some of his primary properties. In fact, it is profoundly rich in humour, and tragic incidences. It is informal, intellectual and

splendidly amusing. Many personalities have censured him for his treatment of language or labelled the content of his writing inexact, ostentatious.

It must be noted that Khushwant Singh was not born in the family having a taste for literature. Therefore, he honestly admits that he is not a man of letters. Singh Writes about his writing of an autobiography.

I did not have time to wait for inspiration, indulge in witty turns of phrase or polish up what I wrote. I have lost the little I knew of writing good prose. All said and done, this autobiography is the child of ageing loins. Do not expect too much from it: some gossip; some titillation, some tearing up of reputations, some amusement-that is the best that I can offer. (2)

Since childhood multiple qualities such as a good storyteller, the family entertainer, skilled in presenting events in innovative ways are visible in him. Khushwant Singh never took anything too serious in his life. The creative writing is not exception. This habit helped him to express his opinions freely without thinking what other people think of him. He is considered as one of the most controversial writers of the modern era, but Khushwant says, “I have never deliberately sought controversy or wanted to create trouble. I have always wanted to be true to myself and write honestly” (88). He has high regards for the Indian writers like Nirad Chaudhury, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Vikram Seth. Two English writers Aldous Huxley and W. Somerset Maugham had impressed him enormously when he was young.

In his autobiography *Truth, Love and a Little Malice*, he very convincingly explains the attributes that fashions the creative artist and the essential things to become a successful writer. The first and foremost thing is the robust craving to become one and readiness to work hard. The money and fame are secondary things for the genuine budding writer, these things cannot become a motivating force for him, he doesn't care for the acknowledgement. He was of the view that to become a creative writer, one should have a clear notion of one's ability, the area of interest and competency to recognise the voice of his inner feelings. Khushwant writes, mere having desire to become a writer is not suffice but transforming that desire into reality by becoming a writer is important. If we have passion for writing we feel strong urge to write something, if that urge persisted, he, writes, “some find outlets writing short articles, unfinished short stories or novels before accepting defeat and accepting that they do not have it in them to become writers” (401). He writes the budding writers need to improve, “... the ability to slog, the ability to sit for hours if need be facing a blank paper, a determination not to get up until it is filled with writing.

He is a great example for the new generation to read and understand his experiences when he tells us how he became a successful writer. He advises that writing a daily diary, lengthy letters to acquaintances is an advantageous practice. He also suggests one should also write columns for newspapers regularly and try to complete it before the given deadlines and will help to develop discipline. The catching of deadlines is the most important suggestion by this person for the youngsters. We know the fact that to become a writer, one needs to be an avid reader, to become familiar with the subtleties in the creative writing one has to read different works of various writers of the country and abroad.

Most of us who reads a little of him knows very well that Khushwant Singh was not interested in reading since his childhood, he developed the habit of reading when he got leisure time while studying law. He was very much interested in reading poetry, especially Urdu poetry and Shakespeare's plays. Khushwant Singh had a great affinity toward his grandmother. She was a religious woman who meticulously followed the everyday rituals of Sikh community such as, recitation of morning prayer, *Japji*, Guru Arjun's *Sukhmani* and reading the *Guru Granth*

Sahib, Khushwant while living with her became familiar with these religious prayers and scriptures. These earliest familiarity with religious texts later on influenced his literary aptitude.

It is also to be noted that the background in which a writer develops teaches him a lot and contributes a lot in developing his personality. Khushwant Singh was a keen observer of men and matters, it was this quality of him which he used to write short stories on various people who came in his close contact. During the school days Singh developed interest in English language as well as poetry both in English and Urdu. He learned English quickly and reading the poems shaped his aesthetic sense and began to appreciate beauty present in all things. There was no one at home to assist him to learn English, he himself devised a way, he writes, "...it was acquired haphazardly by reading and rereading strip cartoons in the English children's weekly *Puck*, poring over pictures of World War I, illustrated stories from Bibles and volumes of *The Book of Knowledge*" (22). He is indebted to Miss Biden for developing the habit of using and searching proper words into the dictionary, in this way his knowledge of vocabulary also developed. When we read his texts we know the command over enormous word power serves as the great asset for the creative writers, and in this way, Singh recognised this need and acted accordingly.

In addition to the above things, the use of apt references and lines from the poems of different poets prove his status as a versatile and prolific writer. Notwithstanding, having great admiration for poetry, he has never tried his hand in writing poetry in English or in his mother tongue. During his school days, he attended the Bible classes without fail although it was optional. This, made him able to understand the nuances in ancient classical writing and he developed love for the English language and became familiar with the Old and the New Testament. He says, "I sensed that in order to write good English one should be familiar with the Bible as well as European fairy tales, nursery rhymes and even nonsense verse like the limericks of Edward Lear. I read them not for fun but as the basics of literature" (32). While living in Canada, he developed a friendship with number of Canadian writers and poets. He read their literature and some of his stories were published in couple of Canadian journals, at the same time he was pondering over to quit the job and take the writing as a full-time career. He was sure that this was a perfect time to give it a thought, he writes, "Canada not only gave me visions of becoming a writer, but also quickened my interest in nature" (128).

It is well-known that Khushwant Singh began his literary career with short stories. He is recognised for his irrepressible secularism and genial humour. He possesses outstanding knowledge to judge the people and their eccentricities from India and abroad, he also presented the true picture of the society of the countries he visited. The journalist in him acted as a guard to check the authenticity in his writing. He has been always honest to himself and voiced against what he had felt detrimental to society or a nation. Being a journalist, he has attached proof to every situation which he mentioned in his autobiography. He has depicted the true picture of what he experienced and observed in his childhood, during school or college days or as a law student in London or a bureaucrat in the India House and UNESCO.

Khushwant Singh worked at international platforms. While working in UNESCO he took the project for translation of some of the selected scriptures of Sikh religion. During his subsequent posting in England, Khushwant Singh developed an intense urge to take definite resolution concerning his future career as a creative writer. He says, "Like many aspiring writers, I tried to befriend famous men and women of letters and get them to autograph their books for me" (385). He got fed up with the never-ending partying that involved of frequent luncheons, cocktails and get-togethers. To Keep the flame burning of his literary ambitions Singh changed his home into a conference hall of journalists and authors.

Most of his stories are based on autobiographical elements in which he has depicted the characters personally associated with him, he narrated his personal experiences. He is deemed as a radical and a person of humanistic attitude the glimpses of these traits can be perceived in his short stories. Some of the stories have been created on actual experiences he came across working as a bureaucrat, a journalist, while in England as well as in India. It seems that comedy serves as a tool for him to correct the stupidities in the society. Some of his novels are based on the prevalent national issues of the time such as partition and communal disharmony which presents the tragic view of life. He has exposed many of his near and dear ones. Many political leaders have fall prey to his iconoclastic temperament. He gets bored in the company of same men and women for a long time. He believes that the wealth accumulated with the intension to provide support to the future generations of his family is a futile labour. Such wealth doesn't last longer. Thus, Khushwant Singh's development as a creative writer has many facets, he emerged as an outstanding novelist, superb short story writer, refined historian, a straightforward political pundit, keen observer and a social critic.

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