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A FEMINISTIC APPROACH IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S I SHALL NOT HEAR THE
NIGHTINGALE

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ABSTRACT

Much scholarly work has been done on Khushwant Singh but it is fair to say, little work has been done on his treatment of love in his novels. The present paper seeks to provide a modest study of the novel of Khushwant Singh, the most popular Indian writer in English. It attempts to make comprehensive critical comments on his fiction *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* with an emphasis on his treatment of women characters in the above said novel. His second novel *I shall not hear the Nightingale* basically deals with the maternal love. It is Sabhrai, whose matriarchal strength sustains the family in its time of crisis. On one side, where the novel is replete with sexual, amorous activities, practiced by different characters, Khushwant on the other side portrays a pious, religious character, which is without a stain. She is a source of inspiration not only for her husband but also for her son and daughter. It is through Sabhrai's Character, we come across another illusive kind of love i.e. divine love. A religious woman like Sabhrai believes that this love is the greatest of all. While for Champak, Beena, Shunno love is skin communicated thing.

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INTRODUCTION

Khushwant Singh was an Indian novelist, journalist, and a lawyer. He was a man of many talents and served the Indian legal system, Indian journalism and literature all with equal passion and hard work. He was a well learned man and studied from various institutes like Modern School, New Delhi, Government College of Lahore, St. Stephen's College, Delhi and King's College London. He set his foot in his professional life by starting out as a lawyer but soon he turned to Indian Foreign Service. Served that for a few years and later he found his place in mass communication and journalism. He was the editor of many reputed newspapers and magazines like, The Illustrated Weekly of India, The National Herald and the Hindustan Times. Singh was

more known for his writing and Indian literature is lucky to have received works like 'Train to Pakistan' (1956), 'Delhi: A Novel' (1990), 'The Company of Women' (1999), 'Truth, Love and a Little Malice' (2002), 'The Good, the Bad and the Ridiculous' (2013), etc. from his side. For his brilliant service to the Indian society and culture, he was awarded with a Padma Bhushan, but due to his deep contempt for Operation Blue Star, he returned it back to the government.

I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale is a colorful and moving pageant of an ancient people about to throw off the yoke of foreign rule. Essentially, it is the story of Buta Singh, a shrewd and wily official working with the British, and of Sher Singh, his vain and ambitious son driven to rebellion against the

foreign master. It is also the story of the women of the family—Champak, Sher's beautiful wife, her wild passions bursting the bonds of century-old prohibitions, and Sabhrai, Sher's mother, whose matriarchal strength sustains the family in its time of crisis. What happens to this family when a brutal and senseless murder sets father against son, wife against husband, is told against the background of an India torn by religious tension and fraternal strife.

A Feministic approach in *I shall not hear the Nightingale*

This novel begins by showing the impact of men and women in colonial Indian society. All the male characters were shown as in form of superior and the female characters were shown as inferior. This novel has four female characters namely called as Sabhrai, Beena, Champak and Mrs. Taylor.

The very first major female character of this novel was Sabhrai, wife of Buta Singh, an uneducated religious woman who follows traditional rituals and has some fear in sense of God and his violent act. Her borders were very much furnished by the author that she was a mother of two children, who longs for the love of her husband and finally a woman who supports his son even after knowing that he was a chief victim in case which against our mother country. She prays for her sons fast recovery from all his tragedies, she secures her daughter Beena from the hands of a rogue, she has been used as a bridge between father and son and also between his son and his countries official people. Through all her action she has been showed as savior of her family as well as our country.

Beena daughter of Buta Singh an educated woman tries to be perfect but failed to do so. She shows some kind of moralistic attitude in her action. When a men tries to seduce her in the beginning as a immature women she has shown interest in physical attachment but later through her mother's guidance she was able to identify what is right and what is wrong so finally with the help of her mother she founded out the right morality and remains a chaste women. In this novel she has been pictured as a women who longs for lustful but cheered because of the god fearing attitude. Here the author tries to implicit the boundaries for a traditional

woman. That she was not allowed to have any physical contact with any other men other than his husband. If it happens so it is wrong in accordance with the traditionalism and mythology.

Champak wife of Sher Singh an ordinary educated woman who loves to follow the thoughts of westernization and tries to show herself as a good one towards society where as in real she was a sexual manic, who loves to enjoy a nurture of loosen physical attachment towards the opposite gender. She was shown as a woman who has impressive thoughts about western ideas and culture tries to live her life in the similar way. She loves the physical touch and tries to get it from her husband but she fails to get it because of her husband's unlikeliest action, so she went with other men. Here she was shown as a women with no fear of tradition and morality.

Lastly Mrs. Taylor, a woman from England loves the tradition of India and lasting for the ever concerning love relationship towards Indian people. She helped Sabhrai to get back her son, because of her faith in God. She was showed as a woman who worth for the trust of women community. Even though she was from abroad she loves the tradition of India and tries to follow that, it is not important that she followed or not but the way she portrayed as a follower and lover of tradition of India was beautifully explained by the author.

Conclusion

In this novel four characters were shown in a different point of view, Sabhrai a women of completeness, Beena a self satisfied woman, Champak a woman with western thoughts and Finally Mrs. Taylor a great kind hearted woman. Singh has justified all his women characters in this novel in accordance with their action. Through which he tells us that making the people to know about tradition and moral is not imporatatnt but asking them to follow and be a model for them is important. Here two full fledged woman charcters shows their heartfelt action and another two characters shows their intolerant actions. So finally Singh justifes that woman are good in their characters if the are properly taught if not the society and they themselves will face the consequences.

Works Cited

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