

## HISTORY IN I SHALL NOT HEAR THE NIGHTINGLE

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### ABSTRACT

*The novel with the India of 1940s, When the colonial encounter between the Indian and British was Moving towards a climax on account of the emergence of nationalistic consciousness among the Indians. There had been always a mixed reaction among Indians towards the British Raj. Khushwant Singh presents a microscopic picture of the strange mixture of attitudes to the alien rule through the presentation of life in Amritsar district. The central irony in the novel is obvious in the fact that both the pro-British and anti-British ideologies are cherished by different members of the pro-British and anti-British Continues all through the novel.*

**KEYWORDS:** Khushwant Singh, English Drama, History,

By this time, the nationalistic activities start rigorously in north India under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. The Gandhi-cap covered patriots start to attack the shops and public offices. The British soldiers attempt to beat the patriots violently. Hence, the nationalistic movement gathers impulsive force and occupies the mind of Indian who tend to forget their personal issues. Roads are blocked, shops are looted and trains are stopped by the nationalist agitators. Sher Singh reads the newspapers full of nation-wide agitation and receives a cyclostyled letter, "A Manifesto of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army." "It drew attention to the arrests of the leaders and asked the youth of the India to arise and rid them of foreign rule. It did not mince its words. 'Short English Officials and the Indian toddies who serve them. Destroy roads and bridges; create chaos and paralyse the administration. This is your sacred duty. Long live the revolution.' (Singh, 1959, p190)

After knowing about the spread of nationalistic movement all over the country, Sher Singh's revolutionary impulse grows more and more intense. At last he overcomes his oscillation and confusion and decides to indulge in terroristic action. He calls a secret meeting of his fellow rebels and takes the oath of liberating the country from the British rule. They also take the oath of secrecy before starting terroristic activity. They are inspired by Mahatma Gandhi in general and by Bhagat Singh in particular. They analyse their terroristic places clearly. Sher Singh makes it clear, "The call is to destroy means of communication. A few bridges blown up, a few roads barricaded and the British army will be struck where it is. (Hindustan Times, 14 Jan, 1992)). They took six hand

grenades and initially blow the central bridge and think that nobody knows about themselves.

Since the nationalistic movement, spread all over the country. The British officers, specially John Taylor, become very alert and try to control the situation as far as they can. Hence, John Taylor, ordered unofficially to Buta Singh to track down the agitators. Buta Singh narrates the history of loyalty of his family to British right from the days of Sikh rule: "Sir, we can almost go back to the days of Sikh rule. In the annexation of the Punjab and disbanding of Sikh force my great grandfather, who was a subedar and had fought against the British in the Anglo-Sikh wars, joined the British Army. He served under John Lawrence. He also fought under Nicholson in the Mutiny of 1857 and was awarded a medal for the capture of Delhi: we still have it in the family. My grandfather was also in the British army. He rose from the ranks and retired as a Jamindar. In those days to be a Jamindar was a big thing for an Indian. My father did not join the army, but he recruited many soldiers in 1914-18 war and our family was given lands in the canal Colonies. I have kept up the tradition of loyalty to the British Crown and will do so till the day I die." (Singh, 1959, p192)).

Buta Singh feels that only John Taylor can help him out of the crisis. He thinks to please the Englishman with some Christmas gifts. He arranges to send some fine oranges to John Taylor and his wife. The Christmas gift of oranges is well received by Joyce Taylor who presents the humanitarian courtesy by visiting Sabhrai. Joyce Taylor examines the health of Sabhrai because she was a nurse before marrying John

Taylor. Joyce Taylor known that Sabhrai is suffering from pneumonia and she is so much touched by Sabhrai that she persuades her husband John Taylor to provide a real Christmas gift to Buta Singh's family in the form of release of Sher Singh on the Christmas day itself. John Taylor understands that he ordered the arrest of Sher Singh on mere suspicion ground without having any solid evidence about the murder of the village headman. His understanding about Buta Singh's firm loyalty to the British, Sabhrai's religious bent of mind and physical suffering and his wife's pressure finally compel him to order for release of Sher Singh on the Christmas Day. Sher Singh is taken out of the prison into the city in a procession by his nationalists fellow. Hence, Sher Singh becomes a hero in eyes of fellow rebels and antagonists. He is garlanded and photographed and cheered by the people. Sher Singh thumps his chest and says,

"Comrades..... I will cherish the honour you have done me today for the rest of my life. I've proved that I was called upon to do a small duty to my country and I did it.....you all know how well the king emperor – may peace be upon him looks after his guests.....but they could not break the spirit of the son of India and God willing they never will." (Iyengar,1973,p504)

The novel is not entirely free from novelistic blemishes which tend to detract from its merit. First, it starts indications of developing into a political novel focusing on the pre partition activities of the terrorists and revolutionaries but it does not politics remains the background for putting into relief other statement. Perhaps, the reason for this could be the subconscious partials of the artist in Singh which made him expand the thematic horizon and turn the novel into a more in compassing study the decreasing control of the artist over his material and parameters is a well obvious phenomenon. Something of similar character perhaps happened in the case of **I shall not hear the Nightingale** during the course of its preparation and Singh found himself dealing with a much better and larger theme he had originally considered – the realization of the political aspiration of Sher Singh, paired

with complications arising for him and his family from the peculiar pattern of his character and his sexual inadequacy. The second blemish in the novel is the incorporation of overdose of sex, which is not surprising, coming as it done from Singh. Singh, adopts a journalistic stance – sex sell and he cannot help introducing a lot of sex, whenever he can. Then novel **Delhi** is a confirmatory Example. Singh does not cut words when he says, "I am a dirty old man, I will remain dirty old man and I will write a dirty old man." It appears Singh takes great pleasure in baring as many female bodies and ramps as possible, and getting as many females prostrate as he can during the composition of the novel.<sup>5</sup> Champak is constantly in a search of quenching her excessive desire. Besides getting her buttocks massaged and embraced by the boy servant Mundoo who goes into violent involuntary contraction of muscles because of the rising sex in his body has lots of sex with Madan, who is a friend of Sher Singh. Madan is a married man, leads into crimebeena, Sher Singh's sister who gets a "feverish longing in her body" for the tall, handsome Madan whom she imagines "stepping her and taking her as a man should take a woman." Beena is obstructed from uniting sexually with Madan because he at time was revising Champak. If the Singh had sent Beena into Madan's room, it would have been equally probable. Shunno is also made to experience sex once again after a lapse of thirty year being an old maiden – servant.

In spite of these flaws, the artistic stature of the novel remains unattached. If one goes at the deeper level, the novel turns into a clash between the two modes of life – the old and the modern i.e. nonviolent and violent ways or conventional and non conventional ways.

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