

## A Study of Postmodern Narrative Technique in Khushwant Singh's Delhi: A Novel

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**Abstract: -**

*Khushwant Singh is the great writer in the Indian writing in English. He is prominently famous for his historical writing. The postmodern narrative techniques are copiously used in his almost all the works of arts. Modernism is totally rejected in his works and the postmodern narrative techniques are celebrated in his work of art, which selected for the research work. The papers' primary focus is to discuss narrative technique in relation with the selected fiction. The metafiction, temporal disorder, ontological concerns are some of the prime features available in the fiction. The detail study of the novel makes it clear for reader the exact concept of postmodern narrative technique and its use by the writer in the selected fiction. The postmodern narrative technique focuses on the narration of the history in the fiction form, this history creates multiplicity in the meaning. This is the best narratives which restrict the teleological knowledge and creates multiplicity of meaning in the literature, which is most important feature of postmodernism.*

**Keywords: -** historical writing, postmodern narrative, postmodernism etc...

Khushwant Singh is most renown name in Indian writing in English. He is the best historian, novelist, political commentator and a well-known columnist. He is born in 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1915 at small village Hadali in Khushab district Sargodha, Punjab. The place now situates in Pakistan. He is an author, lawyer, diplomat, politician, journalist with the proper support of his parents. He practices in the Lahore court for eight years, even he works for the Indian Foreign Service in the year of 1947. At the initial days of his life many of the years he spends at his native place. At that time his parents move to Delhi with elder brother. This was time when his grandmother at home so he takes the responsibility to take care of her. Some of the critics says that is the reason he gives birth 'The Portrait of Lady', a good creative

work. Khushwant Singh's writing skills develop when he starts reading Indian writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. Actually, he gets influences from these writers and started writing novels.

Khushwant Singh's contribution does the proper justice with him and he receives many awards and honours in his life. This is the real achievement of his life that stays with him forever. In the year of 1974, he honours with Padma Bhushan by the India's President. In the year of 2007, he honoured with Padma Vibhushan. The Sulabh International Social Organisation awards Khushwant Singh 'The Honest Man of the Year Award' for his contribution to the literary field in the year of 2000. The Government of Panjab awarded him with 'Panjab Rattan Award' in the year of 2006. This is the proof of his writing that he deserves the 'Rattan' of the state Panjab. The Sahitya academy of India awarded Khushwant Singh with the 'Sahitya Academy Fellowship' in the year of 2010. In the year of 2012 the contemporary Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Mr. Akhilesh Yadav awarded him with 'All-India Minorities Forum Annual Fellowship Award'. The Tata Literature Live in the Mumbai Litfest 2013 awarded him with the 'Lifetime Achievement Award'. He becomes the Fellow of Kings College London in January 2014.

The world narrative technique divides in the two parts, one narrative which means the skill of telling the story and technique means the method of telling the story. Khushwant Singh uses best narrative technique to understand the story to the reader. He uses the simple and lucid language to write the story. His most of the writing is historical but use of character and past events so effectively that reader feel the past as the nature of present. In this process the quality of the narrator to tell story is important to understand the events. The well organization of the plot and each plot is connected though the flash back and flash forward use in the writing. Another important thing about the writing is, the point of view. The first-person point of view when the writer himself is present in the story and tell the story to the reader. The third person point of view means the narrator narrates the story from objective point of view. In this the narrator is very unbiased and neutral. The third point of view is called omniscient point of view. Here author shows the story to the reader and he does present in the story, just become the observer in the novel.

Khushwant Singh's *Delhi* (1990) is the historical novel. Many of the historical events are interconnected with the help of one city where they ruled. This is the one common thing in all the historical events that they all happened in the one city. The vast historical period's

description is given in the text, but the reader never feels that much travel in the novel. The accumulation of the events from the 12<sup>th</sup> century till 21<sup>st</sup> century but they all are interconnected when reads the novel. The novel is not only the description but also the interior monologue of the character presented in the story. Many of the incidents in the novel narrate through the autobiographic point of view. This brings the historiographic metafiction in the novel. The historic personage and events are fictionalized in the novel *Delhi* (1990). The novel travels through the great time and the selection of the era is purely subjective matter. The eating habits of the country people narrated very appropriately in the fiction. Now a day's English language becomes the language of the user and the Britisher can't claim that this is their English language. In this novel *Delhi* (1990) he uses lots of Hindi words to create that Indianness. The use of Hindi and Urdu words creates more closeness to the Indian and Asians and people read the novel with more connection. The expression of the feeling is more accurate due to the use of regional language Hindi. In the novel at many places the reader feels the touch of journalism, the tendency of description, the minute details of events are his special skills reflects in his writing. The behavior of the narrator with women is very mischievous in the entire text. Actually, he focuses on the male mentality but somewhere he agrees on his description that the intention of such writing different than the sexual orientation. Even, the character Bhagmati is also the symbolic character which can't be taken as the sexual symbol. He himself reveal at beginning of the text that it is the Delhicity. Then the character introduced Bhagmati, so she is the symbol of the city. The story of the *Delhi* (1990) is spiced so well that even all the people will feel the love for the city. There are many readers who have not seen these parts of *Delhi* but after the narration they feel the love and closeness with story. The scheme of narration includes the interior monologue for the character like Aurangzeb, Timur and Nadir Khan. It is the part of their mind which might never revealed to the world. This is another version of the history which is not available in any of the archive. Though people check all the historical details in the other reference book but this creative narration of their mind would never available anywhere. This is the creative quality of the narrator to give the right picture of the personality. One side we see the real historical characters and another side the character which came from the mind of narrator plays very vital role in the fiction. The humor and irony are the most important aspects of the novel. The character Bhagmati represents the humor in the entire novel. This character can be seen as a satire also. The language of the writer at many places so dirty that the reader feels the ugliness of the language but if read between the lines it is harsh but realistic. When Singh narrates about Anti Sikh Riots, he uses more abusive words. But it might be the requirement

of the narration otherwise it might not touch the people. He is more attacking on the people who govern the state. So, he thinks it is the duty of the government to take care of people but that not been followed, so he attacks on the people with his harsh language. This is again the skill of the writer that they attack on the national figure without the thinking. But the quality of writers is that the remaining world accepts them what they say.

The inquiry of the past in the present period is stupendous work Khushwant Sing does in his historical novel *Delhi: A Novel* (1990).

The present research is based on the Khushwant Sing's most celebrated fiction *Delhi: A Novel* (1990). This novel spans a very long period in its subject matter. Delhi is the best example of historical novel which encompasses the entire history of India. Khushwant Singh writes in his note in the novel that 'In this novel I have tried to tell the story of Delhi from its earliest beginnings to the presents time. I constructed it from records chronicled by eye witnesses and most of it is told in the first person'. It is clear that he mixes the fact and fiction in the novel *Delhi*. There are many historical figures he uses in the fiction but at the same time many of the fictitious character he employs in the novel. There are twenty-one chapters includes in the novel where each alternative part dedicated to his friend/ beloved Bhagmati. There are lots of incidents narrated on the religion and religious leader. The details encounter of ruler and the greed of theirs leads them towards the destruction narrates in the novel. It is the picture of realistic history with the help of fictitious characters. Delhi is not the story of Delhi city but it represents the entire India. So, it becomes the representation of the whole country. The past history is romanticized in the fiction. Through this novel Singh gives another version of history. And it is not necessary to prove it, that it is right or wrong in the postmodern writing. The span of his writing in the novel is from the Mughal Period (1265) of Zahiriddin Babar till the Freedom of India. When he writes the fiction, he clears for the reader that Bhagmati is the Delhi his beloved. When he compares Bhagmati with Delhi means there is tremendous exploitation been done of the city. He narrates in the first paragraph only to show his love for the city, I return to Delhi as I return to my mistress Bhagmati (1). Then he narrates the exact picture of the city, its road, bazar, lanes. He writes the nature of the Delhi people who spits on the roads, urinates anywhere they feel, and loud mouthed and express familiarity with incestuous abuse and not bother to scratch their privates' parts in the public. Though this all things are there but then also he wants to stay in the same city because his love for the city. He comments on the punctuality of the nation but the same time satirizes about the timing of Air India. When he talks about the city in relation

with facility of water and electricity, he never gets the good response ever from the concern people. He even comments on the Indian tendency about strike on the small petty issues. His visit to the Nigambodh Ghat changes his thoughts about the life. The place is for the cremation of the death bodies.

Then he narrates the chapter about Lady J.H.T. She comes to India to visit the archeological sites in the city Delhi. The narrator Mr. Singh appointed to entertain her and show the sites to her. Mr. Singh is the narrator of the novel. We see the entire story through the narrator's eye. He decides to show her the most famous places in the Delhi city like Tilpat and Suraj Kund. His curiosity is too much because he gets a white lady with him full day so he can impress his friends in the city at the same time this lady is very close relatives of the queen of London. They roam full day together and due to that there is little affinity between the two but he says the white people know it how to maintain distance from the Indians and treat them in front of others. The lady J.H.T makes fun with him showing interest in the Indian male. But after visiting many places in the Delhi city she takes leave at night.

The next chapter after Bhagmati is about the Mussadi Lal. He narrates the villainous nature of many Muslim ruler, their exploitation, religious prejudices and superstitious belief. The fictitious character Mussadi Lal is the son of Lal Chagan Lal. And Khushwant Singh shows the picture of realistic history through this character. He is the Kayastha, born in 1265 at the period of Sultan Ghiasuddin Balban. The period is mostly famous for the atrocities of the bad ruler who destroys the temple of Hindus and Jains. The life story of Mussadi Lal is important to understand the entire history. In his life after his birth, in few years his parents die so he goes to madrasa for studies among Muslim students. So, his identity becomes Muslim as well as Hindu. And the same time his marriage is not possible because his upbringing with Muslim people but when the reality comes in front then the father of Ram Dulari agrees to give his daughter to him. Actually, this the prejudices in the minds of Hindus and Muslim against each other. That resulted a hate for each other. After the marriage she does mix not with him because his upbringing at the Muslim place. When he takes her to visit the Mosque, she denies to enter the mosque because she saw the disfigured faces Hindu gods on the pillars. Many times, Mussadi Lal gets angry because he thinks that, the Muslim thinks he is Hindu and Hindu thinks he is Muslim. At last, he is confused about his identity. But after visiting the Kwaja Sahib the nature of Ram Dulari changes and she accepts both the religion. Due to that she celebrates both Hindu and Muslim festival. And even she keeps the name of her child Kamal that goes with both the religions. Later Kwaja Saheb goes to Punjab and

meets Sultan Ghiasuddin. Here at his place a notorious dervish Siddhi Maula comes. Due to the death of Sultan's son, he dies in the grief. And the people of the kingdom fights for the crown. Later Jalaluddin Firoz becomes the king of Delhi. The days of Siddhi's overs and he is punished to death so all peoples of Delhi waited for the Kwaja and he comes to Delhi. Many other Muslim kings rule Delhi but not make the great mark in the history.

The kings like Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah, the Hindu Pawar Rajput, Ghiasuddin Tuglak but all fail to be a good king. In the chapter *The Timurid* he talks about the Muslim leader who just show the name of god and ruled on the Delhi. The Taimurs comes to India to spread the Muslim religion but all are so greedy that they looted the entire Delhi. Taimur gets good welcome in the Delhi and not any person opposes him. When Taimur enters in the India he kills thousands of the people under the name of Islam. With this Taimor loots entire city Delhi all the ornaments and jewels been taken away. He kills people that no one left to burn the dead bodies.

The new chapter *Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan* about the king who wants entire India under his control for that he kills numerous people. And the best agenda of his life also to spread the Islam in the world. As far as his thinking concern, this is the work of Allah, he thinks to spread Islam. He writes he is the son of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz. There is rivalry between his and his brother Dara. But later he kills everybody and becomes the king of Hindustan empire. It is the scene in the novel that he stops the water to fort. And his father dies due to water and ill health. This the way he kills all the closes relatives for his crown. When he becomes the king, he starts spreading the Islam and those who tries to stop him are killed on the spot. This is the effect of his power that he demolishes almost all the temples of Hindus and Jains. At the end of his life, he realizes the mistake he did. And he becomes very angry about his behavior that is shown in his internal monologue. At last, he raises the question about the last gain in his life. And left the world without the coffin that was the wish of his.

The later king comes to Delhi, Nadir Khan, he was the ruler of Isphahan, and becomes the Badshah of Iran and already captured Iran and now aiming for the Hindustan. When he aims about Delhi the same time receives the invitation from the Governor of Deccan and the Governor of Avadh. And at that time, he comes to Delhi only for the friendship and Islam. Later he takes entire Delhi under his control by taking the sword of the king Mohammed Shah. And later he orders to kill the Delhi people do not even leave women and kids. This is

the double natured people who at one side talk about the religion and other side they order to kill people. With his order another thing he said that take the all gold and precious stones from all the merchant and kill them all. Later Nadir Shah in May 1739 leaves Delhi with all ornaments and jewels.

Khushwant Singh uses Meer Taqi Mir a person to depict the picture of Delhi. He is a very well-known poet. His creativity gives him a special space in history. He is from very humble background and so gets the good opportunity to earn. He stays with Nawab Rais at his fort. Later Nawab goes to work at another place, he come close physically and emotionally with his wife. The lady Sahiba takes Taqi in her proper control and shows him that that she has the real love for him and makes mad for her. But Taqi's mother, the good mother makes the arrangement of his marriage. But after the marriage also Taqi doesn't feel the closeness towards his wife but the lady always keeps good relation with her husband. She deserted Taqi but never left her husband. Later he left the place and goes to Delhi. The fortune of the poet never works well and at last the tragedy happens with his family his kids and wife die and even he dies with poisonous glass of wine.

The story of Alice Aldwell and Alec gets the picture of real Delhi life style of men and women. And this the time when the native Indian starts their revolt against white people. Alice and her daughters get shelter at the house of Mirza Abdullah. But he later forces her to become the Muslim. Even Alice gets a new name Ayesha and respectively he changes the name of all three daughter Mariyam, Fatima and Jahanara. And later she plans to leave the place and settle in the England.

*The Last Emperor* which name indicates the last time of the ruler and the beginning of the British rule. Bahadur Shah Zafar is the last ruler of the Mughals. This is the time when clashes start between the Mughals and East India Company. The king of Delhi Bahadur Shah instead if giving a proper answer to British he gives them shelter. The nature of Britisher nobody understood they captures half of the Hindustan. And takes the control of all maharaja. Begam Zeenat Mahal wants make Mirza Jawan Bakth the successor of the Mughal but all other decides to make Mirza Fakhroo the king. And here the end of Moghul period. When Britishers comes the rivalry between Hindus and Muslim comes at the end and they come together to fight against the Britisher. The incident of the cartridge made from the fat of cow and pig brings the two religion against the Britisher. The faithful people of the country later become so selfish and kneel down against the Britisher Rajab Ali, Mirza Elahi Baksh. This is

the scene of Delhi that the emperor of the city Bahadur Shah Zafar his wife Zeenat and son Jawan Bakht surrender to Hodson the British officer.

The chapter *Nihal Singh* plays the important role because it presents the revenge and hatred scene. This is the chapter shows the end of the Mughal regime. He works as a policeman in the British police and always feel against the Muslim. Because he thinks the guru of Sikh is killed by the same Muslim people. Now Hodson shows the picture to Sikh that, they are fighting against the Muslim and Britisher's are helping them. At the same time, he promised to all Sikh that if he wins, he will give them lots of gold and silver. Nihal Singh becomes the most loyal person of Hodson. The Sikhs works to kills the people and said to kill the people means get the extra ration and that is rum. This is the way Britisher kills almost all people and enter the red fort. This is the respect native Indians gets that after the win of the they did not allow to enter the fort but to sleep outside the fort. In the Delhi they kill almost all the people. And the world rebel uses to kill them. Hodson captures almost all the people and kill them with the help of Indian men. Now the last people Mirza Mughal, Mirza Abu Bakr and Mirza Khizr Sultan all are killed in front of people.

The new chapter *The Builder* this is the picture when the capital changes from Calcutta to Delhi. The greed of the Indian people is always with them and they cheat each other at every level. Due to the development the political leader gets good money as a commission and both British and businessman grows in the country. After the World War begins and Britisher changes their focus on the war and leaves the development aside. And that is chance to Indians to come closer and start the movement against the Britisher. The beginning of civil disobedience movement, satyagraha and ahimsa takes India at another level of collective unity.

*The Dispossessed* narrates the incidents of the partition of India and Pakistan. The picture of partition and the death of Gandhiji narrated in this episode. The fictitious character Ram Rakha narrates all the incidents chapter. Due to his economic situation he comes to Delhi but at the same time the communal riots are everywhere even in his native place. In the city he joins the RSS and thinks he work for the nation. He narrates that the RSS considers Gandhiji a fool. The entire RSS thinks the Gandhiji and Nehru cheats India. And this Ram Rakha nabs the killer of Gandhiji and shouts in happiness. And the narrator talks about the assassination of the Indira Gandhi. The new incidents take birth after the death of Indira Gandhi that the people start the riots against Sikh. Because Indira Gandhi was killed by her Sikhs bodyguard.

This is the beginning of Anti Sikh Riots. The effect that the group of rioters kills Budh Singh. This the time when police should help the people to maintain the law an order but they are with the people and kill many innocent Sikh. The half man and half women Bhagmati come to rescue the Mr. Singh at the time of Sikh Riots.

The narration of the entire history in *Delhi*. Author selects very important events to create the picture of real history. This fiction is the best example of fictionalized history. This is the well blend of fact and fiction. The narration goes parallel with the fact and fiction. The historiographic metafiction aptly applies to the novel which is the most important trait of the postmodernism. These all qualities make Khushwant Singh a postmodern writer. He has the capability to give the different version of history. This is very subjective description so people can create the multiple histories.

Khushwant Singh is a postmodern writer because he uses the postmodern technique in his novels. To understand his writing style, it is important to get the concept of his fiction, most of the fiction bases on the historical details. He uses the events and personages from the history, use them to write his novel. This is the most favorable trend in the postmodern writing. When the history is fictionalized, it is the part of Linda Hutcheon's term 'Historiographic Metafiction'. This all we can see in the writing of Khushwant Singh. Another strategy of writing novel where author talk about the creation of the novel is the self-reflexive writing even that is available in Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*. Where he tells the reader about his writing. The intention of the writer is almost clear before each chapter. When we read the chapter, the impression comes in our mind that what is the concept in the next chapter. This all-inclusive in the self-reflexive narration. The quality of multiple voices presents in his almost all the novel. When, take the *Delhi* in the consideration the multiple communities, multiple religion, multiple casts, the different types of people like Indian, western, Iranian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and many more voices are present in the text. The novel expresses a strong consciousness of the fictiveness of all discourse about history and reality.

The novels of Khushwant Singh not only recreates the history but provides the imaginative revision of the historical period. Many of his novels written to the response of the historical facts. The facts are the partition of India, Anti Sikh Riots, Gandhi's assassination, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the communal riots, the rulers of India, all sultan's and many more historical figures become the part of his writing. Khushwant Singh's writing is postmodern

which rejects the present belief and standards and come up with the individual version of the past. This is his own specific and particular writing. In this sense the historiographical metafiction provides the paratextual convection to the historiography. This quality of historiographic metafiction is that it inscribes and undermines the authoritative objective historical explanation. Khushwant Singh is so conscious about his narration that, he knows, he is using the historical facts and reality in the novel with the help of fictitious characters. The past chooses in the novel only for the critical point of view not for the history. Means the history or past will be again critically analyzed so give another meaning to the past. So, it will come out with multiplicity of the meaning. Singh uses personal and private expression to elevates public consciousness about the place.

Khushwant Singh is successful at one stage to present the reality to reader through the novel. Because of that, it gives the deeper meaning of text to reader. Khushwant Singh is famous in the India for his column writing. He worked for major newspaper in India as a columnist. His writing for the newspaper is well appreciated. The best quality of his 'objective reporting'. This is the quality of his meets the demand of the reader. So, his writing is in favor of individualism and living in the present moment. This all goes in the traits of postmodernism. The theory of postmodern thinker Lyotard comes up, with the theory says there is no longer any grand narrative, no organizing or explanatory framework or central project for humanity. This all available in his journalism also. He critically deconstructs the tradition of writing and even implements in his works at the same in columns. This is defined by the Hal Foster about the deconstruction. Khushwant Singh's write up never follow a structured writing. He shifts his attention from people to ideas and ideas to people so easily without giving any logical description. There is not any central theme to his column. This makes him a perfect postmodern writer. He wrote about the ancient Upanishads and the thought of Guru's that all are his own opinion or own interpretation in the postmodern time.

These all qualities of his writing make Khushwant Singh a postmodern writer. The different postmodern narrative techniques he uses in the fiction.

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