



SOCIAL REALISM IN KUSWANT SINGH'S NOVEL, THE COMPANY OF WOMEN

G. Ambika* & A. Selvamani**

* Assistant Professor, Sri GVG Visalakshi College for Women, Udumalpet, Tamilnadu

** Research Scholar (M.Phil), Sri GVG Visalakshi College for Women, Udumalpet, Tamilnadu

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Abstract:

This study traces the concept of social realism and emphasis is laid on to analyse the pivotal themes of familial relationship, love and sex, sexual relationship of the hero Mohan Kumar with the company of women in New York, sex with his wife Sonu, and other women are presented with enormous talent and skill. This is evident in the style of his writings. Khushwant Singh has adopted the techniques of realistic writing in portraying characters in a unique way.

The Concept of Social Realism:

In the twentieth century, social realism adopted a new direction. The phrase "social realism" has been broadened to include a variety of concepts like the inner self's and psyche's reality of a person. It does not simply refer to outward reality but also deeply focuses on the mental idea. Khushwant Singh's fourth novel *The Company of Women* was published in 1999. The story is set in a twentieth-century metropolitan city and it depicts the lives of modern people there. This work exposes the true nature of modern man's secret life. According to the topten fictions list released by *The Hindustan Times* the novel has risen to the top of the list of most read and most sold novels in India. Some critics have classified the work as a "popular novel," "pulp novel," or "pornographic novel." Numerous sexual experiences are depicted realistically without any bewilderment.

The Company of Women examines contemporary man's affluent lifestyle while also exposing Indian society's flaws and follies. He addresses the flaws in the marital system, which prioritises dowry. In the work, he explores family dynamics, marital politics, and the ambitions for wealth of the middle class. It also addresses the concerns of the untouchables and caste discrimination. He also focuses on the lives of political men and women in modern society, the conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan, conversion, problems in a joint family, the concept of sin, criticism of Indian news papers, the money-minded nature of religious priests at temples, the luxurious life of rich people in metropolitan cities such as Delhi, sexual exploitation of girls and boys, and the ghastly effects of lust, effects of unsafe sex in hotels and use of Indian English language, hazardous effects of lust or sex in men's life.

The last of a householder's familiar responsibilities before entering the last phase of life, sanyas, is to marry a son or daughter. The author further criticizes Indian parents who force their values and ideals on their children and are unconcerned with their children's feelings and choices. Feelings and temperaments have little importance in the arranged marriage system. It places a high emphasis on education and money given as dowry. Such marriages ruin the place of marital life. In the work,

Khushwant Singh promotes social realism by condemning untouchability and the caste system. Khushwant Singh attacks the act of so-called educated people who refuse to let untouchables inside their homes, yet the same untouchable ladies become touchable when their sexual desire grows strong. Dhannorepresents the untouchable working women who work among the rich. Mohan's residence has two maids who refuse to let her into the kitchen. Khushwant Singh explains:

"To them she was an untouchable: they never let her enter the kitchen. They avoided physical contact with her, and when she came to get the leftovers, they dropped daal-roti or whatever had not been eaten by their master into utensils, she brought with her" (TCOW, 21).

He also examines the behaviour of men and women in politics in the modern age. Yasmeen Nanchoo is the Azad Kashmir's first female political leader. She is a member of Pakistan's Legislative Assembly. Politicians are always surrounded by men and women carrying petitions. Yasmeen's life is filled with monotony. As a result, she is excited to have sex with Mohan, who is twenty years younger to her. Khushwant Singh has dealt with the sexual exploitation of girls and boys during their childhood.

He is conscious of society's social ills, peculiarities, and idiosyncrasies. He sarcastically adds that boys and girls are used by close relatives in accordance with sound societal standards, and the victims' parents are always ignorant of it. To make this point, he uses two characters. Molly Gomes and Susanthika spoke about how their families used them, while Mary Joseph was exploited by the Parade. Susanthika was sexually

exploited by her married uncle, who was the father of a fourteen-year-old kid. Molly reveals that she was sexually exploited by her uncle. Men's expectations of women's virginity are criticized here in detail. When a man proposes to a woman, he inquires about her virginity but women never inquire about men's virginity. When Sonu reads matrimonial columns with expectation of girl's virginity she asks Mohan, all men want fair skinned brides and virgins. All virgins are maidens; not all maidens are virgins; she would explain no girl seeking a husband asks for a boy who has never slept with a woman"(TCOW, 27)

Khushwant Singh highlights the deception of girls in India whose husbands are abroad for jobs. Mohan Kumar reminds his life in the United States, where he was able to enjoy sex almost every day without restriction but in India he was able to use all his plans to find a bed partner, but at the same time, he is aware of the socio cultural barriers that came in the way. Mohan Kumar himself observes:

"In America I had got all the sex I wanted, without long - term commitments. In India it was not so easy, I did not relish the idea of visiting prostitutes or looking for call girls. Even I succeeded in persuading a working woman to share my bed, there was no place I could take her to; Indians do not believe in privacy..." (TCOW, 139).

Khushwant Singh criticizes the repression of sex in society. Man is an animal, yet he differs from other animals only in that he has the ability to reason. When his sex urge is triggered, he loses his ability to think clearly, and he acts like a savage. As a result, Khushwant Singh's major expectation is sexual satisfaction. The novel might be described as a *literature of anti-AIDS campaign*. It elaborates the feeling and sensibility of AIDS patient and its causes and symptoms. It also gives elementary knowledge and information about the causes and symptoms of the fatal disease called AIDS. It also provides a cautious warning to the victim's sensibility in a graphic way.

Thus to conclude, *The Company of Women* is a novel about social realism. Khushwant Singh promotes social realism by addressing issues such as child marriages, love, sex, politics, religion, and the Jammu and Kashmir conflict. He wants to warn us about the dangers of desire since it keeps us from accomplishing our goals in life. Social realism is a work of art in its own right.

References:

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