



DIVIDED LOYALITIES. I SHALL NOT HEAR THE NIGHTINGALE

Dr, KHANDAPU VENKATARAO

ASSOCIATE PROF OF ENGLISH

SRI VASAVI ENGG COLLEGE TADEPALLI GUDEM PIN 534101 .

ANDHRAPRADESH

During the Pre Independent days the Nationalists were divided into two groups: believers of violence and non violence. In the Second World War, those two groups took two different stands. Gandhiji and his followers, who followed the path of non-violence and peace, supported the British Government. Those who believed that “the future of India lay with those radical and militant forces that will be able to undergo the sacrifice and suffering necessary for winning freedom” (Tarachand. History of Freedom Movement in India. 271) They were militants. It was ardently believed that there militant forces, despite their violent political activities, were not less glorious than the followers of Gandhiji. In fact, they were as passionately as, if not more, devoted to the cause of freedom. The violent means adopted by Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru, Sukhdev, Jetin Das and a host of other nationalist revolutionaries appealed to the youth more than the non-violent and peaceful approach of Gandhiji.

National movement stirred the National consciousness and the rise of Indian English Novel. The impact of the Second World War and the horrors of partition found artistic expression in the novels of Kushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya and Manohar Malgonkar

and a few others. Kushwant Singh and Malgonkar dealt with the theme of partition in *Train to Pakistan* and *A bend in the Ganges* respectively. The nationalist movement found expression in the novels, *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale* and *A Bend in the Ganges*.

Kushwant Singh's second novel, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) is a vivid and exciting novel. It is the novel that depicted the animosity that prevailed in the family relationships. The narrative design of the novel has a historical context which finds its roots in the character of Buta Singh. The character of Buta Singh, the Sikh magistrate, is very revealing. The Taylors, too, who provide acute insight into the personality of Buta Singh are significant in the narrative design of the novel. The personal relationship existing between the Taylor's family and Buta Singh's becomes crucial for the development of the novel. Mr. Taylor reveals the basic narrative design and the intention of the novel in his words to Mrs. Joyce Taylor. He tells her: "Well! In a way you have the story of Indo-British relationships represented by Buta Singh's family tree. His grandfather fought against us in the Sikh wars; his father served us loyally. He has continued to do so, with certain reservations. His son is impatient to get rid of us. Poor Buta Singh is split between the past and the future; that is why he appears so muddled in the present. He is not as much of a humbug as he appears to be." (218).

From Mr. Taylor's account of Buta Singh's family tree, it is evident that the loyalty shown by the members of Buta Singh's dynasty has been fluctuating. Buts Singh's grandfather hated the British. Buta Singh and his father like the British. Again his son Sher Singh chooses the line of Buta Singh's grand father, who hated the British. Wide range of social and political life forms the essence of the novel. Primarily, the novel is the drama of two families – the family of Buta Singh and that of Mr. Taylor. But, it goes beyond the narrow limits of a family life and portrays various phases and changes in social and political

situations.

Kushwant Singh dedicates the novel to Dharma, who aspires to know. The quotation,

Paracelsus: “I am he that aspired to know; and thou?”

Aprile: “I would love infinitely and be loved.” (fly leaf)

It is presumed the epigraph to the novel implies knowledge and love that are complementary approaches to reality. Knowledge is the source of love and love begets love, but not hatred. Hatred comes from ignorance and it leads to violence and violence is sinful. This integral view of human life presented in I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale. Love, the pathway of God, emerges out of the inward feeling of the novelist and it is expressed in the portrayal of Sabhrai, the most significant character in the novel. It is Sabhrai whose matriarchal strength sustains the family in crisis. It is the character of Sabhrai, says Shahane: “is the Kernel of I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale” (106). She renders redemption to the sordid world in the novel.

The first chapter of the novel which begins with a meaningful reference to the “baptism in blood”¹ represents the made of the presentation of the novelist. The phrase sharply contrasts the atmosphere symbolized by the title. The nightingale stands for joy. Joy reigns where peace reigns. Nightingale stands for spring which is independence. If India gets independence, everybody will have joy. But for the present violence prevails. “Baptism in blood” indicates violence. Sher Singh, a terrorist leader of a group of immature college students, goes on a hunting expedition along with Madan, a brilliant cricket player, and a few others. They are shown engaged in target practice and rifle shooting. They undertake this expedition in order to baptise the weapons in accordance with the ancient Hindu custom of dipping swords in a goat’s blood and laying them before “Durga or Kali or Bhavani or whatever the name the Goddess of destruction was known by.” (6).

According to the Hindu belief, the Goddess of destruction destroys the forces of darkness or the Rakshasas. If the Goddess is pleased by the offer of blood, the goddess will slay the demons or the Rakshasas. Here the demons are the English people whom Sher Singh and others want to drive away or destroy. This phrase “Baptism in blood” also foretells the tragic and gruesome events like the murder of a village headman and violent incidents that take place later on.

Madanlal, who is said to be the backbone of the terrorists group, supports the plan of killing either a deer or duck. These young boys, whose ambition is to become terrorists and kill as many Englishmen as they like, carry out this tasks of hunting after smuggling rifles and hand grenades from across the frontier. When Sher Singh hesitates to kill cranes, Madan, the strong man of the university, remarks: “If you are going to funk shooting birds, you will not do much when it comes to shooting Englishmen.” (7) Sher Singh, a jumble of conflicting emotions of guilt and pride, gets provoked and mercilessly wounds inedible and harmless bird. Sher Singh’s Dyer, the snarling and snapping Alsatian, helps him in the hunting. Sher Singh, thus, makes a first attempt to take life and succeeds.

After the ruthless event, they start going home when the other crane beings to circle overhead crying loudly. “The anguished cry of the flying crane was almost human.”² Sher Singh, the leader of the group, in his excitement and hurry forgets to pick six empty cases of bullets which are later used by Jhimna Singh, the village headman, as proof against Sher Singh’s revolutionary activities. The headman who arrives at the spot at that time demands everybody’s shooting licence, but very soon he withdraws not only his demand but also flatters Sher Singh knowing that he is the son of the most powerful magistrate, Buta Singh.

Jhimma Singh's dual nature, which is the primary quality of his character, is revealed vividly in his very first appearance. Of course, Sher Singh, who suspects Jhimma Singh to be a police informer, cleverly introduces his friends to him under false names and wraps a five-rupee note in his father's shot gun licence. He then puts it in the hands of the headman and tells him:

“You have become angry for no reason. You can see the license and anything else you like.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Jhimma Singh, the lambardar, who is given to corrupt practices, suddenly changes his tone and begins to flatter him. He tells Sher Singh “I am your slave.”⁽¹⁰⁾ The youth thus avert the crisis and reach their homes without facing further trouble. The happenings in the first scene suggest the development of situation and character in the novel. Kushwant Singh appears to have the knowledge of ornithology and the life and activities of birds. The Sarus crane represents the motif of love, mating and sacrifice. The wicked and inhuman separation of the cranes is caused by heartless actions of Sher Singh and Madan. They do not seem to possess a true awareness of love and man's mutual feeling for woman. The agony of the male for the female crane brings out the touching and pathetic scene of the two dumb birds and their separation due to the death of the mate, a re-enactment of Valmiki's experience. The Sarus crane continues to call its mate. Both Sher Singh and Madan are insensitive to the feelings of love and affection. The young men are involved in the world of violence, bloodshed, cheating and lying. The lambardar, too, blackmails them and exhorts money. The world of blood shed, violence, blackmail and falsehood are presented against the love-anguish of the crane and the longing for the freedom of the country.

Sher Singh, after dropping his friends, reaches home and puts the box containing the rifles and grenades in the trench. He leaves the jeep in the garage and waits there for a while before facing his wife and parents. The figure of the flying crane still haunts him. He loses the

sense of assurance, gets dispirited and depressed. His thoughts about Mr. Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner, and his father, Buta Singh make him undergo mental agony. He does not know what will happen if his father comes to know that the jeep given to him to further war work is used by him for the clandestine purpose of carrying the terrorists. Sher Singh is afraid that his father's career in service and his hopes of recognition would get dashed. Sher Singh, who undergoes mental agony, fails to reconcile the conflicting worlds: "The one of security provided by his father who was a Senior magistrate and the full of applause that would come to him as the heroic leader of a band of terrorists. Now for the first time he realized how utterly incompatible they were and he simply had to make a choice."(15) Sabhrai, an embodiment of nobility, gently tells Sher Singh that "To take the life of innocent creatures is sin."(15)

Sher Singh gets haunted frequently by the nightmarish experience of killing the innocent crane. The delusions and fears have been tormenting his mind. The figures of Madan, the headman, his father, and Taylor have been frequently appearing in his thoughts. To add to this delusion, was the figure of the crane flying in the dark and its crying coming back to his mind. He is totally shaken. He gets a dream and he cries in his sleep. But his cry does not wake her. Champak lives in her own world of lust without offering any solace to her husband's tormented mind. He is totally shaken. But his cry does not wake her. Champak lives in her own world of lust without offering any solace to her husband's tormented mind. "She lay like a nude model posing for an artist: One hand between her thighs covering her nakedness and the other stretched away to expose her bust."(18)

Sher Singh, on the New Year's Day, gets some personal assurance from the words of the Grandh. "Or as a rope mistaken for serpent causeth panic. Such are delusion and fear." (21)

Though Sher Singh is nervous, he gets into argument with his father regarding the

British rule in India. Buta Singh, who is loyal to the British for personal gain, proffers advice to his son. His double-faced nature is seen in his words: “And,” added Buta Singh with indulgent pride, “don’t say anything which may cause trouble. Remember my position. I do not mind your hobnobbing with these Nationalists as a matter of fact, it is good to keep in with both sides, but one ought to be cautious.” (39)

Sher Singh feels extremely uneasy in the company of his father and a communication gap develops between them. Sher Singh, who develops a craze for applause, overcomes anxiety and regains confidence in himself. A large crowd consisting of Sikh students under the banner, ‘Student volunteer corps’, arrives on the scene to receive Sher Singh. The students parade up and down the grounds. Sher Singh, like a field marshal coming to inspect the troops, arrives when there is much shouting and saluting. Unfurling the S.V.C’s black flag, he takes the salute and goes to the rostrum to address the gathering. Knowing that there would be police reporters, he decides to be cautious in his speech.

This in a man who wants to fight for his country’s freedom is rather strange, because he wants to eat the cake and have it too. If his involvement in the freedom struggle is total and complete, he should not mind the presence of the police reporters. He does not want to cause embarrassment to his father, hence his caution. Torn between filial piety and national piety, he seems to fail in both. Paying homage to Gurus, he fervently says:

“Comrades, we met at a critical time. The enemy is at our gates.” (39)

He indulges in a speech full of clichés – like, ‘we meet at a critical time’ ‘enemy at our door steps’ etc.

“Comrades, we not only have the enemy at our door step, we have enemies within our house.” (39)

Raising his voice again he says:

“Those who sacrifice the interests of the motherland for foreign countries are our enemy No.1. They have been rightly named as the ‘Kaum nashts’ – destroyers of the race.” (39)

He fulminates against the advocacy of partition.

“There are also people who want to cut off the limbs of Mother India and make another state of Pakistan. They too are our enemies.”(39)

He preaches fearlessness and determination:

“But we are Sikhs who do not fear any enemies. We shall destroy all those who stand in our way.”(39)

Sher Singh speaks very cautiously. The way in which he raises his tone and lowers exposes his wavering and fearful condition and does not prove him to be a courageous leader of the terrorists especially a Sikh terrorist. Buta Singh and Sher Singh differ in their attitude towards Indians. Buta Singh remarks:

“We Indians have no character.” (75)

And “We have still a lot to learn from the English.”(75)

Sher Singh becomes angry and contradicts Buta Singh’s statement. He says: “They too have something to learn from us.” (77)

The friendly discussion turns into an acrimonious debate. Buta Singh’s wife, Sabhrai, asks Sher Singh why he contradicts his father. Sher Singh Says: “I am not against them. I am for my own country. If they stayed in England, I would have nothing against them.”(78) Sabhrai further asks him: “What will you get if the English have this country?”(79)

Sher Singh says that he would get nothing, but the Indians would be free. He fails to answer his mother’s simple question. He lyrically says: “Spring will come our barren land once more... once more the nightingales will sing.” (98) Mr. Taylor asks Buta Singh about his son’s programme during the summer vacation. Buta Singh tells Mr. Taylor that he proposes to send him to Simla. Mr. Taylor, then advises Buta Singh to ask his son to meet him. Buta

Singh, during his discussion with Sher Singh, tells him that Mr. Taylor wants Sher Singh to see him. Sher Singh, who expects to be received alone by Mr. Taylor, gets into Taylor's room after a long waiting. He becomes nervous. After formal greetings, Mr. Taylor, makes a reference to politics. Sher Singh's attitude to Taylor is a mixture of fear and hate. Mr. Taylor asks: "Things are not going too well for us; are they?"

Sher Singh, who is thoroughly shaken in his meeting with Mr. Taylor, feels that his issue had not been settled. He becomes weak and indecisive. He is afraid that his father would disown him if he comes to know of his association with the nationalists. He decides to get rid of the arms in his possession before they are traced by the police. But the village headman calls on him even before he could dispose of the weapons. Sher Singh feels cornered and helpless when the headman, Jhima Singh, shows three empty cartridges. But Sher Singh is cautious and he does not reveal the names of the people who were with him at the time of shooting. A young man who must be fighting fearlessly for national freedom is pathetically involved in a crime one of which to extricate himself he has to go on committing petty crimes like bribing the headman to keep him silent. The irony of a self-styled nationalist getting begged down in a small crime is tellingly brought cut in this episode.

Sher Singh's actions show a certain immaturity and impulsiveness. Though these two qualities are quite natural in a young man, his indulgence in acts of sabotage like blowing up the bridge does not do him any credit as a freedom fighter. Already scared by the empty cartridge flaunted before him by Taylor, Sher Singh should have understood into what deeper mire he would be dragging his father by his act of sabotage.

Though the grenades thrown by Sher Singh cause considerable damage to the small bridge, this act of heroism (!) pales into insignificance if we compare it with Devi Dayal's

burning of British military plane in Manohar Malgonakar's A Bend in The Ganges. There Devi Dayal's attitude towards the British is totally uncompromising and born out of a fierce resistance of the British rule, while Sher Singh's act appears rather juvenile. In spite of an impetuosity that involves Sher Singh in sabotage, there is not absent in him an element of selflessness. Though the circumstances conspire to have him arrested and thrown into jail, he shows a certain amount of tenacity in putting up with all the beatings and humiliations from the Anglo-Indian sergeants. He does not betray his colleagues, though at one stage he physically breaks down. Luckily for him, his house search does not disclose any tangible evidence of his involvement in the incident. The already unhappy Mr. Taylor about his having to take action against Buta Singh's son now sees a change to let the young man off. So he tells Buta Singh that Sher Singh may be made "a crown witness and be granted the King's pardon" (183), if he confesses. Buta Singh sees in this unpleasant situation all his hope of being knighted shattered. What little remains of his prestige may be salvaged if Sabhrai with her quite competence and proper comprehension of the problems can be made to talk to her son.

Sabhrai returns from Simla on receiving a telegram from her husband. She seeks the guidance of the Granth out of impasse. She herself feels let down by the Guru, but she pursues in seeking the light. It is in that frame of mind that she meets her son in the jail. Her love for him overpowers him and she is humble enough to say that not she but the Guru will guide Sher Singh. She advises her son not to reveal the names of his associates in the crime, which of course he has not so far. Disclosing the names of the colleagues is an act of betrayal that implies selfishness and hate. If it is the will of God that he has to bear the cross himself, he should do it cheerfully and resignedly. The suggestion here is that he should not turn an approver and if he turned into a crown witness, "he was no longer to be regarded as a Sikh and

I was not to see his face again.”³ She is resigned to the loss of her son. But a miracle happens and the boy is released for want of evidence against him.

Thus ends the nationalist struggle of Sher Singh. Though in action, Sher Singh’s fight for nationalism has ended, he has not forgotten the need for India’s independence. He continues to believe that “India can be ruled only by strongman. This democratic business of votes for every one, elections, assemblies, committees is nonsense. I don’t believe in it.”(229)

The question that confronts the reader is whether Sher Singh has accomplished the task which he had undertaken. The events in the novel from the time he kills an innocent bird to his murdering of Jhimma Singh and his subsequent arrest and incarceration do not show him as a devoted patriot totally involved in the freedom struggle. The killing of the bird is a juvenile act of rashness and irresponsibility. The blowing up of the bridge is a thoughtless impulsive act, a bravura rather than bravery. His killing of Himma Singh is a crime pure and simple. His divided piety between his father and his country does not also show in him any extraordinary conflict of emotions. He gives the impression of an aimless youth drifting from one crime to another rather than a passionate nationalist. So much so that all his acts end in a fiasco. Abjuring the path of violence, as it were, he makes only pronouncements of politics which Kushwant Singh says have “acquired sanctivity.”(229) This is in the context of Sher Singh’s praising Hitler in response to Buta Singh’s descriptions of Hitler as an amazing character.

What sanctity is there about Sher Singh’s decrying the democratic process as nonsense, it is difficult to understand. Does the novelist believe in dictatorship and fascism? Has he no faith in democracy which is a humanistic institution? Love and knowledge which are celebrated in the epigraph to the novel seem to go against this dictum on democracy.

More than the theme of nationalism, the novel deals with the subject of human relations. The central character in the novel is Sabhrai who embodies in herself the paracelsian wisdom contained in the epigraph to the novel: Paracelsus: “I am he that aspired to know: and thou?” Aprile: “I would love infinitely and be loved.” (Fly Leaf)

Except for a peripheral treatment of Sher Singh’s patriotic upsurge in his demolition of a small bridge and his pompous pronouncements on nationalism and freedom, there is not much of the political ideas in the novel. Of course, the relations between Mr. Taylor on one hand and the Indian officials on the other might be described as political. But we see more of personal human relations than the attitude of the ruler towards the ruled in Taylor’s dealings with Buta Singh and his family. Taylor does not show the usual arrogance of the British bureaucracy nor does he lack the humanistic touch in his attitude towards Indians: “Other English officers had kept their distance from Indians and set up the pattern of the rulers and the ruled. Taylor, on the other hand, not only met Indians as equals, made friends with his subordinates, but also openly expressed his sympathies with Gandhi and Nehru.” (24)

What provides the immediacy of interest in the novel is the social or domestic relations rather than the political theme. The political theme is no doubt woven into the fabric of human relations. But the epigraph to the novel clearly indicates the direction in which the novel moves. Love and knowledge, love more than knowledge are the motivating forces behind the sections of many of the characters, especially the chief ones like Sebhrai, the Taylors and Sher Singh. Love, affection, kindness, compassion generosity, mercy – these are the qualities of humanism abundantly present in Sabhrai and the Taylors who enact this human drama.

Mr. John Taylor and Mrs. Joyee Taylor are a liberal minded English couple closely associated with Buta Singh's family. John Taylor treats his subordinates with a tenderness and shows a remarkable endurance and understanding. When Buta Singh makes a loud pronouncement that he would disown his son, if he associates himself with the terrorists. Taylor says that people should be understood with sympathy and not treated harshly for holding opposite views. Especially children must be sensitively handled when they are rebellious: "You are a harsh judge, Buta Singh. Children are meant to be understood, not thrown out when there is a different of opinion." (181)

Mr. Taylor views Sher Singh's activities not as a serious threat to the British administration, but as the actions of a misguided youth. Handled carefully, Taylor believes that Sher Singh may be brought to see the folly of his actions. When Sher Singh meets him, Taylor merely flaunts the empty cartridges before him not with a view to intimidating the boy, but to make him see why he should not indulge in these activities further. By implication, he tries to impress upon Sher Singh that it is better for him and his family to give up his anti-British activities. Taylor gives him a long rope, even going to the extent of granting him license to own arms. Even the arrest of Sher Singh is necessitated by the sudden disappearance of Jhimma Singh, and Sher Singh, "was perhaps the last man to see him alive," (182) Taylor assures Buta Singh that if Sher Singh "had nothing to do with the affair, or refuses to talk, the case will not be reopened." (183) He would even grant him a King's pardon.

Though Taylor gets Sher Singh arrested and thrown into the jail, he has to consideration enough towards the family to send Joyee Taylor in his car to the station to receive Sabhrai coming from Simla. The visit of Joyce Taylor to the family both during Sher Singh's imprisonment and after has a humanistic touch. The Taylors behave like true Christians in the charlatan love towards the suffering. As though, the goodness of the Taylors was being

rewarded, no incriminating evidence against Sher Singh is found in Buta Singh's house. This enables Mr. Taylor to release Sher Singh with a clear conscience.

Joyce Taylor asks Mr. Taylor "how long do you deprive the man of his liberty, because of probability of guilt?"⁴ Taylor hears from his wife that Sabhrai is suffering from double pneumonia. He had great respect for her. Joyce suggests to her husband that they must give Sabhrai a Christmas present which would mean something to her. Though Taylor does not explicitly agree with her, his subsequent action to order Sher Singh's release implies tacit approval. This surprises even Sher Singh.

The involvement of Sher Singh in the nationalist terrorist movement does not embitter the relations between Taylor and Buta Singh. The Englishman is sympathetic enough to understand how the family is torn between divided loyalties. He judges every act of its own merit and does not mistake Buta Singh for his son's actions. As the British administrator, his duties and responsibilities are clearly defined. But that does not preclude him from being humane. He administers justice tempered with sympathy and compassion. Basically his relations with Buta Singh and others are humane and human, and not those of a matter and servant. He is lucky to be aided by equally pious soul with a true Christian temperament, Jyoce Taylor. Between them too, there is almost a secret spiritual understanding and their ideas and attitude chime together. The final triumph of the Christian spirit is seen in Taylor getting for Buta Singh, C.I.E.

Sabhrai may be considered the central figure in Buta Singh's family. By her goodness, kindness and love, she keeps the different strands of the family fabric together. The son, Sher Singh is a terrorist. The daughter-in-law, Champak is sex-starved. The daughter, Beena is adolescent girl with all the timidity and desired of a teenage girl. Her husband, Buta Singh, in his fierce loyalty to the British aspires to ascend the professional ladder. The servant maid,

Shunno, is a sexual-aberrant.

This is the secret of her hold on all those she comes across. Her immense faith in God and the guidance of the Guru, makes her spiritually charming. She is at complete peace with herself. This spiritual wholeness sends creepers of love and understanding from her towards all. When her son is arrested and when she meets him in the jail, she wants him to be good even towards those who were his co-conspirators in Jhimma Singh's murder. She advises him not to reveal their names and to suffer for them also. This is the guidance she gives to him. The essential goodness of Sabhrai is doubly rewarded, though in the bargain she dies. Her son is released, and her husband gets the C.I.E. She dies with a smile and is optimistic enough to wish for her son to hear the nightingales again. Till the end, the Guru is on her lips and God in her mind. Sher Singh's involvement in politics makes him neglect his wife Champak. "Sher's young wife, Champak, is little more than bitch, and the novel describes at some length her exercises in sensuality." (502)

Even the normal pleasures of married life are denied to Champak because of Sher Singh's frigidity. All her attempts to induce her husband into physical pleasures meet with failure. With her abnormal sexual urge, she has to find other agencies than her husband to satisfy herself. So she develops a liaison with Madan who for all his talk of nationalism is essentially a pleasure seeker. Though he is married, he makes overtures to Beena when she comes for combined study with his sister, Seeta. The poor, adolescent girl, Beena can neither be repulsive nor encouraging. But she is tickled by Madan's advances. Simultaneously, with his overtures to Beena he contracts a secret relationship with Champak. Beena once even finds them in Simla in a compromising situation in Madan's room when he is actually supposed to be waiting for her

As Champak finds sexual satisfaction in Madan, Shunno has her own problems of Sexual adjustment. Ignorance of man-woman relationship leads to a biological problem in her. In her mistaken rustic understanding of her 'illness', she goes to consult a Muslim divine, Peer Sahib. Though she is a Hindu, she does not hesitate to consult a Muslim divine. Taking advantage of her 'illness', Peer Sahib seduces her which in her continued ignorance, it taken by her as a cure for her 'illness'. Kushwant Singh gives in the novel three instances of seduction. Champak, all the time complaining about Mundoo's voyeurism, seems to be deriving a satisfaction in it, because she is herself fond of looking at her nude figure in the mirror. She loves her own body and the rounded features she has. She seduces Madan, Shunno shows another perversity. The sub-human levels of relationships are portrayed in these instances.

Kushwant Singh portrays in the novel three families one English, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, another a Sikh family, and the third a Hindu family, Wazir Chand's. Wazir Chand is another magistrate of the town along with Buta Singh. The Sikh and the Hindu families are rather close with constant visits from each other. Madan considers Sher Singh as his brother. Beena seeks Seeta's help in her studies. Both the families go on holidaying to Simla with Madan taking care of all of them. Madan is so respectful towards Sabhrai that he does not smoke before her. Sabhrai shows a tenderness towards Madan. At a crisis Madan offers his help to Buta Singh's family.

Thus we see in the novel an intricate play of human relations, presenting at the micro-level a miniature Indian situation. The Nationalist movement in which Sher Singh and Madan Lal are involved draws the others also into the vortex of complex relationships so much so that Sher Singh's arrest and imprisonment throw a pall of gloom over the two families. His release

is an occasion for rejoicing. Wazir Chand is among those who come to Buta Singh's house to compliment him on his New Year's honour.

The novel also significantly ends with Mrs. Taylor drawn into Buta Singh's future plans of erecting a memorial for Sabhrai, a small library or a ward in a hospital. But Mrs. Taylor suggests that a religious institution like a temple or digging a well will be more appropriate because Sabhrai while alive was a firm believer in charity. A library is a place of knowledge. A hospital is a place of love. A Gurudwara or a well is a place of charity. The novel begins with the epigraph of knowledge and love and ends on the same note. Library or hospital or temple or well all these are places of human understanding and sympathy.

FOURTH CHAPTER

THE EVALUATION