

---

---

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 17:4 April 2017

Dr. R. Anuja, MBA, M.Phil., Ph.D., Editor

**Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature**

---

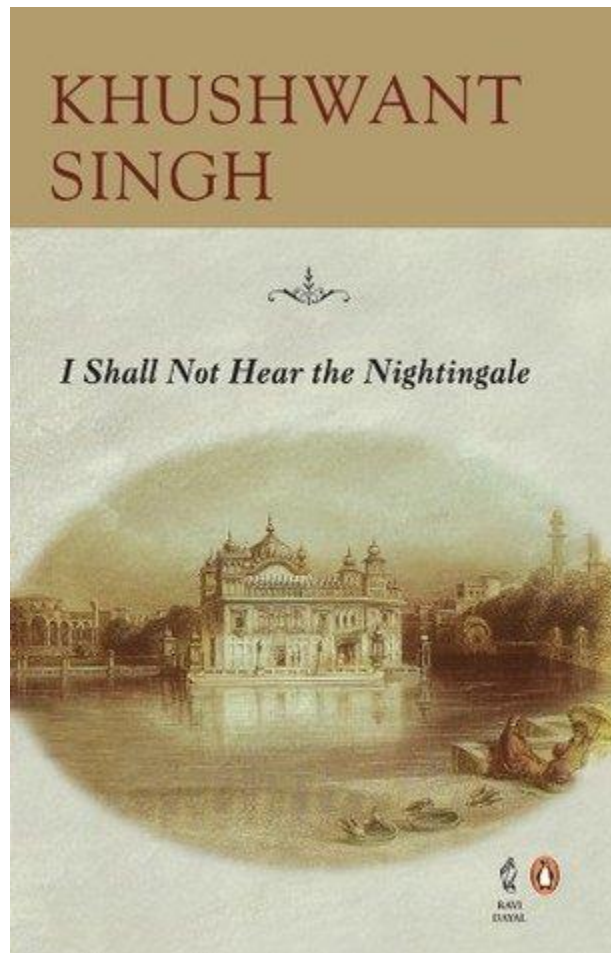
---

**Feministic Concerns in Khushwant Singh's  
*I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale***

Arul. J., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil. (Ph.D.)

---

---



**Abstract**

The present paper seeks to present a modest study of the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* of Khushwant Singh, the most popular Indian writer in English. It attempts to make comprehensive critical comments on this novel with an emphasis on his treatment of women

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:4 April 2017

Dr. R. Anuja, MBA, M.Phil., Ph.D., Editor: *Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature*

Arul. J., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil. (Ph.D.)

Feministic Concerns in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*

characters in the novel. His 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 muse 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 Sabharai believes that this love is the greatest of all. While for Champak, Beena, and Shunno, love is skin-communicated thing.

**Key words:** Khushwant Singh, *I shall not Hear the Nightingale*, amorous, religious, divine love

## Introduction



**Khushwant Singh (1915-2014)**

**Courtesy:** <http://www.iloveindia.com/indian-heroes/khushwant-singh.html>

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 in 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 in the service for a few years and later he found his place in mass

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:4 April 2017

**Dr. R. Anuja, MBA, M.Phil., Ph.D., Editor: *Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature***

Arul. J., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil. (Ph.D.)

Feministic Concerns in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*

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***

*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.

### **Sabhrai**

This novel has four female characters, namely, 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 the sense of

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:4 April 2017  
**Dr. R. Anuja, MBA, M.Phil., Ph.D., Editor: Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature**  
Arul. J., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil. (Ph.D.)

Feministic Concerns in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale* 3

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 son's 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 country's official people. Through all her action she has been shown as savior of her family as well as our country.

### **Beena**

Beena, daughter of Buta Singh, an educated woman, tries to be perfect but fails to do so. She shows some kind of moralistic attitude in her action. When a men try to seduce her in the beginning as an immature woman, she shows interest in physical attachment but later through her mother's guidance she is able to identify what is right and what is wrong. So finally with the help of her mother she finds out the right morality and remains a chaste woman.

In this novel Beena has been pictured as a woman who longs for lustful experience, but cheered because of the god fearing attitude. Here the author tries to imply the boundaries for a traditional woman. She was not allowed to have any physical contact with any men other than her husband. If it happens so it is wrong in accordance with the tradition and mythology.

### **Champak**

Champak, wife of Sher Singh, an ordinary educated woman, loves to follow the thoughts of western world and tries to show herself as a good one towards society where as in real she was a sexual manic, who loves to enjoy loose physical attachment towards the opposite gender. She is 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 goes with other men. Here she was shown as a woman with no fear of tradition and morality.

### **Mrs. Taylor**

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:4 April 2017

**Dr. R. Anuja, MBA, M.Phil., Ph.D., Editor: *Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature***

Arul. J., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil. (Ph.D.)

Feministic Concerns in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*

Lastly Mrs. Taylor, a woman from England, loves the tradition of India and develops lasting love relationship towards Indian people. She helps Sabhrai to get back her son, because of her faith in God. She is shown as a woman who works for the betterment of women community. Even though she is from abroad, she loves the tradition of India and tries to follow the tradition. The way she is portrayed as a follower and lover of tradition of India is beautifully explained by the author.

## Conclusion

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

---

## Works Cited

1. Singh, Khushwant. *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*. Delhi: Penguin Publisher, 2005. Print.
2. Panda, Namita. Treatment of Love in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 14.1 (2013): 66-73. Print.

---

Arul. J., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil. (Ph.D.)  
Assistant Professor in English  
Bishop Appasamy College of Arts and Science  
Coimbatore 641018  
Tamilnadu  
India  
[aruldreams@gmail.com](mailto:aruldreams@gmail.com)

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:4 April 2017

**Dr. R. Anuja, MBA, M.Phil., Ph.D., Editor: *Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature***

Arul. J., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil. (Ph.D.)

Feministic Concerns in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*