

## TRIUMPH OF CONCUPISCENCE IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S *THE COMPANY OF WOMEN*

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**Abstract:** Blaise Pascal, the great French Philosopher of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, rightly believes that “*Concupiscence and force are the source of all our actions; concupiscence causes voluntary actions, force involuntary ones*”.<sup>(1)</sup> If we talk about Khushwant Singh's most controversial novel *The company of women*, it can be said that concupiscence rules the roost here. It rather triumphs over the consciousness of the protagonist. Mr. Singh who is one of the boldest novelists and cockiest short-story writers of India in recent time has impregnated almost all his English fictions and non-fictions with lots of love libido and lust. Right from his first-venture entitled *Train To Pakistan* (1956) till *The Sunset Club* (2010) he has glorified concupiscence in different ways. So far as his fourth novel *The company of women* (1999) is concerned, he has rather ritualized and solemnized the art of libido in the guise of AIDS. Perhaps, it has been the maiden novel that enfolds the theme of the danger of AIDS so far as Indian English Fiction is concerned. The novel not only celebrates, sexuality, rather it also propagates some philosophies related to it. The protagonist Mohan Kumar's confession that “*as a man gets older, his sex instinct travel from his middle to his head*”.<sup>(2)</sup> In fact, Mohan Kumar forwards the philosophy of the octogenarian writer Khushwant Singh. The following extract amply testifies as to how concupiscence overtakes the conscience of Mr. Mohan who is both rich and foreign-educated. Recording one of his coital encounters with a Sri Lankan women, he quotes her words as follows :

“Come over me”, she ordered as she  
lay flat on her back and raised both  
her legs. I went into her again. “All of  
it”, she cried hoarsely, again and  
again. “All of it. Nothing to worry  
about this time”<sup>(3)</sup>

Thus, the proposed research paper intends to justify how concupiscence triumphs in Mr. Singh's *The company of women*.

**Keywords:** Triumph, Concupiscence, Force, Love, Libido, AIDS, Conscience.

**Introduction:** Many Indian writers have been giving due space to the essence of concupiscence in their fictional outputs. Soros cowasjee, Shobha De, Ruth Praver Thabwala, Sreemoyee, Ananth, Sangeeta Bandopadhyaya, Madhuri Banerjee, Chetan Bhagat

and Khuswant Singh are same of the well known novelists who have ritualised concupiscence in their fictions. In their article entitled *Erotica in India: Bold and banned* in the Times of India the author believe,

“ Literature's tryst with erotica  
Is nothing now – Sexual acts  
and brajen sexuality are  
found in ancient Greek and  
Roman texts – in the lyrics  
of Sappho and the works of  
Ovid and Juvenal. Erotic  
verse found it's way into  
Shakespeare's sonnets. Ciruclation  
of erotic material has been  
able to duck social, Religious  
and moral criticism right  
from 17<sup>th</sup> Century to present day.  
Erotic fiction, however, came  
to fore with Memories of women  
of Pleasure, popularly known as  
fanny Hill, which was  
published in England in 1748.  
The story of the sexual exploits  
of teenaged Fanny has been

long considered the first  
English Prose Porn. The book  
has faced several bans  
and prosecutions all through history .  
in the late eighteenth  
century, works such as 120  
Days of sodom by the Marquis  
de sade brought about the  
influence of sado-masochism  
in erotic literature. India,  
of course, is no stranger to  
erotica. Vatsayan's Kama sutra  
was written the fourth  
and the sixth centuries.  
Ratirahasya, from the  
11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> Century, classifies  
women according to body types,  
described their erogenous zones  
when they can be easily aroused.  
Erotic elements can be found  
in work such as Geet-Govind

Anang Rang, Kama Sambhav and Rasik Priya.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Following the lines of the authors and the works quoted in above excerpt, Indian English authors of modern time are just continuing the tradition of incorporating eroticism in their writings . So far as , Indian English fiction is concerned, Khushwant Singh has championed this specific cause. His every novel contains the elements of concupiscence or eroticism in different shades. But so far as The Company of Women is concerned , the elements of concupiscence is found in profusion here . Some people label this novel as pornography, but it is no so because the book has been sold and read worldwide by a large number of people – both males and females and has bagged more accolades than criticism – specially because it creates awareness among it's readers about AIDS, if the acts of copulation are not performed carefully . In fact , at the end, the protagonist Mohan Kumar dies from AIDS because in many of his copulatory encounters he does not use Condom.

Now , the question might erupt as to how there is triumph of concupiscence if the protagonist dies in the novel? The answer is very simple Khushwant Singh , being a great author, wants to extend the message that being promiscuous is not bad , but such persons must adopt safety measure in every coital encounters they undergo. So, the novel is didactic in a sense. Otherwise, Mohan Kumar – the protagonist of the novel – makes almost all his erotic encounters extraordinary and special. Though, belonging to a middle – class family, he manages to earn U.S. degree and turns into a rich magnate. He loves being in relationships both before his married life and even after marriage. Sex is addiction for him and he does not leave any chance to fulfil his addiction his feminine cohorts include a lady sweeper, sonu-his wife, a professor, a teenager , classmates of U.S. colleges and even diplomats of the embassies etc. It seems he believes in Oscho's saying this,

“So really it happens that ,  
the more sexual a person is ,  
the more innovative he can be.  
The more sexual a person is ,  
the more intelligent with less  
sex energy, less intelligence  
exists; with more sexual energy  
more intelligence because sex is  
a deep search to uncover, not  
only bodies, not only the opposite  
sex body, but everything that is hidden.” <sup>(2)</sup>

The Company of women is divided in three sections namely (1) The Secret life of Mohan Kumar (II) The memoirs of Mohan Kumar and (III) The last days of Mohan Kumar – all further divided into catehy

subtitles mostly with names of women with whom he had sexcapades. Some of those subtitles are Dhanno, Sarojini, Jessica Browne , Yasmeen, Mary Joseph , Molly Gomes, Susanlhika. And, the last Subtitles is

The Death of Mohan Kumar. In all these relationships, be it on the part of Mohan Kumar or on the part of all these females, there has been triumph of concupiscence because the protagonist possesses the typical charm of Casanova and where the charm fails, the money works. He never forces anyone to be one with him. Everywhere his intelligent

manoeuvring works. When the wave of concupiscence floods inside a person, it wants a way out urgently. When Mohan's wife is away from home, he does not hesitate to sleep with his sweeper-in-forties, known as Dhanno. He bribes her to be his bed-mate and records his rapport in the following way,

He kissed her on her lips and fondled her breasts. She responded vigorously. He slipped his hand inside her kamees to feel her breasts. They were firmer than his wife's and the nipples much harder. Dhanno slipped her shirt off her shoulders and coyly looked down at her feet. Mohan undid the chord of her salwar and let it fall to the floor. Dhanno was stark naked. 'Not like this, Sahib', She murmured. 'You must be like me.' She unbuckled his belt and pulled his trousers down. She gasped, 'sahib, I have never been anything so big' <sup>(3)</sup>

After Dhanno Mohan further recounts his encounters of the bygone days including that with his wife. But, since his conjugal life was so satisfactory, it ultimately died and Mohan and Sona finally got separated. He then wished for pro tem companion again. He often got inviting letters in response to his advertisements for seven companions. While scanning his letters he came across a tempting letter bearing the photograph of a physiotherapist seductress from Goa.

That was Molly Gomes. Though she was short, stocky and dark, yet she was extremely appealing. He sent her an open air ticket, Goa-Delhi-Goa, and suggested her to come at her convenience. One day she arrives Delhi and spends a quality time with Mohan Kumar. Like Mohan she also believed in the theory fuck, fly and forget. Mohan Kumar depicts his private association with Molly in these words,

"Indeed! she effortlessly slipped my organ into her vagina. 'Now we can go to sleep as we are.' She pretended to doze off. Only the twitching and milking of my organ assured me she was wide awake. It was blissful; it was prolonged. We took turns being on top of each other. We went for an hour before I rolled over, bringing her under me and asked, 'Are you ready?' she nodded and replied, 'I've been ready for a long time.' I began to pump into her. She crossed her legs behind my back and heaved up each time I plunged down. 'Harder!' she cried. 'For God's sake, don't stop!' She screamed. I put all I had into her. She slapped the carpet with both her hands and cried loudly, 'Oh God, this is heaven heaven heaven.....' <sup>(4)</sup>

Khushwant Singh's hero Mohan Kumar has described his erotic experiences in all its colours and shades in, *The Company of women*. Amusingly, all his encounters are highly satisfactory, except some of those with his wife Sonni. Mohan Kumar thus proves that experiences of concupiscence, if performed with mutual orgasm, can not only be pleasurable but also

heavenly. He loves to give due space to foreplays in his every encounters which is a pre-requisite for a climaxing copulation. Thus in this novel there is a triumph of concupiscence. Some critics even believe this book to be an indirect autobiography of the author. Undoubtedly, *The Company of women* is all about celebration of sex, not love.

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