

KARMA

- Khushwant Singh

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Topic - "Karma"
Lecture - 01

"Karma" is an exquisite piece of short-story written by Khushwant Singh. Khushwant Singh has covered a niche among the top-ranking story-writers of India. He is an eminent journalist and a fiction writer of considerable fame. His novels The Train to Pakistan and I shall Not Hear The Nightingale have achieved instant success. The Mask of Vishnu and other short stories is a wonderful collection of Khushwant's short-stories.

In the present story Khushwant Singh very ably, handles the theme of the principle of "Karma" illustrated in the Indian Scriptures. "As you sow, so shall you reap" is an old proverb and this explains the theory of karma. Your achievements and sufferings come to you in exact proportion to what you do to others. If you inflict suffering on others you will suffer too. This is what happens in the case of Mohan Lal, the protagonist in "Karma". Though he is Indian, he revels in presuming himself as a self-styled Englishman. He always keeps his wife, Lakshmi, at a distance because she is not educated.

and uncultured to her refined husband. The story-writer describes their conjugal life thus - "Her husband never had any time to spare for her. She lived in the upper storey of the house and he on the ground. He did not like her poor illiterate relatives hanging about his bungalow, so they never came. He came up to her once in a while at night and stayed for a few minutes. He just ordered her about in anglicized Hindustani and she obeyed passively."

This expresses the amount of humiliation Mohan Lal inflicts on his meek submissive wife. The height of this 'touch-me not' attitude comes up at the railway station. The husband is relaxing in the waiting room. The wife sitting on her steel trunk on the platform. The husband travels first. The wife keeps to her "Zenana inter-class". She is however, not the complaining sort. She has resigned herself to her fate, 'Karma'. She defends her husband. He is a vizier and a barrister, and meets many officers and Englishmen in the trains - and I am only a native woman. I can't understand English and don't know three ways, so I keep to my Zenana interclass.

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