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Emotional Realism in Ravinder Singh's *I Too Had a Love Story* and *Can Love Happen Twice?*

Bablu Shyam Kumar

Assistant Professor

Department of English

K. B. Postgraduate College, Musaffarganj,

Mirzapur (U. P.), India

Abstract

This paper examines emotional realism in the novels of Ravinder Singh, focusing on a critical analysis of two novels—*I Too Had a Love Story* and *Can Love Happen Twice?*—from the perspective of emotional realism in his works. These novels are widely regarded as semi-autobiographical narratives rooted in the lived experiences of the author. These works portray the fragility of human emotions, the intensity of first love, and the devastating effects of loss, all within a realistic framework. Singh's simple yet powerful storytelling captures the nuances of everyday life, where ordinary individuals confront extraordinary emotional upheavals. The authenticity of the characters, their struggles with grief, hope, and healing, and the portrayal of interpersonal relationships contribute to the emotional realism that resonates deeply with readers. Through the protagonist's voice, Singh bridges the gap between fiction and real life, highlighting the therapeutic power of writing and storytelling. The paper analyzes the themes of love, loss, memory, and recovery, while also focusing on the use of language, first-person narration, and emotional detailing that enhance the realist appeal of the novels. In doing so, it explores how Singh's early narratives reflect a modern sensibility while remaining rooted in relatable human experiences. The study thus situates Ravinder Singh's contribution within the landscape of Indian popular romance fiction marked by emotional authenticity and realism.

Keywords: Emotional Realism, Love, Loss, Healing, Romance, Real-life Narratives



Introduction

Ravinder Singh, born on February 4, 1982, is a celebrated contemporary Indian author known for his poignant and relatable storytelling. He was born into a Sikh family in Calcutta, West Bengal and brought up in Orissa. His schooling at Guru Nanak Public School in Sambalpur and obtained a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Computer Science from Guru Nanak Dev Engineering College, Karnataka. After graduation, he worked with Infosys Technologies in Bhubaneswar for five years before pursuing an MBA at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. Singh later worked as a Senior Program Manager at Microsoft before deciding to dedicate himself entirely to writing.

Ravinder Singh is a renowned and popular Indian author known for his heart-touching romantic novels. His writing often explores themes of love, loss, and relationships, resonating with young readers. He is best known for his novels *I Too Had a Love Story* (2008), *Can Love Happen Twice?* (2011), *Like It Happened Yesterday* (2013), *Your Dreams Are Mine Now* (2014), *This Love that feels Right* (2016), *Will You Still Love Me?* (2018), *The Belated Bachelor Party* (2019), and *Write Me A Love Story* (2021). In 2020, he edited *You Are All I Need*, a collection of short stories. Singh's transition from an IT professional to a bestselling author highlights his ability to transform personal tragedies into literary expressions that resonate with readers across age groups.

In *I Too Had a Love Story*, realism manifests through the protagonist Ravin's autobiographical narration, which candidly chronicles his romantic journey with Khushi—a woman he meets on Shaadi.com. Their relationship grows through calls, texts, and brief meetings, reflecting the modern-day reality of digital courtship. Singh captures this emotional realism when Ravin remarks, "Her innocence and the candid way in which she talked to me had left its mark on my mind". The portrayal of their growing bond—built not on physical proximity but emotional compatibility—resonates with readers because it mirrors the lived experiences of many in the digital age.

Khushi, though absent for much of the novel, is rendered with lifelike vitality through her dialogues, habits, and interactions. Her tragedy—a fatal road accident just before their engagement—introduces the harsh unpredictability of life, breaking away from romantic idealism. The grief that follows is not dramatized but described in everyday detail. In *Can Love Happen Twice?*, the novelist continues his exploration of emotional realism but shifts from autobiographical certainty to semi-fictional introspection. The novel opens with Ravin, emotionally broken, in a rehabilitation center—an image symbolic of unresolved trauma. The story is narrated by his friends through a radio show, adding a meta-narrative dimension while maintaining realism in tone and character portrayal.

Ravin's relationship with Simar, his second love interest, develops in Belgium and is marked by conflict, cultural differences, and value clashes—realistic hurdles in many modern relationships. Simar's reluctance to return to India and her individualistic aspirations contrast with Ravin's deep-rooted emotional and cultural ties. The incompatibility between them is portrayed not as villainy but as a reflection of changing priorities in a globalized generation. "Her dreams were different; her reality was different. I realized that maybe we were not made for each other," Ravin reflects, highlighting the emotional maturity and realism that Singh builds into his characters.

While Khushi symbolizes warmth, tradition, and ideal love, Simar represents independence, modernity, and ambition. The emotional fallout between Ravin and Simar is gradual and nuanced,



portraying the complexities of post-traumatic vulnerability and mismatched expectations. Singh avoids melodrama and opts for restrained, realistic storytelling that explores how love does not always conquer all—a rare sentiment in romantic fiction.

In both novels, Ravinder Singh employs a first-person narrative, simple diction, and conversational tone, which enhance the authenticity of the experience. He does not glorify love or idealize characters; instead, he presents them as emotionally flawed, morally complex, and psychologically believable individuals. Thus, the two novels analyzed in this chapter present a deeply realistic exploration of love—one that is hopeful yet vulnerable, grounded in emotional truth rather than fantasy. Ravinder Singh's realism lies not only in the events he narrates but in the emotional landscapes he uncovers, allowing readers to see fragments of their own lives in his fiction.

Moreover, the novel *I Too Had a Love Story* captures the protagonist's intense grief and struggle to move on after the loss of his beloved Khushi. The narrative presents a stark contrast between past happiness and present sorrow, as he reflects on the anniversary of their first conversation, torn between celebrating their love and mourning her absence. The pain of losing her lingers in every aspect of his life, making him feel isolated even in a crowd. Despite trying to sustain himself through work and routine, he remains emotionally broken, unable to find solace. His interactions with Khushi's picture show his desperate attempt to keep her memory alive, yet he ultimately breaks down, realizing he cannot escape his grief. The pressure from family and society to move on only deepens his internal conflict, as he cannot imagine loving another woman while still being emotionally committed to Khushi.

The final scene, where he meets a little girl named Khushi, serves as a poignant moment of fate. The encounter stirs painful memories but also subtly suggests that love, in some form, continues to exist around him. The novel powerfully portrays the lingering impact of love and loss, emphasizing that while time moves forward, true love leaves a lasting imprint on the heart. Ravinder Singh's *I Too Had a Love Story* is known for its emotional depth and autobiographical realism. The novel vividly captures the essence of realism through its depiction of friendship, nostalgia, and life's transitions. Realism in literature aims to present life as it is, avoiding exaggeration or idealization. This chapter exemplifies realism through its authentic portrayal of friendship, life choices, and emotional depth.

The camaraderie between Ravin, Happy, MP, and Amardeep is presented with genuine conversations, inside jokes, and shared experiences. Their dialogue filled with humor and teasing, mirrors real-life interactions among close friends. The excitement of seeing each other after years, reminiscing about hostel days, and engaging in deep discussions about life and marriage are highly relatable to readers who have experienced college friendships. The conversation about marriage further reflects the concerns of young professionals balancing career aspirations and personal lives. The characters debate arranged vs. love marriage, the role of technology (matrimonial websites), and familial expectations—issues that many Indian youths face. This discussion enhances the novel's realistic tone, as it delves into dilemmas without forced dramatization.

The description of Kolkata, from crossing the Hooghly River to sipping tea in earthen cups, adds authenticity to the narrative. The portrayal of the Launch Ghat at midnight, the cold breeze, and the quiet riverbank evoke a strong sense of place, making the readers feel like they are part of the scene. The chapter's attention to small but significant details—like the smell of homemade food or the feeling



of speeding over a bridge—further reinforces realism. The emotions in the chapter—excitement, nostalgia, and contemplation—are understated yet powerful. The hug at the train station before parting, the shared laughter over old habits, and the late-night introspection on life’s next steps all resonate with real-life sentiments. The narrative avoids over-sentimentality, making the emotions more impactful.

Realism in literature often explores the passage of time and its effects on individuals. The reunion reminds the friends of their carefree college days but also highlights how life has changed. They have different jobs, live in different cities, and face responsibilities that were once distant. This subtle but significant theme makes the chapter reflective and relatable. The novel is a perfect example of literary realism, portraying life’s simplicity, emotions, and transitions with authenticity. Through believable characters, real-life dialogues, and a natural setting, the novel captures the essence of human relationships without unnecessary dramatization. The realism in this chapter strengthens the novel’s emotional impact, making it deeply relatable to readers who have experienced similar friendships and life changes.

Ravinder Singh’s *I Too Had a Love Story* embodies realism through its simple yet deeply emotional narrative, and one of the chapters in the novel ‘Khushi’ is a perfect example of this. Realism in literature focuses on the portrayal of everyday life, genuine emotions, and relatable experiences without exaggeration or melodrama. This chapter captures these elements through the protagonist’s journey into online matchmaking, his first interaction with Khushi, and the gradual development of their relationship.

The depiction of the protagonist’s experience with Shaadi.com reflects the reality of modern relationships and marriage in India. His initial excitement, disappointment, and eventual disinterest in the matrimonial website are highly relatable to contemporary readers who have explored digital matchmaking. The way he oscillates between curiosity and skepticism, his reluctance to inform his parents, and the humorous realization that premium features require payment all add to the realistic portrayal of how people engage with such platforms. This experience is neither glorified nor dismissed—it is presented as an ordinary yet significant aspect of modern relationships.

Ravinder Singh’s *Can Love Happen Twice?* is a novel that encapsulates the contemporary realities of love, loss, and emotional struggle. Through the lens of realism, the novel portrays the life of its protagonist, Amardeep, along with his friends, Happy and Manpreet, in a setting that feels authentic and relatable. The study presents various elements of realism, including vivid descriptions of setting, emotional depth, and social commentary, all of which contribute to a narrative that resonates with readers. One of the foremost aspects of realism in the novel is its detailed and atmospheric setting.

However, realism is reinforced by the inclusion of common human reactions, such as Amardeep pulling out his jacket and his visible breath in the cold air. Characterization is another crucial aspect where realism is evident. Amardeep, the protagonist, is portrayed as a man grappling with emotional turmoil while maintaining a sense of normalcy. His initial interaction with the taxi drivers at the airport reflects a believable, everyday experience, “Kithey jaana hai, paaji?” Amardeep quickly retaliated by snatching his luggage back from him. With this gesture he signalled his disagreement to take a cab” (Singh 2). Such moments add to the novel’s realism, showcasing how individuals navigate common



social interactions. The inclusion of colloquial language and regional dialect further enhances the authenticity of the narrative. A significant theme explored in the novel is the impact of past relationships on present emotions. The novel does not present idealized or overly dramatic characters; instead, it offers individuals dealing with loss in a way that feels natural and relatable. Moreover, the social commentary embedded in the narrative further aligns with realism. This reference to a real-life legal decision situates the novel within a concrete historical context, making the story more authentic. Such instances reinforce the novel's engagement with real-world events, grounding its narrative in actuality. Additionally, the novel explores psychological realism through the depiction of a character in a rehabilitation center:

This novel paints a vivid picture of loneliness and despair, showcasing the depth of human suffering in a realistic manner. The details of the character's appearance and surroundings intensify the emotional weight of the scene, demonstrating how the novel employs realism to portray psychological struggles. In conclusion, *Can Love Happen Twice?* effectively employs realism through its descriptive settings, authentic dialogues, emotional depth, and integration of social issues. The characters' experiences, though fictional, mirror real-life emotions and societal circumstances, making the narrative compelling and relatable. By grounding its themes in genuine human experiences, the novel successfully bridges the gap between fiction and reality, offering readers a poignant and realistic portrayal of love and loss.

Ravinder Singh's *Can Love Happen Twice?* is a novel that encapsulates the contemporary realities of love, loss, and emotional struggle. Through the lens of realism, the novel portrays the life of its protagonist, Amardeep, along with his friends, Happy and Manpreet, in a setting that feels authentic and relatable. The chapter presents various elements of realism, including vivid descriptions of setting, emotional depth, and social commentary, all of which contribute to a narrative that resonates with readers.

Conclusion

Ravinder Singh's *I Too Had a Love Story* and *Can Love Happen Twice?* stand out as emotionally resonant narratives that embody the core elements of realism in contemporary Indian romance fiction. Through simple language, autobiographical undertones, and authentic emotional experiences, Singh creates relatable characters and situations that mirror the joys and tragedies of real life. His portrayal of love, sudden loss, and the painful journey toward healing captures the emotional complexities faced by modern individuals. These novels go beyond conventional romantic tropes by delving into themes of grief, vulnerability, and emotional recovery. The realism lies not only in the plot but in the deep emotional responses they evoke in readers. Ultimately, Singh's early works offer a compelling example of how personal experiences can be transformed into powerful literary expressions that connect deeply with audiences, affirming his significant place in Indian popular literature.

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