Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is a modest attempt to study the fictional worlds of R.K. Narayan and Dr. Basavaraj Naikar. It aims to compare and contrast the treatment of theme and depiction of the fictional world in the short stories of Narayan and Naikar. Both writers are South Indian and have published short stories of substantial merit. They have delineated beautiful worlds in their literary creations. Being a pure artist at the core of his heart, R.K. Narayan interprets Indian life aesthetically and with unprejudiced objectivity. However, Narayan’s Malgudian world gives us a glimpse of India, rather South India, and invites comparison with the locales, themes, techniques of Dr. Basavaraj Naikar who is also a South Indian writer and representative of the present generation. In this way, the study of their short stories is likely to bring about more in common between themselves than with other fictional worlds of English and Commonwealth writing. The people from their fictional worlds, their attitudes, their emotions, whims, relations with each other, their individual and societal behaviour, patterns of life, ideas and many other things are immortal. These establish a lasting bond between the readers and their characters and milieu. What bestows immortality to this fictional universe created by these writers, has always been a subject of curiosity for researchers.

Literature is an expression of writer’s response to a given situation lived or perceived by him. In this process the literary artist faces an inevitable clash between the ideal and real. A true artist is well aware of his strengths and limitations. In a way he finds some conditions disagreeable. In such a situation the writer cannot bring about desired changes. So he assumes an aggressive posture, and in his fictional domain he seeks to break this putrid world into bits and then reshape it according to his dreams and designs. Thus the creative work of a writer becomes an efficacious means of voicing dissent and protest of the writer who disapproves of prevailing practices. In the fictional world there is an ordered restructuring of reality by means of which the bewildering multiplicity of life is reduced into an artistic unity. In fiction we find a movement of the creative process which is from disorder to order. Thus, it seems that the attempt of R.K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar is to bring about a little order in their fictional worlds.
When we engage with a work of fiction, we acquire information about fictional characters, events and places. We also gain knowledge about what is fictionally true in that work. A fictional universe is a self-consistent fictional setting with events, and often elements that may be derived from and also may differ from the real world. It may also be called an imagined, constructed or fictional world or realm. Fictional universes may appear in short stories, novels, comic, films, television shows and other creative works. One should note that a fictional universe can be almost indistinguishable from the real world, except for the presence of the invented characters and events that characterize a work of fiction; at the other extreme it can bear little or no resemblance to reality, with invented fundamental principles of space and time. The subject is most commonly addressed in reference to fictional worlds that differ markedly from reality, such as those that introduce entire fictional cities, countries, or those that contradict commonly known facts about the world and its history, or those that feature fantasy or science fiction concepts such as magic or faster than light travel- and especially those in which the deliberate development of the setting is a substantial focus of the work. A fictional universe has an established continuity and internal logic that must be adhered to throughout the work. Creating a fantasy world means building a world based upon reality and making sure that reader knows the rules of that world. The characters from this world must remain true to those rules throughout the story. For the readers to accept and continue reading the story, they have to believe in the world and accept what is happening to the characters from the fictional world.

### Fictional World and Real World

Just like real life, fictional world operates consistently within a spectrum of physical and societal rules. That’s what makes these intricate worlds believable, comprehensible and worth exploring. What may be true or seemingly true in a fictional world may not be true in a real world, such as magic or supernatural elements. We may feel these elements to be true, but once we are out of these fictional worlds, they cease to exist. It’s same as what Coleridge stated as “willing suspension of disbelief”. Authors of science fiction and fantasy literally build fictional worlds. They make rules, maps, lineages, languages, cultures and universes for their world and from those worlds sprout story after story. When it is
done well, readers can understand fictional worlds and their rules just as well as the
characters that live in them do and sometimes, just well or even better than the
reader understands the world outside the book.

Both R.K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar have created their fictional
worlds which are peopled with teachers, lawyers, children, beggars, dreamers,
drunkards, farmers, students, thieves, astrologers, politicians, etc. Narayan’s
deceptive simplicity, the narrative technique, ironic vision, his sense of humour, the
endless capacity to entertain the readers and his universal appeal of his fiction make
him one of the supreme short story writers. In his fictional world Narayan accepts
life with all its imperfections, eccentricities and follies. He successfully transports
this spirit to his readers without any didacticism. The sympathetic humour and
broad humanity of Narayan has no parallel in Indian English Fiction. On the other
hand, Dr. Basavaraj Naikar’s stories have also a universal charm because of the
human element. A perusal of Naikar’s short stories reveals the fact that they are of
eternal value and have charmer’s effect to make the readers spellbound. There in
his fictional world Naikar has projected his insight into the human nature giving
importance to the basic values of life like love, honesty, nobility and forgiveness.
His characters are chosen from different walks of Indian life to fit them within the
confines of a multifaceted fictional society created by his imagination. The short
stories mark Naikar’s scholarship, creativity, and his choice for writing largely the
ignored motifs of Indian short stories in English, like man’s primordial obsession
with wealth and women, human relationship, evil in different forms, social ethos,
etc. That is why S.P. Singha aptly observes- “As a short story writer, he [Basavaraj
Naikar] is comparable to R.K. Narayan….”

**Antecedents of Short Story**

Since the story is fascinating in itself, it has power to attract a child, an
adult, an old man or a woman alike. Love of the story is ingrained in man. From
early days man has taken delight in telling stories and listening stories. Child after
becoming conscious of this world is almost always confronted with some story or
the other in one shape or pretext or the other. It is a truth stranger than fiction that
the life of human being itself is nothing if not a story or a store house of stories
originally derived from the incidents and experiences in this world. The art of
storytelling is doubtlessly older than record of civilization. Even the so-called modern short story has an ancient lineage. So the story is as old as the existence of man on this earth. Here we are concerned primarily with the re-emergence of short story as a medium of artistic recreation. The short story existed in the ancient times but then it underwent enormous changes spread over a vast period that today when we talk of the short story, it gives the impression of owing its existence to the present age and its complex structure. “The interest coupled with curiosity, which is a basic instinct, in human beings, lies at the root of the birth of stories”.  

Short stories have their roots in oral-story telling traditions. Perhaps the oldest and most direct ancestor of the short story is the anecdote and illustrative story. In this regard Murli Das Melwani observes:

The folktale, with its lucidity, simplicity and concern with one briefly defined theme, is certainly the ancestor of the modern short story.

As the art of oral story telling got properly cultivated, the story tellers started polishing up the tools of their trade and more effective ways of storytelling. This ultimately led to the writing of novels and of course, short stories. It has grown in abundance in occidental as well as oriental literature. The short story has changed its form, structure, plot, design, etc., from time to time and from nation to nation thereby altering the previous conception of its nature. As per the tendencies of writers and readers, the short story has manifested in the diversified forms i.e. sketch, yarn, marchen, parable, novella, cycles, etc. “Historically the short narrative, in both verse and prose, is one of the oldest and most widespread of literary forms. Some of the types which preceded the short story are the fable, the exemplum, the folktale, and the fabliau.” These are discussed as follows:

I) Fable:

In fable we have animals as characters which act as though they are human beings. Fable may be in verse or prose and concludes with a moral in the form of an epigram. In the past beast fable was very popular and even today everybody knows the fable of the ‘fox and the grapes’ which gives the phrase ‘sour grapes’. An early set of beast fables was attributed to Aesop, a Greek slave of the sixth century B. C.
II) Fabliau:

Fabliau is a humorous or satiric tale in verse. The characters are from middle-class involved in sexual intrigue or obscene pranks. During 12th and 13th centuries, the fabliaux were written in France and during fourteenth century Chaucer was influenced by them. His **Miller’s Tale** and **Reeve’s Tale** are notable examples.

III) Exemplum:

The exemplum was very popular in the Middle Ages. It is a short tale used as an example to illustrate a moral point in sermon. In Chaucer’s **Pardoner’s Tale** we find the story of three revelers. They are in search of Death but find the gold instead. As they are greedy, they kill each other to have the sole possession of gold. The preacher’s saying ‘Greed is root of all evil’ is the moral of the story.

IV) Parable:

It is a type of short tale used to illustrate moral or spiritual truth. Parable is usually understood as an allegory. It is didactic in tone. Christ’s parable had a lasting influence upon Western Tradition of didactic allegory. Christ’s **fig tree** is one of the best examples of parable.

V) Sketch:

Sketch, a prose narrative seems to be a short composition, dramatic, or descriptive. It is more modest than a short story, showing less development in plot or characterization and shows some movement towards narrative dimension. Washington Irving writes-

The sketch is “the play of the thought, and sentiments and language: the weaving in of characters, lightly yet expressively delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life, and the half concealed vein of humour that is often playing through the whole”.  

VI) Yarn:
Yarn is most suitable form for the story teller who identifies himself more with the oral tradition. Metaphorically, the term is applied for story weaving. In fact, yarn is related to nautical field and the term is derived from rope making. Usually it is comic and makes use of vernacular idiom.

VII) Marchen:

Marchen is a German term that is translated as fairy tales. However, in most stories the fairies as supernatural element are not incorporated and fairy is usually replaced by magic. The maximum number of characters and units of action is seven and thirty one respectively. There are two categories of Marchen-the Volksmarchen and Kunstmarchen.

VIII) Novella:

The fine example of novella is Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902). It is “a fictional tale in prose, intermediate in length and complexity between a short story and a novel and usually concentrating on a single event or chain of events, with a surprising turning point”.

By the term novella we mean ‘novelty’ and is derived from the Italian word. It is applied to shorter stories found in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. The features of novella cross and go beyond the regulations of the short story and also cannot fit properly into the framework of the novel.

**Short Story, Novella and Novel**

It is clear that short story differs from novel and novella in terms of length, characters, incidents, etc. Aesthetic pleasure derived from the short story and the novel is almost similar because they have the same elements-plot, characters, setting, point of view, etc. But the modern short story is an independent form of art quite different from the novel. The limited space or brevity of the short story has its inevitable conclusions. It produces an effect of concentration and economy whereas the novel has leisurely prolix way of narration. There is a subtle difference between the novel and the short story. O’Connor in *The Lonely Voice* aptly comments:
The form of the novel is given by the length; in the short story the length is
given by the form.\textsuperscript{7}

Similarly in plot also the short story has to select only one situation or episode
or a character whereas the novel can deal with numerous incidents and characters.
The characters in a short story are like creatures caught in a moment of time
whereas the characters in a novel move in time and space reveal themselves
gradually through their actions. The novelist may depict a character in a set of
circumstances and allow the character to grow in stature. The short story writer
cannot afford this expansiveness, he has to pick up and choose a suggestive moment
which may reveal a character like a flash of lightning. In short we can say that, if
writing novel is like planting a forest, short story is more like planting a garden. The
comparison of novel to a forest and short story to a garden is highly instructive in
terms of how the same elements work differently to produce two genres. Both the
forest and the garden thrive on the same basic ingredients like water, soil, sunlight,
etc., but the proportion of the elements, their admixture and handling differ
sufficiently to give rise to different end-products requiring different names: one is a
garden and the other is a forest. Such is the case with the short story and the novel.

The narrative task of the short story, the novella and the novel is different.
Judith Leibowitz summarizes her views in this way:

\textbf{Novel: Elaboration}

\textbf{Short Story: Limitation}

\textbf{Novella: Compression.}\textsuperscript{8}

The short story is dynamic as the same thing cannot happen again. People are
led to think that a short story is a novel in miniature simply because they both share
the quality of character moved by plot. But there is as great a difference between
the novel and the short story as there is between the drama and the lyric and
therefore it is unfair to judge a short story by the standard of a novel.
Defining Short Story

Undoubtedly, the short story has been very popular among the reading as well as writing community of the contemporary times. Man has been in live touch with the stories, as he has been deriving pleasure and lessons of life from it since time immemorial. “Yet the christening of this form took place in 1933 when the term came to be used for the first time in OED Supplement. It was then acknowledged as a particular kind of literary product.”

In the 19th century, firmly developed plot design was given the top significance. However, today, methods of poetry and drama have become central in it. This phenomenon has made the defining of the short story very difficult. At the same time, the enormous variety found in the short story defies all definitions. If one stresses the economy of words, other stresses the impression and yet another emphasizes the purpose or narrative and so forth.

A short story is not a novel in fragment as some might think. Rather it is like a drop of water, complete in itself with a single uniform idea, unity of motive, of purpose, of action and in addition unity of impression. For working purposes we need a rough definition to start with, and that suggested by Edgar Allan Poe will do well enough:

A short story is a prose narrative “requiring from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal.”

The novel is a great provider of time and space to the writer to introduce a quantity of incidents and effects, the short story writer is limited. The form is demanding as the writer has to make his characters live, cause the story to unfold and complete itself ideally in less than ten thousand words. E. A. Poe spoke of the short story as providing “a single and unique effect” and thus demands of a writer a rigid discipline and concern without which it would be difficult to achieve the “single and unique effect,” an aim and ideal towards which every word must strive. In the words of E. A. Poe:

If his (the author’s) very initial sentence tends not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there
should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the pre-established design.\textsuperscript{11}

Thus, E. A. Poe, who is sometimes called the originator of the short story as a specific genre, was at any rate its first critical theorist. He was the first person who tried to discuss the form of the short story in the context as it is taken today. Poe’s comment applies to many short stories, and it points to the economy of management which the tightness of the form always imposes in some degree. He has laid great stress on a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out.

W. H. Hudson further develops this theme by suggesting that the short story must concentrate on a single idea and through directness of method and singleness of aim work out to its logical conclusion. Hence singleness of aim and singleness of method are two hallmarks of a good short story,

While commenting on the writer’s goal Guy de Maupassant states that the serious writer’s goal is not to tell a story, or to entertain or to move, but to make us think and understand the deep and hidden meaning of events. It is the personal view of the world and the writer tries to communicate to us by reproducing it in fiction. The writer does it with scrupulous accuracy, with such dissimulation and apparent simplicity that is impossible to uncover its plan or to perceive his intentions.

“The writer”, Maupassant adds, will pick up characters at a certain point of their existence and carry them, by natural transitions, to the following period and will show how minds are modified under the influence of environmental circumstances and how sentiments and passions are developed.\textsuperscript{12}

C. Hugh Holman writes about the practical definition of the short story:

A Practical definition of the short story must be broad enough to include the surprise ending story of Maupassant and O’ Henry, ‘the tale of unified effect’ of Poe, ‘the slice of life’ story of Chekhov, Katherine Mansfield and Sherwood Anderson, and the symbolic and mythic stories that are extremely popular in the LITTLE MAGAZINE today.\textsuperscript{13}

Eudora Welty has rightly stated that all stories embody a personal vision, when all the elements are set in motion by the writer’s perception of the mystery and magic
of everyday life. Good stories touch us intellectually and emotionally and ignite our imagination. A story becomes more meaningful when we read it actively i.e. relating the personal vision of the author embodied in the content and the form of the narrative with our experiences of life and to the questions we ask of it. Welty’s expectation of a good short story is significant. Circumventing the question of style, mood, atmosphere, originality, ingenuity and the like (all of which are no doubt important and add to the final effect), she makes it clear that mystery is the most important feature of the short story.

So the first thing we see about a story is its mystery. And in the best stories, we return at the last to see mystery again. Every good story has mystery – not the puzzle kind, but the mystery of allurement. As we understand the story better, it is likely that the mystery does not necessarily decrease; rather it simply grows more beautiful.\(^{14}\)

As already stated that the short story may be written in both prose and poetry but it is true that the medium is not so important as the subject matter and style. A. J. Merson points out:

Much of the popularity of short story today is due to the diversity and unexpectedness of subjects.\(^{15}\)

Manoj Das, the modern Indian short story writer says, “expecting the unexpected” should be the chief characteristic of the short story.\(^{16}\)

Grace Paley in conversation with Ann Charter (1986) opines that stories are closer to poetry than they are to the novel because they are shorter, and second they are more concentrated, more economical in the sense of pulling together all the information and making leaps across the information. Unity in story means that something has to be whole, even if it ends in an open way, “in writing poetry I wanted to talk to the world, I wanted to address the world, so to speak. But writing stories, I wanted to get the world to explain to me.”\(^{17}\)

Chekhov, famous Russian short story writer is of the opinion that a story should have neither beginning nor end. He believes that the purpose of the short story is “to present, suggestively, a slice of life.”\(^{18}\)
Thus, each critic has tried to define the short story in his own way, but it is not easy to establish a precise definition of the genre. The short story is still in the process of development and continues to defy conclusive definitions. A fairly acceptable definition for the short story is given in ‘Major American Short Stories:

A relatively short narrative (under 10,000 words) which is designed to produce a single dominant effect and which contains the elements of drama. A short story concentrates on a single character in a single situation at a single moment. Even if these conditions are not met, a short story still exhibits unity as its guiding principle...Dramatic conflict-the collision of opposing forces - is at the heart of the story.19

The above definition seems to be comprehensive and may be acceptable but for a slight modification which is that it concentrates on “a single character” or on “a group of characters.” The traditional notions associated with the short story are: continuity and design, though it has to expand the scope and texture in our own day to accommodate the truncation of ideas and the presentation of psychoanalysis, the obvious results of a tension-ridden age enveloped in ‘discontinuities and disillusionments.’ According to A. Walton Litz, the hallmarks of a well-made story are: consistency of style, rationality of structure, and steadiness in viewpoint.

**Characteristics of Short Story**

It is too difficult to define a short story, so the following characteristics of the genre provide a guideline by which it would be easy to judge Narayan and Naikar’s short stories which is the thrust of this work.

1. A short story is a prose narrative and it must be short enough to be read in a single sitting with rapt attention.
2. A short story is supposed to be more straightforward than a novel because it contains a smaller number of incidents, plots, and characters.
3. It is a miniature form of prose fiction.
4. It sometimes contains dialogue.
5. It must aim at a single unique effect requiring on the part of the writers’ extreme concentration and management.
6. It should be compressed.
7. In all good stories the theme is implied rather than explicitly stated.
8. It deals only with a slice of life and its plot has necessarily to be concentrated and well-made with none of the diffusiveness or expansiveness of a novel.
9. It should exclude all unnecessary details-its organization must be tight and artistic.
10. It must assume the aspect of a verisimilitude.
11. It should give an acutely satisfying sense and impression of finality to the narrative.
12. The language of the short story is characterized by economy and directness.

Components of the short story

An artistic vision that derives from an understanding of life as it lived and communicable only through a narrative projection is the subject matter of short story. The ultimate end of the artist is the communication of this artistic vision and the various components of the short story are meant to subserve this end. The beauty and value of a literary text lies in the way different elements cohere to result in a well-made harmony. Though different genres have different elements, the short story and the novel share some common literary features, but express them differently. Plot, character, setting, theme, point of view and style are important both for the short story and for the novel, but the novel, by the spaciousness that it enjoys, can work each of the aspects in a more detailed and leisurely manner than a short story can.

i) Plot: The first structural feature of a short story is plot. Plot is the arrangement of the events in the story, but the point to be reiterated is that it requires an arrangement based on the laws of casualty. Aristotle referred to plot ‘as the soul of tragedy’ and this is also true for the novel and the short story as well. E. M. Forster speaks about cause and effect as being vital to plot. A plot must have a beginning, middle and an end in order to be a whole. Even Somerset Maugham, the modern short story writer accepts the importance of plot in a short story.

The story must have a definite design, a design which includes a point of departure, a climax and a point of rest, in other words, it must have a plot.
The plot pins down and presents a piece of life within the confines of its own construction; in so doing, it exhibits life to us, as it were under a microscope, and enables us to view it more clearly than we can do in the raw. 20

As a short story has limited canvas, it generally treats of single situation or incident. Most plots centre around ‘conflicts’ that can be loosely defined as an opposition of forces, ideas and attitudes. Different kinds of conflicts add interest to the story. Even stories that do not apparently have a conflict, upon deeper analysis, will reward the reader with a subtle, latent conflict. Plot may be the soul of a story, but if one may use a mixed metaphor, conflict is the spice of the plot. One can claim that without a conflict, plot ceases to be interesting.

The ending of the story is also important. It gives suddenly a somewhat new meaning to the entire story. The hidden truth becomes clear with the end of the story. The unexpected end or twist-ending comes as a shocking surprise in good many short stories.

ii) Characterization:

The interrelations between characters of short story are extremely close and tense. It is because the number of characters in a short story is always very limited normally two or three. There may be a few more minor characters purely as the necessity of the plot but they are always kept in the background or never mentioned again, once their purpose is over. E. M. Forster speaks of ‘round’ and ‘flat’ characters. Round characters are complex and generally heroes tend to be round rather than flat. On the other hand, flat characters are two-dimensional and their characteristics are confined to one or two dominant traits that remain constant through the course of the story. Character development in a short story is a challenge since the trajectory of the hero’s growth has to be shown within a few pages. So the entire and undisturbed focus must be on one central character or at the most two. This leads us to a logical conclusion that in a short story too many characters can never be introduced. It is usually the character that makes a story great. In Rabindranath Tagore’s popular story The Cabuliwallah the character of
Cabuliwallah (Rahman) makes the story memorable. It is thus the memorable characters lend beauty to the short story.

It is true that the character must have the capacity to cause action and the capacity to reveal the change. Rust Hills comments on the vital relation between the character and action:

Character and action are like the subject and the verb in a sentence. A sentence by definition must have a subject and a verb and express a complete thought. You talk about the subject separately...but until you put it together with the verb you haven’t got a sentence...You can talk about the verb separately...But until you have the subject you won’t know what form the verb should take and until you have the thought you won’t even know what a verb to use. So it is with a short story: you must have both character (subject) and plot (verb) and know the significance of what happened to the character (meaning or thought). You can talk about character alone...but until you put the character into action you haven’t got a story. You can talk about the plot alone...but until you have a character to act and be acted on you won’t know what form the plot should take, and until you know what happened to the character you won’t know what plot to use....

It is the skill of the short story writer that gives life and actuality to the characters. A good artist visualizes the characters and their action well before the start, so that every word and gesture may add a definite amount to the reader’s knowledge.

iii) Setting and Atmosphere:

The setting of a short story is the general locale and the historical time in which its action occurs. In a number of stories the setting may just help to create the right atmosphere. The setting lends a touch of veracity to the short story. Characters, plot, incidents and all that happens in the story do not take place in a vacuum. We should note that there is a definite physical background of the place in which the story takes place, a background against which the characters move and things happen, however, the setting in a short story is normally brief and constant to create the desired effect. Richard Summers comments:
The proper selection of setting, therefore, is an essential part of the story teller’s art…Setting in a story has its own importance in creating “realism” and the proper ‘atmosphere’ for the story “setting by itself means very little”, says. Richard Summers in The Craft of Short Story, but setting as a part of atmosphere is extremely important…of course, not every detail of a setting should be recorded.\(^2^2\)

The physical setting in writers like E. A. Poe, Thomas Hardy and Faulkner is an important element in generating the atmosphere of a work.

Setting includes the entire aspect of a story- the manners, customs, ways of life which enter into its composition as well as its natural background or environment. Basically, there are two types of setting-concrete and abstract. The actual locale, for instance, can come under the concrete setting, whereas the ethos of community (its belief and mode of thinking) can be taken as the abstract setting. The depiction of a particular type of setting depends upon the nature of the short story or novel, more importantly, on the intention of the writer.

The mood or atmosphere is also an important aspect of a short story because this aspect also forms setting. To study setting, we have to look collect pointers, historical events, etc. Setting can add to the visual impact of the reading experience and sometimes, an in Hardy’s novels, become a character in itself. A skilful story teller can also use setting to convey and strengthen a theme.

‘Atmosphere’ we mean the general feeling a story may give to the reader. It may be cheerful, happy, gloomy, somber, sordid, pessimistic, optimistic, and so on.

Thus, short story shares the usual constituents of all fiction-plot, character and setting-but they cannot be treated with the same detail as in a novel. Each has to be reduced to the minimum in the interest of the impression they are together intended to convey. In other words, they take the shortest route towards the preconceived effect, the one pre-established design. They are all a means to an end. Any superfluous detail only retards the progress towards the final effect. The plot is confined to the essentials, the characters to the indispensables, and the setting to a few suggestive hints.
iv) Theme

The concept of theme is an abstract idea that emerges from a literary work’s treatment of its subject-matter. It is the central idea that the author wishes to convey. In a competent writer’s work, the theme is never handled explicitly, but is woven into the texture of the plot, characters and stylistic devices like the metaphor and symbol. Sometimes, the theme is the author’s view of the world, or it could be his perspective on certain events. Theme brings together the particular and the universal and forges a link between the reader and the writer.

It is too difficult to define the theme. Wilfred Stone, Nancy Huddleton Packer and Robert Hoope write:

After pleasure or pain, excitement or perplexity caused by the story had receded, the reader is left with a residue, a distillation, that we call theme.\(^{23}\)

A study of themes of fiction has a direct bearing on the personal experiences of the artist, for every writer is shaped by the social, political, economic, religious, moral and cultural forces as well as by his sense of tradition and history,

Two different intelligent readers reading the same story may arrive at different themes, because in all good stories the theme is implied rather than explicitly stated. The theme in fiction may be anything. What matters artistically and intellectually is how concretely, logically and dramatically the literary artist gives shape and substance to his idea.

The short story always involves in an implied manner value of one kind or another. This may be a controversial aspect of the short story. It is said that the most outdated way is writing a story with a moral. However, open emphasis on a moral destroys art; characters become mere puppets and the illusion of reality is shattered. We have another method expressing values through the characters, setting, etc. A genius writer keeps the values or significance as much as possible in the background and work through characters and situations in such a way that it leads to the understanding of the writer’s moral values. This does not mean that values are the be-all and end-all of the art of the short story, A straight forward adventure story, if well told, can give us pleasure. Everything depends upon what the artist
aims to achieve and sincerity and the manner of how he does it, for instance, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s popular *Sherlock Homes* stories are interesting and alive even today.

Theme is the central idea in the story that conveys the author’s attitude and beliefs with which the reader is able to connect. Discovering the theme of a story may be an intellectual journey in itself, taking readers through an in-depth study of characters, conflicts, symbols, etc. Consequently, the telling of stories has a deeper function: that of connecting humanity and the history of the short story attests to this age-old function.

v) Language and Style:

Language in a short story plays a very important function in deciding the tone of the short story. Every writer has some attitudes which are suggested by behind the language he uses. The language of the short story has to be the model of economy. Style is the matter of choice of words, and the concept of style is used to answer the question of “why this word rather than any other?” A good artist spends an immense amount of energy in choosing each and every word that goes into the final copy of the short story. Every word in the short story should contribute to its effect. Minimum words and maximum meaning is absolutely essential. A novel often has passages which could be scored out without detriment to the plot, but there is no room for these in the short story. Like a man of limited means, the short story cannot afford to spend two coins where a single one would suffice. It requires an apt word and the telling phrase. Descriptive passages are only valuable in so far as they contribute towards the total effect. Thus language of the short story is characterized by economy and directness. Whatever the theme or technique, it is the style that sustains a story. Sherwood Anderson rightly observes:

“Words are like the colors used by a painter”.  

Style is not just the outer garb worn by a story—it is meaning itself. Just as a heavy, pedantic style would not be appropriate to a humorous story, so would a flippant and racy style be unsuitable to project a grim and poignant situation. A good writer aims at creating the rhythmic fluidity of every day speech.
vi) Point of view:

The story telling is one of the greatest and fundamental aspects of the short story. Plot and character constitute the events, but events have to be narrated by someone from a particular point of view. All of us know that every story has a narrator. Sometimes, the author narrates the story, but at others the author lets one of the characters narrate the story. Who narrates the story is as important as the perspective from which the story is told. Point of view, a vital element of the story, is the perspective from which the story is told. Our appreciation of the story and the sway of our sympathies are often dependent on the narrator and his point of view.

Basically, there are three points view: the first person, second person and the third person. Of these three, the second person is a technique that is very rarely used.

The most familiar point of view is the first person of point view. In this mode, the narrator is a character in the story, a participant in the action. The first person is supposed to give a more personal view of the story, which can always be understood as that particular narrator’s view which means that we associate a certain amount of bias and subjectivity with this point of view.

The third person narration can be either omniscient or limited omniscient. It is supposed to create a certain distance between the reader and the narrated events, making the events sound more objective. True to the term omniscient, the third person narrators of this type are all-knowing with a God-like control over the world and the characters into which they let us in. In limited third person, the narrators are still outside the story, but tell us the story through the view of one of the characters. Most of stories follow the mode of third person narration.

In fiction we have also a mixed narration, where the narration changes from the first person to the third person in an impressionistic way.

vii) Dialogue:

Dialogue creates most intimacy between the reader and the people in the story. Good dialogue greatly brightens narrative and its judicious and timely use is to be regarded as evidence of a writer’s technical skill. Dialogue is the life blood of
a short story. It helps the writer in creating realism and achieving highest dramatic intensity to capture the attention of the reader. It is useful method of revealing character and developing plot.

viii) Tone:

Tone is another important element in a story. The overall tone gives pattern and shape to the fabric of the story. It is the tone of the story that makes a story humourous or serious or satirical. The tone or the way of speaking makes the language ironic or artistic. Thus, tone is largely a matter of language choice or even a choice of details.

ix) Description, Suspense, Contrast:

Descriptions, Suspense, and Contrast in a short story, are also equally important. Description establishes more vividly the setting, mood and atmosphere of a story. Characters come to life with the help of description. Indeed, it helps to create realism and makes a scene memorable. Another important essential is suspense, one of the means of heightening interest. Here, the reader’s curiosity is increased and he is held in doubt about the ultimate outcome of the story. It is the skill of a writer to get suspense under way in the very beginning of the story.

Contrast in a story provides and secures added emphasis. This device is useful to heighten interest and to reveal character in contrast.

In conclusion, we can say that all these elements are essential; however, it is the overall impact on the reader caused by the artist’s skilful and harmonious blending of these elements that makes a good short story.

Types of Short Story

Short stories may be roughly classified under various heads as per the contents, plot, theme, character, mood, etc. As the stories are written on varied themes, they, in fact, cannot be placed in any one of the categories. For our convenience we may classify them in various types such as- adventure, romantic,
social, psychological, humourous, detective, scientific, historical, reflective, children and animal stories.

**Evolution of Short Story**

The short narrative in both verse and prose is one of the oldest and widespread of literary forms. The short story is a comparatively recent development in English literature. Storytelling is a natural human urge. The talent for telling stories is the oldest artistic faculty in the world and the deepest rooted in the heart of man. Narrative, it appears, is hard-wired into the brains of human being, and from the olden days our cave ancestors, perhaps in one form or the other, have been sharing stories. So we can say that given the naturalness of the narrative tendency in us that short story as a literary form might have begun early in human history. However, the two narrative forms of literature i.e. the novel and the short story emerged much later than poetry, tragedy or epic, in their current formats.

The modern short story seems so obvious a literary form that it is only reasonable to suppose that it must have existed for centuries.

....The history of modern short story is not vast but very brief...So also Elizabeth Bowen points out. “The short story is a young art, a child of this century.

Somerset Maugham agrees that it is modern but puts its start somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century. Canby and Dashiell the two American authors who wrote ‘A Study of the Short Story’ say, “It is from the early nineteenth century onwards that the short story became most significant in English literature.”

It is clear that the short story as a genre is a late-bloomer. It is the opinion of many critics that it was the nineteenth century that definitely kick-started the growth of the modern short story and gave it the necessary impetus.

However, it is important to see the state of the short story before the nineteenth century. We can point out a number of works and writers from the pages of early history whose stories are well remembered even today. But they are not short stories in the modern sense of the term. In the past the stories in prose or
poetry were, basically recited before audience and the difference between the old
tales and modern short stories is the difference between listening and reading. In the
old stories the physical presence of the story teller and his personality become the
part of the experience of hearing a story. Short prose narratives in oral form seem to
have existed from time immemorial. Since these stories were in oral transmission,
human memory was relied upon to pass on these stories from generation to
generation. To help remember tales and as mnemonic devices, tellers of stories took
recourse to verse, rhyme, stock phrases, idioms and popular stories and themes.

T. O. Beachcroft in his book *The Modest Art* makes distinction between
the professional story tellers of the past and the modern short story writer:

Moreover, the professional story-tellers of the past, in the bazaar of great
hall, were usually telling traditional stories which most of the audience
already knew and trusted. The modern writer, on the other hand, is not only
unable to meet his audience face to face, but he is trying to interest them in
an entirely new story, written by an author whom they may never have
heard before. Again, in addressing an audience face to face there is bound to
be a certain amount of playing up to the group response. The effects are
broader, less intimate, achieved in a different way.¹⁶

The Babylonian tale, the Epic of Gilgamesh, generally agreed upon as the
oldest surviving written work, extant around 2000 BC was in verse. Many of the
oral tales were didactic with an occasional secular tale, here and there. In a similar
fashion, many of the early tales from Middle East and India were mostly didactic in
nature.

We should note that beyond the Hebrew Scriptures the ancient Egypt for the
earliest extant stories, evidently told for their intrinsic entertainment value. Much
similar to these in scope are numerous brief tales which appear in the classical and
post-classical literature of Greece and Rome. The Greeks extended the scope of the
short fiction. Both in India and Greece, animal characters played out moral
dilemmas, conveying didactic lessons. The form is called the animal fable. Many of
these tales, collected as *Aesop’s Fables* in the sixth century BC, are well-known
even today and available widely in English translations. These tales were charged
with moral teaching. The origin of medieval apologues can be traced to the Jatakas, which came to Europe from the East. The **Buddhist Jatak** tales and the ancient tales of the **Panchatantra** were usually didactic in tone, gripping in narration and epigrammatically in structure. These ancient prototypes in fact came into existence as vehicles of religious and moral instruction. The short story is, therefore, not a very new form. Crude and elementary but highly effective stories and anecdotes are found in **The Old Testament, The Arabian Nights, Aesop’s Fables, Katha-Sarit Sagar** and other books. Thus, the ancient parable and fable, starkly brief narrative used to enforce some moral or spiritual truth, anticipate the severe brevity and unity of some short stories written today.

In the works of later Greek tragedians like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides and in the works of Homer, tales began to form an integral part. Some of the Hellenistic and Roman material trickled through gradually into the reservoir of traditional story-telling from which authors have continued to draw.

A.C. Ward in his book *Aspects of the Short Story* states, “The greatest creator of short stories in World Literature was the greatest figure in world history—Jesus of Nazareth.” Undoubtedly, the parables of Christ are the wonderful stories.

During the Anglo-Saxon period **Beowulf**, an epic also contained story-like episodes. Its authorship is unknown and it is considered the oldest work of the Old English. The verses in this epic were sung by the minstrels in community or family gatherings. Scholars are of the opinion that the epic was composed between the eighth and the early eleventh centuries.

We should note that it is the Middle Ages that saw new life being breathed into the short narrative. With Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) **The Canterbury Tales** the whole art gets a new turn. Chaucer and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) provided two major milestones in the development of the short story. The prologue to **The Canterbury Tales**, Chaucer’s monumental work is considered the jewel of all medieval story telling. All the tales are encased within a larger narrative of a group of pilgrims travelling to Canterbury for a spiritual retreat. These pilgrims narrated the tales one by one to avoid the monotony of travel. Chaucer’s humour is genial, invigorating and urbane and the book embodies the comic spirit of the
author. Chaucer has written these comic stories against the background of Canterbury. In this multi-voiced narration and vivacious drama, one can see almost the entire wide canvas of humanity, painted with humour, charm, irony and sympathy.

In the history of the short story, Boccaccio’s famous book *The Decameron* is considered the landmark. The stories in the book are also encased within a frame narrative. The frame of *The Decameron* pertains to the Black Plague that divested Florence, Italy, in 1348. We find, three women and seven men manage to escape to a villa outside Florence during the ravages of the plague and they share stories to lighten the pain and fear. There is a lot of underlying pathos in this book because the dark specter of Black Death looms threateningly even while the narrators put on a facade and entertain each other telling these tales.

During Elizabethan period the dramatists borrowed their themes from the contemporary stories or translated stories in England. The popular book of stories entitled *The Palace of Pleasure* appeared in 1566. The other influential books are Tenton’s *Iraquill Discourses* (1567), George Petrie’s *A Petite Palace of Pattie his Pleasure* (1576) and Barnabe Rich’s *Farewell to Militrie Profession* (1581). The stories contained in these books were of various types such as revenge, bloodshed, adventure, jokes-coney-catching stories. The coney-catching phrase was used among thieves and referred to various methods of robbing people by tricks and violence. Herman’s book *Cavat for Common Cursetors* is a rich repository of anecdotes that closely resemble short stories. The credit goes to Thomas Deloney who wrote Coney-catching stories. He told pleasant and realistic stories of people in the course of ordinary life.

The short story during 17th and 18th century especially in England was almost absent from the literary scene. The novel in those days was emerging as a very popular form and the short narrative was not the preferred model. This was neoclassical age in England that witnessed a renewed interest in the classics. Chaucer and Boccaccio had spawned enough limitations and people were tired of the much-used material. At the same time journalistic sketches were also becoming popular to satisfy the thirst for light reading, almost displacing short narrative. It seems that sketches played a major role in the emergence of the art form of the
short story. During the expansion of the British Empire and discovery of new lands, people’s interest in new cultures, etc. increased and as a result the progress of short story halted for a while. Under Italian influence, prose romances continued to be translated and written in English during 16th and 17th centuries, but none of these can be claimed as direct ancestors of the modern short story. In the 18th century, Steele and Addison evolved the tale-with-a-purpose to drive home a moral, but this again is different from the present day tale of “impression” “or idea”. Their essays in Spectator and Tatler and those of Daniel Defoe in his journal appear almost like short stories. But their aim was to discuss moral ideas.

The modern concept of the short story developed towards the beginning of the nineteenth century:

“One probable reason is that the short story could gain acceptance only after the novel had established itself as a serious form of literature, and this it did in the eighteenth century. A more likely reason is the demand for short fiction created by the rapid growth of newspapers and periodicals in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. With increased demand went the precondition of a better, more compact story. The result: not only were better stories written, but the art of short story writing became a subject of critical study.”

Melwani, further states that the credit goes to a group of writers in four different countries namely Germany, America, Russia and France, who published their work within a few years of each other between 1812 and 1830. E.T.W. Hoffman (Germany) wrote three collections of short stories between 1812 and 1815. Irving’s (America) Sketch Book appeared in 1820. In Russia, it was N. V. Gogol who began his career as a short story writer in 1831. Also Merimee, Balzac and Gautier wrote stories.

In the United Kingdom, Thomas Hardy wrote dozens of short stories but he cared very little for the craftsman of the story. As a youth Kipling achieved world-wide success with his tales from India. He provided models of stories to posterity. Rudyard Kipling and other masters of short fiction, deviating from the past models, devised their own fictional structures and modes of presentation. There are “tales of
adventure like Rudyard Kipling’s stories of East, studies in mystery and detection like Conan Doyle’s famous tales of Sherlock Holmes, H. G. Well’s Scientific fantasies”.29

R. L. Stevenson excels in shaping short stories as usual pictures. Some of the humorous writers were also contributing to the form of the short story. These light-hearted writings found a brilliant blooming in the hands of P. G. Woodhouse.

James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Thomas Mann and especially Franz Kafka rely on Freudian psychology to mould their stories. Among all the moderns Somerset Maugham alone has chosen to remain an old fashioned teller of robust tales. He is a narrator par excellence. The distinguished aspects of Maugham’s stories are objectivity and incisive dissection of human frailties.

Since 1900, John Galsworthy, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, and James Joyce have all written memorable short stories in addition to their work in the realm of the novel. H. E. Bates, Frank O’Connor and Sean O’Foolain have written not only outstanding short stories but also books on the poetics of the short story. The contribution to the development of women short story writers is also noteworthy.

**Short Story in America**

The history of the American short story can be traced back to one hundred fifty years. Though America had no literary masters who would attract the attention of European critics and masters, the short story flourished in America than in England. It is highly significant that America was in a happier position to foster the short story. In fact, America owes its pre-eminence in the short story chiefly to economic conditions. An important point in this connection is the commercialization and consequent standardization of the genre. Magazines and journals introduced the fashion of gift books. Publishers who were inclined to bring out magazines dealing with Indians, hair-raising deaths, and unrequited love, found these annual gift books a great source of profit making. It is worth mentioning in this context that early stories found their first appearance in The Token a Boston based annual. Similarly, Gody’s Ladies Book founded in 1830 attracted a large number of women readers and continued till the end of 19th century. The American
short story aptly fitted their life, their habits of reading and their means of publication. The writers were trying to evolve a distinctive American identity for this genre and it was made possible by the transmutation of the resources of the European Romanticism into distinctively American ethos, local colour and local idiom. Thus, the honours in the field of short story go to American short story writers. Peter S. Prescott says:

To be sure foreigners tried to invent the short story and may even have thought they had; they did manage to skirt all-round the territory by giving us sketches, fables, tales and anecdotes. But the short story is not merely a story told short, it is a particular kind of literary construction. The thing itself is ours, invented by us a century and a half ago and dominated by Americans ever since. (Emphasis mine)  

Washington Irving’s The Sketch Book is an important work which is considered to be the literary ancestry of short story. His stories emphasized regional flavour. The publication of annuals and Ladies Books played an important role in the development of the American short story. Two of the greatest practitioners of the genre N. Hawthorne and E. A. Poe appeared through this media. Poe was the first significant master of the craft who evolved his theory of the short story based on the principles of brevity and unity. An important change in the history of the American short story took place when the writers like Thomas Aldrich, Bunner and Brander Mathews paid special attention to the structural principles of the short story. These writers formulated its basic tenants and used the term ‘short story’ officially for the first time. Another important short story writer was O’ Henry who challenged the reader to a game of guessing with twist endings. The plots of O’ Henry stories have their own laws, which require the exactness of measure and proportions. His influence as a short story writer has been felt and recorded even outside the English speaking world. The list of American short story writers is a long one, but special mention may be made of Katherine Anne Porter, Earnest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and Eudora Welty. Peter Taylor, Lionel Trilling, Salinger, Wallace Stegner. Thus the contribution of American short story writers from the beginning of the teething stage is noteworthy.
Short Story in Russia

In Russia, the modern short story was founded by Pushkin, developed by Gogol and perfected by Turgenev, Tolstoy and Chekhov. These writers had a great influence on the development of the short story. Gogol’s story The Overcoat (1842) is one of the greatest modern short stories of the world. Its distinction lies in its having as the central character social misfit, Akaky, treated not as an object of laughter or charity but as one of human significance. It is Gogol who endowed modern short story with a social realism that was humanistically rather than ideologically oriented. It is worth quoting here Turgenev’s familiar saying:

“We all have come from Gogol’s overcoat.”

Ivan Turgenev in A Sportsman’s Sketches was the first short story writer to resort to the oblique method of narration, which suggests more than it states, and demands painstaking artistry. Russian writers focused on revealing moments in the lives of their characters and their climax comes not so much in a striking incident as in a growing understanding of the nature of a character. The Russian short story is a revelation of human nature. Chekov, the master of short story occupies a special place of honor in the history of modern short story. It is in his hands that the simple tale-the yarn-acquired the status of a literary craft. Chekov is said to have been the first to catch life on wing.

In the hands of Chekov the short story became the vehicle for expressing feeling, a mirror on which emotion is caught and reflected back again to the readers. We find compactness and rigorous economy of effect in the stories of Chekov and others. Chekov was the first to exploit the moment in the short story. His stories have emerged from such a moment luminous with meaning, a little world revealing a great world. Chekov keeps his eye on character. Stories like The Grasshopper (1892) and The Darling (1898) reveal Chekov’s compassion, powers of intuition and insight, and humour.

France

From America the short story travelled to France. Following the lead of Russia, France became strongly addicted to naturalism in her fiction—that is, the
minute and scientific presentation of all its realism, with an apparent detachment of
the author and his sympathies from the circumstances described. Balzac, Flaubert
and Zola exerted a great influence on the French short story and France produced
one of the greatest short story writers of the world-Guy de Maupassant. The focus
of Maupassant is on event. He regarded the short story as a finished product of art.
His stories are based on the solid rock of life. He can dive deep into human
passions, and display their minute subtleties. His stories are primarily ‘plot-stories’
with a transparently simple structure. To an incident of everyday life Maupassant
gives a new artistic design complete and beautiful so that the finished product is
both strange and life-like. In his stories he does not attempt to analyse human
psychology; rather he allows the psychic process to work out naturally. His popular
stories are The Diamond Necklace, A Piece of String, A Country Excursion, The Duel and The Harla.

Maupassant is remarkable for his detachment and depicts his characters
dispassionately. He is ironical, direct, hard and physical. Undoubtedly, Maupassant
is the master of the art of compression. The great short story writers like Somerset
Maugham and others outstandingly accepted the inspiration of Maupassant. In his
two hundred and more short stories, Maupassant touched the entire gamut of human
passions and emotions.

Thus, the modern short story may be said to have been fashioned by two
continental writers-Guy de Maupassant and Prosper Merimee-like the moralizing
light, airy tales of Voltaire, symbolic and mystery stories of Nodier, course satiristic
stories of Balzac and Vigny’s stoic tales.

While commenting on the development of the short story Murli Das
Melawani observes:

The manner in which I have traced the development of the short story form
differs from the usual practice of commentators on the short story. Their
approach has been to trace the growth of the short story in individual
countries, in Russia, America, and France, and conclude that the pattern of
growth was similar in each country. This approach is valid as far as it goes.
But a closer historical study reveals that the growth was not only in his
country but also in others. What was significant in his contribution helped to develop and refine the form.\textsuperscript{32}

**The Indian English Short Story**

Both R. K. Narayan and Dr. Basavaraj Naikar are prominent short story writers and their powerful individual talent as short story writers has to be seen into the context of the general tradition of the short story in India. It is necessary to take a brief stock of the Indian short story tradition particularly in the light of the fact it was in India itself that the form was used for instruction, pleasure and for the world-view of the days of their creators.

Indian English Literature, comparatively a new body of writing has revealed its all round growth in almost all forms of literature and has won the acclamation. The story of the Indian English short story runs parallel to that of the Indian English Novel and both came into fruition during the eventful period of the Gandhian era and gradually became able to convey the contemporary complexity of life. The beginning of the Indian short story in English was made under the influence of Britishers. The western masters like Maupassant, O’ Henry, Galsworthy, Somerset Maugham, Frank O’Connor, Chekhov, Rudyard Kipling and others influenced Indian writers. But at the same time our Indian short story writers have not forgotten their roots. It is noteworthy here that by their sheer dint of diligence, Indian English short story writers have worked out their techniques through a successful fusion of Eastern and Western traditions and techniques.

Story telling impulse is quite natural to human beings, particularly for Indians because of their being fed upon by grandmother’s tales, since their infancy and also because of their hoary, rich and incessant tradition. The genesis of Indian tales trace back to the Vedas and Upnishdas, the Puranas, the Panchatantra, Hitopdesh and Jatak Kathas. The modern short story writers search for their themes in Indian myths, epics, folk tales and ancient tales. Shiv K. Kumar gives an account of the origin of Indian English short story:

Although the Indian English short story in English is comparatively a recent phenomenon, its genesis may be traced back to ancient fables of the sixth century A. D. Its origin lies in such ancient classics as the Katha-Sarita-
Sagara, Yogavashishtha, Brihat-Katha or the Panchatantra. As stories, these fables and tales were tightly structured and ingeniously conceived, although their primary objective invariably was didactic-geared more to instruct than to entertain their readers.33

Indian short story began in the last decade of the 19th century simply because the rich story-telling tradition of India. It is rather deeply rooted in our Indian tradition, which used to give us folk-tales and fables from the earliest times. This tradition has always been enriched by oral as well as written tales. It is unquestionably as old as Indian society and culture.

The modern Indian short story writers learnt the epigrammatically style from the ancient Indian fables. These writers realized the need for pointed details and a conclusive end. The Panchatantra fulfils the basic requirements of a good story with an effective beginning, an engaging middle and an appropriate denouement. The stories in the Panchatantra keep the suspense sustained till the end by a style which is thoroughly direct and forceful. The language in the Panchatantra and Jatak Tales is simple, idiomatic with a generous sprinkling of witty statements in memorable verses. Thus, the modern short stories have essential proximity with these tales. When Indian writers started writing stories naturally they turned to their own wealth of literature for inspiration. The themes in Kathasaritasagar are realistic and the characters have a robust zest for life. There was yet another variety of tales, generally known as folk-tales in ancient India and this variety is well-preserved in Kathasaritasagar.

The great Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata have been inexhaustible storehouse of tales, and they have continued to inspire and provide materials to the writers of all ages. While assessing the role of the short story in modern Indian literature, M. Rama Rao rightly observes:

We have had in India stories which lie embedded in the hymns of the Rigveda, or scattered in the Upanishads and the epics, the stories which constitute the Panchatantra, the Hitopadesha, the Sukasapatati, the Dasakumaracharita and the Vetalapanchavimsati in Sanskrit, the Buddhist Jatak Tales in Pali and host of similar stories in modern Indian languages.34
The ancient fables and the characters have been used by the Indian short story writers in English of the first generation. At the Portal by R. K. Narayan, Five Short Fables by Mulk Raj Anand, Illumination by Manjeri Isvaran are some of the examples. The impact of the popular folk-tale tradition is visible in stories like The Roman Image by R. K. Narayan and The Barber’s Trade Union by Mulk Raj Anand. Thus all these works provided stimuli and motivations to Indian short story writers. The Big Three i.e. Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao acknowledge the ancient art as highly finished art of story-telling in India and admitted the impact of the ancient tradition of story-telling on their works. The Indian short story began in the last decade of 19th century itself simply because the rich story-telling tradition of India needed no generation period. Stories From Indian Christian Life by Kamala Sathianandan in 1898 heralds the beginning of short stories in English by Indians.

With the introduction of Western education and impact of western writers and their writings Indian writers learnt something new which added up to their knowledge of their own tradition. Macaulay’s celebrated recommendations were accepted on 7th March, 1835, and Lord William Bentinck resolved that “the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European Literature and science among the natives of India. . . .”

Consequently English became not only official language of India but also the language for schools and colleges. With the increase in the number of people speaking English, the necessity of English newspapers was felt. English journalism gave new boost to Western education in India. All these factors helped in increasing the number of people well-versed in English. Increase in the circulation of English newspapers and other materials increased the demand for more and more matter from early Indian writers. This opened the scope for Indian writers to write in attractive way so as to satisfy the popular public demand. When the Indian writers started to write, the Western influence was evident. Their works were directly or indirectly inspired by English writers. For instance, Indian detective stories by R. K. Banerjee have its colours of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s well-known Sherlock Holmes.
It is noteworthy that the Western education turned the minds of Indians inside out, removed many mental cobwebs and promoted in them a new integral outlook. The transmission of modern scientific and sociological ideas made Indians aware of blessing of materialism and social organization, of the infinite value of democracy as a way of life and of a reason as an instrument of analysis and critical inquiry and as the champion of free and independent thinking. The early writers tried to imitate western techniques and literary forms. The awakened Indian writers started expressing themselves in all western forms. As the gates of knowledge were widely opened, the Indian writing in English was also affected by the master story tellers of the world. It stirred their desire to reach international audience.

Initially English was used for purposes like translations, political agitation, social reform, propaganda, law and education, gradually emerged a new literature called Indian writing in English. It is a matter of pride for us that today it has become one of the most significant literatures in English. Indian writers in English have been using almost all the major forms of literature.

The Indian English short story began towards the close of the nineteenth century. Shoshee Chunder Dutt published his short story collection **Realities of Indian life: Stories collected from the Criminal Reports of India** in 1885. In 1886 and 1887 two collections of stories were published by **P. V. Ramaswami Raju**: **The Tales of Sixty Mandarins** and **Indian Fables**. In 1898 Kamala Sathianandan published in Madras volume of short stories entitled **Stories from Indian Christian Life**. Despite their acceptance of a new form of self-expression, these writes tended to make their stories philosophical, keeping the tradition of ancient tales. At the same time, it is not to be forgotten that a few writers followed the great masters of the west in writing stories of horror and suspense. **Kamala Sathianandan** chose the form because “it was the simplest and most popular means of communicating . . . the essential India which he had understood and of which he wanted others to get a proper perspective.”

The first Indian short story writer in English with a considerable output is **Cornelia Sorabji**, the first woman graduate of an Indian university. She published four collections of short stories. These stories deal with life as it was lived by the
Hindus and the Parsis of the upper and lower classes of the period. As a social worker she championed the cause of women’s education and emancipation.

A.S.P. Ayyar, K.N. Nagarajan, A. Madhaviah, S.K. Chettur, G.K. Chettur and others took to the short story form with great zeal; however, these writers do not show any great mastery over the technique of the short story.

Prestigious Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore is an outstanding figure in the realm of Indian English Literature. He shows first signs of maturity in Indian short story. Tagore wrote his short stories in Bengali and later translated them into English. Most of these stories furnish deep studies in human relations within the large frame of rural life. He, however, does not neglect totally the city life. His stories are peopled with men and women of all ages and of all types in various domestic and social situations. Tagore, who was highly sensitive to the changes taking place in the country—the rise of nationalism, the movements of social and religions reforms, the changing pattern of economy and the development of education after the western models, was also conscious of their deeper impacts. His stories are eternal and universal in their appeal. His impact on the Indian writers in English is so marked that he occupies prominent place of the modern short story. For the first time in modern Indian literature the life of ordinary men and women received such sympathetic understanding and depicted with love and feeling. Tagore is not only a romantic short story writer; he is also a stern realistic.

Unlike the novel of the time, the short story portrays the common man with his problems. The short story showed affinity with the novel in the early stage but soon in the course of time, it established its relationship with the lyric and reveals its true nature. The emergence of the short fiction accelerated the growth of the short story. It shares the characteristics of the novel namely structural complexity and the development of the characters. The first Indian to give a short story in the modern sense was Fakir Mohan Senapati.

The early Indian writers in English such as Pallab Sengupta, S. C. Dutta, Cornelia Sorbaji, S. B. Banerjea, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar, etc. paved the way for great trio of Indian English Fiction namely Mulk Raj
Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. The real beginning of the short story as a genre was made in the 1930 at the hands of the ‘Big Three’.

Manjeri Isvaran is one of the first Indian writers in English of a recognizable stature to cast his lot with the development of the short story. Isvaran’s contribution to Indian literature in English is substantial. He was slowly yet steadily gaining ground as a major Indian English short story writer. Having published about ten volumes of short stories such as Naked Shingles (1941), Sivaratri (1943) and A Madras Admiral (1959) Isvaran occupies a conscious place among our pioneers. In Isvaran’s hands, Indian short story in English gained a new vitality, a new design and a certain quality of transparency. He embodies the forces that are crucial to the understanding of the way the genre has developed in the subcontinent. His total commitment to Indian life is unquestionable. He is an experimenter with the English idiom, hence the enormous significance of Isvaran’s own views on the growth and development of modern short story.

Most of the short stories written between 1900 and 1935 are marked by a strong note of didacticism in intent and execution. Dorothy Spenser says that “in the early years at any rate Indian authors were influenced by Victorian moralistic works”\(^37\) Of the ‘Big Three’ Mulk Raj Anand occupies a prominent place as a writer of short stories and novels-The mid-thirties of the twentieth century saw the publication of a genuine artistic work in this genre, and it is Mulk Raj Anand’s The Lost Child and Other Stories which proved to be ‘an immediate success. ‘With Anand begins the era of big names such as Manjeri Isvaran, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’.\(^38\)

Indeed, after Rabindranath Tagore it is Mulk Raj Anand who by the variegated quality of his work, his sincerity of purpose, humanitarian outlook, his synthesis of all that is good in the East and the West has made it to the world class literature. Mulk Raj Anand deals usually with ‘what man has made of man’.\(^39\)

Anand’s stories are dominated by a sympathetic attitude towards the less privileged class. He has truly shared the feelings of untouchables, poor, downtrodden and marginal. He attacks on the hypocrisy of people. Social injustice and misery of the people move Anand to the point where his narration attains a
tragic intensity. Chandu the protagonist in Anand’s famous short story The Barber’s Trade Union is not only a passive protested against the evils in the society but also symbolizes the new mode of production and set of new values to overcome marginality.

Another big name in the field of short story is that of R. K. Narayan. His distinctive contribution to the growth and development of short story is well recognized both at the national and international level. He comically reveals the life and yet does not allow the cynicism to enter the world of his creation. Murli Das Melwani aptly points out the distinctive approaches of R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand:

Where Mulk Raj Anand states, R.K. Narayan suggests. Where the former draws in detail, the latter sketches. This is true of mood, character and atmosphere. Narayan is a meticulous writer, and, unlike Anand, he will hardly let a loose sentence pass. . . If Anand looks to the future…Narayan is content to reflect on the past. Anand’s concerns are social, Narayan’s moral. Even though Narayan does not overtly pass moral and other judgments, he is interested in exploring the nature of life and reality.40

Narayan presents a slice of life and allows it to speak for itself. Delicacy of touch is the distinguishing mark of Narayan as a short story writer. Narayan’s use of irony is superb but he has come to terms with the foibles of human existence and censures them with good-humoured cynicism. Narayan’s greatest invention is his fictional town Malgudi. “If Narayan had written only short stories his reputation would have been secure.”41

Raja Rao, the Sahitya Academi Award Winner (1963) has a strong claim among the great short story writers. He has artistically captured the beauty and imagination of Indian heritage and mythology in his works. Though Raja Rao has written fewer stories than any other major Indo-English short story writer, he has added a new dimension to its form through his fashioning of it as a rich mosaic of meanings, philosophical as well as socio-cultural, without turning it into a philosophical treatise or a folk tale. He has profound vision of life and deeply rooted in Indianness. He is highly symbolic and philosophical. The Cow of the
Barricades and Other Stories is Raja Rao’s well-known collection of short stories. A few of the short stories in the collection reveal the impact of Gandhian ideology on Raja Rao. He shows his zeal for reform, for example, his Javni is apparently an exposure of the evils of the caste system. Raja Rao is the first Indian short story writer in English to use Indian English for narrative purpose. Other writers, like Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Ruth Jhabvala, use it mainly as dialogue.

Khushwant Singh’s achievement as a man of letters is considerable enough to establish him as one of the prominent figures with international fame. He has the satirist’s eye. His The Mark of Vishnu (1950) is a scathing attack on superstition. The general opinion about Khuswant Singh’s short stories is that they are written in early narrative form.

In his four collections of short stories K. A. Abbas deals with hypocrisy, selfishness, unemployment, ignorance, partition. He is greatly influenced by Mulk Raj Anand who champions the cause of the under-dog.

G. D. Khosla’s collection of short story entitled The Price of Life is popular. In construction Khosla’s short stories could serve as models in a course of literary craftsmanship. His main focus is on the themes such as marriage, disparities in family and social life.

Ruskin Bond’s ghost stories are popular for they have a great charm and appeal for the readers. His ghosts like his people are harmless and like children they themselves get frightened and disappear. There is a fine fusion of romance and fantasy with the realistic. Like Chekhov he is interested in the ‘Slice of life’ but is also like Maupassant by giving the outlines of his characters. Ruskin Bond’s creativity is his humanism.

Manohar Malgonkar deals with army life and hunting. His focus is on the sunnier side of life and his aim is to entertain. Malgonkar’s short stories and novels deal with varied themes and are technically impressive. Manoj Das writes both in English and Oriya. His stories dive deep into human psyche and present characters as they are, not as they should have been. While dealing with contemporary situation, he comes down heavily on those who corrupt the society and hoodwink
the public. The ethereality of atmosphere and dreamy quality are the important features of Manoj Das.

**Arun Joshi** is a serious and deft writer and succeeds in concealing his didactic purpose. He makes his points briefly, efficiently and effectively. He displays assurance not only in the working out of details but also in ordering the overall pattern of a short story.

At its best **Bhabani Bhattacharya**’s use of English as narrative has remarkable economy. He makes use of psychology to explain people and events, lending even the humblest of them an air of sophistication and making them comprehensible to the foreign reader. **Steel Hawk and Other stories** (1968) is his famous collection of short stories.

In the Indian English Literature there have been other short story writers of considerable merit like **Keki N. Daruwalla, Vikram Chandra, Kamala Das**, etc. They have contributed considerably to the promotion of the short story as a popular literary form. Indian writers deal with contemporary life in India and of Indians living abroad. Diaspora, life and its values, love, etc. are the various issues on which the writers have expressed their vision.

**Indian Women Short Story Writers**

The work of Indian women short story writers merits critical attention, if only for their contribution to the enlargement of the scope and significance of the Indian short story in English. Feminism seems to be a key issue in the short stories of women writers. In addition to feminism, diaspora is also a prominent theme in women writing especially in Indian English literature. Some of them have tried to portray the state and stream of consciousness of the non-residential Indians through their short stories. They have made the contemporary Indian short story an effective tool for the promotion of a secularized democratic culture quite at odds with the traditional pieties.

Shiv K. Kumar rightly observes:
Our women writers seem to have lent a new dimension of sensitivity and perception to the short story in English. They find its limited canvas quite congenial to their sensibilities in confronting their brief, often muted, experiences. They prefer to say a thing or two, and then let the rest fade away into silence. That is the way most of our women writers tend to respond to reality with reticence, quietude and endurance.

The Indian women short story writers have shown varying degrees of competence in handling the form of the short story and realizing verbal structures to suit the portrayal of complex human relationships, especially of the man-woman variety. Not all of them may have achieved striking economy, unity of effect and sometimes even thematic integrity in their stories.

**Shashi Deshpande**, Sahitya Academy Award winning writer has taken this form seriously with bonafied intentions. She mainly dwells on desperation and frustration, misunderstanding and incompatibility, sense of guilt and loss, loneliness and alienation of a sensitive woman pitted against an ill mated marriage and hostile circumstances around her. Most of her stories give voice to the predicament of women, but she does not let the family disintegrate.

The basic aim of **Anjana Appachana** is to portray woman in her several roles. She pin-points at the game of gender politics. She believes in the harmonious relationship between man and woman, which would lead to the progress of both, leading to the progress of humanity. **Prema Ramkrishnan** in her stories focuses on the ‘home-maker’ that can be a person, place or thing that turns a ‘house’ into a ‘home’

**Anita Desai** is considered to be one of the most accomplished writers. Her famous collections of short stories are *Games at Twilight* and *Diamond Dust*. Her focus is on personal struggle and problems of contemporary life. She exposes many ironies of life. The diasporic experience is also a thematic preoccupation of her stories.

**Jhumpa Lahiri**’s contribution is also noteworthy; the representation of the Indian culture is inherently present in her short stories. In her stories, we find the
sharp contrast between India and America. Her characters demonstrate the universality of life experience.

Both women short story writers and expatriate writers as they are very significant voices have enriched the Indian English short story. Many more names can be added to prepare an index of Indian women short story writers. They are significant because they are intellectually strong and powerfully vocal and expressive of their vision. The noteworthy women writers are Gauri Deshpande, R. P. Jhabvala, Tara Deshpande, Manju Kak, Gita Harihara, Jai Nimbkar, Shalan Savur, Laxmi Kanan and a few others.

**Critical Neglect**

Ironically, in spite of its immense popularity and diversity the short story seems to have all along received a step-sisterly treatment at the hands of creative writes as well as critics. Though the form has been very popular since its beginning, it has remained critically neglected form of writing so far. Even today it awaits serious critical attention.

Murli Das Melwani describes the Indian short story as “the step-child of literature”. In fact, the short story as a genre is especially suitable to deal with the wide range of Indian experience. Also it is more expansive and faithful to the nuances of a multicultural, diverse nation like India than the novel in English. It is undeniable that the Indian short story writer’s efforts have added a new dimension to the exploration of the human personality and the Indian social milieu which is changing yet changeless in a profound sense. But surprisingly, the Indian short story in English has been dealt with rather perfunctorily by literary historians like K. R. Shrinivasa Iyengar, M. K. Naik and H. M. Williams.

Nowhere is it so obvious as in India where despite the fact that the celebrated Trinity of Indo-English fiction-Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Naryan- have been prolific short story writers; they are assessed mainly as novelists. Dr. Suroopa Mukherjee opines, “The step-motherly treatment given to short stories is largely
because key-writers, mostly novelists and poets, merely experiment with short stories so that it remains a side activity”.

Despite its vitality and progressive growth, the short story has been more or less ignored as an important literary form suitable for serious study in India.

**Language in Indian English Short Story**

The short story is more congenial to the writers who wish to capture the fleeting moments of life. Especially in the Indian context of social, cultural, religious and linguistic diversities this form becomes more adaptable and endearing. Its elasticity encompasses and accepts anything and everything under the sun for its subject. As already mentioned Indian short story writer had a hoary tradition of story-telling. Now that he had encountered the foreign short story and studied it keenly he synthesized the best of both. He evolved his own method. It was inevitable for him in the context he was provided with. The purpose of the then Indian short story writer, especially in English was to express himself in a foreign language in a comprehensible way. For him there was an acute need to evolve the language, for he wished to project India as it really is. Of course there was a problem before him, the problem of evolution of language. It is in the matter of language-of adapting the language as a medium of expression to convey Indian thought and sensibility-that Indian fiction has acquired a characteristic flavour of its own. The adaptation has taken two forms: first, the interpretation of well-known Indian words into English to convey an atmosphere of Indianness; second, and more daring, the translation of Indian idioms and phrases from the Indian languages into English, even at the risk of violating English syntax and usage. Though some credit for the distinctive use of Indian words, phrases and idioms must go to Sochee Chunder Dutt and Lal Behari Day, it was only with the novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao in the thirties that Indian English came into its own. Mulk Raj Anand was the first Indian writer of English to see the inadequacy of Standard English to cope with the Indian psyche. Raja Rao was also the first who stated in his Preface to *Kanthapura* (1938):
The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word “alien”, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not.45

Not all will agree with Raja Rao. R.K. Narayan has found the Queen’s English adequate to reveal Indian life in all its diversity, and his use of Standard English is a rebuff to those insistent on forging a new medium of expression. Narayan says:

All that I am able to confirm, after nearly thirty years of writing, is that it has served my purpose admirably, of conveying unambiguously the thoughts and acts of a set of personalities, who flourish in small town named Malgudi (supposed to be) located in a corner of South India.46

There are also others like Anita Desai and Ruskin Bond, who have refused to take liberties with the language. But the success that Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao have had, despite criticism from purist, has more or less ensured that Indian English has found its roots as firmly as have Irish or American English.

The great stalwarts like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan forged the language and style to make it a suitable vehicle to convey the Indian environment, experience and life. Above all, his vibrant impulse was to correct Westerners’ vision of India. M.K. Naik in The Mirror on Wall rightly states that India has been often considered as a land of opportunities and adventures; haunting and haunted; marriage and money; of gold and glory; of disease and death; and a land of thinkers and thugs, mystics and mosquitoes, princes and paupers, satis and strens, gilt and guilt.

C.V. Venugopal has rightly assessed the aim of Indian English short story writer:
To present an overall satisfying and unifying picture of a vast area, through a general observation of the men and the land has perhaps been the dominant motive behind every Indian short story writer in English …what he wanted to say in a direct way and establish a quick rapport with the reader.47

Thus Indian English short story has traversed a long course of journey. Now it has reached a stage, through the salutary efforts of a few talented writers, where it can make a breakthrough by exploring certain new areas and techniques. Despite the natural hardships of language and expression, the short story has made some headway and has become truly Indian after shaking off the initial foreign influences. It is true that the writers have used modern techniques and their stories have grown in variety and vitality and the credit goes to the *The Big Three*. Today Indian short story writer is so much successful in this that he is even capable of bagging prestigious international awards. Thus we can say that the Indian short story writers have revealed their perception and vision in their short stories. The Indian short story has broken new grounds. It can be favourably compared with short stories written in regional languages. Undoubtedly, the future of the Indian English short story is bright.

The foregoing survey hopefully brings out distinctly that the genre of the short story has acquired a personality of its own. In the subsequent chapters modest attempt is made to examine the short stories of R. K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar taking into consideration locale, theme, character and technique. After studying the stories of Narayan and Naikar we come to know that both are truly Indian writers in their vision and truly universal in their appeal.

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