INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to analyse and interpret the social realism and ethnic identity in the short stories of Bernard Malamud. Bernard Malamud (1914-1986) is an American novelist and short story writer. Most of his works focus on the Jewish experience in America. His contribution to American literature included novels, short story collections, and scores of interviews, essays, lectures and speeches. He occupies a major place in the history of American Jewish novelists and short story writers. His contribution to these genres have been characterized by his craftsmanship, his structuring of the short story, his sense of language and ethos, and ability to create a whole gallery of variegated characters. He has held tremendous appeal to several generations of readers in different literary cultures. His literary discourse generally concentrated around the two significant and contemporary themes like social realism and ethnic identity. His literary crafts explore the kaleidoscopic socio-cultural scenario of the contemporary age. The present research work attempts to comprehend these terms in the light of his short stories.

The author attempts to picture the social and racial injustice, economic hardship and pathetic struggling of working class. In general the realist art tries to explore the social scene edged with satire. Many intellectuals describe ‘realism’ as a stylistic tool which was generally used to describe dark side of human life. The social and cultural scene portrayed in these fictional works is unlovely and social and cultural institutes are under the process of decline. In realism, there is no wonder, no magic, and no mystery. The method of
realistic writer is photographic. It is a way, a manner of representing real life, familiar in literature. Reality is judged by truth. The inter-relation between reality and imagination is the basis of literature. In short, realism is a tendency of expressing real life with all its facts.

Ethnic identity is one of the most definitive aspects studying of twentieth century in American literature. Such type of study has been the move to ethnic fiction by ethnic minorities into separate categories according to the authors’ ethnicities. This study suggests that American Jewish authors have resisted the confines of ethnic categorization by imagining themselves as each other and by using each other’s cultural property within their writing. The present study also tries to point out the basic issues related to ethnic identities of Bernard Malamud’s short stories. He is generally considered as one of the most prominent ethnic writers in American Jewish literature. His Jew is a type of metaphor both for the tragic proportions of anyone's life and for a system of personal virtue. Malamud is interested much in his significance as a metaphor. The Jewishness of his characters serves as an ethical symbol. It is the symbolic use he makes of Jewishness that stands out to place him among the Jewish-American writers.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to have the research frame for the study that is Hypothesis, Aims and Objectives, Review of Relevant Literature, Scope and Limitations, Rationale behind the Selection and Methodology to be used.

Hypothesis:

The present study hypothesizes that in the selected short stories of Bernard Malamud social realism and ethnic identity are major
aspects, and Malamud tries to uncover the threads of socio-ethnic situation of the Americans, therefore, the present study tries to analyse and interpret these stories in that direction.

**Aims and Objectives:**

The present research work aims at to study the select short stories of Bernard Malamud with special reference to the concepts like Social Realism and Ethnic Identity. To achieve this aim the certain objectives have been decided as follows:

1. To discuss the concept of Social Realism and Ethnic Identity, its origin, development and some definitions.
2. To analyse, interpret and evaluate the select stories on the basis of social realism and ethnic identity, and
3. To form certain conclusion based on the analysis of the stories.

**Scope and Limitations:**

Malamud was a prolific writer, who has written novels, short story collections, essays and nonfictions, but it is not possible to study here his each and every works. Therefore, the focus will be laid only on his short story collections for the present research work.

His short stories can be analysed on various grounds or with various critical approaches. Many themes can be attributed to his narrative body, but it might be digression under the said title. Therefore the present research will analyse the short story collections in the light of social realism and ethnic identity. The following Short story collections are selected for the study:

*The Magic Barrel* (1958)

*Idiot’s First* (1963)
Pictures of Fidelman: an Exhibition (1969)
Rembrandt’s Hat (1973)

Review of the relevant Literature:

Bernard Malamud was a prolific writer and widely read in the world, and has been criticized by various scholars in different point of views. In his book, *Bernard Malamud Revisited* (1993) Edward A. Abramson analyzes Malamud’s literary vision in his short stories. Jewishness and its cultural traits have been analyzed Robert Solotaroff in his *Bernard Malamud: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1989). Begona Sio-Castineira in her book, *The Short Stories of Bernard Malamud: in Search of Jewish Post-Immigrant Identity* (1998) she discusses deterioration of relationships between Blacks and liberal Jews. She also recasts earlier critics’ comments on Malamud’s use of “realism and fantasy” and his debt to the tradition of “Jewish folklore” in terms of “Magical Realism”. Malamud’s *The Barrel* is discussed only on surface level regarding its thematic aspects and story line in *Bernard Malamud and the Critics* (1970) by Leslie A. Field and Joyce W. Field. Under the title of ‘In Defense of the Human’ M. Rajagopalachari in his book, *Theme of Compassion of in the Novels of Bernard Malamud* (1988) analyzed Malamud’s Short Story collection with his concern for “Morality and Ethics”, and point outs Malamud’s compassion for Moral vision in the stories. Thus only few scholars have tried to analyse Malamud’s short stories, however none of them has discussed Social Realism and Ethnic Identity in his short stories. Hence, to fill this research gap the present study aimed at to analyzes Malamud’ stories in the light of Socio-ethnic aspects.
Rationale behind the Selection:

Bernard Malamud is a very significant novelist and short story writer in American literary tradition. His novel *The Fixer* (1966) has won ‘Pulitzer Prize’ and ‘National Book Award’ in 1967. Beside this, he is also prominent in the genre of short story, his short story collection *The Magic Barrel* won the ‘National Book Award’ in 1959. Almost his all short stories depict the social realism and ethnic identity, which are more visible. Therefore, his short story collections are selected for the present study.

Methodology:

Analytical, interpretative and comparative methodology will be used for the present study. The focus of the study is laid on the close reading of primary and secondary data available on the subject and analyses and interprets it. Initial part of the thesis that is Introduction contains research frame of the thesis, Hypothesis, Aims and Objectives, Review of Literature, Scope and Limitations, Rationale behind the Selection and Methodology to be used. Chapter first discusses Jewish American Literary Tradition, Life and Works of Bernard Malamud and Short Story as a Literary Genre. Chapter second contains the concept of Social Realism and Ethnic Identity as a theoretical framework of the study. Third and fourth Chapters are the analytical part of the thesis that discuses short stories of Malamud with the concept of Social Realism and Ethnic Identity respectively. Conclusion is the chapter fifth.