INTRODUCTION
Introduction

The tradition of story telling can generally be traced back to the rich-in-imagination and ever-so-fertile brain of travellers with the warmth of oral narration lending it more credibility and enabling it to exercise powerful influence on the readers and listeners. From fables, parables, folktales, fairy tales, fabliaux etc down to the present day sophisticated short story, mostly written, many a change in form, content and technique of writing has been brought about in the genre. Inspite of this the resemblance of the story to its progenitors is quite striking. Man remains the main subject of the story whatever other aids and techniques a writer may add by way of introducing the supernatural, realistic detail, narrative technique, characterisation, involvement of the readers through subtle devices and other facets of the genre. A subtler examination of the different phases of the evolution of short story reveals that the various devices which seem to us strikingly modern are in fact sophisticated developments of the devices which the crude story teller of yore employed in his own simple way. He had his own narrative technique and his own ways of involving and maintaining the interest of the readers.

Another connecting thread of the story in its different varieties and phases of evolution is that it is, in a significant sense, the manifestation of the collective man. Indeed this is true of all literature. In a way it is the representation of the collective man in literature-conscious or unconscious - which is largely responsible for its universal appeal. Aristotle's remark that poetry is more universal than history and Jung's belief that the poet is essentially not an individual but a
representative of the species and his elaboration of the archetypes of the collective unconscious are to be seen in this light. This basic idea underlies the present thesis most significantly and appears in one way or the other in all its six chapters.

Chapter 1st traces the origin of short story briefly down to its present day form where it receives the status of a separate genre with its own terminology and critical jargon whose understanding is an essential pre-requisite for any good student of the form. This Thesis therefore begins with the definition of key terms involved in this dissertation such as culture, technique and short story.

The IIInd Chapter stocks the social, political and economic conditions prevalent in the three countries—America, Russia and India of 19th Century and early 20th Century. Since during this period the people of these countries witnessed major changes—political, social, and economic—which in turn affected the writers thinking as well as their writing-- the manner as well as the matter. In fact, every writer is an integral part of his society and cannot as such escape the influence of his times which gets reflected in his individual art and this fact necessitates this quick look through history.

The third chapter attempts to read and evaluate selected stories of O.Henry that are technically and thematically important from the particular point of this project. The stories written by him during his stay in New York are in main focus here although his southern stories are no less important and interesting. The simple reason for the choice of stories here is the fact that O.Henry became very popular as a short story writer because of these Newspaper contributions depicting the New York Culture and sensibility.
For my chapter on Tolstoy I have used the English translation of his stories and for Prem Chand both the original i.e. Urdu as well as the English renderings of selected stories.

Chapter VI is an attempt at a comparative study of the similarities and points of contrast in the art of short story writing of these three writers from three different cultures.