CHAPTER - 1
Man is essentially a tale teller and the evolution of short story began even before he could actually write. To aid himself in constructing and memorizing tales, the early story teller often relied on stock phrases, fixed rhythms and rhyme. Consequently, many of the oldest narratives in the world, such as the famous Babylonian tale, the Epic of Gilgamesh (2000 B.C.), are in verse and were inscribed in Cuneiform on clay during the 2nd millennium B.C.

The earliest tales extant from Egypt were composed on papyrus at a comparable date. The ancient Egyptians seem to have written their narratives largely in prose, apparently reserving verse for their religious hymns and working songs. One of the earliest surviving Egyptian tales, 'the shipwrecked sailor' (2000 B.C.), is clearly intended to be a consoling and inspiring story to reassure its aristocratic audience that apparent misfortune can in the end become good fortune. Also recorded during the 12th dynasty were the success story of the exile Sinuhe and the moralising tale called King Cheops [Khufu] and the magician. The provocative and the profusely detailed story, The Tale of
two Brothers (or "Anpu and Bata") was written down during the New Kingdom, probably around 1250 B.C. Of all the early Egyptian tales, most of which are baldly didactic, this story is perhaps the richest in folk motifs and the most intricate in plot.

The earliest tales from India Brahmanas (700 B.C.) function mostly as theological appendixes to the four Vedas, and a few composed as short, instructional parables. Perhaps the most interesting as stories are the later tales in the Pali language, The Jataka. Although these tales have a religious frame supplied by the Buddhist ethical teachings, their actual concern is generally with secular behaviour and practical wisdom. Another nearly contemporaneous collection of Indian tales, The Panchatantra (500 A.D.), has been one of the world’s most popular books. This anthology of amusing and moralistic animal tales, akin to those of "Aesop" in Greece, was translated into Middle Persian in the 6th Century; into Arabic in the 8th. century and into Hebrew, Greek and Latin soon thereafter. Another noteworthy collection is the Katha Sarit Sagara, ‘The Ocean of Rivers of stories’, a series of tales entirely secular and free from supernatural elements, assembled and collected in narrative verse in the 11th. or 12th. century. This work is ascribed to Somadeva and supposed to be based on a still larger collection, the Brihatkatha (The Great Tale) of Gunadhya. These tales vary
from the fantastic story of a transformed swan to a more probable tale of a loyal but misunderstood servant.

During the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries B.C., the Hebrews first wrote down some of their rather sophisticated narratives, which are now a part of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha. The Old Testament books of Ruth, Esther, and Jonah are perhaps the most famous stories in the world.

Nearly all of the ancient tales, whether from Israel, India, Egypt or the Middle East, were fundamentally didactic. Some of these ancient stories preached by presenting an ideal for the readers to imitate, others tagged with a 'moral' were more direct. Most stories, however, preached by illustrating the success and joy that was available to the 'good' man and by conveying a sense of the terror and misery that was in store for the wayward.

The early Greeks contributed greatly to the scope and art of short fiction. As in India, the moralising animal fable was a common form, many of these tales were collected as Aesop's fables in the 6th century B.C. Brief mythological stories of the gods' adventures of love and war were also popular in the pre-Attic age. Apollodorus of Athens compiled a handbook of epitomes, or abstracts, of these tales around the second century B.C., but the tales themselves are no longer extant, in their original form. Short tales found their way into long prose
forms as well, as in 'Hellanecus' Persika (5th century B.C.), Herodotus's stories of Polycrates and his emerald ring, of Candaules' attractive wife, and of Rhampsinitus' stolen treasure. Xenophon's philosophical history, the Cyropaedia (4th century B.C.) contains the famous story of the soldier Abradates and his lovely and loyal wife Panthea, perhaps the first Western love story.

The Greeks are usually credited with originating the romance, a long form of prose fiction with stylized plots of love, catastrophe, and reunion. As the variety of these short narratives suggests, the Greeks were less insistent than earlier cultures that short fiction be predominantly didactic.

In Middle Ages short tales became an important means of diversion and amusement. From the Dark Ages to the Renaissance, various cultures adopted short fiction for their own purposes. Even the aggressive, grim spirit of the invading Germanic barbarians was amenable to expression in short prose. Also widely respected was the exemplum, a short didactic tale usually intended to dramatise or otherwise inspire model behaviour of all the exempla, the best known in the 11th and 12th centuries were the lives of the Saints, some 200 of which are extant.

Among the common people of the late Middle Ages, there
appeared a literary movement counter to that of the romance and exemplum. Displaying a preference for common sense, secular humour, and sensuality, this movement accounted in a large way for the practical minded animals in beast fables, the Coarse and "merry" jest books, and the ribald fabliaux. All were important as short narratives, but perhaps the most intriguing of the three are the fabliaux. First appearing around the middle of the 12th. century, fabliaux remained popular for 200 years, attracting the attention of Boccaccio and Chaucer. Some 160 fabliaux are there, all in verse. Often, the medieval story-teller regardless of the kind of tale he preferred — relied on a framing circumstance that made possible the juxtaposition of several stories, each of them relatively autonomous. Since there was little emphasis on organic unity, most story-tellers preferred a flexible format, one that allowed tales to be added or removed at random with little change in effect. Such a format is found in The Seven Sages of Rome, a collection of stories so popular that nearly every European country had its own translation. The framing circumstance in The Seven Sages involves a prince condemned to death; his advocates (the seven sages) relate a new story each day, thereby delaying the execution until his innocence is made known. This technique is clearly similar to that of The Arabian Nights another collection of the Middle Ages. The majority of the
stories in *The Arabian Nights* are framed by the story of Scheherzade in *A Thousand and one Nights*. Records indicate that the basis of this framing story was a medieval Persian collection *Hezar Efsan* ("Thousand Romances") no longer extant. In both the Persian and Arabian version of the frame, the clever Scheherzade avoids death by telling her king-husband a thousand stories. The collection was drastically altered by the Arabs during the Muslim Mamluk period (1250 -1517 A. D.).

Short narrative received its most refined treatment in the Middle Ages from Chaucer and Boccaccio. Chaucer's versatility reflects the versatility of the age. By relating tale to teller and by exploiting relationship among the various tellers Chaucer endowed *The Canterbury Tales* with a unique, dramatic vitality. Boccaccio geared more toward narrative than toward drama. He seems more interested in his stories as pieces of action, framing his well-wrought tales in a metaphorical context. The frame of *The Decameron* (from the Greek deka, ten and hemera, day) has relevance as well: during the height of the Black Plague in Florence, Italy, ten people meet accidentally in a church and agree to amuse and divert each other by telling ten stories each. Behind every story, in effect, is the inescapable presence of the Black Death. *The Decameron* is fashioned out of a variety of sources, including fabliaux, exampla and short romances.
As the most influential nation in Europe in the 15th. and 16th. centuries, Spain contributed to the proliferation of short fiction. Cervantes' short fiction, varying in style and seriousness, explored the nature of man's secular existence. This focus was somewhat new for short fiction, heretofore either didactic or escapist.

The 17th and 18th. centuries mark the temporary decline of short fiction but in the 19th. century it reappeared as the "modern short story"—with a new stage in its evolution, one in which the short form undertook a new seriousness and gained a new vitality and respect. The modern short story emerged almost simultaneously in Germany, the United States, France and Russia and everywhere it accepted some of the realistic properties of popular journalism—concerning itself with events that actually happened or could happen. The genre as such stands distinguished from its diverse progenitors because of its pronounced social and cultural concerns whereas myth, folk-tale and the traditional story is more collective in nature, cutting across cultural differences and ultimately seeking its sanctions from the collective unconscious—the Great Memory—making it more universal and less culture-bound, the short fiction as we see it today, is more reflective of the individual vision and simultaneously, more culture-bound. The writer as an individual
who moulds and remoulds what he has or is 'given' to carve out an artifact, stamps his individuality in clear terms, lending his writing at the same time a cultural identification because every writer is a product of his environment and his particular culture which in turn determine his unconscious responses, actions and reactions to various things.

The term culture is complex and includes almost everything that is linked with a people-their past as well as their present. And no two cultures can be exactly the same-though the possibility of some similarities cannot be ruled out. Such similarities are made possible by cultural interactions and cultural transference. As words communicate attitudes, language and human mind act and react on each other. Consequently, literature is both a resultant product and a reflective image of the cultural status of a people. The two terms 'culture' and 'literature' are therefore, interdependent and complimentary at the same time. And since the writer is a product of a society and environment, created to a great extent by the culture and socio-political values of that society-passed on from generation to generation, wittingly or unwittingly he is in a way determined and moulded by them. With the growing complexity of the social web and consequential relationships, the role of a writer becomes even more important. He is a perceptive individual and a deliberate entertainer. He
may find his raw material everywhere and anywhere -- as Prem Chand and O. Henry believed -- but it is his individual touch and treatment of the subject that gives it a distinct shape. The writer, without breaking away from his roots, creates something distinctly unique and new. A lot goes into what has been created by him — his own personality, mental attitudes, thinking, his cultural background, his personal experiences, his reactions and responses to external events and his comprehension of things around and relationships — everything plays a part. This bears witness to the fact that culture and literature is inseparable. This also means no two works can be the same though their subject, theme, main idea or the story line be similar. The writer bound by his culture, shapes it according to his own understanding and perception of things and where the individual fails to show this, his work becomes run-of-the-mill sort and falls short of the real purpose.

Any discussion about culture means a discussion about the individual and the group and the society he belongs to as T.S. Eliot aptly puts it:

Culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of
the whole society to which that group
or class belongs.¹

A writer as an individual has to apprehend social ailments and continuously seek specific remedies -- because unchecked, unattended to social ailments lead to decline in culture -- which springs from ill maintained relations between the individual and society and Man and Nature. The writer has to make deliberate attempts to establish and strengthen the strings that hold the balance of meaningful existence. Culture stimulates fertilizes and shapes thought and sensibility. And for the sake of improvement of culture the artist must concentrate on his art keeping in view the conditions, the situations in which he finds himself and the artificial and the intolerable thereof, and also the emotional prejudices and the intellectual errors. In other words culture for a writer is a bond that embraces a maturer understanding and responsibility of the writer toward the human society and everything that surrounds him -- a reverence for his past, a responsibility for the future. He does this by sensitising his readers through his written word -- a resultant product of what is worth while for that culture, civilization to have existed.

If culture means humanisation and refinement of man then short fiction is a very effective agency and genre to do it. Short fiction as we see it today is a comparatively much younger

genre, concerned more with the here and now, offering instruction and also entertainment. To do this different writers use different techniques.

The term technique according to Mark Schorer means, ‘nearly everything’. It is “the only means he (the writer) has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and finally, of evaluating it”

Mark Schorer also adds:

Technique can also be the arrangement of events to create plot; or within plot, of suspense and climax; or as the means of revealing character motivation, relationship, and development.

Technique is not mere craftsmanship. A writer has to consider the manner, the treatment and the purpose of his writing in particular. And this would mean that the demands of a story could vary and sometimes call for experimentations with devices and the manner of handling of the material. Short fiction has a marked ability to bring apparent extremes of style together with mingling self conscious literary devices and colloquial spontaneity within the compression of a single narrative. It is in this respect that the early American short story can be seen as seminal, reflecting as
it did prevalent cultural moods. The short story varies according to the period in which it is written but it has a unique ability to preserve and at any time recall its mixed origins in fable, anecdote, fairy-story and numerous other forms.

Thus technique, in a wider sense, means the treatment given to a particular subject by a writer, which in turn determines its literary value. Every writer employs techniques in accord with the need and demand of his subject and again according to his own understanding of the relevance of the same.

This thesis proposes to analyse, examine and evaluate selected short stories of three outstanding practitioners of short-fiction hailing from three distinct cultural environments. These are O. Henry, Leo Tolstoy, and Prem Chand. The purpose is to see how the technique of short story writing changes with the change of cultural environment and individual vision. Tolstoy's raw materials came from the socio-political changes that were taking place in a traditional Christian society and this determined the technique of his short stories. Being a true Christian Tolstoy looked up to religion and Christ's teachings in particular for the resolution of individual and social crises.

India of Prem Chand was also passing through a crucial political and social change in which the cultures of the East and the West were rubbing shoulders with each other and giving rise
to strange situations and relationships. Indians did not find it quite convenient at all to accept unquestioningly the new order but a realisation of the fact that a change was necessary for a better and more secure future, did dawn on the thinking minds who in turn took the responsibility of educating the masses. This required compassion and psychological understanding of the cultural heritage and the new emerging and resultant cultural transference. And we find it all in Prem Chand's short stories which reflect the sincere concern of an insider, a responsible member of the suffering society and a sensitive writer. His characters, situations, themes, plots, locale-are all culture-bound and the technique employed is in accord with his ultimate purpose.

As compared to Leo Tolstoy and Prem Chand, O. Henry makes his mark in using the techniques with special effect and purpose to project the New York culture of his short stories. And in the particular respect of technique he offers his readers amazing skill and innovative powers. In his own way O. Henry captures alive the newly emerging New York Culture to the advantage of an alert, intelligent and ever-prepared-for-the-unexpected reader. For him in particular technique means discovering new possibilities in idiom, events, motivation and narrative of short story writing.
Thus short story, considered in its different forms, handled by the three great masters, emerges as a brief narrative with two or three events having temporal movement and logical linkage. A form that inspite of its noble ancestry in the ancient fables, folktales, parables etc, is distinct because of its pre occupation with the culture to which the writer is bound and the specific technique, that arises from this pre occupation as well as the individual vision of the writer.