CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

The short story as a literary genre was not altogether foreign to ancient India. But it was of the *Panchatantra* type, or of the *Jataka Tales* type, more a fable, a moral tale. The short story as we have come to know it is a western literary genre, a younger sibling born after its elder brother, the novel. It is not however, a long story, that is a novel, cut short. It has developed into an independent literary genre, as most suited to the time-strapped 20th century man.

It is therefore necessary to look into some of the definitions given by illustrious practitioners of the story craft, in order to know what it really is about. It is also necessary to glance, at the history of its development. Before we take up for study the short stories in English written by the Indian women writers, it would be pertinent to take a sideways glance at the outstanding Indian men practitioners of the form also.
Emergence and Development of the Short Story Form:

The old Testament, The Arabian Nights, Aesop’s Fables, Panchatantra (5th century A.D), Kathasaritasagar (11th century A.D), Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, Boccaccio’s Decameron (1349 - 1351) - all these reveal that the short story is not a very new form. The Russian Nicholai Gogol (1809 - 1852) made a significant contribution in the field of the short story at the beginning. Other great names in the same field are Guy de Maupassant, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, Galsworthy, H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, Somerset Maugham, Katherine Mansfield, O. Henry, V.S.Pritchett, Graham Greene, H.E Bates etc.

The vague configuration of the short story makes it difficult to find an exact definition. The Short Story is an important and interesting form like any other literary form. Stories are beyond the time frame, immortal, perennial. The short story gives equal entertainment to all - from children to old people.

The prose narratives can be classified into the novel, the short novel, (novelette, novella) and the short story. The category depends upon the length decided by its author.
Today, the short story can be written in a few words and sometimes runs up to thousands of pages. So length is not a major criterion, as John Cournos observes;

“A short story may, indeed, be long, even quite long, if conceptionally and structurally it creates a concentratedness of mood and single-mindedness of purpose which permit of no digression or deviation, no over-running of the frame.”¹

It is true that the nature of the modern short story cannot be easily defined. As per the Dictionary of Literary Terms, a short story is:

“.....a relatively short narrative (under ten thousand words), which is designed to produce a single dominant effect, which contains the elements of drama...a good short story consists of a character (or group of characters) presented against a background or setting involving mental or physical action.”²

A short story can be called so if it is maintained with concentration on a single situation, single character and single local colour. All this is possible if the writer maintains brevity, which chiefly differentiates the short story from other forms. So brevity is the essential characteristic of the short story.
Edgar Allan Poe was the first person who tried to define its form. Ian Reid observes;

"The tale-telling impulse is too irrepressibly fecund to be confined within any single narrative pattern." 3

According to Poe a short story has to have three important principles so as to be able to achieve its feature i.e single effect: Unity of impression is the first thing to be wrought out in the formation of the story. To quote him again, a writer must "...... conceive with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out" 4 The next distinctive feature of the short story is that it should avoid all unnecessary details. The incident or the character sketch must not interfere with the singleness of effect. The writer can stretch his desired incident or character, if he must only within a small compass of time.

Edgar Allan Poe further explains that after the single effect is achieved, he

".....then invents such incidents and combines such events-as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tends not to the out-bringing 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 one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction.⁵

Another characteristic feature of the short story is its readability. The story must not fail in capturing the mind of its reader. Gerald Prince remarks that no story takes birth until three or more events are conjoined, with at least two of them being causally connected, though occurring at different times.

G. H. Mair opines: "the faculty for telling stories is the oldest artistic faculty in the world and the deepest implanted in the heart of man. Before, the rudest cave-pictures were scratched on the stone, the story-teller, it is not unreasonable to suppose, was plying this trade."⁶

Claude Bremond states that temporal movement and logical linkage are just enough to make it a story, though no doubt insufficient to make it an interesting one.

Louis Stevenson defines three ways of writing a story:

"There are only three ways of writing a story --- you may take a plot and fit characters in it or you may take a
character and choose incidents and situations to develop it or you may take a certain atmosphere and get action and persons to express and realize it.”

Modern man can find little time for reading in his busy life. According to H.G. Wells, The short story

“...may be horrible or pathetic or funny or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential, that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud. But here is something very bright and moving to be achieved in a small place...and short time.”

The short story is another name for a shortened novel, because the novel can take the liberty of dealing with a long span of time or even generations. It has unlimited space. But a short story has got to be compact in plot. Also the short story has to deal with only one situation or episode, it must show limit itself to a critical moment in the life of the chief characters. John Cournos spells out the difference between the novel and the short story in this way:

“The short story belongs to the ultimate action. It is in a sense, like the unfolding of a final chapter containing within it responses of a past made eloquent by mere
implication by the way the character or characters of a short story act”

Hugh Walpole has also a unique definition of the short story. He says that a story

“should be a story; a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and satisfying denouement.”

Russia has given birth to a form of short story where Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol produced great works in the field of short story. Pushkin initiated the genre which later moved on to the realistic observation of life. Gogol too made a realistic approach to his short stories. Realism was carried by further three important practitioners of the genre, viz., Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy and Fydor Dostoyevsky. But realism was developed to its perfection by Anton Chekhov who initiated the technique of ‘impressionism’

Both Turgenev and Chekhov wrote stories, which laid emphasis on the revelation of characters, and unfolded incidents that could bring out the quality of their lives. Chekhov developed the short story with the technique of exploitation of a moment in time which is a new thing. His
practice of revealing a slice of life, objectively and through seemingly plotless story, influenced the form of the short story.

In a remarkable development the short story found itself transferred from Russia to America. Edger Allen Poe, being inspired by narratives of Nathaniel Hawthorne, had written the criticism of the form and short stories. Poe was unique in his method of narration, He creates great suspense at the climax, providing the reader with a shocking experience. His stories are effective in creating an atmosphere of intense horror, suspense and mystery.

One among the best followers of Poe was Brette Harte, who followed a ‘single, unified impression’ while writing short stories. Critics considered him as a great literary artist. His *Miggles* and *The Luck of Roaring Camp* are best examples for the ‘singleness of effect’ he aimed at.

The contribution of American writers to the form of short story forms a glorious chapter in the history of the genre. O. Henry with his wit, wisdom and humour stands as the most popular short story writer. He is a great artist, a craftsman and an impressive journalist, who is deeply concerned with human psychology. He is mainly interested in real-life people. *The last Leaf* mirrors his unique narrative
technique. Stephen Crane, his contemporary, was also interested in the human plight. His *Maggie*, deals with the life of a prostitute. After Stephen Crane, nobody theorized about the short story. It was Sherwood Anderson, by whom Hemingway was much influenced, who brought on the renaissance of the short story. Critics described him as being artless but also appreciated his minute details of a dramatic situation. The 20th century short story has seen a tremendous change by breaking down the old traditional methods (of neat plot-making and straightforward narrative).

The short story was brought to France from America. As English writers were influenced by Turgenev, with George Moore, Joseph Conrad, John Galsworthy and Sean G. Faolain among them, French writers were also influenced by him. The new trend of 'naturalism', the minute, and clinical portrayal presenting psychological perspectives are the features of the short story of France. Then the era of Guy de Maupassant began. He illumined the effects of the travails of humanity on character and action. Maupassant was interested in the hardship and suffering of simple, humble human beings. The plots of his stories have a simple structure.
The European short story is divided into two main schools, and they are the Maupassant and the Chekhovian. Both are different in their way of presenting the short story. If Maupassant's style of writing is ironical, direct, hard and materialistic, Chekhov's is soft, sympathetic, oblique and spiritual. Maupassant has written his short stories without taking sides for or against the characters. He says:

"What they are doing is entirely their responsibility. I present them as they are."

Chekhov says:

"Yes I know that they are responsible for whatever they are doing. There may be some little thing that will explain"

Chekhov's approach is highly imaginative, while Maupassant's has nothing to do with imagination.

Until 1890 the short story was not very popular in England. The renaissance of the short story was ushered in by Rudyard Kipling. He was not taken as a models by the French naturalists or the Russian formalists because he was a highly self-conscious literary artist. The closing decades saw a remarkable group of short story writers like R. L. Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrod and H. G. Wells. R. L. Stevenson showed much interest in writing
romantic short stories, though he always strove for an artistic 'unity of impression' and 'exotic setting'. Arthur Conan Doyle is known for his detective stories in the tradition of Edgar Allen Poe.

Another fiction writer, H.G.Wells, has published remarkable stories like *The Magic shop, The Beautiful suit, The Truth about Pyre-craft, The Treasure in the Forest and The country of the Blind*. His successor Arnold Bennett was influenced by the 'Naturalistic' school of Balzac and Zola, He published two collections of short stories, viz., *Tales of Five Towns* in 1905 and the *Grim smile of Five Towns* in 1907. His successor, G.K.Chesterton published his work *Father Brown stories*. Galsworthy, who was much influenced by Maupassant and Turgenev, wrote dramatic stories with humanitarian sympathy. E.M.Forster's *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911) is a remarkable collection in the field of short story. D.H. Lawrence is interested in throwing light on the elemental and impulsive life of men, especially their sexual passion. The elemental, pictorial and sensuous methods of his short stories are way out of the ordinary.

In 1920 a remarkable bunch of short story writers mushroomed on the scene, of whom Katherine Mansfield and
A.E. Coppard are important. Katherine was influenced by Chekhov. Another eminent short story writer, who appeared on the scene about the same time, was Somerset Maugham.

H.E. Bates’s short stories have many similarities with D.H. Lawrence in presenting "earthy characters and setting them in an atmosphere of emotional tension."\(^\text{13}\)

It may be noticed that the English short story evolved into something closely resembling Chekhov’s. Somerset Maugham opines on Chekhov’s art, "He has a gift for devising a compact dramatic story, such a story as you could tell with effect over the dinner table."\(^\text{14}\) There is much evidence of Maupassant’s influence in the short stories of Maugham. The incidents and situations of his short stories are effortlessly built up, as if there were ostensibly no art in the telling. The talented writer Katherine Mansfield’s literary output is very large. A follower of Chekhov she is, however, almost entirely devoid of the gift of construction. She has not shown any interest in portraying the outer reality of human life but she, like Virginia Woolf, adopts psychological analysis as her method in presenting a ‘slice of experience’. She focuses her attention on analysing the sensitive mind and depicts the ordinary life of human beings with great vividness. She used
the 'Stream of Consciousness' technique of narration, shot through with poetic luminosity. One more storyteller, A.E. Coppard, proved himself a good storyteller by his collection of short stories *The Black Dog*. His use especially of irony and humour in his stories is noteworthy. Among his twelve collections of short stories *The Black Dog*, (1923), *The Field of Mustard* (1926) and *Dunky Fitlow* (1933) are the most important.

H.E. Bates, influenced as he was by many great scholars, viz., Chekhov Turgenev, Tolstoy and Conrad, published two collections, *Day's End* and *The Black Boxer*. The conscious and the subconscious intermingle in the depths of his characterization.

Other important writers T.F. Powys, Rhys, Davies and Elizabeth Bowen have contributed to the form of the short story as well as its spirit.
II

Development of Indian Short Story in English:

A retrospective study of the Indian short story should begin with the first Indian English short story collection, *Realities of Indian life: Stories Collected from the Criminal Reports of India* by Shoshee Chunder Dutt, published in London in 1885. Another contemporary collection *The Times of Yore: Tales from Indian History* by Shoshee Chunder Dutt and Sourindra Mohan Tagore arrived on the scene soon after. In the decade between 1886 and 1887 two more collections: *The Tales of Sixty Mandarins* and *Indian Fables* were published by P. V. Ramaswami Raju.

Some writers took the advantage of the birth of journals; Kshetrapal Chakaravarthy’s stories were published in periodicals and magazines. He had only a single collection to his credit published from Calcutta, *Sarada and Hingana: Tales descriptive of Indian life*. During 1896-98 some of B. R. Rajam Iyer’s stories were published in the newspaper ‘Prabhudha Bharat’. These are tales retold from mythological and allegorical sources. The tales of these writers, observes C. V. Venugopal,
“do not have any striking features of intrinsic merit, either in narrative or in characterisation.”

The first two decades of the nineteenth century had witnessed the appearance of some noteworthy short story collections like S.M. Natesan Sastri’s *Indian Folk Tales* (1908), Dwijendra Nath Neogi’s *Sacred Tales of India* (1916) being notable among them. A Madhavaiah’s two-part publication *Short Stories by Kusika*, published in 1916 aim to educate the readers regarding social evils. S. K Chettur and G. K. Chettur’s stories deal with the supernatural elements.

A certain freedom of self-expression can be seen with these writers but most of them have borrowed the philosophical, folk-tales or the traditional ancient Indian tales as models for their short stories. Apart from following the theme of Indian sensibility, a few writers followed notable celebrities of the west in writing stories of horror and suspense. Muhammed Habib’s *Descrated Bones*, says C. V. Venugopal,

“ is a remarkable experiment with the horror story-worthy of comparison with some of the best, such as
The Hound of the Baskervilles written by Conan Doyle. 

The Gandhian era brought revolutionary ideas to the writers. The literature of that period has become a reflection of the social, political and moral movements. With a degree of social consciousness, which however does not exclude artistic expression, the writers developed the short story as an art form.

A.S.P. Ayyar took up the matter of the Indian women’s problems. His Indian After-Dinner stories and The Finger of Destiny and other stories (1950) unveil serious issues and combine an exact portrayal of tradition as well as modernity. Tales of Ind, Three Famous Tales and Jolly Old Tales of Ind follow the Jataka and The Panchatantra Tales. T. L. Natesan, who wrote under the pseudonym, ‘Sankar Ram’, published two volumes of short stories – The children of Kaveri (1927) which is a portrayal of true village life, and Creatures All (1933). Some writers have followed his style of straight-forwardness streaked with humour. K.S.Venkataramani made a significant contribution by means of his stories dealing with themes on the contemporary scene. His two collections of short stories were Paper Boats (1921)
and *Jatadharan and Other Stories*. The Portraits of south Indian life and character, with a touch of humour, are the flesh and soul of these stories. K.N. Nagarajan has also taken to the short story form with great zeal.

The Indian short story in English would have been numerically or literarily insignificant if the four legendary figures, viz., Manjari S.Isvaran, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan had not entered the field. They formed the pioneering group of this new genre and the spectrum of Indian Writing in English was enriched by the diversity of these stalwarts.

Manjari S. Isvaran shouldered the development of the short story in English at a time when it was yet to find a foothold in the field of Indian English letters. Even though he is not a solitary celebrity he is definitely an undeniable link in the chain of development of the short story as a modern art form. He is referred to as

"the most productive of Indian short story writers of the period,"17 and

"one of the pioneers of this convergence."18

In the able hands of Isvaran, the Indian Short Story in English came to be rejuvenated and polished.

Despite the fact that his stories have received no publicity like Raja Rao's and R.K.Narayan's, they stand unique and bring considerable merit to the task, with a variety of wide-ranging spectrum of themes. His stories roam through the lives of men and women drawn from middle and lower classes of urban and rural India. Superstitions, faith in heavenly interference, and typical Indian attitudes are the effective aspects of his stories, blended with sophisticated English and Indianisms.

Like Isvaran, Mulk Raj Anand has also taken the form of the ancient Indian tale and fable for his short stories. His stories reveal the rich and varied human scene of contemporary India, dark realities of pre-and post-Independence India. He has seven collections of short stories to his credit. *The Lost Child and Other stories* (1944), *The Barber's Trade Union*, and *Other Stories* (1944), *The Tractor* and *the Corn Goddess* and *Other Stories* (1947),
Reflections of the Golden Bed and Other Stories (1953), Power of the Darkness and Other Stories (1959), Lajwanti and Other Stories (1973), and Between Tears and Laughter (1973). The themes, characterization and technique make his stories unique. They contain portraits of rural as well as urban India, rich people and beggars, glory and poverty, human relationships and humanistic feelings. His stories survey the whole of India from all angles. That is why K.R.S. Iyengar says,

"Anand sees life sometimes as a comedy, sometimes as tragedy." 19

Another contemporary short story writer, R.K. Narayan, is better known for his novels. There is a comic touch to Narayan's treatment of the themes and characters of his novels and short stories. Like Isvaran and Anand, R.K.Narayan too was inspired by the Indian epics and mythological stories. He is different in exposing the social life of India and Indian sensibility from Mulk Raj Anand. C.V.Venugopal observes:

"Narayan is content generally in skimming lightly on the surface of life." 20
Narayan contents himself to write from the middle class milieu of Malgudi. Like the Wessex of Thomas Hardy, Malgudi is a town of Narayan’s invention. He has seven collections of short stories to his credit. *Malgudi Days* (1943), *Cyclone and Other Stories* (1943), *Dodus and Other Stories* (1943), *Lawley Road and Other Stories* (1956), *Gods, Demons and others* (1964) and *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970).

Simple ironies of situation, resulting in comic reversal or anticlimax, are some of the ingredients of R. K. Narayan’s short stories.

Another eminent contemporary of equal popularity, Raja Rao, is described by C.N. Srinath in these words:

“......small built and frail looking but radiant and wise like a sage with his very soothing, charming smile full of respect even to a child...

...Both language and silence came to him naturally, whether it was English or Kannada.”

Being called an artist by many and also as a genius by the ‘Time magazine, Raja Rao has carried his Indianess intact within himself. Combination of ancient wisdom with western thinking, history and philosophy jostling with western dialectics, eastern metaphysical thought and approaches of
Hindu philosophy elevate the tone and tenor of his novels and short stories.


Stories about the freedom movement, the agony of Harijans and widows, about the cities of Ganga and Banaras have carved out a niche for Rao. The other major short story writers who have tried to experiment with the form are Manohar Malgonkar, Kushwant Singh, K.A. Abbas, G.D. Khosla, Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das.

A follower of Somerset Maugham, Manohar Malgonkar, has four collections to his credit. These are - A Toast in Warm Wine (1974) Bombay, Beware (1975) and Rumble Tumble (1977), and latest, Four Graves and Other Stories (1990). Palace life, domestic life, sports, intrigue, primitive demagogues, colonial colouring, hunting etc. are a few ingredients of his short stories.

One more disciple of Maugham, Khushwant Singh, who describes Maugham as, “the greatest spinner of short stories of all time” is a prolific short story writer. The four volumes of
short stories which were published between 1950 and 1971 are – *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (1950), *The Voice of God and Other Stories* (1957), *Bride for the Sahib and the other stories* (1967) and *Black Jasmine* (1971). have now been brought together in *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh* (1989). He has chosen caste, religion, communalism, bigotry and sexual exploitation as topics for his short stories. In his Foreword “On the Short Story”, he has given the finest opinion about the form of short story. It must have unity, a distinct beginning, a middle and an end, “a ring of truth”, “a message to convey” and “a sting in its tail”.

Another contemporary, K.A.Abbas, has recently added *The Gun and Other Stories* (1985) to his earlier four collections of short stories – *Rice and Other Stories* (1947), *Cages of Freedom and Other Stories* (1952), *One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and Other Stories* (1957) and *Black Sun and Other Stories* (1963). Among his earlier collections ‘Sparrows’ and ‘Sardarji’ are known as masterpieces. His stories exhibit the writer’s bitterness of disillusionment with independent India, the hypocritical society and its selfish attitude. Exhibiting a variety of scenes, setting and character, which is his speciality, especially gains our attention.
Bhabani Bhattacharya, who is more concerned with the novel than the short story, has written a single collection of short stories *Steel Hawk and other stories* (1968). The themes of his stories are hunger, freedom and the feminine principle which he treats in a realistic way.

G.D.Khosla has put forth four volumes of short stories—


Ruskin Bond began his career in the late sixties. He is a prolific writer and has contributed significantly to the corpus of the Indian English short story. Qualitatively, too, he has achieved a high water-mark. His latest collections of short stories *The Night Train at Deoli and Other stories* (1989) and *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* and his four earlier collections are all included in his *Collected Fiction* (1996). His stories delineate the misery of lonely women, orphans, beggars and old men. His recent collection *Friends in Small Places* (2000) reminds us of his earlier stories.

Like Bond, Manoj Das, who also started his career in the late sixties, has trodden the same path. He has now added
four collections. *The Submerged Valley and Other Stories* (1986), *Bulldozers and Fables and Fantasies for Adults* (1990), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1993) and *Farewell to a Ghost* (1994). He can be compared to O'Henry and Maugham in some modes of his stories. Humour is one of his strengths.

Jug Suraiya’s stories *The Interview and Other Stories* (1971) and *A Chap Called Peter Pan* (1992) are remarkable for the character sketches. Farrukh Dhondy’s character sketches similarly attract the reader. Portrayal of the life of Poona and the local colour of the stories are the remarkable features of his stories.

Many of the poets also turned their hand to the form of short story and have achieved considerable success. Shiv k. kumar’s *Beyond Love and Other Stories* (1980) attracts the readers’ attention towards the transformation of the characters, viz., a flirtatious husband becoming a sanyasi. The brief short stories written by P.Lal show meaningful insights into the nature and thoughts of the characters. K.N.Daruwalla’s earlier short story collections *The Sword and the Abyss* and *The Minister for Permanent Unrest and Other Stories* (1996) bring a touch of irony and sarcasm to the genre.
The period 1990 to 2000 is not less worthy in the field of the short story form. Many remarkable writers have tried their hand at writing short stories.

Jayanta Mahapatra is interested in portraying middle class life in his stories. Randhir Khare has great sympathetic feelings towards dislocated people and presents their condition with great understanding. G.S.Sharat Chandra throws light on the situations faced by both Indian immigrants in America and Indians in India. Another eminent writer Rohinton Mistry, being a Parsi, carries the readers to the world of parsi families living in a block of flats in Bombay. Another parsi writer, Kaizad Gustad, highlights a few incidents in the lives of his female characters in his short stories. Ranga Rao, teem with a large variety of characters, from school-going young children to prostitutes. R.K.Narayan’s influence is clearly noticeable in Rao’s as well as Shashi Tharoor’s short stories. These short stories, including the short stories of Salman Rushdie, are not distinguished by any hallmark and suffer from certain limitations and lack of notable technique.

Other important short story writers are Vikram Chandra, R.W.Desai, Amit Chaudhari, Makarand Paranjape,
With these short story writers the form of short story may be said to have become full-fledged both in respect of quality and quantity. Though the list is a blend of some important and less important writers’ names, the variety of themes which they have chosen, the methods of narration which they have used, definitely have made the genre more rich.

III

Emergence and Development of Indian Women Short Story Writers in English:

Indian women writers have entered the threshold of the literary scene in a big way, starting with Sarojini Naidu and Toru Dutt to Kiran Desai. A literary creation does not come into existence by itself. Its emergence is determined by certain circumstances of society. During the Nineteenth Century the advent of western liberalism, English education and anglicized views, experiences of the freedom movement, the impact of writings of western crusaders for the
emancipation of women reawakened feminist feelings among women folk. They seemed to join with Muriel Rukeyser, and declared,

"I want to speak in my voice
I want to speak in my real voice"22

The reach of the voice widened to cover issues of identity, equality, frustration and outstretched to include the literatures of both the advanced and advancing countries. Various literary forms became new grounds for Indian women writers to explore and find a new identity of their own. The Short story is prominent among them.

One of the principal practitioners of the genre is Shashi Deshpande. Of her own compulsive urge to express her self, She speaks as follows:

"My own intense and long suppressed feelings about what it is to be a woman in our society, it comes out of the experience of the difficulty of playing the different roles enjoined on me by society, it comes out of the knowledge that I am something more and something different from the sum total of these roles. My writing comes out of a consciousness of the conflict between my
idea of myself as a human being and the idea that society has of me as a woman."23

These words of perhaps, Shashi Deshpande, represent an echo of all those women writers who have chosen one or the other forms of literature to essay.

The Nineteenth century is considered the most eventful period in the history of women's struggle for the rights of equality and freedom. During this period the advent of western liberalism, English education and anglicized views made the women conscious of the deplorable condition of society.

The word 'independence to mother India' became a slogan not only for the freedom fighters but also led to an awareness about women's liberation. As Riemenschneider observes,

"National and populist struggles characteristic of the pre-war and war periods have been replaced by economic and social contradictions and struggles among the classes and castes of India. Middle-class writers have, accordingly, turned to questions and problems besetting their own class. The changes in the country after political independence form the basis of a literary
development noticeable from the end of the 1960s: an increasing tendency to turn away from national public themes towards individual and private themes. The development of the Indian short story written by women is to be placed in this context.” 24

The literature inspired by the Freedom struggle projected a new image of the Indian woman. Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, Indian novelists in English, start as evidence of their writing for the emancipation of women. The portrait of brave women fighters sketched by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru turns the orthodox mindset of the society to a positive, new image of woman.

Women come out from the kitchen, from the home, inspired by the Gandhian whirlwind and the freedom movement. A.R. Desai describes the scenario in these words:

“This was unique in the history of India, the spectacle of hundreds of women taking part in a political mass movement, picketing of liquor shops, marching in demonstration, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets.” 25.

Like this it is also true that, like other literary forms, even the short story of Indian women writers in English saw
the impact of western ideology on it. The agony of oneself gives a vision to see the agony of another. The Indian women writers got that vision from the western women writers, like, Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West, Dorothy Richardson, Simone de Beauvoir and Germain Greer. With the emergence of the feminist consciousness movement in literature by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *A vindication of the Rights of Women* (1972) Margaret Fuller’s *Woman in the nineteenth Century* (1845) many other issues related to the plight of woman came to the fore such as alienation and marginality.

Modern Indian women writers have given a new shape to the form of short story under the influence of western writers. They have trodden the path of western writers in the matter of narrative devices, like point of view, method, dialogue writing, first person narration and also in the treatment of theme and technique.

“Women are natural story-tellers even when they don’t write or publish”, 26 observes K.R. Srinivas Iyengar, as they have inherited the art from their female ancestors, like the grand mother’s stories which are a part and parcel of the Indian culture.
Women writers have chosen the short story form, maybe, because they are not interested to face competition with the already existing stalwarts in the field. The Short story has become a new ground for them to explore and find a new identity of their own. This also has become one of the reasons for women writers to choose this small prose narrative form.

Dr. G.S. Balarama Gupta Observes,

"With the exception of Anita Desai, the Major Indian Women novelists in English have not shown any marked interest in the short story as a form of artistic expression and exploration". As he suspects, "...the possible reason for the avoidance of writing novels by women short story writers seems to be their recognition of the difficulty of maintaining a steady center of interest in a long narrative or of achieving coherence of action rather than unity based on theme and idea." 27

With the advent of English journalism the journey of the Indian women short story writers has become easy sailing. The expansion of the publishing industry, the increase of monthly and weekly magazines, and literary journals gave ample opportunity, specially for women short story writers, to
reach the readers and to contribute to Indian literature in English. With the help of this vehicle they are influencing the women readers by addressing the issues of identity and self awareness.

Shashi Deshpande, who started her writing career by publishing her first story 'Legacy' in the magazine Femina says,

"I myself had stories published in Femina, Eve’s weekly, Illustrated Weekly, Deccan Herald, Mirror and many others." 28

Along with this it is also necessary to mention the literary figure P.Lal and his Writers Workshop for giving considerable space to Indian women writers by undertaking the task of publishing their short stories.

It is great to see that the Indian short story in English started off with a woman writer. It was in 1898 that an Indian writer in English Kamala Sathianadan published her first short-story collection *Stories from Indian Christian life.*

Cornelia Sorabji, whose name figures among the early writers, has three volumes of short stories to her credit. Her stories got a prominent place in various magazines like
Macmillan's Magazine. She, who inaugurated the short story genre, transports the readers to the world of woman which was until then unknown and unexplored. The stories in the volumes – *Love and life Behind the Purdah* (1901), *Sun-Babies: studies in the Child-life of India* (1904), *Indian tales of the great Ones Among Men, Women and Bird-People* (1906) and *Between the Twilights: Being Studies of Indian Women by one of Themselves* (1908), bear on the themes of evil social custom and early widowhood which was one among the causes of exploitation of women of India. Her portrait of the life of Hindu wives mirrors "the nuances of femininity." 29

This period saw the emergence of quite a few story collections, like Sheela Hauli's *Potpouri* (1912); Sunity Devi's *Bengal Dacoits and Tigers* (1916), *The Beautiful Moghal Princesses* (1918) and *The Rajput Princesses* (n.d.), Santa and Sita Chatterjee's *Tales of Bengal* (1922), and Swarna Kumari Devi's Ghosal's *Short Stories* (1930). The stories deal with folklore, Indian myths and legends.

Ela Sen has taken up as her theme one of the large-scale real-life tragedies viz., the famine in Bengal in her *A child is Born and Other Stories* (1943), *Darkening Days* (n.d.) and *Midnight on the Lakes and other stories* (1943).
Krishna Hutheesingh also has taken up for fictionalizing situations from real life. The stories of *Shadows on the Wall* (1948), deals with the life of prisoners and politicians.

Attia Hosain reveals the inner realities in the life of North Indian women in her *The Phoenix Fled and other stories* (1953). One more spotlight on widowhood and some more portraits of the orthodox Indian society can be seen in the remarkable writer Ruth Prawar Jhabwala’s four collections of short stories, *Like Birds, Like Fishes* (1963), *An Experience of India* (1966), *A Stronger Climate* (1968) and *How I became a Holy Mother and other stories* (1976). Humour, irony and sarcasm are the moving wheels of these stories depicted through letters.

Usha John has given voice to the world of female temple dancers, actresses, and laymen of the Moghal Empire in her *The Unknown Lover and Other Stories* (1961).

Bengali women writers have contributed much to this genre—short story, viz., Margaret Chatterjee with her *At the Homeopath’s (SIC) and Other Stories* (1973) and Juliett Banerjee’s *The Boy-Friend and Other Stories* (1978) adopt the Indian way of life in their stories. Even the Maharastrian writer like Jai Nimbkar in her *The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories* (1971) has a satirical edge to the portrayal of the traditional Indian society. She upholds man-woman relationship as a sacred one. She proves herself highly deft in her characterization. Padma Hejmadi’s *Coigns of Vantage* (1972), Raji Narasimhan’s *The Marriage of Bela* (1978) herald a transition of woman from the margin to the centre.

The 1970s period is considered remarkable in the field of the short story with the entrance of Shashi Deshpande. She starts her literary career by writing short stories in magazines and her short stories are collected in five volumes—*The Legacy and Other Stories* (1978), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1980), *It was Dark* (1986), *It was the Nightingale* (1986), and *The Stone Women* (2000). She exposes the inner layers of thought, the inner voice, and untold miseries of women of all ages.

Kamala Das has captured the ugly faces of life in her poetry, as well as short stories and autobiography. She uncovers the hidden and hard truths of the life destined for a
woman. She has exposed the darker sides of women's life in her *A Doll For The Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992).


Veera Sharma, in her collections *The Unrepenent and Other Stories* (1982) and *Naina and Other Stories* (1989) lay bare the complex relationships of human beings before the readers. Prema Shastri, in her collection *The Blue Convertible and other stories* (1983), deals with superstitious beliefs and the much-used theme i.e. man-woman relationship. Shailaja Ganguly's *Festive seasons*
(1983) describes women of various ages with certain circumstances. Sadiqa Peerbhoy, in her single collection *Faces in Crowd* (1986), has given tongue to the much talked-about subject viz., woman's suppressed voice in her own family. Mira Balasubramanian, with her *Birds Have Wings* (1986) and Laxmi Kannan, with her *Rhythms* (1986) have proved themselves to be good narrators.

Sunita has two collections to her credit: *A Woman is Dead and other stories* (1980) and *Eunuch of Time and other stories* (1982). Exploitation of women, Complex human relationships, the impact of society and domestic issues on women are the backbone of her short stories. Veena Adiga in her *The Meeting and Other stories* (1995) has adopted skillful narrative techniques. Anjana Appachana in her single collection *Incantations and Other Stories* (1992) focuses the misery of being born a girl in traditional India.

Indian immigrant women, both first and second generation, have contributed quality works in the field of short fiction. They are rich in with a variety of themes for choice and in the masterly use of language. Despite not knowing India properly a few of the Indian Diaspora women writers stand out with all their dignity and considerable merit. Suniti Namjoshi is well known for retelling well known stories like ‘Bluebeard’, ‘The mouse and the Lion’, ‘The Ugly

Bharati Mukherjee, a familiar voice in Indian diaspora writing has published two collections of short stories *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988). She tells the stories of immigrants, their sufferings, adjustments in the new world etc. and also tackles the East-West encounter theme. A poet, turned to short story writing, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has a single volume of short stories to her credit. *Arranged Marriage* (1995) set in Calcutta, Chicago, and California, the eleven stories focus on the plight of immigrant Asian women.


Another promising short story writer and Pulitzer prizewinner, Jhumpa Lahiri, has but a single collection of short stories to her credit. *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* (1999) focuses on the self-


One may sum up the achievement of the Indian women writers of the short story in English substantial enough to deserve a full-length story - in the words of Dr. G.S. Balarama Gupta:

"The foregoing rapid discussion suggests that Indian English women short story writers' contribution to the
short story is substantial enough to deserve a full-length critical work. They 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.” 30

IV

My thesis aims at the study of the thematic concerns of the six Indian women short story writers, namely, Shashi Deshpande, Dina Mehta, Anjana Appachana, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. The quest for identity is one of the major themes handled by many Indian women short story writers. The second chapter entitled “Quest for an Identity” analyses the meaning and nature of the concept of identity and traces its presence in the short stories of Shashi Deshpande, Dina Mehta, Anjana Appachana and Bharati Mukherjee. It also attempts to spell out its significance in the present context. The chapter exposes the contemporary urban reality, the dominance of patriarchy, influences of tradition and cultural etiquettes on women, women’s inner voice and their rebellious attitude. Observations are made on the emotional and intellectual points of view of the above said writers. The journey of the
female protagonists from the periphery to the center is traced out.

The third chapter “Feminine Sensibility” attempts a definition of the concept and the nature of feminine sensibility, and also highlights the particular short stories in which the present theme is treated by Shashi Deshpande, Dina Mehta and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The chapter observes the stereotypical roles like dutiful and obedient wife, and also the attributes of endurance, virtue, chastity and submission accorded to the Hindu wife by patriarchy. The traditional image of women and their reactions to the household and familial obligations are noticed.

The short story of the Indian Diaspora women writers has given considerable attention to women immigrants also. The fourth chapter “Immigrant Sensibility” analyses the short stories of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri, which spotlight the feeling of isolation, alienation, loss of dreams, struggle and sufferings of the women protagonists, isolation, alienation in a new atmosphere experienced by the immigrants etc. Expatriation, immigration, fate of exiles and cross-cultural crisis also form the major themes of the writers. The chapter also highlights various facets of life in the foreign land, love and marriage, broken marriages,
extra-marital affairs, nostalgia, psychological aspects, death and new birth.

The fifth chapter “Comparison and Contrast between Feminine and Immigrant Sensibility” compares the feminine and immigrant sensibility as expressed in the short stories of Shashi Deshpande and Dina Mehta and the Indian Diaspora women writers- Bharati Mukerjee, Chitra Banerjee and Jhumpa Lahiri. Comparison is made between tradition and modernity. The protagonists of Deshpande and Mehta accept the marginalization (being pushed to the wall or periphery, in the family as well as in the society) while the protagonists of Mukherjee, Banerjee and Lahiri triumph over the marginalisation and by becoming self-oriented, self-centred and self decision making individuals.

The last chapter is “Conclusion”. It gathers together the strands of thematic concerns chosen by all the six Indian Women short story writers. And specific or special aspects of their sensibilities are marked out.
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