CHAPTER III

SOCIAL REALISM IN THE SHORT STORIES OF BERNARD MALAMUD

The theoretical frame discussed in the second chapter along with a brief review of the Jewish American authors, clearly reveals that these authors, due to the social injustice, are become more conscious about the societal issues. Their works represent their social marginality and focuses the relations of majority and minority. Malamud’s literary creations cannot be separated from this frame of perception. In the select short stories of Malamud, his thematic concern is a social truth. He depicts a real life of society and explores the universal issues human predicament. His writing deeply rooted in social concerns as he experienced the life of hard-working immigrants in his stay at Brooklyn, New York. Malamud’s success with the short story form, like his mastery of the novel, results from the use of his delightfully unique style to provide an effective communication of society.

The present chapter tries to analyze and interpret the social realism in the short stories of Bernard Malamud. He was a novelist of passion and strong social conscience as he has delineated the lives and experiences of the millions of people living in an alien and recalcitrant society. In studying short stories, researcher focuses the theme of social realism and by choosing the short story collections from different decades, give a broad scope to the topic.

The issues of race, caste, class, culture, religion and sexuality overlap heavily in Bernard Malamud’s text. Researcher will analyze all the short stories thematically. It is impossible to distinguish a
particular theme without discussing its relation with theme. Therefore it is very important to study his short stories from the point of view of social realism.

‘The First Seven Years,’ allocated as an opening story in the first short story collection of *The Magic Barrel* (1958). Although Bernard Malamud is an American Jewish writer who incorporates Jewish characters, traditions, and rituals in his works, the story is set in 1950’s New York with a background of European Jewish Immigrant community, a strong patriarchal family structure arranged marriages emphasises on education and generational advancement.

The story is about a shoemaker named Feld, who is an immigrant from Poland and has his own shop in the New York. Feld has a daughter named Miriam who is nineteen year old and who wants to be independent by adopting the job instead education and has interest in reading different classical books.

Miriam reads books only in her free time. It was her hobby that she enjoyed. As a father Feld is worried about her future life. Max, a young handsome, college going boy, use to go to the college by the way that goes nearby Feld’s shop. Feld has been seeing him since last few years and impressed by his appearance as well as by his wish for getting education. He thinks that Max is the only perfect man as a life companion for his daughter Miriam. The thought made him decide to try to get them together because he strongly believed that they were meant for each other.

One day when Max accidentally came to his shop for repairing his shoes Feld got surprised and he did not even noticed what he was
saying about his torn shoes because he thought that there was a golden chance to discuss with him about Miriam. When Max asked him about the price for repairing the shoes, Feld unnoticced the question and got him in the room to discuss about his daughter to engage with him. After seeing a snapshot of Miriam and few questions about her Max got ready to date her. During this time Sobel, Feld’s assistant, a thirty-five-year-old shoemaker, a refugee from Poland, who loves reading classical books and has been advising Miriam’s reading. As he heard the discussion between Feld and Max he gives a strange reaction, narrator narrate it as:

Sobel [was] pounding with all his might upon the naked last. It broke, the iron striking the floor and jumping with a thump against the wall, but before the enraged shoemaker could cry out, the assistant had torn his hat and coat from the hook and rushed out in to the snow. (6-7)

After this incident Sobel left the job. It was a shock to Shoemaker because Sobel was working there since last five years. Feld remembered how he appointed Sobel, a Polish refugee, came to the door looking for any job that he could find. Although Sobel had not known anything about shoemaking, Feld was ready to take him on and teach the skills that he needed for shoe making. After a very short period of time, Sobel had picked up on all of the techniques that Feld had taught him. This built the great trust that Feld had felt for Sobel. His single penny is secure with Sobel whenever he is out of shop. Along with Sobel’s abilities with shoes, he had a strong love for books just as Miriam had.
Before the Sobel when Feld had needed an assistant to help him in his business of shoe-making. Feld had a heart attack then and he was going to just decide to give up on the company or could not hire a new assistant who will lose all his fortune. This polish refugee Sobel came to his door and within few days with Sobel once again his shop ran satisfactorily.

Sobel stayed with Feld for a long period of time for getting very little amount of money even though Feld himself tried paying him more. Narrator describes the thoughts of Feld about Sobel:

Feld had honestly told him he could earn a handsome salary if he worked elsewhere, or maybe opened a place of his own. But the assistant answered, somewhat ungraciously, that he was not interested in going elsewhere, and though Feld frequently asked himself what keeps him here? Why does he stay? He finally answered it that the man, no doubt because of his terrible experiences as a refugee, was afraid of the world. (8)

When Feld asked Max if he would like to date Miriam, Sobel was angry and left quickly without saying a word. Feld did not notice at that time the reason why Sobel left the job angrily and accidently.

Max had dates with Miriam twice. Feld was interested to know how she enjoyed the dates with Max. As he wanted Miriam to marry with Max who is educated person. But she had different opinion about him. As per her opinion and to his surprise to learn that,

Max was not studying to be either a doctor or lawyer but was taking a business course leading to a degree in
accountancy he is a materialistic and of no soul. He is interested in things only. (11)

Later she inquired about Sobel and he replied that assistant had got another job. Max did not call her back for dating. He changed his route to the college also. When he came to Feld’s shop to take his shoes, he didn’t utter single word for Miriam. That made Feld disappointed.

That very night the Shoemaker discovered that the another assistant, appointed in Sobel’s place, had been all the while stealing from him which caused heart attack to Feld because of which he remain bedridden for three weeks. After recovering from the ill health Feld went to Sobel’s home to call him back already but returned hopelessly because he was not at home. Mirium suggested him once again to go for Sobel. So he went to his house to find out the reason of his not coming to the job. He knocked at the door. Sobel opened it and the shoemaker entered.

The room was a small, poor one, with a single window facing the street. It contained a narrow cot, a low table and several stacks of books piled haphazardly around on the floor along the wall, which made him think how queer Sobel was, to be uneducated and read so much. (13)

Sobel’s was living in a very small room and poorly built. This demonstrates that the immigrants were unable to make a lot of money at the jobs that they were at and lived in harsh conditions compared to Americans.
Feld asked him about his returning to the work but he refused by saying ‘never’. Feld tried to convince him by offering him more wages but he did not care of the wages, in the conversation Feld asks him the reason of his resign from the job:

‘What do you want from me, Sobel?’
‘Nothing.’
‘I always treated you like you was my son.’
Sobel vehemently denied it. ‘So why you look for strange boys in the street they should go out with Miriam? Why you don’t think of me?’ (13-14)

For the first time Feld came to know about Sobel’s love for his daughter Miriam. He comes to understand that he was working for Miriam. He further told him that Miriam herself knows each and everything. Sobel turned black with rage and cursed shoemaker. He started to weep with disappointment. Feld became cool and felt pity on him. All his rage turned into pity and to some extent sympathy. He thinks:

How strange and sad that a refugee, a grown man, bald and old with his miseries, who had by the skin of his teeth escaped Hitler’s incinerators, should fall in love, when he had got to America, with a girl less than half his age. Day after day, for five years he had sat at his bench, cutting and hammering away, waiting for the girl to become a woman, unable to ease his heart with speech, knowing no protest but desperation. (15)
This quote is saying that Feld did not realize how hard Sobel’s life had been until looking at him then at that moment and thinking about his past. The fact that Sobel was in love with a girl from America who was so young showed how difficult and sad it must have been to be living in America like this. Finally Feld agreed with Sobel and accepts their love by saying:

‘She is only nineteen,’ Feld said brokenly. ‘This is too young yet to get married. Don’t ask her for two years more, till she is twenty-one, then you can talk to her.’ He left the place with great disappointment as his dream has dead.(15)

Though the end of the story is not in favour of the shoemaker, there is a unity of soul rather than materialistic attitude. The conflict takes place between boss and assistant, and it causes confrontation of such a degree of intensity that it prompts the final miracle of brotherhood to arise at a moment of painful recognition—thus resolving the opposition and transforming the main protagonist into a different human being from the one we saw initially.

The identifying four characters with their role of each character at this stage, it is clear that Malamud’s characters are representing real life of common people; the only realistic character is Miriam’s father. Feld is a father he only wants the best for his daughter. Although certain features of his such as old age and a bad heart condition are consolidation Malamudian devices, it is obvious that the verisimilitude of his characterization allows us to re-create in our mind a character whose back is bent from old age, fatigued toiling through the snow, hardly climbing the stairs. Emphasis is given to his
resemblance to reality. We have no stereotypical details about this character but only psychological traits because his motivations are deeply explored and social attitudes because a sound social criticism is clearly implied, having to do with arranged marriages and university education. Love affair between his daughter and his own assistant is definitely the matter of social status. And naturally he tries to reject the relation between both of them. As usual he wanted to make relatives in higher class than him which is human tendency that is presented effectively in the story.

The features of social realism reflected in this story are the realistic depiction of the characters, the realistic portrayal of the social scene, the life of an immigrant, social conflict and social hierarchy. The story very realistically depicts the social aspirations of Feld who wants to be the part of elite society by marring his daughter with an educated man. This aspiration suggests his class consciousness. This is one of the important characteristic features of the social realist novel. Feld deliberately underestimated the love between Miriam and Sobel as he has adopted the social status and more concern about the social status. This depicts the harsher reality of the society. Malamud criticizes the contemporary materialistic attitude. Many critics rambles the title and the story with the Biblical story in which Jacob laboured in the service of Laban for seven years to win the hand of Rebecca, whom he loved. Sobel’s life demonstrates the life of an immigrant in America. Further Malamud deliberately demonstrates the Sobel’s home which was poorly built and was very little. It suggests that the immigrants were unable to make a lot of money at the jobs that they were at and lived in harsh conditions compared to Americans. Thus after the analysis of the story it become
clear that Malamud’s ultimate purpose is to explore the social reality and focus the conditions of working classes. The third person narration enables him not only to depict the outer events but to relocate them into the human psyche.

The similar concern of the society can be exemplified in another story ‘Take Pity’ (1956), fourth story in The Magic Barrel. It is a story of Rosen, an ex-coffee salesman who shows extraordinary compassion for Axel Kalish’s widow Eva. She is a polish refugee, lives with her family and tries unsuccessfully to eke out a living from a little grocery store in a poor neighbourhood. The story reveals that after the death of Axel, Rosen tries to help Eva but she denies it for the self-respect and self-worth. This denial of pity by Eva drives Rosen to committee suicide.

‘Take Pity’ explores the lives of Rosen and Eva that represent a particular social stratum and reflect the contemporary social condition. The story reveals the temper of the contemporary literature that is social realism and the philosophical commitment of the author with humanism. The story deals with the theme of man-woman relationship in particular and the life of Jew immigrants in general.

The authors of realistic tradition depict the setting of their fiction very minutely as if they are sketching a portrait of it. In this short story he creates the realistic atmosphere by documenting the details of the places. These landscapes presented by the author are not only intended to reflect the physical conditions in which the action took place but on the other hand the crafty authors like Malamud use it to depict the social truth with more clarity. For instance, he describes the house of Rosen as:
The square, clean but cold room, lit by a dim globe, was sparsely furnished: the cot, a folding chair, small table, old unpainted chests - no closets but who needed them? - and a small sink with a rough piece of green, institutional soap on its holder – you could smell it across the room. The worn black shade over the single narrow window was drawn to the ledge, surprising Davidp. (85)

In this particular description many truths regarding the personality of Rosen was revealed. The coldness of the room suggests that the warmness of the human relations is absent from the house. It indirectly suggests that Rosen is living the life of alienation without any companion or life partner. This beginning of the story serves as a modifier in the delineation of the meaning of the entire story. The Rosen’s extraordinary affection for Eva can be understood due to his loneliness. Thus this setting suggests the motivations of his actions. In the description the question was asked “no closet but who needed them?” is also a deliberate to suggests that there is no woman in the house. The shades of the windows were drawn to the edges which creates darkness in the room. It suggests that Rosen is frustrated and no hope for life. The minute description of the physical characteristics of the characters also makes this short story a piece of literary realism. For example the character Davidov was described as “sour-faced” or his action of “the feathery shavings falling to the floor”. The description of this simple action also suggests the careless personality of Davidov. Thus, with the minute description of the actions and objects which otherwise may seems least important, plays significant role in the overall meaning of the text.
The realistic characterization is another important characteristic feature of the realistic novels. The story ‘Take Pity’ delineates the characters which are real and can be observed in the society. Malamud very realistically note down the emotions and the motifs hidden in the unconscious psyche of the characters. This description of the psyche of the characters he eradicates all the doubts regarding the realistic meaning of the story. Rosen, Eva, Alex and Davidov are explicitly humanlike without any traditional hero like characteristics. The actions described in the story is also related with the creation of a realistic meaning, for instance, in the beginning of the story the character Davidov is inadequate equipped with a fountain pen without ink and therefore needs to use a pencil stub that he has to sharpen “with a cracked razor blade”. (86) His astonishment about the darkness in the room and feeling of restlessness and impatient make this portrait realistic. He registers his discomfort about the darkness which is a strong indicator of natural human behaviour.

The power of word can be observed in the context of this short story. The life of refuge is revealed very realistically by Malamud in the story ‘Take Pity’ when he describes the life of Alex Kalish:

The husband was maybe forty, Axel Kalish, a polish refugee. He worked like a blind horse when he got to America, and saved maybe two-three thousand dollars that he bought with the money this pisher grocery in a dead neighborhood where he didn’t have a chance. (87)

How the life was not easy for the refuge in America is explored in this description. Feld of ‘The First Seven Years’ thinks about the difficulties faced by Sobel who successfully escaped from Nazis and
live a life of frustration and poverty can be compared with life Alex
time in the slum areas of New York. He has to work very hard to gain
the bread and butter. With great efforts what he has achieved is the
grocery shop in the area where there is very less chance of success.
He also shows the dangers which these immigrants have to face in the
new locations. These dangers become more graver when Rosen
suggests Alex that “Kiddo, this is a mistake. This place is a grave.
Here they will bury you if you don’t get out quick!” (87) This
communication is sufficient to understand the situation of a refuge in
America. It is not so easy to establish a new business. He tells that
Alex tried couple of weeks to sell his goods but he fails to do so.
Then Rosen advices Alex to work as painter, a janitor, and a junk man
but leave the place. It suggests that a refuge can live life as a worker
but cannot be an independent businessman. After the death of Alex,
her economic conditions become more critical. When Rosen asks her
to leave the place moves towards the areas where one can be safe. She
replies, “Where will I go, where with my two orphans that their father
left them to starve?” (88). This reply suggests her helplessness and
pathetic situation and the status of a widow in the contemporary
society. Further in the story Eva comments on her whole life that, “In
my whole life I never had anything. In my whole life I always
suffered. I don’t expect better. This is my life.” (89). The comment
suggests the status of woman in the contemporary society. The
situation of the Eva reveals that woman in the contemporary society is
just a puppet in the hands of the society. There is no choice, no
options only the pre-decided fait. Therefore the story has various
realistic dimensions like class, gender and politics. Thus, Malamud’s
observation of the society is very minute and his fictions explore the
various threads of the social truth.
The theme of humanism is another important thematic aspect of this story. The protagonist Rosen is shown as a humanist as without any refund he wants to help Alex and Eva. A close of reading of the story one can notice that Rosen does not have very strong reason to help Alex and Eva. After the death of Alex, he does everything to help her. He gives her loan out of his own pocket. He loves her daughters and wants to give them something to eat out only pity. He guides her on the practical ground and gives her the suitable advices, for instance:

“All, I said ‘you are a nice-looking young woman, only thirty-eight years. Don’t throw away your life here. Don’t flush in the toilet – you should excuse me – the thousand poor dollars from your dead husband. Believe me, I know from such stores. After thirty-five year’s experience I know a graveyard when I smell it. Go better some place and find a job. You’re young yet. Something you will meet somebody and get married.’ (89)

One can understand that the advice is given full heartedly without any reservations. He wants only the welfare of Eva. He is doing all this only out of pity. He even tries to send money to her with fake name. Even his suicide has a secret motif that after his death his property will be inherited to her. He is in real sense the well-wisher of Alex family. The title of the story ‘Take Pity’ also suggests that the story is about the feeling of ‘pity’. This feeling is essentially a feeling of a humanist who loves society without any expectations. This demonstration of the humanistic approach is intended to explore the conditions of poor in the society and how society can make it better by adopting the humanistic approach.
The story has two fold structure which opens reality in two dimensions. At one level it deals with the conversation between Rosen and Davidov and at the second level the story of Rosen about the Alex and Eva. The narrative scheme of the story contributes to make the realistic meaning in the narration. The actions which are happening in the real space where Rosen speaks with Davidov have their motivations in the second space of Rosen’s memory.

Thus the story is realistic as it divulges the human emotions and social conditions and creates a real space for the narrative which reveals different truths of the contemporary society.

Malamud’s exploration of the social reality in the stories ‘The First Seven Year’ and ‘Take Pity’ is in the context of an individual’s life. In the story ‘Black Is My Favorite Color’ this concern become more social as he handles the themes like racism and the prejudices that proved obstacles in the harmonious relationship in the society. The contemporary social scene of racial inequality and the Civil Right movements is the realistic background of the story. It can be observed in the American literary history that the Civil Right movement has a profound influence on the literature of the contemporary period. The present story deals with the tense relations between Jewish-American and African-American communities. The story begins with the Nat Lime’s approach towards the racism. He is a fortyish, white, Jewish bachelor who owns a liquor store in Harlem. The social setting of the Harlem is very significant one. Harlem is a large neighbourhood of the New York City. Since, the 1920s it has been known as a major African-American residential, cultural and business centre. The geographical location enables author to make the racial conflict more realistic. Nat Lime attempts to be the integrated part of this large
black residency but fails to do so every time. For this integration he
dates a black woman makes black friends, hiring black personnel in
his liquor store and think about the welfare of the black community.
All his efforts end in utter failure due to his social status as a white.

The motif of the story becomes clear when in the beginning,
Nat Lime tells his approach towards the racism. He says, “. . .
personally for me there’s only one human color and that’s the color of
blood” (18). He then goes on evaluating his relations with black
personalities. He also introspects about his own status as white in the
society. This approach towards the racism represents the approach of
a one group of intellectuals in the contemporary America who
demands the equality, freedom and fraternity. By adopting this
approach they want to establish the harmonious relationship in the
society. In the fiction of realism, authors always speak about the
political ideologies or the philosophical backgrounds. They attempt to
evaluate them with their various dimensions. But the intention of
Malamud is not focus this approach of equality but on the contrary he
wants to emphasise how the prejudices spread in the society will
restrict the harmony from the society. The story in its margin suggests
that it is impossible for whites to establish the true emotional
relations with the black personalities as they have certain prejudices
in their mind. Thus, the story is about a political and social stance
about the racism.

Besides this realistic thematic concern Malamud in this story
also adopts the realistic methodology of the narration. The
geographical locations and their realistic addresses make the real
space for the text. For instance, Nat tells us the address of his liquor
shop as: “in Harlem, on English Avenue between 110th and 111th.”
(18) as if it is a real place and Nat is a real personality or his mother sold paper bags in Ellery Street or further in the story in the mood of nostalgia he describes his neighbourhood in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn as,

There was this long block of run-down dirty frame houses in the middle of a not-so-hot white neighbourhood full of pushcarts. The Negro houses looked to me like they had been born and died there, dead not long after the beginning of the world. (19)

This reflection of geographical locations foreground the reality presented in the story. Malamud’s observation and his accurate symbolism can be observed in this statement.

Besides the geographical locations Malamud in this story also uses the realistic portrayal of the characters which creates the realist air in the story. For instance, the portrayal of a black boy Buster Wilson:

He was a skinny kid and his brother’s cloths hung on him like worn-out potato sacks. He was beanpole boy, about twelve, and I was then ten. His arms and legs were burnt out matchsticks. He always wore a brown wool sweater, one arm half unravelled, the other went down to the wrist. (20)

This description not only reveals the personality of Buster but it also suggests his social reality. The narration and the images like ‘worn-out potato sacks’ or ‘burnt out matchsticks’ used in the description make us visualize his personality. It is in fact one of the significant
characteristic of the literature of realism. Besides this the description also suggest that the conditions of Negro child. His physical characteristics described here suggest that he is under nutrition. Further in the story he describes the social scene of this black neighbourhood. The place was full of life in the day but at the night it becomes deadly dark as there was no electricity. The parties and social gatherings of Negros were followed by the drinking and fights. The violence depicted in this story reflects the social truth of the Harlem which is a centre of enlightenment for Negros. Malamud in this story also wants to suggest that how the social realities influences the human relations. When Nat meets Mrs. Ornita, a young black widow, he thought she is the love of his life. Mrs. Ornita Harris is ready to date Nat also she is ready to have sex with him but firmly denies for marriage proposal. She thinks that their dates are pointless as they belong to two different races. Even during their dates she feels uncomfortable and restless due to their racial differences. Same is the case with Nat’s relation with Buster and his relation with Charity Sweetness.

Another important characteristic feature of the literature of realism is the theme of humanism. Malamud’s humanistic approach is again underscored in this short story. Like Rosen of the story ‘Take Pity’, Nat in this story is a humanist who thinks about the welfare of the humanity. His thoughts of equality and his selfless desires of social welfare can be compared with Rosen’s attitude. In his description of childhood he reveals the scenes of violence which make him frightened. At one point when he sees that man is bleeding he reacts as, “I was frightened by the blood and wanted to pour it
back in the man who was bleeding from the chisel” (21). His desire to pour the blood back into his body suggests his humanistic attitude.

Thus the story can be seen as one of the significant example of the literature of realism. The theses like racism, humanism and intrapersonal relations formulate the contemporary scene as it is in the fiction.

The theme of victimization and the self-worth can be observed in the story ‘The Bill’ in which the protagonist Ms. Panessa victimizes herself and others with her own sense of honour. The character of Ms. Panessa can be compared with the character of Rosen from the short story ‘Take Pity’. This story is also marked by the realistic description of location, delineation of characters and the social thematic concern. Similar to many other stories ‘The Bill’ is also a tragedy of human values and traditional morals. The motif of tragedy can be understood in the beginning of the story where the author has used the specific adjectives to create the frustrated social scene. For instance ‘aged brick tenement building’, ‘pale sky’, ‘blackened tenement’ ‘dark delicatessen’ or the discretion of Panessa’s shop as ‘a hole in the wall’ (145) All these adjectives superbly describes the tragic view of the society and reveals the motif of tragedy.

Similar to his other stories in this story too, he is interested in the dealing with the human relations and the influence of social situations on it. Like his story ‘Black is may Favorite Color’, in this story he again pointing towards the tense relations between the white American-Jews and black African-Americans. The character of Ms Panessa can be compared with the character of Eva Kalish from his
story ‘Take Pity’, who also owns a grocery store and become victimized due to her sense of pride and self-sufficiency. These three stories focus the evils of social institutions and their effects on the individual life. The story also has a class, race and gender dimensions which make it more real.

The social conditions reflected in the short story are also near to the reality. The description of the social landscapes and the personalities modifies the meaning of the story. The story focuses on the lives of four characters associated with each other in business context. Mr. Panessa, sixty three year old retired factory worker, tries to start a new shop in the basement of tenement but becomes unsuccessful due to his unprofessional attitude. He tries to establish the relation with Willy Schlegel is a tall and broad-backed janitor of the tenement opposite to Mr. Panessa’s delicatessen. But in this attempt to he is looser as in the end he denies to pay his bills. The character of Mr. Panessa is not real like as it represent the idealism of humanism. But his wife Mrs. Panessa seems more real as she is practice and less emotional compare to her husband. The personality of Willy Schlegel also seems realistic as he represents the black poor janitor who remains poor though he works very hard. His family and his behaviour in the society reveal the social truth of African-American minorities. These characters and the story of them can be observed in our real neighbourhood. The reality of poor classes becomes graver when Etta, wife of Willy, reminds him about the dues of Panessa. He replies,

“Leave me alone,” I said, “I got enough trouble of my own.”
“What kind of trouble have you got, Willy?”
“The goddam tenants and the goddam landlord,” he shouted and slammed the door.
When he returned he said, “What have I got that I can pay? Ain’t I been a poor man every day of my life?” . . . .
[he describes his conditions as]
“With the ashes in my eyes. With the piss I mop up on the floor. With the clod in my lungs when I sleep” (149)

This conversation between husband and wife is sufficient to understand their social status and economic conditions.

Besides the realistic characterization, Malamud’s favourite theme ‘humanism’ is again explored in this short story. Mr. Panessa is a humanist like his other characters Rosen and Nat. he starts his business and adopts a policy of credit. He thinks that,

. . . everything was run on credit, business and everything else, because after all what was credit but the fact that people were human beings, and if you were really a human being you gave credit to somebody else and he gave credit to you. (147)

This approach of Mr. Panessa represents the principles of humanism. He becomes bankrupt but remains sturdy with his philosophy humanism. He in the end falls ill and dies out of treatment due to his penniless economic condition.

Thus, the story not only reveals the tragedy of Mr. Panessa but it is the tragedy of humanism. The stories like ‘Take Pity’ and ‘The Bill’ reveal the characters’ compassion at the cost of their lives. This
radical humanism reflects that it is impossible to leave with the humanistic approach because the world around never be always amiable but it on at the most of times proved hostile. Thus, the story is realistic in its thematic concern and the artistic rendering.

In the short story of ‘The Jewbird’ (1963) Malamud uses the narrative technique of Magic Realism. He uses Magic Realism and exploits its characteristics like the juxtaposition of the natural and the supernatural on the same textual level, the resolution of the antinomy between both words, and the authorial reticence. The technique is generally used to reveal the radical facts of the society which otherwise is impossible to explore with the traditional narrative technique. It tells the story of three-members of Jewish family, which receive a sudden visit from an old back talking bird. He claims his name is Schwartz. He speaks in a Yiddish dialect and exudes a smell of herring. Harry Cohen, the father, shows hatred all along and to an increasing degree towards the end. He finally starts a physical battle against the bird and he eventually kills the crow.

Similar to many of his other short stories, ‘The Jewbird’ is also a fine example of realism in literature. The class-conflict, racism, prejudices, religion, heritage, interpersonal relations are the thematic concerns of the story. The visit of this talking bird and the reactions of the family members to it have various dimensions of social meaning. The story opens with a very realistic atmosphere though it uses the supernatural bird. The Cohen family is introduced to the readers with their Jewish origin. It focuses the contemporary reality that how man is losing his traditional values and denying his own cultural identity. The bird in fact is a moralist who teaches the religious values to the family. In the literature of realism the authors
were always tends to teach certain social, religious and cultural values to the society. Malamud, in his short stories makes the society aware with their conditions and demonstrate them what is right. The story can be seen as a cultural orientation of Cohen family. For example, the beginning of the story reveals that Cohen family is sitting for the dinner and discussing about Harry’s mother’s illness and how they have cut short their vacations due to it. The family was disturbed by a crow that enters in the house through the open kitchen window. The crow is talking bird. The questions answers between Cohen and the crow reveals, Malamud’s literary motif of the story. Cohen asks him why entered in his house the bird replies that:

“The window was open,” the bird sighed; adding after a moment, “I’m running. I’m flying but I’m also running.”
“From Whom?” asked Edie with interest.
“Anti-Semeets.” (102)

The word ‘Anti-Semites’ suggests the religious theme of the story. According to Merriam Webster Online dictionary ‘Anti-Semites’ means someone who is hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group. The term ‘Antisemitism’ is popularly used to describe the hatred towards or discrimination against Jews due to their Jewish heritage. This is a form of racism. In the literature of realism one can observe that the discrimination of the minority community is a major theme in it. Further the motif of religion becomes more apparent when the bird declares that he it is a ‘Jewbird’. The bird demanded the food but denies accepting the food they were eating he demands the traditional Jewish food ‘piece of herring’ and ‘small crusted bread’ (103). Thus, the story reflects the contemporary scene of the ‘melting pot’ in which the young
generations were forgetting their heritage and adopting a new creolized cultural identity. The death of the bird is in the end of the story is also very significant. When the boy sees that the bird is dead and asks the bird that “Who did it to you, Mr. Schwartz?” Maurie wept. “Anti-Semeets,” Edie said later. (113) This ending suggests that the religion and traditional culture is dying from the contemporary society.

Besides this major issue of Jew heritage and the cultural orientation, Malamud makes this story realistic by describing the places and personalities as if they are real. For instance, the address of Cohen’s apartment that, “top-floor apartment on First Avenue near the lower East River” (101), is given very realistically. It seems that it is real place in the New York City and we are reading the story. The reference of the time is not just a time of the day but it is a specific day ‘August evening’ when this story happens modifies the reality of the story. The characters portrayed with the physical features enable reader to visualize the personalities. For instance:

Cohen, a heavy man with hairy chest and beefy shorts; Edie, in skinny yellow short and read halter; and their ten-year-old Morris. (102)

with the help of this description one can understand even what kind of clothes they have been wearing. The description of the characters and the place in which the action took place creates the realistic atmosphere in the story. Only the taking bird is a supernatural creature and takes away the story from the reality. But if we forget the body of the bird and take him just a voice or human character, his thoughts and the opinions are real. Thus, the story though uses the
narrative technique of magic realism is an example of social realism in American literature. Thus, the story gives us the realistic picture of the world in which the religious values were shattered and replaced by cold reason. Malamud suggests that the make a right decision is depending on the imagination and trust and not with rational analysis.

Thus, though Malamud uses the supernatural character, he sets his story in a recognizable world. It also contains a strong critical portrait of our modern city life. This includes the sameness and barrenness of a capitalist family whose progress is based on money and the Ivy League, a lack of humanity and the need to forget as soon as possible. All of these details are basic for a magical-realist structure.

Malamud is interested not only in the social truth but also in the personal realities. The ‘human relations’ has been in the centre of his fictional world. In the story ‘My Son the Murderer’ Malamud demonstrates the various dimensions of the father and son relations. While delineating this story in the off shoot of it many other social realities were revealed. The story reveals us the condition of the social institution like family. How the modernization in the every sector of life separating the family members from each other and making them emotionally detached. The story tells the tense relations of father and son. The generation gap is the important thematic aspects of the literature of the generation gap.

The dialogue between the mother and son is realistic one and which can be observed in our day today life. Harry, the son of Leo, represent the contemporary youth. After graduation he is alone,
nervous, and remain in his own thoughts. His mother advises him to look for job, he replies,

“ It’s not that I don’t want to work. It’s that I feel bad.
So why do you feel bad?
I feel what I feel. I feel what is.
Is it your health, sonny? Maybe you ought to go to a doctor?
I asked you not to call me by that name any more. It’s not my health. Whatever it is I don’t want to talk about it.
The work wasn’t the kind I want. (167)

His arrogance with his mother suggests this age and the popular theme of ‘generation gap’. The generation of the contemporary period is facing the problem of unemployment and instability. This is the period which witnesses the rise of the philosophical schools like existentialism, absurdism and nihilism. These philosophical schools centre their thoughts on the condition of man in the hostile universe. The Harry can be seen as an existential hero as he hates the temporality in his life. When his mother advices him to take at least a temporal job he replies:

Everything’s temporary. Why should I add more to what’s temporary? My gut feels temporary. The gooddam world is temporary. On top of that I don’t want temporary work. I want the opposite of temporary, but where is it? Where do you find it? (167)

This statement is sufficient to understand the mental condition of the contemporary youth. They are frustrated with the world as their
nothing permanent. The social, religious and cultural values were shattered and replaced by nothing. This nothingness creates the ambiguity and confusion in the minds of young generation.

In the short story ‘The Bill’ he deliberately delineates the failure of humanism where as in this present short story he deals with the existential philosophy. Thus both these stories attempt to evaluate the contemporary philosophical temper of the society and reveal the truth about them. Besides this thematic aspects another important thing of narrative which formulates the realistic space of the story is that In the opening Harry is observing his father from the distance but soon the narration shifts from son to father. This shifting makes the reader aware with the focus of the story. It can be interpreted as the shifting from one generation to another.

In the story ‘The German Refuge’, Malamud once again depicts the theme of interpersonal relations and the social aspects that influences it. Similar to the stories like ‘The Black is my Favorite Color’ and ‘The First Seven Years’, the present story depicts the various dimensions of the human relations. The realistic characterization is one of the important features of the realist literature and Malamud’s fiction is once again classically repeated here. The physical features of the characters and the depiction of the layers of their psyche make the story more realistic. These characters become more realistic with the real social and historical background of American depression. The third person narrator introduces characters in a minimalistic style but providing all the necessary details which make us enable to visualize the scene. For instance:
Times were still hard from the Depression but anyway I made a little living from the poor refugees. They were all over uptown Broadway in 1939. I had four I tutored – Karl Otto Alp, the former film star; Wolfgang Novak, once a brilliant economist; Friedrich Wilhelm Wolff, who had taught medieval history at Heidelberg . . . Oskar Gassner, the Berlin critic and journalist, at one time on the *Acht Uhr Abnblatt*. (195-196)

The description of these characters not only gives the personal details of the characters but it also reveals the social truth of depression. It suggest that how the famous personalities become cheap one in the depression. Further in the story Malamud reveals the nature of their meetings and communication which is in fact the paralysed view of the society. The narrator describes:

> To many of these people, articulate as they were, the great loss was the loss of language—that they could not say what was them to say. You have some subtle thought and it comes out like a piece of broken bottle. (200)

This quotation reveals that everyone in the group is frustrated or depressed. They cannot communicate what they feel because of the social and cultural conditions in which they exist.

Another important theme of racism and its effect on the interpersonal relations can be observed in this story. The Nazism in Germany threatens Jews to leave the nation. Oskar Gassner leaves the Germany but his wife who gentile refuses to move to America. These
tense relations can be seen as one of the important thematic issue of Malamud’s fiction. Oskar thinks that she was anti-semite. He explains that “he had lived with her for almost twenty-seven years under difficult circumstances. She had been ambivalent about their Jewish friends and his relatives, though outwardly she seemed not prejudiced person. But her mother was always a violent anti-Semite” (208). It reveals that the racial identities always remain in the unconscious psyche and influences the social behaviour. This combination of social and psychological truth creates the narrative which must be called as the realistic literature. Themes which can be considered under the themes of Diaspora like displacement, cultural estrangement, alienation, frustration and depression as the thematic issues of the story which make it the example of Social realism.

Next short story ‘The Mourners’ denotes the lives of the four characters and especially the struggle between Kessler, a former ‘egg candler’ and Gruber, landlord of the tenement in which Kessler leaves for the last ten years. The problems like old ages is explored by Malamud in this story as it reveals that how the old lives lonely in his apartment on the social security. He is past sixty-five and has been living in ‘a small cheap flat on the top floor of decrepit tenement’ of Gruber who wants his apartment back on the practical ground without involving into the emotions of the old man. The realistic characterization and the portrayal of the realistic social and geographical landscapes are the merit points of the story. In very short Malamud by using the third person omnipresent narration reveals Kessler history which is necessary to understand the reality of his past and the reason of his present. His alienation due to his nature is described by the author very realistically. In the profession he is
known as ‘trouble maker’ therefore excluded from the trade. Same is the case with his neighbours, as he is not bothering to others no one bothers him and therefore though he is living for ten years in the tenement no one knows his reality. The narrator also reveals that once “he had had a family, but unable to stand his wife or children, always in his way he had after some years walked out of them. He never saw them thereafter, because he never sought them, and they did not seek him. He had no idea where they were, nor did he think much about it.” (17) Thus no family, no social friends and no neighbours leave him into utter alienation. This theme of alienation is a significant theme of the literature of realism.

The theme of humanism is another similar thread can be observed in this short story. Gruber, the landlord treats the old man as piece of furniture. He wants to throw him into the house for old though he is paying in time. His approach towards this old man is professional. His personality suggests that he is emotionally detached from the society. When old man cries and asks him that

“What did I do to you?” He bitterly wept. “Who throws out of his house a man that he lived there ten years and pays every month on time his rent? What did I do, tell me? Who hurts a man without a reason? Are you a Hitler or a Jew?” He was hitting his chest with his fist. (23)

Gruber replies that do not take it personal. He says that he owns this house which is falling apart and his bills are ‘sky high’ and asks her to leave the apartment. This approach suggests his inhuman tendency towards the old man. The end of the story is magic realist which
shows Gruber his own death and makes the reader aware with the reality.

Thus, the story reveals the themes of the literature of realism and deals with the realistic method of narration. Only once in the story that is in the end he uses the narrative method of magic realism. But both these techniques were aimed to reveal the social reality.

Malamud’s ‘Rembrandt's Hat,’ reveals the dispute over a hat between an art historian and an elder colleague. The theme of the short story is the difficult human relations. Arkin, the art historian, compares the colleague’s cap to Rembrandt’s hat. But the art historian fails to hit the point, making himself a caricature. Tension grows between them. But the light in him resurrects and he is enlightened to comprehend that he has been rude to behave so. He starts to think himself into the place of the frustrated and humiliated sculptor and he repents.

The characters are delineated very realistically, for example the narrator describes Arkin with so many adjectives which reveal various dimensions of his personality. “Arkin, the art historian, a hypertensive impulsive bachelor of thirty-four—a man often swept by strong feeling, he thought—about a dozen years younger than the sculptor...” (125). Though the physical features of Rubin were not depicted in the story, his character can be explored throughout the story.

The misunderstanding about Arkin’s comment over Rubin’s hat makes problem to their personal relations. Arkin wants to appreciate his hat but does not know the reason why he is wearing such odd hats. He says,
“I’ll tell you why I like it so much. It looks like Rembrandt’s hat that he wears in one of the middle-aged self-portraits, the really profound ones, I think the one in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. May it bring you the best of luck.” (129)

In the reality he is wearing these odd hats out of frustration. His wife left him and costume and headdress become a mode among students. But with knowing fact he comments on his hat which hearts him. He starts avoiding him and their relations become tense.

Malamud’s in his fictional works repeatedly deals with the themes of compassion, redemption, and new life, the potential of meaningful suffering and self-sacrifice, which can be traced back to the Hebraic tradition. It is a tradition of mutual responsibility, ever regarding himself as his brother’s keeper. This biblical spirit was there in Malamud’s mind when he started his writings. One can observe that he follows the values of the old prophets like Amos and Hosea who emphasize universal justice, righteousness, love and compassion as the most important principles of moral life. He projects a moral vision in his works and takes a compassionate view of the suffering of man. He is compassionate towards the suffering Jew whose constant suffering has enhanced the value of compassion and charity. He is interested in capturing the spirit of Jewish life and moral experience seen in suffering and compassion.

In the end of the story, the reconciliation takes place. Malamud seems to say that man is liable to make mistakes but it can be rectified by the insight that is given to him as a gift. Here the author caricatures the characters showing the absurdity of the
misguided aspirations of modern anti-humanist art and the self-dissatisfaction of the author himself. The characters of Malamud from ‘Take Pity’, ‘The Bill’ and ‘The Jew Bird’ reveal that he is much concerned about the degradation and loss of human dignity in the modern world. All these stories want to give the message that ‘only compassion can redeem the modern man’.

In ‘The Loan’ Malamud deals with the realistic themes like economic conditions, human relations and the contemporary social scene. Similar to his other stories in it he very minutely depicts his characters which enable us to imagine them. For instance, the narrator describes the beaker as, “His pink fleshy arms had been deep in dough. For a hat he wore jauntily a flour-covered brown paper sack. His peering glasses were dusty with flours, and the inquisitive face . . .” (184). The description not only describes his personality but depicts the reality of his tread. His personality is like inexperienced man living for so many years in the same secure setting whereas his friend Lieb is well experienced person who travelled all over the world and have various experiences.

The relations between Lieb and Kobotsky, the two immigrants, help each other in their needs and survive in the hostile world around. The stories of these friends underscore the significance of brotherhood and humanism. In the end Lieb borrows two hundred dollars to Kobotsky. They embraced each other and parted forever.

The short story ‘A Pimp’s Revenge’ is about an American person namely F who is above forty years of his age and a painter by profession. Though he is an American he lives in Italy. He is unmarried and alone in his room which is on rent. The owner of his
room namely Fabio a landlord (embittered dropsical) who always tortures F for the rent. His room is like a studio, he himself made it as studio, where he works devotedly,

The room is very small with curtained kitchen alcove-several shelves, a stove and sink- the old fashioned walls painted with faded rustic dancers, nymphs and shepherds and on the ceiling a large scalloped cornucopia full of cracked and faded fruit. (39)

All in all the condition of his room is very poor where he spent all his time for painting and where all his painting material scattered. Painting is his passion. He is busy in preparing a masterpiece since last five years namely, “Mother and Son”. He uses to carve and paint a statuette of Madonna for his daily needs. His poor economical condition compels him to do so. He has no any other income source than painting. He is quite upset or disappointed about his life. He wants to know about his future life. So he goes to fortune teller and asks about his career to her.

Will I finish my five year’s painting of Mother and Son? My sure masterpiece- I know it in my bones- if I ever get it done”.

The reply of fortune teller is quite amazing. She says…

“A good cook doesn’t throw out yesterday’s soup” (40)

It indicates he is losing faith on himself as well as curiosity about knowing unknown things in the future. The future which is completely unknown he wants to make it secure by getting such opinions and spends one hundred lire for her useless suggestions.
Alberto Penenero, a proprietor of a woodworker’s shop, to whom F usually sells his statuette of Madonna, bargains about the prices and uses to give him less amount for his valuable and devoted work. He uses to give him around five thousand lire for one statuette. But that much amount is not sufficient for his daily expenses for purchasing painting material and food. No doubt he is struggling with poverty. He says,

“I am a time-ravaged man, horrible curse on an artist”.

He is unable to enjoy even a sexual life only because of lack of money. When he asked a young whore about her price she told him two thousand lire.

“He raised his beret and walked on”.

He is unable to spend even five hundred lire on an old whore. His ideas cannot be converted into reality because of his poverty. The same woman, namely Esmeralda, a whore and to whom he asked her price first time later came into his life. Though he is unmarried, both of them started to live together. Though she is a nineteen year old prostitute he accepted her as her keep. It is a contemporary social realism that before marriage one can live with any other female like live-in-relationship. Society accepts such kind of things. Even Fabio, owner of F’s room doesn’t have any protest against the couple. Esmeralda enters in his life and his poverty increased. F hardly gains money from his painting and statuette. After their joint life the situation become more difficult. Sometimes they could not get anything to eat more than two days. In those days Italy itself was a poor country and unable to provide jobs to everybody. On the other hand his work has less value in the market. Esmeralda borrowed few hundred lire from Ludovico, a pimp and her manager in her previous
business of whore. The following paragraph rightly comments on their poor condition…

“F suspiciously asked Esmeralda after having good meal ‘How come?’ She admitted that she borrowed some from Ludovico.

F: How are we supposed to pay him back?

Es: “We won’t. He owes me plenty.”

F: “Don’t borrow from him any more”

While saying this he has no answer of how he can borrow money. (42)

Then she suggested him to make more statuette of Madonna. She tried to sell the prepared statuette in the local market but got low price than expected. F became angry on her and stopped to prepare Madonna after having such response. The situation became more critical. Ones she sold six inches of her hair to a man came on her door and then she could buy herself some warm underwear. One thing is quite surprising to mention here that though their economical condition is very bad they never turn towards robbery or cheating to others.

Ludovico, a pimp of Esmeralda and Italian person who loves Italy, suggests him some persons who can buy his paintings on commission. But Esmeralda who has bad experience of Ludovico, doesn’t believe on him and tries to kick him out of the house.

As Esmeralda started to live with F, Ludovico became crazy and helpless. In one way Esmeralda was his only source of income. He manages all her clients on huge commission. He is no doubt angry on F because his money in the form of Esmeralda is in his hands. He
uses to come to F’s studio only because of her. He wanted to bring her back anyhow. He arranged F’s interview only to torture him. And at the end of the interview he threatened him because F is caused him unnecessary personal discomfort and sorrow by interfering in his previous business relationship between Esmeralda and him and because of him his source of income closed so the lives of four people depend on him are seriously spoiled. But F is careless.

Each morning he awoke earlier to paint. Sometimes he forgets to do daily necessary activities. His nervous impatience seeped into his painting also. There is no change in his financial condition. Problem of earning remains the same. F decided to make the statuette of Madonna once again and hurriedly started the work. After preparing it he took it to Penenero for sale. He expected more prices from him but he rejects him to give him more than five hundred lire because his workers are now capable to prepare the same statuette with same quality and he has plenty of it. F became very angry and snatched the statuette from him and threw it away in the water. He is totally depressed and unable to understand what to do. He returns to his studio cum room. Esmeralda suggested him about her previous profession as she was working as a prostitute. He is not ready to allow her to be a whore primarily but later he agrees to protect her from naughty clients. He changed his total appearance and tries to look as a rowdy. All the day she is busy with her clients and gets 2000 lire for fifteen to twenty minutes and more if the client is rich and wants to spend more time with her. In this way both of them start new kind of life. F gets up early in the morning and uses to work on his painting. He sketches some poses of Esmeralda which she likes most. He also works on his masterpiece ‘Mother and Son’. The picture, except the
faces of the figures, is ready with appropriate painting. The picture has special meaning in his life. His mother died in his childhood. Since then he is living lonely and has deep love for his mother. So he concentrated on the picture since last five years. He is a true artist. He says,

“If I’m not an artist, then I am nothing.
I am not really a man without art”.
When Ludovico asked him in his interview…
Lud: I wish you would explain to me clearly why you Paint.
F: With my paintings I try to stop the flow of time.
Lud: That’s a ridiculous statement, but go on anyway.
F: I’ve said it.
Lud: Say it more comprehensibly. The public will read this.
F: Well, art is my means for understanding life and trying out certain assumptions I have. I make art, it makes me.

Painting is his whole life. He is afraid of complete the picture because his role in the life is changed and attitude towards the picture also. Now the subject of the basic painting has been changed in the course of time from ‘Mother and Son’ to ‘Brother and Sister’ in which Esmeralda painted as Bessie, his sister.

One day the picture was done with this woman and man together, as prostitute and procurer. “He had tormented, confused, deeply drained, moved but was satisfied”. When he called Esmeralda to see the painting she was totally shocked after seeing the same. “Her lips
trembled, lost colour of her face, she turned away and finally spoke...“For me it’s me. You have caught me as I am. There is no doubt of it. The picture is a marvel”. (35) He painted Esmeralda in place of his mother. Ludovico criticizes that the picture may be suffers from an excess of darkness which requires more light though he accepts that the picture is a masterpiece really. Esmeralda doesn’t allow Ludovico to touch the picture saying “Don’t touch it”. She further remarks to F that... “You will never make it better”. (45)

Ludovico suggests some dealer who can give handsome price to the picture but she rejects his assistance. F also wants to keep it with him for few days. He slept that night soundly, but awoke at midnight with depression. He went to his painting, examined it inch by inch carefully and seemed to him disappointment. There is a question in his mind where was Momma after all these years? He felt Ludovico was right that the picture needs a touch of light. He started to work on it with his brush and paints. One or two stroke he gave around the eyes and mouth of the lady’s expression truer to life. After finishing the work at the morning he saw he had ruined the painting. Ludovico came with an art dealer, they laughed on his work when they saw the painting. He became angry and blackens the canvas with a thick brush covering both faces in all directions. Esmeralda shocked after seeing this and attacked on F with knife saying “Murderer”. F snatched knife from her and put the blade of knife into his gut. This is the end of the true artist as well as the story. The author painted realistically the social conditions and situations of the characters effectively in this short story. The way the prostitutes do their business, the way the wood shopkeeper bargains for the good product and pays less amount to the owner, the way, the pimp makes money from the blood of the
prostitutes all these are the parts of the social life. In short the story presents Italian life with poverty realistically.

Malamud in his story ‘Glass Blower of Venice’ uses Venice, Rome as setting of the story. Fidelman, as usual, who is ex-painter, is a common character in all stories of Malamud, focused as a central character of this story also. The winter of December is at its pick in Venice. So the atmosphere is cold, sometimes wet and rainy and everybody is in warm clothes. Fidelman is searching object for his are. The work like taking the customers on his back and deposit them on dry ground his is doing additionally for earning. And for this service he charges 100 lire per person. No doubt such work is apart from his love for art. And it is demand of the people also who are unable to walk a long distance in such atmosphere.

Once, an attractive, long nosed, oriental-eyed young venetian woman sat on Fidelman, enjoying the ride and towards whom he attracted and when he dropped her down tenderly, she kissed him affectionately and went away. This happens occasionally. She turned back to him smiling sadly as if they were/had been lovers once. He was after a while in love with her. After the incident he used to search her in every place. And for his surprise he saw her standing behind a counter of glass shop staring at him. Once again she lifted her hand from her heart and abruptly turned away. For the two weeks he continuously visited the shop more than seven to eight times daily where she saw her. Then he gave up all the things from his heart because she wasn’t noticed. But later he decided that he hadn’t given her up at all. In the same glass trincket shop when he saw her once again he surprised. His heart was beating loudly and he thanked Holy Mother for sending her. It is co-incidence that he saw her once again
in the shop. He went there and knocked the window. She came out. They talked quickly, intensely with each other. Her name was Margherita Fassoli. She behaved friendly with him and told that she had been ill for weeks. He introduced himself and asked, “Where can we go. I have no money”. (23)

Malamud showed his poor economical conditions here as well as a love story took place between them. She stunned by the statement and then confessed that she is married and husband namely Beppo Fassoli, is a glass blower in Murano. They had four rooms and two boys Riccardo and Rodolfo, eight and ten, little terrors. She is around thirty, simple, spontaneous and direct. There is a narration of her physical beauty by Malamud in one passage. She gazed him with depth and has sadness in it. She urged him to go before her uncle return. Here she wanted to keep their matter secret. He agreed to go but took promise from her for the next meeting. She also agreed. As he could not call her to his room he asked her to arrange the room also. They met at the bell tower in old building, four storied high with many rooms and enjoyed sex with sensuousness. Malamud painted the scene as if it is in the books devoted to the sexual topics. When he got up from the bed and saw an old woman was reading a newspaper out of the window. He was shocked. But she told him that the old woman is Beppo’s mother and “she is a deaf-mute in both ears”.

Once, Beppo met Fidelman, when he arrived there for supper. They discussed about Beppo’s profession and type of work. Now he used to go her house without hesitation and took meal with them. Beppo told him about his profession to him in following words,
They use to make fish, flasks of all sorts, and the sentimental animals of Disney. Our craft has fallen to the level of the taste of the tourists”. Beppo, though short of inches, he was, “a strong, muscular, handsome type thick shouldered and hairy man. He appeared young than his wife.(78)

Fidelman thinks that Beppo suspects him of taking his right as husband. But Margherita assured him that there is no such kind of thing in his mind. He was spending more time with Beppo though it is awkward that to sleep with the man’s wife and being friend with him. Malamud presents the shamelessness of his mind as well as illegal relationship in the contemporary Venetian society. He and Margherita both of them are representatives of Venetian social conditions. Their meetings were depending on circumstances and desires of mostly Margherita and he usually stayed for supper because of Beppo’s invitation. Beppo once praise him for his one or two sketching but Fidelman confessed that his life is totally failure in art. Both of them are now became good friends and they shared their personnel experiences of life with each other. Fidelman still has suspect in his mind that Beppo must know about the relation between he and Margherita. While discussing on personnel life, once, Beppo told him that he has rare sexual relations with his wife and that is hard thing to endure. Fidelman feels guilty and for relieving from this feeling, embraced Margherita and invited him to his room to see his paintings and sculpture (a dozen justificatory pictures and a few pieces of sculpture).

As Beppo himself likes art, that came to him naturally, agreed to come to Fidelman’s room to see his paintings. Later, Fidelman
thought why he was so eager to show all his work to the stranger like Beppo. He realized that it. Sunday morning he went to Beppo’s flat to tell him not to come but he had already left the house. He returned hurriedly to face Beppo. After some time Beppo entered into his room. He showed him all his paintings one by one with explaining each and every detail about the painting like its type, influence, theme and its origin. During the session he thought,

Who is this man and why am I breaking my heart for him. I mean do I have to show him my private work? Why the revelation? But he continued and eager to know his reaction. After seeing all his paintings and sculpture Beppo replied, “Your work lacks authority and originality”. And advised him, “Burn them all”. Fidelman became angry and said, “I thought you would say that, you cruel fairy bastard”. (78)

In the response Beppo took kitchen knife and started to cut paintings. Fidelman tried to stop him but failed and he slashed up the other canvases and burned everything and said, “Don’t waste your life doing what you can’t do. Your painting will never pay back the part of your life you have given up for it”. (79)

The advise to him from his dear friend though it is hard but Beppo judged him perfectly. He told everything happened to Margherita. She wept, embraced him, leading him to the marriage bed and said, “Come, for our mutual relief, me from my life and you from art”. (67)

When both were in the midst of violent intercourse, the door opened, nude Beppo entered in the room and land on Fidelman. She
ran out. Fidelman tried to get rid of him but due to Beppo’s powerful grip he failed. Finally he urged,

“Don’t hurt me, Beppo, please, I have piles”.
But he replied,

“You’ll be surprised at the pleasure. Think of love. You have run from it all your life”. (79)

For the first time in his life he loved Beppo and said it to him. Malamud presented contemporary homo-sexual relationship in Venice which was not focused in extent. It’s social realism also.

Later both of them were together as often as possible. Beppo appointed Fidelman as apprentice and part-time man of all work with the help of Assistant Manager of Glass Work. Working with a hot molten glass excited Fidelman sexually. Whatever he did in the factory was of less useful, so he persuaded Beppo to stay and teach him glasswork. Beppo tried to teach him the work by staying throughout the night which affected him badly. He became pale, his wife objected to the night work. During the period both came together. As ill Beppo could not work more, manager set the work with assistant manager and Beppo left the place. But he watched Fidelman’s work and remarked, “You are doing same things you did in your paintings that’s the lousy hair in the egg. It’s easy to see, half a talent is worse than none”. (79)

Their increased meetings badly affected Beppo’s family. Margherita, once, “Stopped Fidelman and begged him to leave Venice”. Because Beppo, rarely came to family because of Fidelman. Here she said,
Though he is homo, he is a good provider and good father. He knows life. Though there was no sex or little but things were better when he was around his family. (82)

But Fiddelman’s arrival in their life caused the things worst. So she requested him to go though she enjoyed some pleasure with him. On listening this from his love Fidelman became disappointed. In despair he rushed to the factory where he prepared a big bowl of glass, did some itch work and painting on it, polished it carefully, “filled it with cold water and with a sigh”, showed to Beppo, who said it was a good job beautifully proportioned reminded him “something the old Greeks had done”. Fidelman mourned and said, “I kept my finger in art”. (81) Here his art invented from his deep heart and was accepted by all.

Before leaving Venice, Fidelman gave a horse to Beppo as gift. But he sold it for a descent sum and gave the lire to him. They kissed each other before they parted. Later Fidelman worked as a craftsman in glass in America and was loved by men and women.

Malamud presents Venetian life as well as the people and their interrelations with each other. He focused on not only multi-sexual relation of male-female but also on male-male home sexual tendencies among the people. He narrated Venetian beauty of atmosphere as well as woman. Poverty is his permanent theme and he used it with central character. Though he is poor he survives with all his needs fulfilled. Venice, as cultural and religious important city, the business of the people are basically based on the interests of tourists. Need based occupations; relatively contemporary works done by the people are presented effectively. Overall, Malamud presents
realistic situations and the conditions of the people of Venice including their way of living.

Malamud’s story “The Magic Barrel” explores Social problem of Marriage; how a young man expects bride and becomes disillusioned by learning the real situation in the society about the marriage is the subject matter of the story. The story was first published by the Partisan Review in 1954 and reprinted as the title story in Malamud’s first volume of short fiction in 1958. The period between those two dates was an eventful time in American history. In 1954 the United States Supreme Court unanimously rejected the concept of segregation in the case of Brown v. Board of Education, which found that the practice of maintaining separate classrooms or separate schools for black and white students was unconstitutional.

When Malamud’s “The Magic Barrel” first appeared in Partisan Review in 1954, it provided a colourful glimpse into the world of American Jews. Four years later, after his second novel, The Assistant, had been enthusiastically received, Malamud reprinted “The Magic Barrel” as the title story in a collection of his short fiction. The collection sold well, and was praised by reviewers for its honesty, irony, and acute perception of the moral dilemmas of American Jews. It won the National Book Award for fiction in 1959.

As the story begins we appear that Leo Finkle, twenty-seven years old Jewish youth is in search of a suitable wife. Leo has spent six years in study, with no time for developing a social life. Inexperienced with women, he finds the traditional route of obtaining a bride appealing, an honourable arrangement from which his own parents benefited. Therefore he meets to Pinye Salzman, a
matchmaker; at their initial meeting, Salzman brings names from which to choose a proper wife for him. The cards on which they appear, which he has selected from a barrel in his apartment, include significant statistical information: dowry, age, occupation, health, and family. When Leo learns who some of his prospects are he dismisses Salzman. The experience leaves Leo in a state of depression and anxiety. In the same year Senator Joseph McCarthy was censured by the Senate for having unjustly accused hundreds of Americans of being communists. In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first satellite to successfully orbit the earth, sparking concern that the Soviets would take control of space.

Salzman, however, appears the next evening with good news that the schoolteacher, Lily Hirschorn, is no older than twenty-nine. So, Leo agrees to meet Lily, whom he finds, as Salzman has claimed, intelligent and honest. However, in addition to being past thirty-five and aging rapidly, Lily appears desperately in fear of Leo's profession. A result, the young man concludes, of Salzman’s misrepresentation. Their meeting results in Lily’s disappointment and Leo’s despair. Angry at first with Salzman, Leo comes to realize that it is his lack of self-knowledge and fear of finding himself incapable of affairs with women that have led him to Salzman in the first place.

With brutal reality and clarity, Leo sees that he has set limits in his relationships with both God and women, limits that have left him feeling empty and unloved. These insights, although terrifying and painful, serve as turning points in Leo's life as self-realization propels him toward understanding and possible change. After a week of inner conflict Leo recommits himself to his rabbinic goals and dedicates himself to obtaining love and perhaps even a bride. Once at peace,
Leo is visited again by Salzman. Leo confronts the matchmaker with his unfair misrepresentations, terminates their business agreement, and declares that it is now love he seeks.

In a final attempt to make a sale, Salzman gives Leo a packet of photographs with which to find love. After many days, Leo opens the package and examines the pictures. He sees many attractive women, but they all lack a certain quality that he desires. As the photos are returned to the packet, a small snapshot of a woman falls out; although not especially attractive, she seems to possess the soul, the depth, the suffering, the potential—and even a certain lack of goodness—that Leo feels he himself must attain. Hit hard by this recognition of a bond between them, Leo hurries across town in search of Salzman. Salzman reacts to Leo’s choice in inexplicable horror and pain. Claiming that the photo fell mistakenly into the packet, he rushes out the door, pursued by Leo, whose only chance for love and happiness is now threatened. Salzman tries to convince Leo that this woman is not a suitable match for him and eventually reveals the source of his anguish. As he informs the snapshot portrays a wild woman who disdains poverty, who Salzman now considers dead—his daughter, Stella. Tormented by this discovery, Leo finally concludes a plan: He will dedicate himself to God, and Stella to morality and goodness.

One day in a cafeteria Leo encounters with Salzman and reveals that he at last has love in his heart and implies that perhaps he can now be the one to provide a valuable service. Thus a meeting is arranged for Leo and Stella one spring evening on a street corner. Leo approaches Stella, who, although smoking a cigarette under a street lamp, is nevertheless shy and not without innocence. While Leo
energetically rushes forth, Salzman stands around the corner chanting the traditional Hebrew mourning prayers.

Through his experiences with the matchmaker, Leo discovers what kind of bride he does not want—someone who sees him not for who he is but for his position in society. As he attempts to define his priorities, Leo is caught in a web of contradictions: “apart from his parents, he had never loved anyone. Or perhaps it went the other way, that he did not love God so well as he might, because he had not loved man.” (58) Leo’s relationship with God constitutes a major part of his struggle for identity. When he accepts the shortcomings of his studies and himself, Leo is able to redefine his goals and begin advancement toward them. His major goal is to achieve love: not only love for God but also love for a woman.

In his efforts to meet and woo Stella, Leo is no longer content merely to take what Salzman has to offer—especially in a situation that causes the matchmaker much pain. Leo can now offer internal peace to both Salzman and himself through his involvement with Stella. Having come to terms with his own limits and with God, Leo is capable of fulfilling his need for love and of allowing himself to influence another's life. He has finally achieved the attributes of passion and compassion that allow him to open his heart and reach for someone else. During their final encounter in the cafeteria, Salzman barely recognizes Leo, who had grown a pointed beard and whose eyes were weighted with wisdom. Clearly, the reference is to a man who looks like and is a rabbi, not to a man studying to become one.

The story “The Magic Barrel” is almost entirely free of topical or historical references that might allow readers to place the events of
the story at a particular date, one detail establishes Leo’s encounter with Salzman as taking place roughly at the time of the story’s publication in the mid-fifties. Finkle is about to complete his six-year course of study to become a rabbi at New York City’s Yeshivah University. Yeshivah, in Hebrew, means a place of study. Yeshivah University is the oldest and most distinguished Jewish institution of higher learning in the United States. While its history goes back to 1886, the school was not named Yeshivah until 1945, when its charter was revised. At the end of the traditional six years of study to become a rabbi, then, Leo would probably be considering marriage sometime early in the 1950s.

As Theodore C. Miller says apart from Bernard Malamud’s attempt to colour his short story with the language and the manners of the Jewish ghetto, he also makes use of a cultural past that has a close relationship to Nathaniel Hawthorne and Blaise Pascal. He uses the same motif that Hawthorne has in *The Scarlet Letter* that is the love of the minister and the whore. As Hawthorne’s Dimmesdale, the man of God, was destroyed because he could not accept Hester and her emblem of sexual transgression, Malamud’s Leo Finkle, the young rabbinical student, is at first repelled when he senses the sexual history of Stella, the matchmaker’s daughter. Although he does not yet know specifically that she is a whore when he first sees her picture, his attraction is muffled. However Finkle, unlike Dimmesdale, comes to accept Stella for the reason that he accepts universal guilt. (Miller 43)

When Malamud adds that “[Finkle] shuddered, saying softly, it is thus with us all,” Finkle is well on his way to becoming a Dimmesdale redeemed. But Malamud’s minister is ultimately quite
different from Hawthorne’s. For Leo Finkle does not fall in love primarily for a reason—but rather he loves for no reason at all. Malamud—who echoes Pascal in several other stories too—is suggesting that “Le coeur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point”—one must love even if all the evidence denies the emotion. (Miller 43) Like Pascal, Malamud proposes that love is existential.

Though Salzman is Malamud’s spokesman in the story, then he only appears to be the comic stereotype of the Jewish marriage broker. Even though he has decided that his own daughter should be the bride of the young rabbinical student, he does not really believe in the matchmaker’s ethic that love is the product of reason. Salzman is the sage who would initiate Leo Finkle into the existential nature of love—but that is a peculiarly difficult task since Finkle is the eminently rational young man committed to the life of reason. The student wants to marry for the solid cause that it will prove beneficial to his professional status. He has even turned to the rabbinate, not for love of God, but because he is interested in the Talmudic law—rules of reason.

Therefore, in order to work his ends, Salzman must engage in a ruse—he initially enters into Finkle’s system of thought, offering him several young women who should prove highly attractive according to all the rules of logic. One has a father, a physician, ready to give a handsome dowry; another has a regular teaching license—the reasons derive from the middle-class Jewish ethic. But Finkle’s rational world fails him, for despite all the logical good inherent in these young ladies, he cannot fall in love with them. Instead, he becomes filled only with existential despair as he realizes the emptiness of his life—and of his religious calling. Only after he has exploded Finkle’s
system can Salzman make sure that Finkle sees Stella’s picture. But he must present her in a context so that it is absurd to marry her. And precisely because it is absurd, Finkle falls in love.

A naked reality becomes so visible when several critics have accepted literally the description of Stella as a ‘‘carnal young lady’’ and a ‘‘girl of the streets.’’ And indeed within the text, she evokes ‘‘a sense of having been used to the bone, wasted’’. Finkle has that ‘‘impression of evil’’ and Salzman, himself, describes his daughter as ‘‘a wild one—wild, without shame.’’ But the accuracy of these characterizations is most ambiguous since they are all subject to double meanings. That Stella has been ‘‘used to the bone’’ may mean only that she has suffered. That she evokes ‘‘an impression . . . of evil’’ may be interpreted not in a sexual sense, but in Hawthorne’s sense that all men bear human guilt. Salzman’s own statement may be part of his deception to complete Finkle’s initiation—and bring him to the marriage altar with his daughter. (Miller 44)

Just as Salzman only pretends to be a comic marriage broker who offers young women for rational cause, he must also pretend that his daughter is a whore, a girl whom there is no reason to marry.

Close to the end of the story Finkle himself recognizes that Salzman has perhaps planned this outcome from their first encounter. When Finkle finally encounters Stella, her purity is suggested by the whiteness of her dress and furthermore by the explicit statement that Finkle sees a look of ‘‘desperate innocence’’ in her eyes. Nevertheless more important, her innocence clarifies the puzzling ending when the reader is told that Salzman is chanting a prayer for the dead. In the orthodox Jewish ritual, a parent may in extreme cases enact the ritual of mourning for a child who has broken a primary
taboo. If Stella is really a trollop, her father, considering her and the rabbinical student to be a most unfit couple, is rejecting them both through his prayer.

If Salzman has planned the whole episode, then the matchmaker remembers the death of the old Leo who was incapable of love, but he also celebrates Leo’s birth into a new life. Salzman’s remark to Leo about Stella ‘‘if you can love her then you can love anybody’’ is ironically not a statement that disapprove his daughter as a social outcast. Rather he is suggests that if Leo can love Stella, he has unlocked his heart to mankind and God. He will have learned that the barrel in which Salzman keeps his pictures is then indeed a magic barrel, for love is a magic that cannot be explained by the normal laws of logic. (Miller 44)

Apparently, the story “Idiots First” is the dark mood of literary naturalism. It has realistic setting and effective Yiddish dialect. The various characters represent the failure of human values, and even more true of the several references to the sky and stars. Malamud combines realism and mysticism in such a way that does justice the powerful impact of “Idiots First.” The story begins with the stopping of Mendel’s clock as the old man awakens in fright. The importance of time in the story is foreshadowed in the opening paragraph when the reader is told that Mendel “wasted minutes sitting at the edge of the bed.” Once moving, he dresses, summons his son Isaac, and, pocketing a paper bag containing his modest savings, leads his son into the night.

As the old man looks very scared, he warns Isaac to avoid Ginzburg, who came to see Mendel the day before. Though Mendel
always refers Isaac as a boy, he is not the child as his father suppose. Rather, he is the “idiot” of the title, a thirty-nine-year-old man with the mind of a child. While facing his own death, Mendel tries to send Isaac by train to California, where he will live with his Uncle Leo.

The story depicts Mendel’s endeavours to raise train fare to secure Isaac's safety before his own time runs out. He tries to get the thirty-five dollars that he needs to make up Isaac's ticket to California by selling his watch. Despite Mendel's protestations that it cost him sixty dollars, the pawnbroker will allow him only eight dollars for the old watch. Though Mendel's desperation is obvious as he despairs of finding the money he needs, the moneylender ignores his pleas.

After this incident Mendel and Isaac visit a wealthy philanthropist, Mr. Fishbein. He also proves that he is hard-hearted than the pawnbroker. As he insists that his “fixed policy” is to give money only to organized charities. Though he does offer to feed them in his kitchen, the philanthropist throws the pair out of his house with the advice that Mendel should put Isaac in an institution.

Mendel’s other option is to see an old rabbi, to whom he appeals for charity. Although his wife insists that they cannot help, the old rabbi, though he has no money, gives Mendel his new fur-lined coat. The wife tries to snatch it back, but Mendel tears it from her. As Mendel and Isaac run into the street, the wife chasing them, the old rabbi diverts her attention by falling to the floor in an apparent heart attack.

In his attempt to collect the sum, it is very late when Mendel buys a ticket for Isaac and they hurry to the train. The train is still
standing in the station, but the gate to the platform is shut down. A heavy bearded man in uniform guards the entrance and refuses to allow them to pass. He tells Mendel that they are too late and it is already past twelve. Though Mendel begs for a favour, the guard heartlessly refuses. He says he has already shown enough favours to him and now the train is gone. By recognizing his antagonist for the first time as the mysterious Ginzburg, Mendel begs again: “For myself . . . I don’t ask a thing. But what will happen to my boy?” (23) Isaac is not his responsibility, Ginzburg tells Mendel, and when the old man asks him what his responsibility is, he says, “To create conditions. To make happen what happens.” (23) Later he claims that he serves the “law,” and when Mendel asks which law, he says, “the cosmic universal law.” (23). This very conversation reveals the traits naturalism that echoes throughout the story.

When his pleas proved unsuccessful, Mendel attacks Ginzburg, but he threatens that he would freeze him to death. As Mendel’s life fades, he thinks only of dying without helping Isaac. Mendel sees his own terror reflected in Ginzburg’s eyes, while Ginzburg sees his terrible wrath mirrored in Mendel’s eyes. Suddenly, Ginzburg “beheld a shimmering, starry, blinding light that produced darkness.” In the grip of some greater power, Ginzburg allows Mendel to put Isaac on the train. After he is settled and the train is moving, Mendel returns to the platform to see what has become of Ginzburg.

Thus the story explores the power of love to change the universe, though throughout the story, the world appears bleak, cold, and dark, and the mood of the tale is one of despair. In a world
Filled with the mercenary pawnbroker, the heartless philanthropist, and the greedy wife of the old rabbi, Mendel seems foolish even to hope he might save Isaac, but it is finally his hope in the face of desperate odds that turns the events at the end of the story. Though Mendel’s time has run out, some power greater than death makes Ginzburg’s to help Mendel to complete the task for which he lives.

In the final scene of the story, Ginzburg identifies himself with a mechanical cosmic law that connects him as well as everyone else. He becomes the representative of a meaningless universe in which human beings can only play out their destinies against a background of impersonal forces or laws. Cold and heartless, Ginzburg, as Mendel tells him, does not “understand what it means” proved that he is human being and his world is different from the other’s selfish, unfeeling, greedy and loveless world. His opposite is the old rabbi; he says to Mendel, “God will give you,” and offers his own new coat to help Isaac. The rabbi has faith in God, but he also acts himself with charity and love, proving that these qualities are not so dead as other characters make them seem. It is through men such as the old rabbi that God works and by their faith that He lives.

Mendel, a long-suffering old man, might be expected to welcome death as an end to a painful life. His love for Isaac has been the meaning of his life, however, and his determination to see his son safe gives him strength to go on even in the face of the inevitable. When he sacrifices his last strength in a final attempt to get Isaac to the train, the power of love in the universe is revealed.
Tommy Castelli a major character of the story ‘The Prison’ is a worker in the candy store of prison, since a decade. His original name is Tony but his wife, Rosa, dislikes it so she renames as ‘Tommy’. He was born and raised near this store. He dreamed of escaping from the tenement in which he was brought up, but by the time he was sixteen he had dropped out of a vocational school, where he trained to be a shoemaker, and was running out of options.

When he learns that there is little promise for his future, Tommy begins to run with a gang. As it has the money to buy silver café espresso urns and television sets and hosts the pizza parties that impressed the girls they admired, Tommy attracts toward the gang. Their money derives from shady dealings, among which is a liquor store holdup. In the meantime, Tommy’s father arranges his marriage with Rosa Agnelli, whose father agreed to bankroll a small candy store in Greenwich Village for the newlyweds. However, disgusting with this decision, Tommy fled to Texas, where he bums around for a while.

Finally, when he returns to New York, his friends and relatives convinces that he should return home to marry Rosa and set up the store Mr. Agnelli had proffered. Thus his father’s marriage plans materializes, however, largely because Tommy fails to object. Now, ten years later, Tommy is twenty-nine and he finds his life a crushing bore. He regards the candy store, above which he and Rosa live, as his personal prison. Day after day, he works from eight in the morning until almost midnight, taking only one break, an hour in the afternoon when he goes upstairs to nap. Rosa shatters Tommy's plan, She obviously dominates him; he accepts her domination passively, as indicated by his accepting a new name at Rosa's behest.
Thus Malamud successfully builds a foreboding quality into the story by referring obliquely to Tommy’s early illegal activities and to his Uncle Dom’s imprisonment. He gives few details about either but makes it apparent that the spectre of imprisonment looms constantly. The irony of the story, however, is that Tommy, as his fate has decreed, is imprisoned as much as any convicted criminal.

Thus, the analysis carried out in this chapter reveals that Malamud is a significant author of the American Literary tradition of Social Realism.