

## **Modern Short Story Women Writers: An Analytical Study**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

However, the Indian short story in English is a very recent addition to the literary arena. Indian English literature first appeared in the 20th century, and Indian English short stories are about the same age. India is a country with a rich cultural legacy, therefore there is a vast variety of subject matter to choose from. Regardless of language, every Indian has a treasure in their heart of some extremely well-known folklore, tales, and legends of kings, gods, and goddesses. But under the influence of the western practitioners of this form, the short tale in the proper sense developed in the modern era. The justification of the present attempt is based on the premise that although so many stray articles as “Women Short Story Writers in Indian Writing in English” in the modern context. An experimental study was undertaken where the data collected from secondary sources and then a thematic analysis was conducted. The results showed that these writers' stories reveal the fact that in depicting the plight of women in Indian society, if they emphasize on the one hand Indian women's attitude of rebellion and revolt in the wake of their realization of their new identity and status in the context of a changing socio-economic and socio-political scenario, on the other hand their vulnerability to the setbacks brought on by their attempts to relate to other people on a social level,

**Keywords:** Short story, women writer, English literature, thematic analysis, socio-economic.

### **Introduction**

The art of storytelling is as old as man and it antedates since man was able to mold his feelings in the shape of words. It would not be wrong to say that the short story is a form of fiction. Where as long as fiction, i.e., novel is the whole ‘loaf of bread’, the shorter fiction, i.e., short story is a single slice having all its ingredients, essence and quality compact within.

Both varieties of fiction—the novel and the short story share their lineage, and are the kindred branches of literature and both are siblings. As William Henry Hudson puts it: The short story, therefore, not as a rival to, or as a substitute for, the novel, but as another kind of prose fiction, which has grown up besides the novel, and has now its recognized and important place in literature (Metcalf, 2019).

In the 19th century, impressionism in literature led to the creation of the short story as a literary genre. The genre was first promoted by Rudyard Kipling in England, although Nicolai Vasilievitch Gogol and Edgar Allen Poe are credited with starting it in Russia and America, respectively. Similar to other literary genres, the short story has become a potent and well-liked vehicle of literary expression.

Due to the pioneering efforts of writers like Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Guy De Maupassant, Sir Walter Scott, Balzac, Turgenev, Chekhov, Gogol and many other European and American writers, it has acquired the status of a distinguished literary genre (Mallery, 2022).

In 20th century literary scene it seems to have further consolidated its reputation because of the contribution of English writers like John Galsworthy, George Moore, Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, James Joyce, Somerset Maugham and many other practitioners of this form (Hawthorne, 2022).

Short story is by definition short, having its ancestry in fable, fairy-tale, parables, in the tales of Chaucer and Boccaccio. Among all literary forms it is the simplest and most popular means of communicating a way of life: A short story concentrates on a single character in a single situation at a single moment (Eastman, 2020).

Similar is the view of Brander Mathews. According to him the short story seals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation.

## **Problem statement**

The issue to be addressed in this study is to examine and highlight the accomplishments of contemporary modern Indian women short story writers in English in terms of their comprehension of the psyche and plight of Indian womanhood, with special emphasis on some of the major contemporary practitioners in the genre of short story in relation to the contemporary era.

## **Aims of the study**

Should be two aims no more

- 1- To analyze the genre of short story
- 2- To analyze the works of modern short story women writers

## **Questions of the study**

- 1- What are the aspects of short story genre?
- 2- What are the literary style of modern short story women writers?

## **Significance of the study**

The primary significance of the study is that it analyzes the literary works of modern-day women short story writers. The short story genre has witnessed drastic changes and analyzing the modern works makes this study significant for not only current readers but also for future researchers working on similar field of study.

## **Literature review**

In this age of hustle-bustle people do not find sufficient time to devote for long-stretched reading, instead they wish to cater their aesthetic appetite utmost in a minimum time span. Hence, here short story proves to be a time saving scheme that one could relish optimally in just a short duration.

The short story can be anything from the death of a horse to a young girl's first love-affair, from the static sketch without plot to the swiftly moving machine or bold action and

climax, from the prose poem painted rather than written to the place of straight reportage in which style, color and elaboration have no place, from the piece which catches, like a cobweb, the light subtle iridescence of emotions that can never be really captured or measured to the solid tale in which all emotion, all action, all reaction is measured, fixed, glazed and finished like a well-built house with three coats of shining and enduring paint. In the infinite complexity lies the reason while the short story has never been adequately defining (Pereira, 2019).

The theme of the short story is not restricted to cater only a clique but to men and women in general. Maugham always favored themes which had a wide interest. Maugham says about the subject to develop the theme, that life's plenty is before the writers. They can collect their contents from it. Regarding the purpose and the art of the short story Somerset Maugham thinks that:

The short story must have definite design which includes a point of departure, a climax and a point of tests; in other words, it must have a plot. The plot pins down and presents a piece of life within the confines of its own construction: in so doing it exhibits life to us, as it were under a microscope and enables to view it more clearly than we can do it the raw.

Edgar Allan Poe, who is often known as the originator of the short story as an established genre, defines what he called "the prose tale" as:

"It is a narrative that must have just enough room to design its single effect neither too much nor too little" (Freeman, 2017).

Poe has emphasized on the unity of impression and singleness of purpose in the short story. He says that a good short story is one where no single word can be added or taken away without injuring its structure and content. It is so because everything that is introduced in it is with a purpose. It is compendious.

The short story is not just a shortened novel, it has all the constituting element of the fiction, i.e., plot, character and setting, but they are not as extensively dealt as in a novel.

## **Methodology**

The resources obtained for this study have mainly consisted of academic articles and previous research related to the study subject choice. The literature has mainly been retrieved via databases such as Google Scholar and other similar sources. Keywords used to find relevant previous research or information on the subject has largely been: short story, women writer, modern writers, and Indian women English writers. Since the study has also obtained information from physical books have been loaned from the University Library.

The collected data was then analysed using an experimental process by conducting a thematic analysis. The themes selected are based on the recent trends. The themes were finalized after cross analysing them with the underlying plots and sub plots of modern-day short stories.

## **Findings of the Thematic Analysis**

With regards to the tenets of the short story the theme, character, plot, situation, language etc. are important. The story must have a theme, which is congruent with its moral. It is the underlying thought that pervades a short story, which makes it something more than a

mere narration of events. The theme will have a vital significance for it is capable of producing in the reader an emotional uplift and an intellectual satisfaction (Duarte, 2017).

With regards to characterization it is as important as the theme. The author gives a brief description of the character in the beginning of the story itself. He gives him a name and gives a brief physical description but it should not be built by what the author says about him. The character should reveal his/her individual traits by what he does, how he thinks, the way he talks, the gestures he makes, the philosophy he expresses etc. The character description is not too lengthy and it is often woven into the story as the story moves forward. The character thinks, the way he talks, the gestures he makes, the philosophy he expresses etc. The character description is not too lengthy and it is often woven into the story as the story moves forward. The character should also be visualized according to the theme and situation of the story. If the writer wants to write about a New England farmer he should paint a word picture in accordance with the general description of the character somewhat differently from other persons of the same class.

In some stories situation plays a more important role than the character. These stories are called atmosphere dominant stories where the situation or an event dominates the whole story than a character. Eudora Wetley rightly observes of the atmosphere in a story. Thus, “We are bearing in mind that the atmosphere in a story may be its chief gloiy-and for another thing, that it may be giving us an impression altogether contrary to what lies under it” (Farae, 2017).

The narrative technique also plays an important role in the short story. The short story writer puts forward his/her theme in the story in three ways, in first person, third person, or in an omniscient way. The first-person narration in other words is called authorial narration, which creates a close rapport with the reader. The storyteller strikes a direct contact with the reader, for instance, in Updike’s “Wife-Wooing” the story is narrated in first person and present tense, it greatly enhances the reader’s sense of immediacy. The reader identifies closely with the narrator, who is telling and seeing it all—inevitably in a light favorable to himself.

In the third person narration the contact with the reader may be less but the scope for understanding the situation is wider. Sometimes it also creates a tension between what the characters do not know completely, between the external action and the internal reactions, between the grossness of gesture and the refinement of thought, between what really is and what the character thinks. About the third person narration as is seen in his short story “The Beast in the Jungle”, Henry James felt, “that the most effective point of view for a story was to submerge the storyteller into a character he called the “central intelligence” (Saint, 2019).

Dialogue also plays an important role in the short story; every short story has a certain percentage of dialogue, which depends entirely on the writer. As Abrams rightly observes, in a character dominant story, “Nothing more happens than an encounter and a conversation between two people.” In Hemingway’s, “A Clear Well Lighted Plays” a dialogue between two waiters disclose the story of an old man, who is always in a drunken mood. Dialogue used in the short story is qualitative rather than quantitative. The character always speaks about something that is relevant to the story’s problem and not about some distant incident that is irrelevant to the subject. Dialogue is always relevant to the character and to the situation. Thus, all these tenets of the short story are to be developed well in order to create a good short story (Gidla, 2017).

In the distant past, generations were bound together by oral narrations in varying spacio-temporal locations. The roots of the modern storyteller lie in the century’s old, unwritten

part of history, whether he revisits it or creates it. A storyteller thus has always been finding a solace in his/her society regardless of time whether the story is an account of events, a version of the past, a narration of some supernatural events, a description of an experience, a riddle, or an anecdote. The tale of the present and of the mysterious past has, at all times, enamored the listener as the prime source of entertainment, and knowledge. Stories differ if one moves from one place to another, the logic and the manner of the telling also changes as we move from one country to the other, but the story in general aims to fulfil the same basic social and individual needs (Jaishankar, 2020).

All these constituents are distilled keeping a balance so that the desired effect and impression is not diluted nor impart the aspired intensity. The plot in the short story is confined to the essentials, the character to absolute essentials and the setting is restricted to be a foil. According to the need the constitution may vary, i.e., a story may stand alone on the pillars of plot with only a plaster of setting and character or simply a portrait of a character could be painted with plot and settings to give a complimentary touch or with the setting all alone as a pivot on which plot and characters swivel.

Hudson further explains this rule more clearly contrasting the short story to the novel:

“...In the case of the novel, so many different elements may weave into the texture that it may be difficult to detect any central organizing principle, while at times analysis may reveal two or more quite distinct pivots of interest. No such catering of attention can be permitted in the story. Here, on the contrary, the germinal idea must be perfectly clear and the interest arising out of it must never be complicated by any other consideration. Singleness of aim and singleness of effect are, therefore, the two great canons by which we have to try the value of a short story as a piece of art” (King, 2017).

While discussing the difference in art and technique of a novel from that of a short story it has been observed that:

The art and technique of the short story are quite distinct from that of the novel. The novel portrays life on a broader canvas than the short story and displays its complexity and solidity. The story cannot be called a condensed novel, nor can a short novel be called a long story. The novel moves in time, while short story remains static more or less. The characters of the short story are live figures projected on a screen by a magic lantern, while the characters of the novel exist both in time and space and reveal themselves by their action and movement. The characters of a novel are four dimensional, whereas the short story presents them in two dimension or utmost in three dimensions. Moreover, a short story can exist even without character, but novel cannot (Clifton, 2017).

Thus, the novel and short story are two distinct kinds of art and the one cannot supplant the other. The short story is said to have developed from classical romance and medieval narrative forms as *fabliaux*, the *novella* and the *exemplum*. It is usually less than 15000 words in length and differs from a tale on account of its tautness. Whereas it also differs from a formula story, *Conte* (Fr.) and a *novella*.

A formula story is a dramatic script written to a preset pattern, often to fit editorial policy, comply with contest rules, meet readers' expectations etc.

Besides, the *Conte* (Fr.) is a usually concise and pointed short story. On the other hand, the genre, that was introduced and exploited in Germany by Goethe under the name of *novelette*

or novella, is a form which stands in between the tautness of a short story and expansiveness of the novel. These are the narratives that are directly or indirectly influenced by Italian stories like Boccaccio's Decameron. As Lee T. Lemon puts it:

“The novelette is an intermediate form between the short story and the novel, usually ranging between 15,000 and 30,000 words (Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*). Although often bawdy and comic, the subject matter of the novella may be serious: the treatment of details, but not necessarily the total effect, is realistic” (Harmon, 2021).

Indian short story in English, however, is not much older on the literary scene. Indian English fiction originated in the twentieth century, Indian English short story is of the similar age. The short story in English kept a low profile till the first half of this century but it emerged as a popular literary' genre in the mid-eighties.

India being a land highly rich in cultural heritage has a wide spectrum of subject matter of every color and shade in abundance. Every Indian has a treasure of some very popular folklores, fables, stories of kings, Gods and Goddesses in their heart irrespective of language.

No doubt, the early short story writers of India looked towards ancient classics as Panchtantra, Jataka Tales, Brihatkatha, Kathasaritsagar, Yoga-Vashistha, Dasakumara Charita and the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as source of inspiration. But there was a vivid impact on Indian literary minds of the foreign writers. Due to this impact the Indian short story writers in English portrayed the social scenes realistically, and also helped to develop the education of English. It was the time when the journals were born and in turn helped in the development of a crisp and natural prose style. It also developed the taste as well as awareness for contemporary social situations (Lazreg, 2018).

But the short story in the proper sense flourished in the modern age under the influence of the foreign practitioners of this form. There has been no Indian who has not taken in these western stories at some time or the other. As a matter of fact, every Indian is nourished on them since his childhood.

He is never tired of their repetition from generation to generation. Their contents, message, style of narration have been imbibed in his creative sensibility. Our leading writers are no exception to this fact. Indian short story writers, however, not only show a deep impression of the West but also are guided by their own tradition of storytelling and literature available in it. To supplement it some quotations are as under:

Literary legends of Bengal as Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee were highly influenced by European writers as Sir Walter Scott. Besides these writers, most of the short fiction written in the Indian languages, as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali or Tamil also seem to be under the influence of such fictional masters as Tchechov, Tolstoy, Maupassant, O' Henry and many other European and American writers (Flint, 2020).

The Indian short story writers in English showed predilection of Maupassant tradition because his stories share certain basic qualities of ancient Indian tales such as uninterrupted narration, preservation of curiosity, and the clear picture of life. The Indian writer was influenced by a sense of realism and an understanding of the human situation in a society through a firm character delineation in terms of his environment.

The purpose of the Indian writer is to create a real image of India with its greatness and smallness, its cities and villages, its men and women, its religion and superstitions, its wisdom and ignorance. The main aim was to portray a picture of human nature and giving expression to man's ambition and aspirations in this world.

Towards the end of the century in 1898, a collection of short stories by Kamla Sattianandan titled *Stories from Indian Christian Life* published and was the first brick laid in the foundation of Indian English short story. This was followed by some occasional work to enhance moral and national consciousness (Savarkar, 2020).

Although the early writers of this genre as A.Madhaviah, A.S.P.Ayer, S.K.Chettur, Nagrajan were among the cultivators of the form but there was a deficiency of originality and depth in concept and characterization. These writers looked towards Western models for ideas imitating their artistic sense.

Apart from this, in the mid-thirties of twentieth century there emerged some genuine artistic fervor in the genre. The famous triumvirate of Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao with their remarkable works appeared as the milestones on the literary canvas. These writers too, however, displayed technical efficacy of the West while practicing their craft but the mark of their creative genius cannot be missed. The following words of Mulkraj Anand are quite significant in this regard:

"I sought to create a new kind of fable which extends the old Indian story form into a new age, without the overt moral lessons of the ancient Indian short stories, but embodying its verse and including the psychological understanding of the contemporary period" (Jeffery, 2018).

Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, in spite of the use of foreign medium for their creative expression, have molded the language according to Indian sensibility enriched with fluidity and suppleness. These writers mingled their artistic sensitivity with tempo of Indian life to present a distinctive and colorful expression. H.E. Bates comments on this spirit of Indian writers in English as follows:

"In the nineties Kipling was writing of India from a viewpoint that was so popular and so widely endorsed that it might well have seemed to the empire-drunken Britisher of the day, to give the only right and proper view; in 1940 young Indian native writers have something to say of their own country from a viewpoint so unexpected, so unheard of, and so real that Kipling seems guilty of nothing but plain falsification" (Narayan, 1970).

Raja Rao in this regard says:

"I think I am interested in making the English language yield to the Indian needs. And that is a very hard task both in terms of rhythm and associated values" (Linderman, 2017).

Some of our leading writers in Indian English show a significant impact on them of the Western practitioners of the short story in terms of technique. As far as themes are concerned Indo- Anglian writers have stressed precisely on a study of interior landscape of the character and the portrayal of social scenario.

Along with the triumvirate some other writers like Manjeri Isvaran, Khuswant Singh, K.A.Abbas, Bhabani Bhattacharya have also made their mark in handling this form. These and

many more writers like Chaman Nahal, G.D.Khosla, Ruskin Bond, Manoj Das present a picture of what they have seen through their creative eye with same virtuosity as any other British writer would have. Because of their excellence in the creative use of English language they have made their place in the prestigious Western media and periodicals (Mansfield, 2017).

When we attempt a survey of the Indian literary scenario we find that the Indian short story in English appears to have taken a definite shape by 1920's and is about eighty-five years old and hence today has developed into a distinct and most significant form in the field of Indian writing in English.

A conscious effort has been continually put in by legendary writers, in giving the short story a shape so as to genuinely impart Indian scenes, thoughts, psychology, and culture to the global readers.

The Indian short story in English has been successful in exhibiting realistic portrait of India with its genuine shades in a perfect balance without being exaggerated or extenuate. As predicted by the critics around 40 years back the future of the Indian short story in English has proved to be promising (Metcalf, 2019).

The pioneers of the form exhibit a strong creative urge in them and have deliberately chosen English as a natural medium to display their creative talents. Having the educated elite in their mind, who have a broader outlook and hence are expected to appreciate their views, these writers have chosen English as a medium.

One thing that is found common in all the early practitioners is, that they all have depicted the men and women who moved around them, the conditions which has given them their distinct personalities, and have delineated natural scene in their story. A comprehensive view of the Indian short story in English reveals considerable variety in its themes and subjects (Hawthorne, 2022).

The early writers, however, approached the story as a means of reform, focusing the attention of the readers on certain major problems of the day, on the need to educate the illiterate masses. The did active tone in the early stories is too loud to be missed.

Besides the stories aiming at social reform, experiments were also done with horror stories and thus the outcome was some gripping specimens. The Freedom Movement was an obvious theme for the early writers to produce a few memorable pieces (Pereira, 2019).

If during the pre-Independence days the early writers mainly dealt with the impact on society of a blind adherence to tradition which has endowed the Indians with its confining caste system and the master slave relationship of the man and the woman, during the post-Independence period they have added to these evils others like corruption, social injustice, hypocrisy and administrative shortcomings etc.

Almost every aspect of Indian social life, in its welcome as well as unwelcomed features have been touched with mild satire or humor by the short story writers in English. Apart from the more conspicuous themes referred to above topic like the heartlessness of officialdom, the irresponsible set up or the senselessness of the methods adopted in certain governmental operations are also explored (Duarte, 2017).



The generation of young unknown writers demonstrate a refreshing yearning to capture reality without decreasing its value. They exhibit a very high degree of technical skill to impress their readers with an unusual courage successfully. They confront experiences in all their great variety. They are bold in commenting on sex and the contemporary human conditions directly, forcibly and strongly.

Indian women are playing an intrinsic role in society and in every walk of life. They have not set-apart themselves from this field of creativity. Many women writers have paid their share of contribution in the genre since Independence and still continuing to do so. Attiah Hussain, Nargis Dalai, Cornelia Sorabji, Ela Sen, R.P.Jhabvala, Anita Desai are some of the practitioners of this form (Saint, 2019).

The women short story writers are less in number and those who made their contribution to the Indian short story in English are novelists primarily. Besides these, several other writers as Raji Narsimhan, Sunita Jain, Dina Mehta, Anita Mehta and many more of the present century are exhorting their creative talent in the field.

## Conclusion

The contemporary short story writers, chiefly the women writers are exploring not only the most subtle and unexplored regions of women psyche but also projecting glimpses of purely domestic situation and very intimate pictures of man and woman relationship, and family crisis etc. In the subsequent section we will try to consider the contribution of women short story writers in English in order to show how they are not lagging far behind their male counterparts so far as their understanding of human psyche, relations and its crisis is concerned.

The writers of the present era have learned to be indigenous, impressive and simple. Along with it they know how to handle the most delicate and subtle emotions deftly. They very realistically portray the new picture of society with all its lights and shades, ups and downs, rights and wrongs strongly.

## Recommendations

The Indian short story in English, is not much older on the literary scene. Indian English novel flourished in the twentieth century, and Indian English short story which has been described as a by-product emerged as a popular literary genre in the post-independence phase especially in the seventies. In fact, it is in the seventies that all the major women writers had made their appearance. By this time the tradition of Indian short story in English was well and firmly established.

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