

# Indian English short stories and the contribution of Jhumpa Lahiri

## Abstract

This paper highlights on the Indian English short stories and the contribution of Jhumpa Lahiri. A short story is like a lyric and should contain one thought, one development, one study and one action. Other prerequisites of the short story are that it must be short, capable to being read at one sitting it should aim at a single or unique effect, be compressed assume the aspect of verisimilitude and give the impression of finality.

Jhumpa has shown serious concern with the depiction of women in literature and have expressed anxiety regarding the traditional positioning of women. Woman is the central figure in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri. Primarily, the works of Jhumpa Lahiri show their concern with the social and cultural injustice meted out to women who are marginalized and exploited. She has written about the Indian women, the problem faced by them in the male-governed social set up, the role assigned to them in the society. Women she feels must be vindicated in their self assertion and in their demand for dignity and self respect.

**Keyword:** Self-respect, Traditional position, Cultural injustice, Unique effect.

## Introduction

The reader is inclined to regard the short story as a novel in miniature. The short story, however deals with a distinctive art and the perfect short story is the most difficult and unrealizable of literary forms. In it the characters must be made to come alive and they must cause the story to unfold and complete itself in approximately 10,000 words. The importance of the short story as a literary form is not sufficiently realized. In writing a short story there should be a definite area within which the story works. The following extract from the dictionary of world literature refers clearly to the University of Storytelling amongst primitive peoples of the world. The plot, character, description and other elements must conform to the smaller canvas.

“The art of storytelling is native to all the ancient peoples, but perhaps the Egyptians were the first to endow random tales with a permanent literary form a collection of short prose narratives from ancient Egypt contains stories from approximately 4000 BC.”<sup>1</sup>

These parameters of the art of writing are clearly applicable to the short story from which expresses strong personal feelings within the canvas of the literary construct. The objective of a good short story should be to make real people act in a probable way using natural language.

The short story also seems to impose on the narrative certain conditions like intensify, concentration, suggestiveness and surprise. But it allows a variety of approaches from fantasy and fairy tale at one end to journalism and social documentation at the other. The short story sticks to the traditional rules of the craft. It is infact, short end not a version of a novella or an abridged novel. It revolves around one or at the most two or three characters. It is limited in time and space and does not span decades or spread out in different locales. It also has a well-formulated central theme and does not touch upon several topics or clashes of personalities. It has a distinct beginning, a buildup and usually a dramatic end frequently an unexpected one which sums up the story.

It was in 1898 that a collection of short stories by an Indian writer in English was first published stories from Indian Christian life by Kamala Sathianand was introduced then by a Madras publisher to a comparatively small reading public.

To present the picture of the short story in India we can say that when Kamala Sathianand started writing in English She found the short story in an almost perfectly finished form in the ancient classics, a form which exactly suited her purpose for the purpose in those short stories was also the communication of an idea as clearly and as simply as possible, the

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dissemination of eternal values and truths Which when properly received would stand the reader and listener in good stead. If primarily the Indian short story writer sought inspiration in his ancient Classics he has also come under the influence of the short story writers of the west to a considerable degree.

When the Indian short story writer in English began writing, he took to the form not so much because he was interested in it as a literary form as because he knew that of all the forms it was the simplest and the most popular means of communicating a way of life and he was interested in conveying this in a language understood by many. The analytical method and the psychological approach to the study of characters and situations is naturally in keeping with the twentieth century mode of living. These two features of the modern English short story have been adopted by almost every writer. Edgar Allan Poe said: "A short story is a prose narrative requiring from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal."<sup>2</sup>

The English short story in India comes into its own during the Gandhian era but it could not ignore the impact of the west "The Short story proper in India is an offshoot of Western literary impact."<sup>3</sup>

But the Indian mind has ventured into creative exercise that produced remarkable short stories. Winternitz observes. As "Tales, tables and stories belong to the best production of the Indian mind."<sup>4</sup>

Among the well known short story writers are Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Jhumpa Lahiri. In the short story no strictly detailed plot or elaborate character delineation is required but the story on strictly detailed plot or elaborate character delineation is required but the story must be in conformity with the limited canvas and must arouse interest by portraying some aspect of the human element. The above mentioned writers reveal a humanistic core in their stories while retaining their essentially feminist stance. The women short story writers of recent times select precisely those themes that give their writing vividness and compelling power to arouse and disturb. The female subjects destabilize our notion of what is female and feminine and dislocate given Indian cultural and social relation. Woman is the central figure in the works of woman short story writer of today and they present the predicament of women with a fine, feminine sensibility. A typically feminine woman grows in the course of the story and acquires traits of a feminist. Like Simone de Becuvior the women writers feel that "Woman is a female to the extent that she feels herself as such."<sup>5</sup>

Among the contemporary Indian female writers writing in English Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Jhumpa Lahari top the list of those who have shown serious concern with the depiction of women in literature and have expressed anxiety regarding the traditional positioning of women. Primarily, the works of Jhumpa Lahiri show their concern with the social and cultural injustice meted out to women who are marginalized and exploited. She has written about the Indian women, the problem faced by them in the male-governed social set up, the role assigned to them in the society, the prejudiced

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attitude of men towards them and the treatment of women as objects of sex. She presents women in their deprived state in society and showcases their position and role in the man woman relationship. She also examines the Indian woman as a stereotyped wife, as a prostitute, as a child-bearer and as an object to please and allure men by her physical charms. Even the first reading of her stories reveals the shameful attitude of men towards women and their obsessive desire for sex.<sup>3</sup> Women she feels must be vindicated in their self assertion and in their demand for dignity and self respect.

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