

Short Story: A Perfect Form of Writing: With Special Reference to

Nergis Dalal's *The Nude*

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ABSTRACT

*Literature is the soul of human beings. It distinguishes human beings from all other beings. There are different forms of writing and Short Story is one of them. Short Story Writing is a seminal form of writing and the purpose of short story is to impart knowledge and to convey message to its readers. This paper is an attempt to discuss Short Story as a form of writing and the vital role which it plays in Indian Writing in English and an attempt is made to make this clear with the help of the collection of short story of Nergis Dalal's *The Nude*.*

Keywords: Short Story, message, theme, purpose, society, problems

Literature is a powerful way of expressing emotions, imparting knowledge, spreading awakening and pouring light on contemporary issues. Literature is the mirror of the society and it reflects the contemporary issues. The purpose of literature is to convey message and to make people aware of happenings around them and the best thing about it is that it is done in a lighter manner where people take it up as a source of entertainment and it conveys a message to them and it forces them to think about the evils of society.

There have been various genres of literature and Short Story is one of them. It is one of the most powerful forms which not only entertains the readers but also educates.

A short Story always serves the readers with good thoughts and it helps in developing their critical faculty. It involves the readers and they can associate themselves with the story. It is a link between the readers and the society. G.H.Mair says:

The faculty for telling stories is the oldest artistic faculty in the world and the deepest implanted in the heart of man. Before, the rudest cave-pictures were scratched on the stone, the story-teller, it is not unreasonable to suppose, was plying this trade.(12)

Nergis Dalal is a prolific writer who has contributed a lot to the Indian Literature. Her anthology of short stories *The Nude* is a perfect example of beauty of short story writing. One can easily find all the attributes of short story in her collection. Each story serves a purpose and readers are left with a message to ponder over. We can find compelling issues in her stories. She talks about the condition of women in society. She pours light on the role of women as wives, daughters and mothers. The women in her stories are strong and readers can easily associate themselves with her characters. Her story "The French Wife" is a beautiful description of Indian wife who is the beauty of house and example of sacrifice. The same dilemma and sacrifice can be seen in the story "Christmas Means Love". Mr.Mehra in the story "The French Wife" was shocked to know that Mr.Kapoor's new French Wife was not comfortable with her new life style and was going back to her motherland as we come to know, " He looked at his wife --- fat, comfortable, always there for him."(11)This is a beautiful description of Indian Woman who sacrifices everything for the sake of marriage.

Her stories are full of various themes as she talks about superstitions and old beliefs also in stories like “The Sacrifice”, “The Silver Stallion”, “The Temple Bells”, “The Temple of Shiva” and “The Seller of Mantras”. Thus, it can be said that short stories strike on a reader’s mind and heart because of its strong theme. It makes the readers think about the topic which is generally picked up from the society. According to Edgar Allan Poe, “A writer must conceive with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out.”(54) Further he continues:

..Then invents such incidents and combines such events- as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tends not to the out-bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design and by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction.(4-5)

Three ways of writing a short story are told by Louis Stevenson :

There are only three ways of writing a story—you may take a plot and fit characters in it or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it or you may take a certain atmosphere and get actions and persons to express and realize it.(358)

This classification is appropriate in context of Dalal’s collection as readers may find characters which fit into the plot. In the story “The Intruder” and “The Temple of Shiva”, there is an atmosphere, characters and persons are taken into consideration to continue it successfully. “A Taste of Blood “ is a powerful presentation of one idea :Superiority of male and the characters play best of their roles to serve it. It ends with a heavy message. John Cournos observes:

A short story may, indeed, be long, even quite long, if conceptionally and structurally it creates a concentratedness of mood and single-mindedness of purpose which permit of no digression or deviation, no over-running of the frame.(3-4)

This is true in context of *The Nude* where each story delivers one single notion. It can be the theme of Indian Woman’s sacrifice, age-old myths, blind-faith, nostalgia and experiences of spinsters. “Ranjit’s Wife” is the story of an Indian wife who has strongly decided to live her life which she never did earlier and now is ready to live it to the fullest when she comes to know about her husband’s affair. “The Seller of Mantras” is a direct attack on the belief-system of Indians where an unemployed boy gets employment in the form of an amulet-seller. Thetreau Paul says:

While Story telling is as old as man himself, the short story, as an art form, is of relatively recent vintage for a long time, the short story papered only as either an illustration of a moral lesson(as in fables or parables from the new testament) or as one incident in a long adventurous account of the deeds and exploit of some heroic figure(as in *The Iliad*, *The Song of Ronald* or *The Arthurian Legends*).(1)

In *The Nude* where the theme progresses with the help of characters and situations. Continuity of thoughts and dialogue play a vital role in all of Dalal’s stories. “Roses ,Roses, All the Way” is a luminous approach of writing where one comes to know about the reality of belief system and it can be seen as a satire also. The theme is perfectly delivered when the female protagonist decides to do away with her thought-process and assures herself of a better life style and she books a hotel room and enjoys tea and food which was denied to her in the Ashram. According to Edgar Allan Poe, “A writer must conceive with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out.”(54)

Short Story contains characters, setting, plot, theme and conflict and all these elements are accumulated in a superb manner in Dalal’s volume. Characterization can be seen as the most important part of this writing. Characters play vital role in the formation of story. The characters of Mrs. Kapoor, Mr.Triana, Monk, Mrs.Oliver, Meena, Miss Malik and Lila are so wonderfully crafted by Nergis Dalal that they seem real.

Setting is the time and location where the story is set. It gives a background and it forms the atmosphere. All the proposed stories are set in different time and location. Some of them are set at homes, some in ashram, some in village area and some at parties or fairs.

Plot is the order of events in a story. It gives coherence to the story. This has played remarkable role in Dalal's stories as "Silver Stallion" progresses gradually and creates suspense to the readers. The same happens in the story "Roses, Roses..All the Way" where Miss Malik ultimately runs away from the ashram when she comes to know the reality of the ashram. According to Hugh Walpole, "A short story should be a story; a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and satisfying denouement."(117)

Conflict is the struggle and strife between characters that creates suspense and thrill for readers. Almost all her stories go through this strife or conflict and it is the reason of sudden change in the ending of the story. Tutun Mukherjee defines the short story as, "The short story has, along with the film, greatly altered the conventional notions of the narrative."(94)

Theme is an important part as it is the backbone which reflects the society and it is a strong medium for the writer through which he/she can bring contemporary issues to readers' notice. H.G.Wells opines:

The short story may be horrible or pathetic or funny or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud. But here is something very bright and moving to be achieved in a small place ...and short time.(176)

This is quite true in modern context as short story talks about the burning issues and it leaves an impression on the reader's mind. The reader can associate with it and can contemplate. Sometime, short stories are auto-biographical as writers are influenced by their own struggles and conflicts. Women writers write about the exile and loneliness. Thus, it can be said that short story is a form of writing which tries to serve the readers with a message. It tries to awaken people and allow them to think in a different way. Short story can be considered as a spiritual being who keeps its cool even in adverse times and tries to give its best to create a better surrounding and perfect world. Short stories are written with an intense purpose and they give their readers immense pleasure and the readers become carriers of change and transformation. As Nergis Dalal's has tried to bring to readers' notice the important roles that are played by Indian women, the pathetic condition of some of the villages which notice change due to famine and theft, the dilemma of spinsters, the inferior condition of women and the superstitions which are still alive in India.

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