

# Chapter - 1

## Introduction

“Earth is a small town with many neighbourhoods in a very big universe”

- Ron Garan (*The Orbital Perspective*)

Literature and history share an intimate relationship, both revealing the intricacies of life. People study history through literature, and literature plays a significant role in the life of humanity, serving as a replica of life itself. The aim of literature is to entertain and enlighten the audience, with its primary focus on the presentation of life. Micaela English in the website *Town and Country*, under the title, “15 F. Scott Fitzgerald Quotes – Fitzgerald’s Best Quotes from *Great Gatsby*”, listed out the quotes of F. Scott Fitzgerald where he eloquently expressed about literature as, “That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you’re not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong.” English literature mirrors life’s situations through novels, short stories, essays, and dramas, creating a strong bond with mankind by portraying its myriad emotions.

The new expression of the ‘short story’ designates a re-exploration of literature toward the close of the nineteenth century, how it is fabricated, accepted, and consumed. In his article titled “Frank O’Connor and the Modern Irish Short Story,” Richard F. Peterson quotes the statement of Frank O’Connor, “the short story at its most characteristic something we do not often find in the novel- an intense awareness of human loneliness” (53). During the nineteenth century, the development and recognition of short stories in Britain and America had a remarkable impact on Canadian writing. However, Canadian short story writers did not gain as much popularity as their American and British counterparts. Writers like Isabella Valancy Crawford, Susan Frances Harrison, and Ernest Thompson attempted short story writing but did not receive widespread recognition.

The Canadian short story began to flourish only in the twentieth century. In the 1920s, the progressive short story writer Morley Callaghan brought Canadian short stories into the global literary stage. While Canadian short story writers faced initial challenges, their work gained momentum and appreciation. People are drawn to short stories, where Kuldeep Vij in the title, “What Is a Short Story?” on the website *Meritnation.com* has noted the award-winning British author William Boyd who opines about the term short story as, “[short stories] seem to answer something very deep in our nature as if, for the duration of its telling, something special has been created, some essence of our experience extrapolated, some temporary sense has been made of our common, turbulent journey towards the grave and oblivion.”

Human beings possess an inherent fondness for short stories, often cherished as beloved favourites. The act of storytelling, especially when passed down by grandparents, holds a special place in the memories. Typically, these stories begin with a problem and conclude with a solution. Crafting or sharing such narratives demands creativity and skill. The literary predecessors of the short story include anecdotes, ballads, parables, sketches, fables, and tales. American writer Edgar Allan Poe is the father of short story. He provided guidelines for writing a short story. Riah in her blog titled “Mystery as Seen in Edgar Allan Poe’s Short Stories ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’ ‘The Tell-Tale Heart,’ and ‘The Black Cat’” states, “Poe considered that a short story should have an idiosyncratic effect or unique effect, should be brief and readable in one sitting, and should possess clarity and intensity.”

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Meyer Howard Abrams outlines the short story as “A brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analysing the component elements, the types, and the narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well” (286). Edgar Allan Poe in his work, *Poe: Essays and Reviews* (1984) describes the short story

in his Review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales" as a prose narrative "requiring from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal" (577).

Canadian literature is unique because it reflects the diverse cultural and geographic factors that have shaped the nation. It offers a distinctive viewpoint on international concerns and frequently addresses the topics of identity, diversity, and the Canadian landscape. Canadian literature primarily deals with adult fiction and romanticism. In the twentieth century, Canadian literature began to flourish holding an appreciable position in the field of literature. The history of colonisation, immigration, and federation has become a prominent theme in Canadian literature in English. Therefore, the notable term 'Canadian literature in English' refers to anglophone literary writing prevalent in modern Canada. Canadian literature places importance on all types of literature and embraces immigrant writers. The major part of Canadian literature encompasses writing in other languages like French and diasporic species.

Fiction and especially short fiction played a significant role in Canadian literature. The inception of the published version of the short story was brought forth in an artistic form. Edgar Allan Poe's *The Philosophy of Composition* played a significant role in the formation of this genre, and Canadian literature began to explore it during the rule of British colonies. Short stories had an impact before the 1830s and Thomas Chandler Haliburton's "The Clock-Maker" was published in 1836. The works of Haliburton influenced Artemus Ward and Mark Twain, though he is not widely honoured for his contributions. Gerald Lynch, in his book *The One and the Many* (2001), written about the Canadian short story cycle, argues that Haliburton was "a colonial man" because in his works, he portrays and testifies "to a keen, not to say an anxious, awareness of his position on the margins of the two great cultures" (178), which is quoted by Eva - Marie Kröller in *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*.

In the late nineteenth century, Canadian nationhood and identity were depicted through Canadian scenes, people, and situations by Canadian writers who were concerned about Canadian identity. Canadian short fiction writers focused on creating a perception of Canadian nationality by portraying aspects of the Canadian experience that they believed to be unique. The writers' primary focus was on defining the impact of Canada's unique land and heritage on Canadian identity, reflecting nineteenth century nationalism. Canadian authors considered the land as the main instrument for the Canadian character due to its natural beauty, agricultural potential, and geographical location. They wrote about the transformative effects of both the Canadian wilderness and Canadian determination. Canadian authors portrayed Canadian identity in terms of gender, specifying distinct characteristics and a flexible approach for Canadian men and women.

A rigorous study of the fictional literature of the late nineteenth century in Canada provides a distinctive insight into the worldview of middle-class Canadians. While writing short fiction, authors bear a particular responsibility to reflect the beliefs and premises of their society. Canadian authors conveyed their ideas about Canada and Canadians through their plots and characters. In the late nineteenth century, fiction authors often included didactic passages within the narrative. Short fiction serves as a reflection of the writers' imagination and shapes the minds of the readers. Ideas embedded in the plots and characters of fictional works are significant because, as Terry Cook quotes Canadian historian Doug Owram in his review article titled "Nailing Jelly to a Wall: Possibilities in Intellectual History," "Man reacts to his perceptions of reality as well as to reality itself" (213). Due to this inclination, it is crucial for historians to explore what people thought about their world.

Short fiction reveals the bounds of imagination rather than constraining itself to the limitations of reality. Antiquarians who approach these narratives with the same level of seriousness as they would diaries and letters, gain unique insights into the beliefs and

premises of earlier societies. In the expansive realm of reading, the characterisations and plot intricacies found in fiction serve as reflections of the writer's imaginative prowess.

Consequently, each writer's body of work provides distinctive glimpses into the cultural milieu of their time.

Understanding what individuals of the past thought about themselves and their lives holds paramount importance for historians. It serves as a corrective measure against the inclination, as historian Peter Moogk suggests in his article "Writing the Cultural History of Pre-1760 European Colonists," where he says, "to see past generations as people who thought and acted just as we do, but merely dressed in period costume" (5). A comprehensive study of late-nineteenth-century fiction demonstrates that the educated classes of that era did not share identical perspectives with the contemporary mindset. Exploring their fiction can offer valuable insights into their thought processes and, consequently, shed light on why they acted the way they did.

In Canadian literary tradition, the short story genre has dominated, according to W. J. Keith and many other critics, where several hypotheses provide an explanation for these phenomena. W. H. New contends that short stories are an underrepresented genre, where Lynch and Robbeson stated in 'Introduction' to their essay, *Dominant Impressions: Essays on the Canadian Short Story*, "[i]n historically marginal cultures such as Canada's ... writers have found the marginal form accommodating of their situations and ambitions. Canadian ... writers use the short story, perhaps all unconsciously, as a kind of cultural political protest ..." (3). Lynch and Robbeson provide an additional, grounded reason for the short story's appeal. They propose that "the time it takes to write a short story had as much to do with the form's popularity among nineteenth-century Canadian writers as the time it takes to read one" (3).

Since literature is a product of context and culture, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and influence of everyday life's practical aspects on the genre. Canada was still a young nation in the nineteenth century, thus its pioneers most likely did not have much time for writing. Lynch goes on to say that, "this condition still applies to women writers of the mid-20th century who opt to create short stories instead of novels because of their obligations to their families and the time commitment involved in writing a book" (8). This would bolster the claim made by Northrop Frye, where Branko Gorjup in his blog titled, "The Educated Imagination: Northrop Frye and his Canadian Critics," that "Canadian imagination ... was directly linked to and defined by its environment." Since literature is created by and within a culture, it cannot be examined in a vacuum. External factors might reveal a lot about the reasons behind the direction that literature took, and vice versa; where Northrop Frye in his work, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, states that "Canadian literature ... is an indispensable aid to the knowledge of Canada ... [because] it tells us things about this environment that nothing else will tell us" (215). Even though Lynch and Robbeson's justification for the earlier writers is valid, it does not account for the genre's recent surge in popularity because Canada is no longer a colony.

The emergence of the Canadian short story is often seen by critics as a relatively new development, where Lynch and Robbeson stated in 'Introduction' to their essay, *Dominant Impressions: Essays on the Canadian Short Story*, that the development results "from the post-1960 rise of Canadian cultural nationalism" (1). However, Lynch and Robbeson try to show in their essay collection *Dominant Impressions* that the mid-1900s is where the modern postmodern short story first emerged culturally. In his essay "The Canadian Short Story," Alistair MacLeod claims that the original writers were primarily immigrants from Britain. At this stage, it's unclear that if it is possible to discuss Canadian literature because these authors

“brought with them the attitudes often associated with their birthplace” (162), and drew inspiration from those views when writing.

The writers’ requirement to transmit their works to Britain or the United States for publication further undermined the legitimacy of Canadian literature. According to MacLeod, Canadian writers had to make difficult decisions about whether to adhere to their dominating neighbour’s American heritage or the mother country’s British history. Northrop Frye in his work, *The Bush Garden* wrote that “[i]t is often suggested that Canada’s identity is to be found in some via media, or via mediocris, between the other two” (215). According to MacLeod, Many Canadian authors still write short stories, and the genre is still reasonably popular in Canada despite all the pressure and changes. People write about their thoughts and problems.

The region’s landscape exhibits remarkable diversity. The province has a coastline full of small islands, straits, inlets, and rivers because the Pacific Ocean borders it on one side. Although mountains and forests comprise a sizable portion of its terrain, major towns like Victoria and Vancouver guarantee the existence of fantastic metropolitan areas as well. According to Ethel Wilson, a region’s features have a major literary influence, where David Stouck has stated in his book, *Ethel Wilson: A Critical Biography*, “the formidable power of geography determines the character and performance of people” (8).

The range of regions found in Canadian short stories is one of its distinguishing features. Many different stories have been created in Canada as a result of its large territory and multiculturalism. While narratives from the prairies frequently focus on the difficulties of rural life, stories based in the Maritimes reflect the coastal lifestyle and maritime traditions. Urban environments such as Toronto or Vancouver have diverse themes that mirror the intricacy of urban living. Canadian short stories frequently examine how tradition and modernity coexist in Canadian culture by navigating this contradiction.

Margaret Laurence is a famous Canadian short story writer is the founder of the 'Writers' Trust of Canada' which is a non-profit literary organisation that seeks to encourage Canada's writing community. Laurence started writing short stories in her teenage years and won two Governor General's Award for the works *A Jest of God* (1966) and *The Diviners* (1974). The short story collections include: *The Drummer of All the World* (1956) and *The Tomorrow-Tamer* (1963), which reflect Laurence's experience of Africa where she lived between 1950 and 1957. The short story collection *A Bird in the House* (1970), is a semi-autobiographical work where the stories archive the growing up of a young agnostic writer.

Similarly, Margaret Atwood also wrote short stories where she focuses on the psychological dimensions of man-woman relationships. The decisive aspect of Atwood's feminism is that she makes an appeal for a composed, pleasant-sounding man-woman relationship in which the two genders play a corresponding role instead of playing a winning or losing game. Her dissections of contemporary urban life and sexual politics have been particularly welcomed by feminists. Atwood's short story collections include: *Dancing Girls* (1977), *Murder in the Dark* (1983), *Bluebeard's Egg* (1983), *Wilderness Tips* (1991), *Good Bones* (1992), *Good Bones and Simple Murders* (1994), *The Labrador Fiasco* (1996), *The Tent* (2006), *Stone Mattress* (2014), and *Old Babes in the Wood* (2023).

Mavis Gallant is another short story writer whose main objective is the development of specific situation and reconstruction of the state of mind and heart of women through her collections like: *The Other Paris* (1956), *My Heart is Broken* (1964), *The End of the World and Other Stories* (1964), *The Transit* (1988), and *Across the bridge* (1993). Further, Morley Callaghan's short stories and novels revolve around Roman Catholicism, where the themes explored are morality, justice, and human condition. His distinctive narrative style and insightful storytelling left a lasting impact on Canadian literature. He also won Governor General's Award for the work *The Loved and the Lost* (1951).

David Bezmozgis is a Latvian Born Canadian short story writer and filmmaker. His awards are Danuta Gleed Literary Award (2005), JQ Wingate Prize (2005), City of Toronto Book Award (2005), and Edward Lewis Wallant Award (2014). His short story collections and short stories include, *Natasha: And Other Stories* (2004), *Immigrant City* (2019), “Minyan” (2002), “An Animal to the Memory” (2002), “Tapka” (2003), “The Second Strongest Man” (2003), “The Russian Riviera” (2005), “A New Gravestone for an Old Grave” (2005), “The Train of their Departure (2010), and “Pome” (2011).

Paige Cooper is originally from Canmore, Alberta, and currently she lives in Montreal, Quebec. Even though, she has not got any award for her short story collections so far, *Zolitude* was shortlisted for Governor General’s Award and also got runner-up for the Danuta Gleed Literary Award. The name of her short story collection is *Zolitude* (2018). Likewise, Neil Smith (1964), who is also from Montreal, Quebec is a Canadian short story writer and translator. He published his debut book, the short story collection titled, *Bang Crunch* (2007), which won the McAuslan First Book Prize. His notable award is Hugh MacLennan Prize for fiction.

Alexander MacLeod is from Inverness, Nova Scotia, Canada, who started his writing career by writing short stories. His short story collections are *Light Lifting* (2009) and *Animal Person* (2022). The prestigious award that he won is O. Henry Award (2019). Similarly, there are two more writers who have few short story collections, but won some prestigious awards for their works. First, Samuel Archibald is from Quebec, Canada who wrote the short story collection titled, *Arvida* (2011) which won Prix Coup de Coeur Renaud-Bray in 2011. Second, Kris Bertin is from Halifax, Nova Scotia who has written two short story collections titled, *Bad Things Happen* (2016), which won Danuta Gleed Literary Award in 2017 and ReLit Award for Short Fiction in 2017, and *Use Your Imagination* (2020).

One such important Canadian short-story writer is the Nobel prize winner in Literature 2013, Alice Ann Munro. She was born on 10 July 1931 in Ontario, Canada and died on 13 May 2024. Most of her fictions are set in her native Huron county in Southwestern Ontario. Her stories probe human complexities in an uncomplicated prose style. Munro's authoring has substantiated her as 'One of our greatest contemporary writers of Fiction' or as Cynthia Ozick place it as 'Our Chekhov'. As a teenager, Munro started her writing career and she published her first story, 'The Dimensions of a Shadow', in 1950 while studying English and journalism at the University of Western Ontario under a two-year scholarship. She won many awards and some of them are listed here: Governor General's Literary Award (1968,1978,1986), Nobel Prize in Literature (2013), Common Wealth writers Prize, Man Booker International Prize (2009), O. Henry Award and so on. Her short-story collections are: *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), *Who Do You Think You Are?*(1978), *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Friend of My Youth* (1990), *Open Secrets*(1994), *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998), *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001) (republished as *Away From Her*), *Runaway* (2004), *The View from Castle Rock* (2006), *Too Much Happiness* (2009), and *Dear Life* (2012).

Munro solely writes short stories. Her grand success in all over the world has helped to boost the profile of the Canadian short story. Munro's attraction to the form of short story, along with her specific writing aesthetics, emphasise the liquidity, integrity, variability, and the final peculiarity of human behaviour through the employment of explanatory gaps, development of words aboard the contrastive of advanced interpretations, proximity of past and present, the contrastive deferral of mounted meanings, etc.

Munro's skill as a writer is demonstrated by the elegance with which she reveals the deep intricacies of interpersonal relationships and the minute details of existence or day to

day life. Munro's settings that are often set in provincial settings, reveal an in depth understanding of the psyche of the humans by exploring issues such as family dynamics, economically unstable, and the influence of society's customs and traditions. Her narratives are distinguished by an invisible examination of memory, and time, and the profound impact on the everyday happenings. Munro, as a literary legend explores the universal truths in her stories which lead the readers to the world where the ordinary things have been transformed into exceptional ones. Munro's characters, setting, language, style and themes of her short stories are distinguished from other Canadian short story writers.

Munro's characters are complex human representations rather than just being fictional characters. They are genuine and relatable because of their level of understanding. The characters in Munro's stories portray the importance of small-town living, where she conveys the subtleties of life in small-town, which delves into the themes like societal expectations in the close-knit communities. Her characters can be easily related to the global audience because of the portrayal of the reality in her short stories.

Further, the setting of the short stories of Munro are crucial in forming the story. She skilfully employs the Canadian environment as a backdrop, giving her works a distinct feeling of location. Munro's settings play a crucial role in the characters emotional and psychological development. Canada's small-towns and provincial landscapes play a pivotal role in the world, which reflects the nuanced nature of interpersonal relationships against the peaceful but widespread background of the natural world.

Similarly, Munro's language, style and themes play a fundamental role in enhancing the narratives of her short stories. Munro's writing is rich in detail and is a beautifully woven masterpiece. Munro has a talent of using straightforward words to convey the complexity of human emotions. Her storytelling often shifts between the past and the present, assembling memories and experiences into a piece of art. Her stories gain richness from the temporal

pliability, which also prompts readers to consider how time is malleable and affecting people's lives. Correspondingly, Munro's themes are multifaceted and varied as the human experience. She delves into the complexities of love and grief, the passing of time, family dynamics, and sometimes about the erratic character of existence. In her works, the depth of theme encourages readers to reflect on the complexity of the human beings. Munro creates a rich theme that portrays the complex nature of human experience within the limits of close-knit communities by neatly capturing the passage of time and the persistent effect of memory through the perspective of provincial settings. Munro in her short story "Walker Brothers Cowboy" remarks:

So my father drives and my brother watches the road for rabbits and I feel my father's life flowing back from our car in the last of the afternoon, darkening and turning strange, like a landscape that has an enchantment on it, making it kindly, ordinary and familiar while you are looking at it, but changing it, once your back is turned, into something you will never know, with all kinds of weathers, and distances you cannot imagine. (5)

Munro emphasises the actual fact that she had been away for writing stories all through that phase. Twenty-one short stories were written before her first collection *Dance of the Happy Shades* was published in 1968, and it earned the celebrated Governor General's Award. Her first two books were published when she was in Canadian province, Ontario, where she engaged herself in artistic writing and still lives. With her growing international popularity, she started to travel to England and Scotland, then to Australia in 1979 and 1980, and she celebrated her fiftieth birthday in China with a cluster of Canadian writers. These pleasing moments are reflected in a sporadic broadening of indication in her stories from *The Moons of Jupiter* onwards.

Some critics often raise queries regarding the autobiographical nature of her stories to which she has replied, “In incident, no ... in emotion, completely” (2) in the book titled, *Alice Munro* by Coral Ann Howells. The answer would seem to be rather more confusing as she reveals in her 1982 essay “What Is Real?”, where she explained how she writes a story which is quoted in the book titled *Reading In: Alice Munro’s Archives* by JoAnn McCaig as, “Some of the material I may have lying around already, in memories and observations, and some I invent, and some I have to go diligently looking for (factual details), while some is dumped in my lap (anecdotes and bits of speech). I see how this material might go together to make the shape I need, and I try it” (96).

In Munro’s third short story collection there is a story entitled “Material” in which she describes the relation between real life and fictional world. Herein she narrates the story of an unlucky woman called Dotty in Vancouver, from the contrasting viewpoints of a male and female writer. She creates locations and characters so exactly that readers are amazed as if the events are happening within their own lives. Yet at the same time, these stories could be anywhere - any small- town or any farmhouse.

The following short story collections have been taken to study the life in small-town: *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Runaway* (2004), *Too Much Happiness* (2009), and *Dear Life* (2012). In the short story collection, *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), the short story “Turkey Season” discusses the childhood of an old woman where she spent her childhood as turkey gutter in a small-town named Logan, when she was fourteen years old. Turkey gutting is a communal livelihood that has been practiced habitually in small-towns, as it is one of the sources of existence for the people who live in small towns. The short story titled, “Labor Day Dinner” is a short story where George gives priority to farming and agriculture, thus he never notices the love of Roberta. The setting of the short story is an anonymous small-town in Ontario. In the short story, “Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Kidd”,

Munro discusses about two elderly friends and their view on life and marriage as a small-town people.

From the short story collection, *The Progress of Love* (1986), the title short story “The Progress of Love” is about the women characters demonstrating the lifestyle of women in small-towns and cities. The short story “Lichen” is about shattered and perverse human relationships. The next short story titled, “Miles City, Montana” deals with human relationship, understanding in the family and about parenting. The short story “The Moon in the Orange Street Skating Rink” which deals with the lives of Sam and Edgar and the story is set in Gallagher, a provincial Canadian town. In this short story, Munro discusses about the happy and reasonable life in a small-town, and also discusses about the disciplined people. The short story, “Circle of Prayer” deals with the innocent minds of provincial life people who live near hillside, where they believe that the circle of prayer can put the life back to normal.

In the short story collection, *Runaway* (2004), the short story titled, “Passion” Munro depicts the past memories of the protagonist Grace, where she pays visit to her small-town near Ottawa valley where she lived thirty years ago. In the short story collection titled, *Too Much Happiness* (2009), the short story “Fiction” is about a woman named Joyce who is preoccupied with the smells of wood, stove and trees. The story is set in the small-town named Rough River. The short story “Wood” is about a man named Roy who is fond of only woods with connection to different types of trees.

From the short story collection, *Dear Life* (2012), the short story titled “Haven” is about the character, Uncle Jasper who deals everything in his life with the mindset of a small-town individuals. The short story “In Sight of Lake” Munro depicts the beauty of nature through the eyes of the protagonist named Nancy. The title short story “Dear Life” is about

an unnamed narrator who talks about her life in small-town, near Ontario and her relationship with her family.

Canadian and Indian short stories have fascinating similarities that emphasise the universal qualities of storytelling, despite their differences in geography and culture. Both traditions, the multilingual and multicultural fabric of India or the diversity of Canada, beautifully capture the diverse societies from where they originate. Both Canada and India's diverse landscapes play important roles in their narratives, either as vivid backdrops for Indian stories to unfold or as symbols of isolation in the Canadian wilderness. Both Canadian and Indian short fiction, despite having different narrative approaches, manage to combine the traditional with the contemporary, frequently including myth and magic to produce gripping stories. Moreover, these two cultures show that storytelling crosses boundaries to expose the universal human experiences that bind everyone together.

Indian literature is a multifaceted work of art, with every detail adding to its depth and richness. It incorporates elements from a variety of cultures, languages, and traditions. Indian short fiction stands out as a unique genre in this literary landscape because it provides glimpses into the lives, cultures, and imaginations of its readers. Indian short fiction is always growing, mirroring the dynamic socio-cultural landscape of the subcontinent, from the traditional stories of Panchatantra to the stories of the contemporary writers. India has a centuries-old history of writing short stories, and oral storytelling has always played a significant role in Indian society. Stories from the past, such as myths, fables, and folklore, have not only delighted spectators but also taught moral lessons and wisdom. The Panchatantra, a compilation of animal tales thought to have been written in the third century BCE, is a prime example of Indian literature's ongoing popularity with short stories. It covers themes like the nature of humans, administration, and morality with short but profound stories.

The earliest collections of Indian English short stories were published in India in the late nineteenth century. They were titled *The Times of Yore: Tales from Indian History* and *Realities of Indian Life: Stories Collected from the Criminal Reports of India* and were written by Shoshee Chunder Dutta and Sourindra Mohan Tagore. These works have a significant body of work in this genre from the early 1900s. In 1924, a Parsi woman who had received her education in Britain, Cornelia Sorabji, became the first female attorney in Calcutta. *Between the Twilights: Being Studies of Indian Women by one of Themselves* (1908), *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1901), *Sunbabies: Studies in the Child Life of India* (1904), and *Indian Tales of the Great Ones among Men, Women, and Bird-People* (1916) were her other four collections that were published in London. These collections presented Hindu and Parsi life with social reform in a Victorian manner.

Similar to the novel, Indian short stories written in the Gandhian era focused on rural life and social reform, particularly as it related to the status of women in traditional Hindu culture. Examples of these stories are Shankar Ram (T.L. Natesan) and A.S.P. Ayyar. The most significant post-independence contributions to Indian short story literature have come from South Indian authors S.K. Chettur, G.K. Chettur, K.S. Venkataramani, and K. Nagarajan. In addition to fiction, psychology, and the paranormal, many of the stories are based on local folklore about snakes, ghosts, and omens, murders, village feuds, and the Gandhian movement.

Tagore's short stories are among the best illustrations of those inventive ones. Even though Tagore gave the Indian short tales a wide range of characters, the Indian English short stories does not pay much attention to his work until 1935. Tagore's short stories demonstrates simplicity. Through his stories, Tagore documents ordinary situations from his everyday life. He did not depict any social, political, or communal difficulties; instead, he accurately portrays the characters' emotions and shared experiences. His tales are

straightforward and written in basic terms. His narratives are authentic and personal. Tagore's short story collections that are translated include: *Lores and Legends* (1899), *A Bouquet of Stories* (1900), *Glimpses of Bengal* (1913), *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1916), *Mashi and Other Stories* (1918), *Stories from Tagore* (1918), *Broken Ties and Other Stories* (1925), *The Parrot's Training and Other Stories* (1944), *The Runaway and Other Stories* (1959), and *The Hidden Treasure and Other Stories* (2005).

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanaswami or well-known R. K. Narayan, is one of the most celebrated novelists in the history of Indian fiction. Master of storytelling, won important awards like Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958, Padma Bhushan in 1964, AC Benson Medal in 1980, Padma Vibhushan in 2000. He is known for his imaginary setting, Malgudi town. Some of his notable short story collections are: *Malgudi Days* (1942), *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road and Other Stories* (1956), *The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories* (1994), *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970), and *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1985).

Mulk Raj Anand, is another famous Indian novelist as well as a short story writer. He is known as Munshi Premchand of the Indian English writing, because he evocatively illustrates the corrupt minds of the society in his works. He has won awards like Sahitya Akademi Award (1971), Padma Bhushan (1968), International Peace Prize (1953). His short story collections are: *The Lost Child and Other stories* (1934), *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944), *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947), *Reflections on the Golden Bec and Other Stories* (1953), *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959), *Lajwanti and Other Stories* (1966), *Between Tears and Laughter*(1973), *Selected Stories of Mulk Raj Anand* (1977), and *Things Have a Way of Working Out and Other Stories* (1998).

Raja Rao is a short story writer, whose themes deal with the realistic portrayal of the villages of India of the Gandhian Era. His stories depict the spiritualism and mysticism of ancient heritage. Raja Rao has won prominent awards like Sahitya Akademi Award (1964), Padma Bhushan (1969), Neustadt International Prize for Literature (1988), Padma Vibhushan (2007). His notable short story collections are: *The Cow of the Barricades* (1947), *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978), and *On the Ganga Ghat* (1989).

Khushwant Singh is undoubtedly one of the most reputed and outstanding Indian writers. He has been the Chief Editor of *Yojana* published by the Planning Commission for the period from 1951 to 1953. He has also been the editor of the prestigious magazine *The Illustrated Weekly of India* from 1969 to 1979. He has won awards like: Padma Bhushan (1974), Padma Vibhushan (2007), Sahitya Akademi Fellowship (2010). His short story anthologies include: *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (1950), *The Voice of God and Short Stories* (1957), *A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories* (1967), *Black Jasmine* (1971), *The Collected Stories of Khushwant Singh* (1989), and *Paradise and Other Stories* (2004).

Anita Desai is another notable Indian short story writer and a novelist. She has been three times shortlisted for the Booker Prize and won numerous awards and accolades for her writing. She has been awarded with the Sahitya Akademi Award and the British Guardian Prize. Her three collections of short stories are, *Games at Twilight* (1978), *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* (2000) written by her.

An important figure in Indian literary history is Shashi Deshpande. She has begun her writing career as a short story writer and has since written numerous pieces. Indian women who shoulder too many household chores and lead regimented lives with their families worry Shashi Deshpande. Her stories have emphasised a variety of women's issues that she has focused on. Division, extramarital affairs, melancholy, dependability, reliability, are some of

the issues. Her notable awards are, Sahitya Akademi Award (1990) and Padma Shri (2009). Her important short story collection is *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993).

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's works often explored the intricacies of cultural clashes and human relationships which have been portrayed in most of her short stories. The awards won by Jhabvala are Academy Award (1986), Bafta Award (1983), Booker Prize (1975), MacArthur Fellowship (1975), Writers Guild of America Award (1986), and Screen Laurel Award (1993). Her notable short story collections are: *Like Birds, Like Fishes* (1963), *A Stronger Climate* (1968), *How I Became a Holy Mother and Other Stories* (1986), *Out of India: Selected Stories* (1986), *East into Upper East: Plain Tales from New York and New Delhi* (1998), *My Nine Lives: Chapters of a Possible Past* (2004), *The Teacher* (2008), *A Lovesong for India: Tales from East and West* (2011), *A Judge's Will* (2013), and *At the End of the Century: The Stories of Ruth Praver Jhabvala* (2018).

Mahasweta Devi is an Indian Bengali writer and social activist. She is well-known for her influential essays on subjects including social justice and tribal rights. She is the author of many short stories and novels. Some of her awards are, Sahitya Akademi Award (1979), Jnanpith Award (1996), Ramon Magsaysay Award (1997), Padma Shri (1986), and Padma Vibhushan (2006). Some of her notable short story collections are: *Agnisabha* (1978), *Murti* (1979), *Neerete Megh* (1979), *Stanyadayani* (1980), and *Chotti Munda Ebong Tar Tir* (1980).

Sudha Murty is an Indian educator, author and philanthropist, who is the chairperson of the Infosys Foundation. She has written many short stories and novels. Her notable awards are, Padma Shri (2006) and Padma Bhushan (2023). Her short story collections are: *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories* (2004), *The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories* (2013), *Grandma's Bag of Stories* (2012), *Wise and Otherwise* (2002), *The Magic of the Lost Temple* (2015), and *Three Thousand Stitches: Ordinary* (2017).

Uma Krishnaswami is an Indian short story writer who writes picture books and short stories for children. Her Awards are, Scientific American (1997), Crossword Book Award (2013), Scholastic Asian Book Award (2011), and Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature (2017-2018). Her translated short story collections are, *The Broken Tusk: Stories of the Hindu God Ganesha* (1996), *Shower of Gold: Girls and Women in the Stories of India* (1999), and *Stories of the Flood* (1994).

One such prolific Indian short story writer is Ruskin Bond, born on May 19th, 1934, in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh. Raised alongside his sister Ellen, who suffered from epilepsy, Bond faced adversity early in life. At the age of ten, his world was further shaken by the death of his father, Aubrey Alexander Bond, leaving him alone. His mother, Edith Dorothy, chose to live with Mr. Hari, a garage owner in Dehradun, abandoning Bond. Despite these hardships, Bond resiliently aspired to become a writer and embarked on a journey to England to fulfil his dreams. Initially working as a junior clerk in a solicitor's office in Jersey, a Channel Island, he later transitioned to delivering pay packets to island workers due to his lack of experience in the legal field. Returning to India, he settled in the quaint village of Dehra, where he tirelessly pursued his passion for writing.

In his own words in the collection titled, *Rain in the Mountains*, Ruskin Bond has described his constant work on achieving to be a writer, where he says, "From my small flat in Dehradun, I began bombarding every newspaper and magazine editor in the land with articles, stories, essays, and even poems" (viii). Opting for a freelance writing career, Bond eschewed conventional office jobs, preferring to carve out a life immersed in his craft. Over the years, Ruskin Bond has crafted a remarkable literary legacy, producing more than 500 short stories, 69 children's books, along with numerous novellas, novels, and essays. His literary canvas is often painted with the serene landscapes of the hills, particularly the Himalayas, where he found a sense of parental security after his father's passing. Bond's

writing, though seemingly simple, conceals layers of meaning, showcasing his mastery in subtly conveying profound messages. He writes in his short story collection titled, *Rusty, the Boy from the Hills*:

When the trees saw me, they made as if to turn in my direction. A puff of wind came across the valley from the distant snows. A long-tailed blue magpie took alarm and flew noisily out of an oak tree. The cicadas were suddenly silent.

But the trees remembered me. They bowed gently in the breeze and beckoned me nearer, welcoming me home. (114)

Ruskin Bond had a notable habit of writing letters. During his father's posting in Calcutta, he would faithfully write to him every week. In those letters, his father sought to unearth the latent writer within Ruskin Bond. His father's influence extended beyond mere correspondence; he consistently encouraged Bond to hone his writing style through the practice of maintaining diaries and memoirs. This literary guidance from his father played a pivotal role in shaping Bond's artistic expression. The fruits of his labour and dedication to the craft did not go unnoticed, earning him accolades such as the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957, the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1992, and prestigious civilian honours like the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014. Recognising his enduring contributions, Bond has also been honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017.

Ruskin Bond is lauded for his deeply moving stories that encapsulate the spirit of the Indian Himalayas. Embracing a diverse array of genres, including children's books, non-fiction, and fiction, his writing unveils a strong connection with the natural world and a keen awareness of human emotions. Bond writes with sincerity and simplicity, drawing readers into tranquil environments and endearing characters he meticulously develops. Throughout his extensive multi-decade career, Bond has crafted enduring stories that resonate with readers of all ages. His significant contribution to Indian Literature is evident in his ability to

captivate audiences with his narratives and inspire a love for reading across generations. What distinguishes Bond from other Indian short story writers is the uniqueness of his characters, settings, language, style, and thematic elements, creating a literary legacy that stands out in the landscape of Indian literature.

Ruskin Bond's extensive collection of short stories predominantly explores the nuances of provincial and ecological life. Renowned for his nature-centric approach and profound understanding of the environment, Bond's literary works intricately delve into the fabric of trees, animals, birds, and insects, reflecting his heightened environmental sensibilities. A pioneering figure among Indian writers, Bond holds the distinction of introducing children to the enchanting world of literature. His narratives predominantly revolve around the mosaic of small-town life, nestled within the picturesque hills and iconic locations such as Dehra, Mussoorie, Shimla, and Landour. In these locales, Bond seamlessly intertwines his deep appreciation for nature with personal life experiences. Noteworthy is the subjective nature of Bond's writing, as he immerses readers in the rich tapestry of his thoughts and emotions. His unique perspective is evident in the protagonists of his short stories, who are predominantly young men and women navigating the complexities of life.

In one of his reflective essays, titled "Joyfully I Write," Bond candidly acknowledges his passion for weaving tales, providing readers with a glimpse into the joyous process of creating stories that resonate with both nature and personal introspection:

As a writer, I have difficulty in doing justice to momentous events, the wars of nations, the politics of power; I am more at ease with the dew of the morning, the sensuous delights of the day, the silent blessings of the night, the joys and sorrows of children, the striving of the ordinary folk and of course, the ridiculous situations in which we sometimes find ourselves. (384)

Ruskin Bond's passion for writing is evident across his works, with a straightforward intention of igniting sparks in the lives of his readers. Similar to William Wordsworth, Bond endeavours to cleanse the finer feelings of his audience. Anxious to explore new facets of nature, he articulates his emotions through his literary creations. Bond's affection for nature resonates vividly in his writings; nature is akin to his breath, an indispensable presence in his life. Even the seemingly 'underrated flower,' such as the petunia, captures his attention, and he extends respect to those who cultivate it, where Sunita Bhola in her article, "Ruskin Bond's Writings Attuned with the World of Flora" has quoted, "I might even write a story about someone who grows petunias because such a person must obviously have sterling qualities. I might even delve into the love life of a petunia grower because those who love flowers must by their very nature, be loving" (482).

While the majority of Ruskin Bond's contemporary writers focus on themes revolving around social and political issues, Bond transcends the confines of this mechanical world to immerse himself in the embrace of nature. His entire body of work reflects his keen observation and deep connection with the natural world. Growing up as a motherless child, Bond found solace and attachment in the nurturing warmth of nature, an enduring relationship introduced to him by his father.

The themes explored in Bond's short stories encompass universal elements such as friendship, nature, love, and memories. Through his narratives, he delves into the intricacies of interpersonal connections, shedding light on the enduring spirit of the human experience. Nature emerges as a recurring theme in his short stories, acting as both the backdrop and a character in its own right. It significantly influences the emotions and experiences of the protagonists, serving as a dynamic force in the storytelling.

The exploration of life in small towns is vividly depicted in the following short story collections: *The Night Train at Deoli* (1988), *Time Stops at Shamli* (1989), *Our Trees Still*

*Grow in Dehra* (1991), and *The Essential Collection for Young Readers* (2015). In the short story collection, *The Night Train at Deoli* (1988), the short story “The Photograph” deals with the theme of memories, set in a small town where the main characters, Grandmother and the narrator, live. Here, Bond also discusses the younger version of the grandmother and her current self. The following short story, titled “The Coral Tree,” delineates the life of a tree symbolising human existence, with the setting being a small town. In this narrative, a small girl brings out childhood memories for the narrator, connecting him to a tree he used to play near when he was a small boy. The short story “The Cherry Tree” indicates the significance of trees in human life, specifically in the story of a small-town boy named Rakesh. Here, the author’s closeness to nature and the importance he assigns to trees in his writings are discussed.

The short story “When You Can’t Climb Trees Anymore” deals with the relationship the narrator has with a jackfruit tree. The author describes the role played by the jackfruit tree in the narrator’s childhood, which later becomes cherished memories and safeguards his treasures. The title short story, “The Night Train at Deoli,” fully revolves around the small towns of Deoli and Dehra. The narrative also deliberates on the silent love the narrator harbours towards an anonymous basket-seller girl. Furthermore, the author delineates his love for small-town life through the characters in the short story. The short story “The Prospect of Flowers” deals with the importance of flowers in the lives of small-town people. The narrative revolves around two characters, an elderly English spinster, Miss. Mackenzie, and Anil, both of whom are flower enthusiasts.

In the short story collection *Time Stops at Shamli* (1989), the short story titled “The Tunnel” explores the bond between a leopard and a watchman. Bond delves into the understanding and care that small-town people exhibit towards animals. In “A Tiger in the House,” Bond portrays the affection between a grandfather and a tiger named Timothy,

emphasising the theme of love and care between humans and animals. The subsequent short story, “The Last Truck Ride,” delves into the importance of trees and small-town life.

Additionally, it explores small-profile jobs in the small-town setting, such as truck riding and agriculture, through characters like Pritam Singh and Nathu Ram. “The Summer Season” revolves around a small-town boy named Visni, who discovers the value of his own land and village compared to working as a tea boy in a theatre. Bond discusses the importance of farming in small-town life. In the extant short story, “The Funeral,” the theme of loss is explored, showcasing how small-town people come together to support a family facing a bereavement. This social phenomenon not only epitomises a close-knit community but also signifies the flourishing of humanity in the small-town environment.

In the short story collection titled *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1991), the short story “As Time Goes By” revolves around the narrator’s reminiscence, recalling his adulthood spent with friends Somi and Dal in the small town of Dehradun. In this narrative, Bond explores the relationship that small-town people have with nature and water. The next short story, titled “Coming Home to Dehra,” depicts the narrator’s yearning for his father’s love and his affection for trees and a simple life. Here, Ruskin Bond eloquently portrays the love between the father and son, with the son cherishing the companionship of his father.

From the short story collection, *The Essential Collection for Young Readers* (2015), the story titled “Growing Up with Trees” delves into Bond’s reflections on the trees in an anonymous small town near the Himalayan foothills, specifically in Dehradun. Here, small-town life is intricately interwoven with flowers and trees. The subsequent story, “The Blue Umbrella,” follows the life of a small-town girl named Binya, residing in the Garhwal village of Himachal Pradesh. Ruskin Bond illustrates in this narrative that the majority of small-town people lack the fear of venturing into the forests. This fearlessness is a result of their upbringing alongside trees and flowers, as well as their overall small-town lifestyle.

## Review of Literature

The examination of *Alice Munro and her Works* (1985) by Hallvard Dahlie provides insightful analysis into Munro's literary contributions. Dahlie meticulously dissects the themes prevalent in Munro's works, notably commending her for the uncomplicated prose style that characterises her writing. Within the discourse, Dahlie underscores Munro's artistic complexity, emphasising the difficulty in categorising her within simplistic genres. He challenges conventional labels such as the notion that Munro exclusively writes in the comic mode or consistently transcends realism. Dahlie's assertion, highlighted by the quote, "The total evidence in Alice Munro's fiction ultimately dictates that she cannot easily be categorized, underscores the nuanced nature of Munro's art and vision, urging readers to explore the intricate layers that define her literary contributions" (70). Dahlie also discusses how Munro places significant emphasis on plot, characters, and setting in her works. Primarily featuring female characters, Munro skilfully portrays their lives and nuanced emotions. The backdrop for Munro's narratives frequently unfolds in her hometown of Ontario, Canada.

Similarly, Celeste Fernandes conducted doctoral research titled *The Fiction of Alice Munro: A Study* (2004). Fernandes observes that Munro injects a dose of realism into her writing by introducing readers to memorable characters within recognisable settings. Munro accomplishes this through a distinctive and rich prose style, employing various narrative structures. It is this unique combination that contributes to Alice Munro's enduring popularity as a writer. Supporting Fernandes's perspective, Catherine Sheldrick Ross asserts that Munro's stories feature "ordinary experiences rendered extraordinary and imbued with a sort of magic" (19).

In the doctoral research, *A Psychoanalytic Study of Alice Munro's Select Narratives* (2005), Debarshi Prasad Nath illuminates Alice Munro's adept utilisation of Lacanian

psychoanalysis. Munro's narratives serve as intricate psychoanalytic dramas, portraying female characters strategically attired to embody the object of the others' desire. Nath discerns a critical misstep in Munro's characters, who mistakenly assume definable specifics in their pursuit of desire, leading to a series of misidentifications. The impossibility of complete identification with the desired object propels Munro's protagonists into a perpetual quest, representing an intricate exploration of Lacanian concepts. Nath's findings highlight Munro's narratives as a precise examination of the challenges inherent in the lifelong pursuit of a genuinely satisfying object of desire, emblematic of the characters' endeavor to absorb and subjugate the Other's desire.

Marcela Valdes' article, "Some Stories Have to Be Told by Me: A Literary History of Alice Munro" (2006), delves into the intertwining facets of Alice Munro's personal and literary journey. Valdes explores Munro's initiation into her literary career, the challenges she confronted, and the profound impact of her short stories on readers. The article encapsulates Munro's approach to storytelling, where she occasionally retains non-essential elements in her narratives, emphasising her immersive creative process. Quoting Munro, Valdes captures the author's meticulous attention to detail, asserting her need to visualise every aspect, even the non-essential, when crafting a story. Valdes skilfully navigates through the layers of Munro's life, presenting a comprehensive overview of the acclaimed author's profound influence on literature.

In his review of Alice Munro's *Dear Life* for the *Fiction Chronicle* (2015), William H. Pritchard discerns a pronounced sense of finality in Munro's collection, emphasising her strategic conclusion with a section titled "Finale." Munro describes these concluding pieces as "not quite stories," marked by an "autobiographical feeling," and representing "the first and last" expressions akin to her own life (345). Pritchard, highlighting Munro's adept use of a simple prose style, notes that it brings closure to the short stories while subtly infusing them

with profound depth. He succinctly captures Munro's narrative finesse, stating, "the closest things I have to say about my own life" (345). This singular quote encapsulates the intersection of Munro's unassuming prose and the intricate layers of introspection, presenting *Dear Life* as a nuanced and impactful contribution to contemporary literature.

In her article, "States of Perception and Personal Agency in Alice Munro's *Dear Life*" (2017), Claire Marrone delves into the nuanced exploration of perception throughout the life cycle in both fictional and autobiographical contexts within Alice Munro's work. She specifically focuses on Munro's portrayal of minds in different stages, transcending the conventional processing of reality in adult experiences. The collection, according to Marrone, delves into questions of being, consciousness, and selfhood from ontological and phenomenological perspectives. Munro's keen interest in the workings of the mind is evident in her character portraits and self-portraiture, inviting readers to connect with her characters and contemplate human nature through shared experiences and tragedies. The thematic scope extends to encompass the young, the aged, and those in between, providing a multifaceted reflection of the human condition.

In a contrasting perspective, the article titled "Analysing Style and Autobiographical Elements in Alice Munro's *Dear Life*" (2017) by Moayad Ahmad Alshara, Abdul Hameed Panhwar, and Marwa Adel Hasan specifically focuses on the integration of autobiographical elements in Munro's short stories. The scholars scrutinise Munro's literary features, with a particular examination of the short story "Dear Life." They highlight Munro's distinct writing style and the seamless incorporation of autobiographical elements, asserting that this fusion enhances the allure and fascination of her stories. The article contributes to a nuanced understanding of Munro's narrative approach, revealing how she intertwines personal experiences into her fiction to create a compelling narrative that resonates with readers.

Ahmed Abdelsattar Abdelaziz Keshk's article, titled "Speaking Silence: A Study of Female Image in Alice Munro's *Runaway*" (2019), delves into Alice Munro's renowned short story collections, focusing on the examination of feminine silence and the devices employed by Munro's characters to overcome it. The essay aims to dissect the reasons behind the silence of characters in Munro's "Runaway" and explores how breaking this silence becomes a means to foster resiliency, independence, and change.

Similarly, Prity's PhD research, titled *Experiencing the Social Women's Perspective in Short Stories of Alice Munro and Shashi Deshpande* (2019), conducts a comparative study. This research specifically examines the depiction of women fighting for respect and asserting their existence in the works of Munro and Deshpande. The study explores their strengths, limitations, sensualities, relationships, and their ability to navigate social barriers. Emphasising the inner psychology of women within society, the research concludes that women writers across centuries have empowered women to confront gender discrimination and exploitation. Despite some changes in the condition of women, the study highlights the persistent endurance of patriarchal structures and gender discrimination, necessitating ongoing efforts to challenge and overcome societal norms.

In Syngkli Balakytiew's research titled *Alice Munro's Short Fiction: A Critical Study* (2019), Munro's distinctive portrayal of female characters is highlighted. The findings emphasise Munro's refusal to adhere to stale stereotypes, avoiding the Hollywood trope of female characters being led by attractive strangers. Munro's heroines diverge from being victims of common themes like rape, incest, or peer pressure prevalent in modern novels. The study underscores Munro's narrative rebellion against the subjugation of erotic emotions, showcasing instances where her heroines engage in sexual satisfaction and openly confirm their sexual orientation without remorse. These portrayals are attributed to the confidence gained by women, a result of various protection laws. Balakytiew's research accentuates

Munro's commitment to challenging stereotypes and empowering female characters with agency in their emotional and sexual lives.

In a separate perspective, Heliane Ventura, in her article titled "The Legacy of the Forest: A Source Study of 'Wood' by Alice Munro" (2020), engages with Munro's short story "Wood," featured in the 2009 book *Too Much Happiness* and initially published in *The New Yorker*. Referencing Khalil Gibran and drawing on elements from ancient to modern nature writing, Ventura examines how the story encapsulates international literature within a natural setting. The narrative of "Wood" promises independence and renewal by challenging established norms and rewriting the rules of everyday life in opposition to people's "natural cultural" heritage.

Anitha's doctoral research, *Fiction of Alice Munro: A Study of Theme and Form* (2020), identifies key themes in Munro's work, such as small-town life, the relationship between humanity and nature, and explorations of life, death, love, and interpersonal dynamics. The research emphasises Munro's focus on the emotional experiences of individuals shaped by memories and highlights her adept storytelling, capturing the complexities of life with joy, sorrow, and longing.

Marlene Goldman's article, "Autobiography in the Anthropocene: A Geological Reading of Alice Munro" (2020), explores Munro's fascination with vast temporal arcs and their impact on her recurring autobiographical works. Goldman argues that Munro's preference for "return and revision" in her non-fiction writing offers protagonists and readers an opportunity to reflect on ancestral relationships and non-human elements, including deep time and subterranean geological features.

In the article, "Literary Imagination of Construction of Community with a Shared Future in Alice Munro's Stories" (2020), Haixia Zhang examines how Alice Munro's realistic short story writing contributes significantly to Canadian literary history. Zhang

focuses on Munro's diverse writing styles and ecological exploration, using them to depict strain and stress in urban, community, and family settings. Munro's creative imagination, as revealed in her novels, provides insights into the construction of community and a shared future.

K. S. Parthasarathi's doctoral research, titled *Male Self in the Select Stories of Alice Munro: A Study* (2022), explores how Alice Munro delineates men in her short stories. The findings emphasise Munro's depiction of various facets of humanity, avoiding stereotypes not only in males but also in women. Parthasarathi suggests that Munro's approach positions her more as a humanist writer than a feminist one, as her portrayal of women allows readers to grasp the vastness of human character types.

J. H. Hema Ruba's PhD research, *Peregrination towards Earning Selfhood in the Select Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway and Alice Munro* (2022), offers a comparative study focusing on interconnectedness and cultural studies. Ruba compares short stories from distinct literary traditions to demonstrate the genre's influence on English literature. The research explores common characteristics of literature across borders and highlights the impact of Ernest Hemingway and Alice Munro on society through their short stories, revealing elements that reflect the reality of life and the importance of understanding human relationships for a happy life.

Urmi Sengupta's comparative study, *The Short Stories of Nirmal Verma and Alice Munro* (2022), examines the transformations of the short story genre. The research investigates Alice Munro and Nirmal Verma's formal and thematic experiments, shifting the focus from social-realist concerns to new-age urban middle-class psychological issues. Sengupta explores the impact of Munro and Verma's literary experiments on the short story as a potent literary vehicle for postcolonial urban "modernity," addressing diverse concerns

such as changing gender equations, fragmentation within families, and the struggle between the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern.’

In his article, “The Past Unearthed: New Reading of Ruskin Bond’s Supernatural Tales” (2005), Debashis Bandyopadyay explores Ruskin Bond’s use of the supernatural in his short stories, characterising it as a “paranormal extension of consciousness” (69).

Bandyopadyay highlights Bond’s adept incorporation of psychological experiences to captivate young readers with poignant and satirical childhood memories.

In his doctoral research titled *Portrayal of Indian Reality in Ruskin Bond’s Work: Analysis and Interpretation* (2007), Pramod Ambadasrao Pawar emphasises that Ruskin Bond’s short stories delve into Indian thematic concerns, featuring common themes such as small-town life, the bond between nature and human beings, family dynamics, and children’s life experiences. Pramod characterises Bond as a realist who opts for simplicity over fantasy to maintain the authenticity of his narratives.

In his article, “Ruskin Bond’s ‘Whispering in the Dark’: A Fantastic Quest for Identity” (2010), Debashis Bandyopadhyay explores the use of fantasy in a metafictional manner within a short story to illustrate the symptoms of unconscious dithering in the minds of the racially and culturally mixed community known as the Anglo-Indian. Bond’s own perspective on the supernatural is cited, stating, “The ghostly always represents some shadow of truth. The ghost story has always happened in our dreams and reminds us of forgotten experiences, imaginative and emotional.”

Cynthia Catherine Michael’s doctoral research, titled *Being and Becoming Indian – The Fiction of Ruskin Bond* (2011), reveals that Ruskin Bond’s works provide a rich portrayal of small towns in the Himalayan region, capturing the intrinsic aspect of Indian reality during a time when the Himalayas still boasted considerable greenery and wildlife. Autobiographical

elements are prevalent throughout Bond's writings, and although some stories touch on universal themes, the setting always remains distinctly Indian.

In the article "Portrayal of Indian Social Customs, Festivals, and Gods in the Works of Ruskin Bond" (2012), Dr. Chetan Trivedi delves into Bond's love and respect for Indian traditions. Trivedi discusses how Bond portrays Indian festivals with social significance and explores Indian Gods through mythological implications. The importance of Indian customs, festivals, and Gods is prominently depicted in Bond's short stories, emphasising his deep connection to India. Trivedi encapsulates this sentiment by stating, "For Bond, India has never been just a piece of land. It has meant love, simplicity, unity, and acceptance" (114).

In the article "For the Tree Lover" (2015), Bhyrava dedicates a poignant poem to Ruskin Bond, envisioning a future where nature reclaims its dominion: "One day, the wild will take over again, and nature will put man to rest." This lyrical piece envisions spilling forests conquering houses, banyan roots crawling across walls, and the wild thriving amidst abandoned human structures. Bhyrava's poetic foresight transforms submerged towns into relics of the next epoch, while highlighting enduring sanctuaries for creatures like the blue butterfly and a lone fox dancing in the morning dew.

In Jayasree's article, "Nature, Nostalgia, and Green Insights in Ruskin Bond's When You Can't Climb Trees Anymore and In Search of Sweet-Peas" (2017), the author delves into Ruskin Bond's adept exploration of nature, nostalgia, and insightful reflections within his short stories. Jayasree underscores Bond's noteworthy ability not only to prioritise the depiction of nature but also to seamlessly weave nostalgia and profound insights into the narrative fabric of his tales. The author astutely portrays Bond's intimate connection with the natural world and his simplistic yet captivating storytelling style, which often revolves around childhood reminiscences, train journeys, and gardening escapades. Bond's unique

narrative approach serves to forge a meaningful connection between readers and the natural realm, constituting a distinctive and laudable feature of his short stories.

Conducting a PhD research on Ruskin Bond's body of work, titled *Environmental Concerns in Ruskin Bond's Select Short Stories* (2018), Vaidhya discerns the author's exceptional dedication to environmental awareness. Specifically, evident in Bond's short stories, the research emphasises Bond's profound concern for the ecosystems he encountered during his childhood. This concern extends beyond iconic elements like trees, animals, and birds, encompassing smaller life forms such as reptiles and insects. Vaidhya asserts that Bond rightfully earns recognition as a pioneering figure in Indian literature, distinguished for his focused exploration of environmental issues within his literary endeavours.

In Monali Chatterjee's article, "Bond with the Best: Exploring India's Ruskin Bond as a Writer of Children's Literature" (2019), the author meticulously explores the literary legacy of Ruskin Bond, an esteemed Indian children's book author. Recognising Bond's numerous accolades for his essays, short stories, and novels, Chatterjee accentuates the universal appeal of his narratives, resonating with both children and adults due to their straightforward, honest, and accessible nature. The article delves into Bond's portrayal of the Anglo-Indian community and the evolving identity of India in his works, with a particular spotlight on his debut piece, *Room on the Roof* (1956), which scrutinises identity challenges in post-independence India. Bond's narrative focus on everyday life in small villages underscores his commitment to portraying the ordinary and the mundane.

Anchal Bhutani's article, "Ruskin Bond- A Man of Imagination" (2021), delves into Bond's writing style, simplistic approach, incorporation of Indian culture in his short stories, and his influence in children's literature. Bhutani emphasises the power of Bond's literary works, underscoring his ability to infuse simplicity and tradition into narratives that bring together nature and the modest lives of people. Bhutani eloquently describes Bond as an

amalgamation of mountains, nature, rain, people, emotion, Indian customs, rituals, gods, and Indian festivals, stating, “Ruskin Bond, the name is an amalgamation of mountains, nature, rain, people, emotion, Indian customs and rituals, God and Indian festivals” (7). This quote vividly encapsulates how these elements enrich Bond’s short stories, contributing to their simplicity and traditional charm.

In her doctoral research, titled *The Inextricable bond of Humans with Nature in the Select Works of Ruskin Bond* (2021), Giriya investigates the portrayal of nature in Ruskin Bond’s literary works. This study promises a fresh perspective and critical analysis, establishing connections between literature and real-world circumstances. Giriya’s research is poised to make a significant contribution to environmental preservation and ecocriticism. Recognising Ruskin Bond’s unique position in Indian English fiction, the study underscores Bond’s commitment to heartfelt composition, positioning him as a guardian spirit of Indian English writing. Bond’s narrative prowess, writing style, and use of straightforward language elevate his works to artistic heights. Giriya emphasises that Bond’s oeuvre delves extensively into candour, various aspects of life, self-realisation, and a profound commitment to nature, while also exploring themes related to children and their connection to the natural world. Above all, Bond’s profound faith in human excellence shines through in his literary endeavours. Neha, in her doctoral research on Ruskin Bond’s stories titled *Child in Ruskin Bond’s Selected Works* (2022), concludes that Bond intertwines dictation and amusement in subtle and easily digestible storylines. Neha asserts that children, when exposed to Bond’s writings, absorb moral values, humanism, and a deep reverence for Mother Nature.

Sanchna Chopra’s PhD research, conducted under the title *Cultural Influences on L M Montgomery and Ruskin Bond: A Comparative Study of their Select Works* (2022), sheds light on the parallel cultural influences on two iconic authors. The research underscores that L.M. Montgomery and Ruskin Bond have become household names in children’s literature,

with their works considered foundational in their respective nations. Despite being raised a century apart, the hauntingly similar childhoods and early lives of Montgomery and Bond raise intriguing questions about the shared experiences. By analysing characters such as Anne, Rusty, and Biniya, Chopra aims to demonstrate striking similarities between the civilisations and cultures of India and Canada. The study explores creativity, realism, sentimentality, and emotion through the lens of child psychology, providing valuable insights into the cultural convergence evident in the works of these two revered authors.

In Niloy Chakraborty's article, "A Critical Study of Ruskin Bond's Woman Characters" (2022), the author explores Bond's use of formal structure in his writings, with a focus on the portrayal of women. Chakraborty contends that Bond's female characters are depicted as more spectacular than their actual nature. In another article by Chakraborty titled, "Ruskin Bond as a Writer of Millennial: A Critical Study of Bond's 'The Blue Umbrella'" (2022), the researcher analyses Bond's characterisation techniques, narrative style, understanding of children's psychology, and the emotional facets of the short story "The Blue Umbrella." This critical study aims to shed light on a story that, unlike many of Bond's other works, did not receive the same level of scrutiny. Chakraborty applauds Bond's unparalleled narrative simplicity, noting that "The Blue Umbrella" resonates with people of all ages due to its strong Indian influence.

In Dipasree Roy's article, "A Comparative Study of Ruskin Bond and Rudyard Kipling in a Post-Colonial Light" (2023), the author delves into post-colonial literature, examining the writings of both indigenous authors and oppressors. Roy explores how writers such as Kipling, Orwell, and Bond employ various narrative techniques to critique colonists. To unravel the twin goals of Ruskin Bond's writing, the paper utilises post-colonial and psychoanalytic theories to analyse two of Bond's stories, namely, "Wilson's Bridge" and

“Night of the Millennium.” This comparative study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which Bond addresses post-colonial themes and critiques colonial legacies in his narratives.

In the article titled, “Writings of Ruskin Bond with Special Reference to the Autobiographical Element” (2023), MD Mojibur Rahman and Asmita Sharma focus on how Bond’s autobiographical writings reveal depth and genuineness. The article highlights Bond’s observations of people, his upbringing in India, and his experiences living in the Himalayas. The stories underscore the value of joy and beauty while exploring themes of uniqueness, simplicity, nostalgia, and the profound ties between human and nature. Rahman and Sharma shed light on the autobiographical elements that enrich Bond’s writings, providing insights into the author’s personal journey and the reflections of his diverse life experiences.

In E. D. Blodgett’s article, “Canadian Literature is Comparative Literature” (1988), the author explores the emergence and definition of Comparative Canadian literature. Through an examination of novels, particularly those by authors like Rudy Wiebe, Blodgett delves into the concept of Comparative Canadian Literature. He concludes by suggesting that the solution lies not only in acquiring knowledge of other cultures but also in abandoning deceptive parallelisms that seek to overcome differences by concealing them.

In his article “Comparative Literature?” (2003), David Damrosch portrays the influential position that comparative literature holds worldwide, drawing attention to the increasing interest of both students and scholars in the discipline. He specifically delves into the comparison between North American and Euro-American perspectives, stating, “Both directions might seem natural stimuli to comparative study—most obviously in the transnational frame of global studies but also in more local comparisons: a natural way to understand the distinctiveness of a given culture, after all, is to compare it with and contrast it to others” (327). Damrosch further discusses the substantial growth of comparative literature

as reflected in the proliferation of journals and articles, underscoring the field's expanding influence and scholarly engagement.

In Haun Saussy's article, "Comparative Literature?" (2003), the author highlights the 'three language rules,' emphasising the importance of considering more than one language to facilitate literary comparisons. The article explores various facets of comparative literature, including its significance, responsibilities, and effects. Saussy delves into the notion that "the job of comparative literature is to find that out, and rarely do, two answers coincide" (339), underscoring the challenging yet essential nature of the discipline.

In Simon During's article, "Comparative Literature" (2004), the focus is on Hutcheson Posnett's work titled "Comparative Literature." Posnett's perspective posits literature as a function of evolving social organisations, and he utilises the comparative method to illustrate literature's role in the transition of social groups to a cosmopolitan world community. During discusses the impact of Posnett's book on the contemporary world, highlighting its significance in shaping perceptions of literature within the context of evolving social structures.

In Suradech Chotiudompant's article, "Comparative Literature: Recent Debates on an Imagined Discipline" (2006), the author delves into the complexities of comparative literature as scholars from different countries attempt to define its scope. Susan Bassnett, a prominent British comparatist, characterises comparative literature as involving the study of texts across cultures, being interdisciplinary, and concerned with patterns of connection across both time and space. Scholars like Rene Wellek, Charles Bernheimer, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Djelal Kadir contribute various definitions, reflecting the challenges posed by evolving practices and contexts.

In Ken Seigneurie's article on "The Institution and the Practice of Comparative Literature in Lebanon" (2014), the author initiates a new perspective on the subject,

providing a masterful narrative that offers insight into the state of comparative literature in Lebanon. Seigneurie's narrative sheds light on the challenges and triumphs of comparative literature in the Arab world, particularly in Lebanon. The article recognises that amidst political and military events, comparative literature in Lebanon thrives through the efforts of determined scholars who navigate institutional structures and historical conditions with quiet determination.

In Elmas Sahin's article, "On Comparative Literature" (2016), the focus lies on exploring various aspects of comparative literature, such as its definition, contemporary practices, benefits, and the common errors made in both theoretical approaches and practical comparisons of texts. Sahin also draws attention to the imprecisions in contemporary observations and practices within comparative literature, emphasising the historical development of this academic discipline. The article underscores the significance of comparing literatures, languages, cultures, and countries in understanding the broader scope of comparative literature.

### **Research Gap**

The existing body of literature on Munro and Bond's works offers valuable insights into their respective contributions, yet a noticeable research gap emerges in the comparative analysis between Munro's depiction of provincial life and its nuanced comparison with Bond's work. While there has been some exploration of Munro's portrayal of localities, the absence of a thorough examination in relation to Bond's work represents an unexplored avenue. This gap is particularly significant given the authors' distinct geographical origins, providing a compelling opportunity to discern unique perspectives from disparate corners of the world.

Furthermore, the incorporation of a section on comparative literature is warranted, as its absence in the current discourse suggests an unmet need for a broader contextual

understanding of the convergences within Munro and Bond's literary realms. This identified research gap underscores the potential for a more comprehensive exploration of the interplay between provincial life, regional influences, and the distinct narrative styles employed by these two authors. Addressing this gap would contribute significantly to the scholarly discourse on Munro and Bond, offering a more nuanced understanding of their works within the broader context of comparative literature.

### **Focus of the Research**

The selection of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond for this research is rooted in the researcher's primary focus on provincial life. Both writers are renowned for their expertise in portraying small-town environments, aligning seamlessly with the research objective. Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond share a profound connection with nature, evident in their short stories that unfold within small-town settings. This commonality enriches the significance of their narratives and aligns with the thematic emphasis on provincial life.

### **Progression of Provincial Life (1892 – 2015)**

The progression of provincial life between 1892 and 2015, as explored in the short stories of Munro and Bond, reveals minimal variation. Munro's collection, spanning from "Turkey Season" (1982) to "Dear Life" (2012), and Bond's from "The Photograph" (1988) to "The Blue Umbrella" (2015), illustrate consistent themes of familial bonds, relationships, agriculture, and animals. These narratives underscore the enduring importance of provincial life, with both authors portraying similar aspects such as gardens, agriculture, memories, and animals throughout their works.

### **Cross References**

Various writers from around the world delve into the intricacies of small-town life through their short stories. Zadie Smith, a British author, explores this theme in her collection *Grand Union* (2019), where characters navigate life in small towns amidst diverse settings.

Tessa Hadley, also British, captures the nuances of everyday existence in provincial settings, as seen in *Married Love and Other Stories* (2013), which delves into relationships and community dynamics. Irish writer Kevin Barry's *Dark Lies the Island* (2012) portrays the oddities and struggles of life in Irish small towns and villages. Jon McGregor's *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You* (2012) offers glimpses into English small-town life through keen observations of human behavior. English writer Sarah Hall's *The Beautiful Indifference* (2011) highlights the beauty and harshness of provincial life, while Alan Bennett's *Smut: Two Unseemly Stories* (2011) humorously explores British small-town existence. Helen Simpson's *Hey Yeah Right Get a Life* (2000) delves into domestic life and relationships within small-town settings. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie portrays Nigerian provincial life in *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), while Australian author Tim Winton vividly depicts Australian small-town communities in *The Turning* (2004). Annie Proulx's *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* (1999) offers a nuanced portrayal of small-town dynamics in America, and Daniyal Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009) provides insights into characters' lives in Pakistani small-towns. These diverse voices collectively offer rich explorations of the complexities of small-town existence across different cultures and geographies.

### **Provincial Life**

Provincial life holds significant importance in the fabric of society, where Raymond William in his book *The Country and the City* opines, “‘Country’ is both nation and a part of a ‘land’; ‘the country’ can be the whole society or its rural area” (1), as it represents a distinct way of living that is deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, community values, and a connection to nature. The charm of provincial life lies in its simplicity, “the idea of natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue” (1), slower pace, and strong sense of community, where individuals are closely knit and rely on one another for support and

companionship. Small communities offer a unique setting where traditions, customs, and shared experiences shape the lives of their inhabitants. The portrayal of provincial life in literature allows readers to explore the intricacies of these communities, offering glimpses into their idiosyncrasies, struggles, and triumphs. Through literary works, such as those by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, the essence of provincial life is captured, inviting readers to delve into the nuances of small-town dynamics, the relationships that flourish within such settings, and the impact of the local society and natural surroundings on the lives of its inhabitants.

### **Key Questions of the Research**

This research aims to address several key questions regarding the portrayal of provincial life in literature, specifically focusing on the works of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond. The research questions include: 1) How do Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond depict the complexities and subtleties of small-town life in their respective works? 2) What similarities and differences can be observed in their portrayal of small-town dynamics? 3) How do these authors explore the unique qualities and challenges associated with living in small communities? 4) What insights can be gained from their examination of provincial life in terms of societal norms, relationships, and individual experiences? 5) To what extent do the local society and natural surroundings shape the lives of characters in their works? By addressing these research questions, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of the representation of provincial life in literature and provide valuable insights into the nuances of small-town dynamics as depicted by Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond.

### **Parameters, Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

The research is framed within specific parameters drawn from influential works in Comparative Literature and literary theory. Susan Basnett's *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, particularly chapters such as "Introduction: What is Comparative

Literature Today,” “How Comparative Literature Came into Being,” and “Beyond the Frontiers of Europe: Alternative Concepts of Comparative Literature,” establish foundational understanding. Additionally, Dr. S. Chellaiah’s insights from *Comparative Literature: Its Theory and Practice* inform the study, alongside Ihab Hassan’s “Parallelism” theory. Furthermore, the analysis integrates Louise M. Rosenblatt’s transactional model from *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, focusing on “Efferent and Aesthetic Reading,” to explore nuances in selected short stories.

In this thesis, the methodology adopts Parallel Theory in the fourth chapter, while the second and third chapters utilise the Transactional Model to analyse the selected short stories. Additionally, adherence to the *MLA 9th Edition* citation guidelines supplements the methodology. The fourth chapter specifically delves into a comparative analysis of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond’s short stories, with a primary emphasis on the application of the Transactional Model. This approach allows for a meticulous examination of the parallels and divergences in the two writers’ depictions of provincial life.

Literature is based on the skill of comparison; it is not only about finding similarities. Scholars are able to identify the distinct cultural environments that influence literary creativity by contrasting works from different origins, where Wellek and Warron in their work titled, *Theory of literature*, opines, “Comparative literature is a key opening all doors beyond the national, cultural, linguistic, historical, social, or political boundaries” (40). A more sophisticated understanding of how civilisations both influence and are influenced by the works they make is made possible by this comparative viewpoint. Some themes and motifs are seen to be timeless and spatially recurrent via the prism of comparative literature. This topic provides an insight into the diverse range of expressions that arise from different parts of the world, whether they are related to love, identity, or societal codes. It invites readers to consider the human condition from a variety of cultural perspectives. By providing

a broad overview of the literary legacy of the world, comparative literature encourages readers and academics to travel beyond the confines of particular literary traditions.

Comparative Literature is studying literature from many languages and civilisations while examining themes, styles, and influences. Comparative analysis, on the other hand, is a more general phrase that describes the process of comparing and contrasting two or more objects. This can include literary works, but it can also apply to other subjects where analysis is used, such as science or economics, where Elmas Sahin in her article titled, “On Comparative Literature” states, “A Comparative analysis of different literatures will present a rich knowledge of literatures, languages, cultures, and identities of other nations, thus comparisons of products of the different literatures will get a chance to recognise both the nations’ values and other qualities” (8).

*Comparative analysis* is a methodological approach that may be used in many different fields, whereas comparative literature is mainly focused on literary works. The theoretical foundations of comparative literature are explained in the fourth chapter, which also emphasises the field’s contribution to the understanding of literary themes and concepts across cultural divides. The approach thus makes it easier to study recurring themes, storytelling devices, and cultural influences in Munro and Bond’s short stories in this chapter, allowing for the discovery of trends and distinctions. In the end, the comparative analysis pervades every aspect of the research, providing insightful analysis of these two eminent authors’ writings as well as enabling a thorough examination of provincial life in the chosen short stories.

The second and third chapters discuss the analysis of the selected short stories through the support of *Transactional model’s Aesthetic Reading*. Louise M. Rosenblatt’s groundbreaking contributions to reader-response theory have left an enduring impact on the field of literary theory. At the core of her work is the *transactional model* of reading, challenging

conventional notions of a fixed, objective meaning within a book. Rosenblatt's model posits that reading is a dynamic exchange between the reader and the text, rejecting the idea of passive reception of predefined interpretations. The reader's subjective sensations, feelings, and cultural background play pivotal roles in this interactive process.

Within the *transactional model*, readers assume two roles: the aesthetic and efferent. For the aesthetic reader, the interaction with the text is an end in itself, seeking an immersive experience. Rosenblatt, in her work titled, *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, emphasises this by stating, "In aesthetic reading, the reader's concern is with what happens during the actual reading event" (27). Aesthetic readers focus on the emotions and sensory responses elicited by the literary work. Rosenblatt underscores the significance of individual interpretation, encouraging readers to infuse the text with their unique perspectives and emotions, echoing Coleridge's renowned statement, "The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself" (28). On the other hand, the efferent reader approaches the text with the objective of extracting specific knowledge or information. This utilitarian approach reflects their desire to gain practical insights from their reading experience.

### **Primary Texts**

There are twenty-nine short stories selected for this study from the following collections: Alice Munro's *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Runaway* (2004), *Too Much Happiness* (2009), and *Dear Life* (2012), along with Ruskin Bond's *The Night Train at Deoli* (1988), *Time Stops at Shamli* (1989), *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1991), and *The Essential Collection for Young Readers* (2015). These collections serve as the primary texts for the research.

## **Thesis Statement**

Amidst the dominance of city life in a modernising world, this research analyses representations of small-town existence in short stories by two writers from different continents. Through this exploration, it aims to uncover similarities and differences between these societies, providing insight into the overlooked facets of small-town life in contrast to the urban-centric narratives of our times.

## **Objectives**

1. To analyse the portrayal of provincial life in selected works of Alice Munro.
2. To examine the depiction of provincial life in selected works of Ruskin Bond.
3. To compare the portrayal of provincial life in Canadian and Indian contexts through the works of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond.
4. To identify and study the similarities in the writing styles of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond in their portrayal of provincial life.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

The research work has been divided into five chapters. Chapter I titled, “Introduction” discusses the introduction to short fiction as a genre, where both Canadian and Indian short fiction is conversed. Furthermore, the contemporary short story writers of Alice Munro and Ruskin Bond, followed by Munro and Bond as writers has been deliberated. Also, Review of literature, research gap, thesis statement, methodology and objectives has been organised accordingly.

Chapter II titled, “Ontario’s Small-town Shades” delves into the theme of provincial life in Canada in the selected short stories that are taken from the short story collections titled: *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *Runaway* (2004), *Too Much Happiness* (2009), *Dear Life* (2012), with the aid of Transactional model.

Chapter III titled, “Himalayan Hues” probes into the theme of provincial life in India, where the short stories are taken from the short story collections titled: *The Night Train at Deoli* (1988), *Time Stops at Shamli* (1989), *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1991), *The Essential Collection for Young Readers* (2015) with the support of Transactional model.

Chapter IV titled, “Munro and Bond - Parallel Palettes,” discusses the theory of *Comparative analysis*, with particular focus on *parallel theory*. The chapter applies it and compares the analysis from the previous chapters i.e., Chapter II and III, thereafter furnishing the comparisons.

Chapter V titled, “Conclusion,” brings together the ideas of all the previous chapters. The chapter argues the relevance of the theoretical framework for the core chapters and also highlights the merits. Also, it furnishes the analysis and presents the observations and findings resulting from the research, which culminates with the future recommendations.