

# *CHAPTER-I*

## *INTRODUCTION*

## CHAPTER I

## Introduction

The significance of great literature is marked as to how an author transforms the everyday experience into an immortal piece of imaginative literature that reflects the minds of the readers. Literature gets inspiration from life and whatever is portrayed reflects of the real attitudes, assumptions and perceptions. As Mark Twain rightly points out, "India is the cradle of the human race, the birth place of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grandmother of tradition." Indian English literature has offered significant contribution to the growth of global literature. It captures and encapsulates the cultural patterns of India and is preoccupied with Indian themes, characters, life and manners. Simultaneously, it reflects the ideas and ideals that constitute the minds of the Indians.

India's vast literary treasure house consists of tales told through the ages, different from myths and legends. It offers a fertile field for interpretation of the social, economic and political issues in the genres including poetry, fiction, play, prose, short story, etc. The present study is focussed on short story writing and its writers. Shiv K. Kumar in his book entitled *Contemporary Indian Literature in English* gives an account of the origin of Indian English Short Story:

Although the Indian short story in English is comparatively a recent phenomenon; its genesis may be traced back to the ancient fables of the sixth century A.D. Its origin lies in such ancient classics as the Katha-Sarit-Sangara, Yogavashishtha, Brihat-Katha or the Panchtantra. As

stories, these fables and tales were tightly structured and ingeniously conceived, although their primary objective invariably was didactic – geared more to instruct than to entertain their readers. (9)

Apart from the fables and the folktales, the Indian writers are largely influenced by the ancient works. Some of the major ancient works that influenced the Indian short story writers are the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Bhagawata, the Brahmanda and the epics – the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*. Jainism has its tales too, like the *Padmapurana* penned by Ravisena and the *Mahapurana* by Jinasena and Gunabhadra.

In the eleventh century, poets namely Pampa and Ranna recreated the epics in Kannada. In the thirteenth century, Raghavanka retold the story of king Harishchandra in verse. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Kumaravyasa and Lakshmisha retold the story of *the Mahabharata* in Kannada. Poets like Eknath and Mukteshwar retold the Puranas in Marathi and Tulasidas brought out his highly popular and revered rendering of the *Ramayana* in Hindi as *Ramacharitamanas*. All these works were in verse, but the ancient Indian tales were preserved in them. Modern short story writers in Indian English have made ample use of the myths and legends in their stories.

The first collection of short stories in Indian English literature is *Stories from Indian Christian Life* written by Kamala Sathianandan in 1898. Subsequently, Indian writing in English saw many more writers of real merit and artistic gift. The earlier Indian short story writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao whose labour made the short story attain its peak of

recognition in the 1930s were also influenced by the writers of the West —, Maupassant, Frank O' Connor, Theodore Powys and Anton Chekhov as their guides and source of inspiration.

Between nineteen thirties and eighties, there were a number of Indian English short story writers like K.A.Abbas, Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai, Manoj Das, Ruskin Bond, Sunita Jain, Kamala Das, Keki.N.Daruwalla, Jayanta Mahapatra and a few others who had enriched its form and made it popular. In the post modern period, most of these writers have contributed immensely to the growth and development of Indian English short story.

Indian English short story holds mirror unto contemporary society. Stories are being written on various aspects of life and society such as love, death, attitude to women, corruption in public life, human relationship, superstitions and rituals that are prevalent in the Indian communities. The change in the society in terms of urbanisation and industrialisation becomes a favourite theme for the writers.

Mulk Raj Anand's notable contributions to short story are *Things Have a Way of Working Out* (1998) and *Tales Told by An Idiot* (1999). R.K. Narayan's short story collections include *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road and Other Stories* (1956), *Old and New* (1981) and *Malgudi Days* (1982). Simple irony of situation, resulting in comic reversal, or anticlimax, has always been the basic structure of Narayan's stories. Raja Rao's short story collections include *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories* (1947), *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978) and *On the Gangan Ghat* (1989).

Manoj Das has employed myths in his collection of short stories entitled *Bulldozers and Fables and Fantasies for Adults* (1990). He also uses anecdotes to give moral and philosophical touch to the stories. Superstitions in the society attract the attention of the writers. Khushwant Singh's "The Mark of Vishnu" is written on this theme. Vikram Chandra's "Love and Longing in Bombay" is an interesting story about the supernatural world. The supernatural elements in a rustic setting continues to be one of Das' interests which is found in his stories such as "Farewell to Ghost", "The Owl" and "Friends and Strangers".

Mahapatra's stories are about human condition and helplessness resulting in pain, agony and loneliness. Shiv K. Kumar has published two collections of short stories in recent years — *Beyond Love and Other Stories* (1980) and *To Nun with Love* (2001). He dives deep into human psyche and recreates characters in real life circumstances. Most of his stories in both the collections deal with love and the characters in the stories are young men and women beaming with love and desire.

Keki. N. Daruwalla published his short story collection entitled, *The Minister for Permanent Unrest and Other Stories* (1996). The locale of his stories varies from state to state. Along with Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Kashmir, Assam, Arabia and Persia provide background to his stories.

Manoj Das's important collection of short stories include *The Crocodile Lady* (1975), *Fables and Fantasies for Adults* (1978), *The Vengeance and other Short Stories* (1980), *The Submerged Valley and Other Stories* (1986), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1993) and *Farewell to Ghost* (1994). Das's themes in

his short stories are vast ranging from ghosts, animals, humans to demons. His world is warm and palpable. There are hints and guesses, pathos and humour, subdued irony and gentle mockery that go well with the plot and the situations. He never spares people of dubious nature and reputation. While dealing with contemporary situation, he comes down heavily on those who corrupt the society and hoodwink the public. Stories dealing with contemporary life and society where parents are cast away by children as in “Trespassers” or friends disown each other as in “Encounters” have atmosphere surcharged with subdued irony and the tone becomes potentially mocking. Although Das does not create another Malgudi like R.K.Narayan, the locale of most of his stories is a small palce in Balasore, Orissa. The landscape of the place with a nostalgia for the writer’s past comes alive in most of his stories.

In the nineteenth century, more and more women actively participated in India’s reformist movement against the British rule. It led to the women’s literature. During this period, their write-ups mainly concentrated on the country’s freedom struggle. This century saw the publications of Attia Hossain’s *Sunlight on A Broken Column*, Vimala Raina’s *Ambapali*, Tapati Mookerjee’s *Six Faces of Eve*, Padmini Sengupta’s *Red Hibiscus*, Veena Paintal’s *Serenity in Storm*, Shanta Rama Rau’s *Remember the House*, Shashi Deshpande’s *Roots and Shadows* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Namita Gokhale’s *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, Kamala Das’ *Alphabet of Lust* and *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* etc. Over the years, the world of feminist ideologies began to influence the English literature of India.

Women's contribution to the short story is invaluable. They prove their clarity of vision and perception, immaculate articulation, depth and variety of subjects and universality of appeal. They have made innovative experiments in the form and narrative techniques. They have lent a new dimension of sensitivity and perception to the short story in Indian English literature. They find its limited canvas quite congenial to their sensibilities in confronting their belief, often muted experiences.

Reading of the stories of the twentieth century women writers have revealed a fairly consistent emergence of lonely women protagonist, who are disappointed in their persisting fight for the fulfillment in life, through love and compassion in the patriarchal society. The women writer implicitly or explicitly hint at the requirement for fostering mutuality by giving importance to their feelings, as it is not considered in patriarchal contexts. There is outright condemnation of social inequities too. Their writing illumines the frustrations, conflicts and contradictions faced by the women protagonist because of the internalisation of certain social prescriptions for feminine behaviour. Women writer have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings.

In the twentieth century, women's writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist writings of Indian English literature. The novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Attia Hossain and many others have evinced remarkable artistic skills for satire, humour, criticism, irony, wit, pathos, serious tragic emotions, fantasy and a lyrical

quality that is outstanding. The content of their novels has accomplished immaculate advancement of the image of the contemporary Indian women with remarkable ease and excellence. Their works of art consist of the latest burning issues related to women as well as to some of the issues that exist in the society. Their write-ups give a glimpse of the unexplored female psyche, which has no accessibility. The majority of them depict the psychological sufferings of the frustrated housewives.

Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabwala, Nayanatara Saghal, Anita Desai, Gita Mehta, Namita Gokhale, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, and Manju Kapoor through their writing have very successfully and skillfully captured the Indian ethos. They exhibit deep insight into human nature and understanding of day-to-day problems. They have drawn their protagonists from modern Indian women and the themes dealt by them are varied depicting clash between modernity and tradition, identity crisis of the protagonists, Indian woman's search for independence, the East-West conflict, freedom struggle movement and the traumatic effect of partition. Through their fictions, these women writers have successfully projected the urges, dreams and desires of Indian women in the context of the contemporary world as an individual with freedom of choices.

Markandaya portrays her women characters with vitality and strength which enable them to face hurdles in life. They suffer heroically, though they are strong willed. Some of them sublimate their desires in religious faith. She describes the dilemma that an Indian woman has to face between tradition and

modernity. Shanta Krishnaswami in her book *The Women in Indian Fiction in English* writes that Markandaya

. . . advocates a compromise in the elevation of her need for love, caring and autonomy into the larger concept of the sisterhood of man. The quest of autonomy for the self leads to nurturance of the family which in turn progresses to imaginative sympathy for the human race. . . . (354)

Markandaya points out in her novels how economic and social problems affect women more adversely than men.

Ruth Prawar Jhabvala's novels evoke vividly the first decade of Nehru's India — its political idealism and its vitality. She is probably the first writer in English to see that India's westernising middle class are preoccupied with marriage. She takes an amused look at arranged marriages in India with her Jane Austenian tongue-in-cheek style and presents an ironic survey of the East-West confrontation. She succeeds in giving a picture of the stereotypical woman of Hindu households within the joint family system. Her novels include *The Householder* (1960), *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *A New Dominion* (1973), *Heat and Dust* (1975), *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983), *The Continents* (1987), *Poet and Dancer* (1993) and *Shards of Memory* (1995).

Nayanatara Sahgal's women characters include divorcees and suffering wives who herald a new morality. In her novels, Sahgal evidently prefers to focus on women's resistance to patriarchy rather than their role in maintaining it. It is through the struggle with patriarchal society that her protagonists develop and mature. Although the difficulties of challenging patriarchy and reappraising social

roles are always apparent, Julie Scott in her article “Female Autonomy: Linking the Public and Private Worlds in *Plans for Departure* and *Mistaken Identity*” finds that “Sahgal’s fiction nevertheless gives a positive message to women, of the potential each one of them possesses” (126). Saroj in *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) and Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* (1971) gradually move towards an awareness of their emotional needs and eventually find the courage to constructively change their lives.

The portrait of Sonali in *Rich Like Us* (1985), according to Viney Kirpal stated in his article “*Rich Like Us: Text, Context and Subtext*” “spells hope for the upliftment and emancipation of Indian women through education, economic freedom and self-determination” (177). In *Mistaken Identity* (1988), women characters like Mother and Razia who refuse to be tied down emerge triumphant. Julie Scott points out that “all the major women characters in *Mistaken Identity* take it upon themselves to act out their own desires as opposed to being objects of desire, thereby subverting conventional mores of Indian women” (126).

Many of Sahgal’s protagonists face the experience of divorce which causes hardship and suffering. The distress makes them fight against it so as to create their own individuality. In *This Time of Morning* (1965), the cause of Rashmi’s divorce is identified as incompatibility, but in each of Sahgal’s later novels divorce seems to be the protagonist’s ‘solution’ to the problems of patriarchal domination. Maya, in an article “On Woman Coming into Their Own” comments about Sahgal

She has a mind of her own and her novels point an accusing finger at smug, chauvinistic Indian society that refuses to recognise the identity of woman as individual . . . Sahgal's women are mostly educated, aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservative society. The social institution of arranged marriage is a trap that curbs their development and chains them to the responsibilities of home. . . . The urge to escape from frustrating marriages is therefore a constant craving in Naynatara Sahgal's women characters. . . . (134)

Shashi Deshpande's novels suggest that in India women's strength in coping with patriarchy have at times had destructive effects. She shows examples of women upholding patriarchal values, accepting subordination, insisting on maintaining a monopoly of domestic work, working out their resentment on other women and on themselves, retreating into silence and even blaming female victims for their own oppression. Her novels also contain examples of women resisting patriarchy with admirable strength and determination.

Since long, women issues have been used by the women writers. Indian women writers explore the feminine subjectivity and apply the theme that ranges from childhood to complete womanhood. Their works reflect that the present age women have realised that they are efficient and can be independent. They feel that a woman is an equal competent to a man. Today, a woman has become an earning member. The women of modern era think on different perspectives which are depicted in the works of the Indian women authors.

Literature is the only field to which women, over a long stretch of time, have made an indispensable contribution. In the post-independence era, there arose a new class of prominent women writers who have made the contemporary Indian short story an effective tool for the promotion of a secularised democratic culture with the traditional pieties. Such women short story writers are Kamala Das, Sunita Jain, Raji Narasimhan, Lakshmi Kannan, Veera Sharma, Shashi Deshpande, Gauri Deshpande, Tara Deshpande, Anjana Appachana, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shalan Savur, Prema Ramakrishnan, Manju Kak, Gita Hariharan and R.P.Jhabvala.

Kamala Das has two collections of short stories to her credit. They are *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992). Love is the central and recurrent theme in her short stories. The frankness with which she depicts love relationship between men and women is admirable.

Sunita Jain's "Heavy is God" tells the story of a young woman who under compulsion agrees to marry a widower twice her age. The agony of woman is depicted in artistic terms. Sunita Jain's collection of short stories entitled *A Woman is Dead* (1980) and *The Eunuch of Time and Other Stories* (1982) mainly concentrate on men's betrayal as a major theme. Her women characters do not revolt. Her language is poetic and has great lyrical effect.

Shashi Deshpande, a Sahitya Akademi Award winning writer, has a number of short story collections to her credit. Her collections of short story include *The Legacy and Other Stories* (1971), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1986), *It Was Dark* (1986), *It Was the Nightingale* (1986) and *The Intrusion and*

*Other Stories* (1993). In her stories she recreates India in the present situation and the characters with authenticity and conviction. Deshpande articulates desperation and frustration, misunderstanding and incompatibility; sense of guilt and loss; loneliness and alienation of her female protagonists in her short stories. As Balaram Gupta in his article entitled "Indian English Women Short Story Writer" comments that

Shashi's women are conscious of their predicament; they are victims of inequality; they are creatures of conventional morality; they are the ones who are unfairly abused, misused and ill-used. But they believe in conformity and compromise for the sake on the retention of domestic harmony rather than revolt which might result in the disruption of familial concord. Shashi's fictional world is replete with only Savitris, not Norahs.

(39)

Shashi Deshpande's "A Liberated Woman" brings out the temperamental and situational contrasts between a married couple, a successful lady doctor and a frustrated lecturer. The man becomes a sadist and tortures his wife physically and mentally. Deshpande suggests that women should not be at her feebleness and her attitude of despairing indifference is to be driven off. Similarly, the old woman portrayed in "The First Lady" finds her life quite boring and meaningless. She attests to a life in which freedom has no place and so gone sour because of the heavy mask that must be constantly worn. The same sense of boredom and dissatisfaction grips the young married woman in "An Antidote to Boredom." Another story, "Death of a Child" deals with a woman's problem of unwanted

pregnancy and the abortion of the child. As G.S.Amur in his preface to Shashi Deshpande's *The Legacy and Other Stories* remarks,

Woman's struggle in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as a wife, mother and most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her stories. (10)

Prema Ramakrishnan's short story collection entitled *The Homemaker and Other Stories* mainly focuses on the home maker. She not only does all the cleaning and management of the house but also creates an aura of warmth and love which embraces the inmates of the house who feel that aura, and do not feel like going out of home. Every woman longs for belongingness, love and warmth and they want to be their own selves.

Prema Ramakrishnan shows the present day situation where women are going out to work but it does not change their roles as homemakers. Woman as a homemaker is reflected in every story which reminds the famous lines of John Howard Payne: "Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, / There is no place in the world like home".

The diasporic experience is also a thematic preoccupation in the short stories of many post-independence women writers. Anita Desai has tried to capture this experience in her collection of short stories entitled *Diamond Dust* (2000). Anita Desai has been praised as a marvelous observer of human race for her broad understanding of intellectual issues and for her ability to portray her country with the way the western and the eastern cultures have blended.

Throughout her literary career, she focusses on personal struggles and problems of contemporary life that her Indian characters must cope with. Desai has been very much concerned with the theme of desolation and seclusion. Her characters express a strong yearning for being loved and cared. She skillfully describes the dilemmas faced by people living in other countries and how they suffer from a sense of rootlessness and alienation.

Jhumpa Lahiri is another important writer who deals with the diasporic experience. The prefatory note given to her collection of short stories entitled *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) mentions that Lahiri's stories, "tell the lives of Indians in exile, of people navigating between the strict traditions they've inherited and the baffling New World they must encounter everyday".

Her short story collections are *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). Her stories unerringly chart the emotional journeys of characters seeking love beyond the barriers of nations and generations. They are imbued with the sensual details of Indian culture. Her characters also bring out the distinctive features of India, Indians and Indianness.

Gauri Deshpande has adopted the same theme as Jhumpa Lahiri does. Her collection of short stories entitled *The Lackdaisical Sweepers* (1997) deals with different themes like alienation, displacement and rootlessness. But the leitmotif in her anthology is the travails faced by Indians living abroad.

Another theme being dealt with is the quest to find out the meaning of existence. Moving from particular to general, advancing from the difficulties

faced by non-residential Indians to the existential problems, Gauri's stories succeed in minutely analysing the emotions of people.

The diasporic experience again figures in the short stories of a very significant writer, Ruth Praver Jhabvala. She has written many novels and short stories. Her anthology of short stories christened *Out of India* (1987) is an attempt to interpret India. Like Jhumpa Lahiri, the exploration and interpretation of India, Indians and Indianness are the main themes of Jhabvala's stories. Her characters, Indians as well as Europeans, try to adjust themselves in Indian surroundings. Her stories deal with the attempt of adjustment and the quest for solace and happiness in India.

Shalan Savur, concentrates on love, emotions and relationships which help in making life sweet and worth living. Savur's *Renaissance Daughter and Other* (1993) is an assortment of captivatingly charming stories set in a cosmopolitan environment. The author enthralls with a whole gamut of emotions.

Githa Hariharan has published several short stories in magazines and journals. *The Art of Dying and Other Stories* (1993) is a striking collection of twenty stories, which pertain to the contemporary Indian life. Death is the central preoccupation in this anthology. She portrays death as a phenomenon, sometimes dreaded and sometimes welcome but inevitable. She shows her characters fading away, thinning away to embrace a slow, sure death. They are also aware of this unavoidable end towards which they are advancing.

The works of Githa Hariharan also carry their special significance in the present scenario. Through her works, she attempts to tear apart the veil of

sophistication and social equality by presenting the status of women in the present age. She tries to portray the custom-ridden Indian society, especially in the southern part of India.

Anjana Appachana has to her credit one volume of short stories, *Incantations and Other Short Stories* (1991), and a novel, *Listening Now* (1998). Her first book, *Incantations and Other Short Stories* was published in England, the United States and India and is translated in German. Her story, "Sharmaji" is included by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West in the collection *Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing*. Anjana Appachana is the recipient of several awards including two Hawthornden Castle Fellowships, an O Henry Award and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.

Anjana Appachana who lives in Tempe, Arizona, United States of America has found her 'new home', an appropriate place for her to excel in the field of creative writing. Echoing the popular phrase of Virginia Woolf on women's liberty, she says that America has given her more room and more space to write. Anjana gives preference to her writing work than to any other thing, "If you're a writer, however, your work is always considered dispensable; you're expected to put it aside for anyone and everyone, any thing and everything. . ." (Kamath). For her writing is not a hobby or a "salvation from the bondage at home" (Pais). It is an ordeal that she endeavours to accomplish with total sincerity and enthusiasm.

Anjana Appachana has begun her literary career as a short story writer. The anthology, *Incantations and Other Short Stories* is a collection of eight short

stories dealing with various themes that are all Indian oriented. Anjana with heedful eyes has captured the microcosm of Indian society; “Politics, the inimitable Indian bureaucracy, psychology, young children behaviour like vicious, selfish children, north vs. south with its gullibility and prejudices” (Appachana).

Anjana’s short stories recognise the inadequacy of male-created ideologies and deal with the middle-class Indian women who struggle to adjust rather than attempting to liberate themselves from the traditional world. She also shows a new perspective with the women psyche trying to redefine women’s roles in the society and reassert their self-identities.

Although Appachana has lived in the United States of America for over two decades, her writing is firmly based in India. In an interview published in *The Times of India*, Appachana said, “When I write, I live there again. . . . I hear the voices of my family and friends all of whom are so far away from me physically. . . .” She also states that all her main characters are women,

. . . because I’m very close to the women of my life. Women matter deeply to me and their stories, those told, ring endlessly in my ears. I can’t write from a man’s point of view. I don’t understand how their minds work. I wrote what came to me and what came to me were the voices of these women. I could barely hear men’s voices.

Appachana’s basic aim is to portray women who play several roles. She has deftly presented the modern women as contrasted against the traditional

women in her *Incantations and Other Stories*. She feels that there is a growing need for woman to wake up and realise what is happening around them. As Mary Wolstencraft remarks in her book entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, “It’s time to bring about a revolution in female manners – time to restore to them their lost identity, and make them as a part of the human species labour, by reforming themselves to reform the world” (qtd. in Daiya 20).

The trials and tribulations of women are recurring themes in Appachana’s short stories. She pinpoints at the game of gender politics. A woman has no place in the home of her in-laws. Nevertheless, she must be silent and follow what is being dictated to her. A woman has no right to either ask a question or to voice dissatisfaction. She has major role to play at home and hence left with no time to think of her own self. Promila Kapur gives reasons to why women are submissive and quotes Dr.Radhakrishnan in a book entitled *The Changing Status of the Working Woman in India*, “Centuries of tradition have made the Indian woman the most patient woman in the world, whose pride is suffering” (366).

Appachana also represents the new woman who does not agree to be totally cowed down by her husband and in-laws. She rises above her role of merely a wife or a daughter-in-law to assert her individuality. She does not want to be victimised in the patriarchal contexts.

Sociologists in their research on women and their rights have found that a woman suffers due to her emotional attachment. But her sense of individuality has developed due to the introduction of education. Promila Kapur analyses the change and states that “. . . women’s personal status and social status has come a

change in her way of thinking and feelings and the past half century has witnessed great changes in attitudes towards sex, love and marriage” (qtd. in Nityanandam).

Anjana Appachana’s *Incantations and other Stories* consists of eight short stories, “My Only Gods”, “Bahu”, “Sharmaji”, “The Prophecy”, “When Anklets Tinkle”, “Incantations”, “Sharmaji and the Diwali Sweets” and “Her Mother”. It is a powerful, concentrated exploration of the persistence across generations of familial traditions and patterns of behaviour. The first story of the collection is “My Only Gods” that tells of a little girl’s obsessive attachment to her mother. It is a story depicting a child’s world in which her parents are her only gods.

“Bahu” speaks of the despair of a woman being in her husband’s family, tired of shedding her tears, willing to face the shame of divorce. Appachana incisively renders the power and manipulation wielded by a mother-in-law over her daughter-in-law who has no opportunity to assert her personal identity.

“Sharmaji” has only one female character namely Miss Dass, who is a personnel officer. She is known for her calibre in handling complex situations in her office. She is smart, discreet and very professional and never brings in the family affairs at her workplace. As a fashionable married woman, Miss. Das differs in the concept of binding herself to marital status and female suppression.

“The prophecy” stirs a call to all women not to be victimized by their sex. It is a story of unconditional love faced with betrayal and rejection, a story of a young female student named Amrita who finds herself pregnant amidst the oppressive atmosphere of a residential school. The traditional Indian society makes her bury her past and begin a new life with an unknown husband.

“When Anklets Tinkle” deals with both traditional women, Mrs. Srivastava and Sita ki amma who end their lives without any self-assertion of their own and Namita, with a modern outlook comes out of the shell of tradition and asserts her individuality.

“Her Mother” is about mother-daughter relationship. The mother is highly confined to her home and the daughter reveals her identity as a modern woman. The daughter dwells in abroad for the purpose of higher education. It is significant that both the mother and daughter are nameless. They represent the iconic nurturing mother and the younger rebellious daughter as they play out their conflicting roles. The mother is a traditional Indian wife looking after her daughters and husband. On the other hand, the daughter is a modern Indian woman, educated, independent and at times head strong. The story highlights how education and economic independence develop confidence in women. It helps women to come out of the traditional restrictions that define the role of women in Indian society.

The title story of Appachana’s work, “Incantations”, captures the unspeakable truth of abuse, guilt and self-recrimination. In “Incantations”, marital life of a young girl’s sister goes wrong when the bride-to-be, Sangeeta, is raped by her future brother-in-law. The raping continues after the wedding every day, until in a single outpouring of suppressed anger Sangeeta kills her brother-in-law and then herself.

The present dissertation deals with the voices of female protagonists and other characters with special reference to Anjana Appachana’s *Incantations and*

*Other Stories*. It is significant that the stories of anthology focus on women's issues. Appachana shows the difference between the traditional and the new woman; the traditional woman does not exercise her option whereas the new woman does. She is not hesitant to avoid the institution of marriage if it becomes a fetter that binds her. Of course, such a revolutionary decision is preceded by a prolonged period of conflicting dilemmas within the woman. Appachana gives the picture of a woman who not only struggles against the external patriarchal paradigm of the society but also with that part of her ownself which has been patriarchal to an extent.

Chapter I entitled 'Introduction' traces out the origin of Indian English short stories and the emergence of women short story writers. This chapter also deals with Anjana Appachana's involvement with female issues and her concern for the empowerment of women with reference to her *Incantations and Other Stories*. As a writer, Anjana Appachana explores the position of women in contemporary Indian society.

Chapter II entitled 'Subjugation of Women in Silence' projects the women characters portrayed in "My Only Gods", "Bahu", "The Prophecy", "When Anklets Tinkle", "Incantations" and "Her Mother". They are in direct encounter with chauvinistic male oppressors and Appachana deliberately gives her women characters a great variety and depth – and thus a definite edge, over to their male counterparts.

Chapter III entitled 'Silent Transformation of Women' studies the new women who are ready to come out of gender politics in the name of tradition. It

primarily focuses on the female characters who are solitary individuals striving for self-assertion. This chapter has taken the short stories such as “Bahu”, “When Anklets Tinkle”, “Incantations”, “Her Mother”, “Sharmaji” and “Sharmaji and the Diwali Sweets” for its study.

Chapter IV the ‘Conclusion’ sums up the previous chapters. Appachana’s short stories require the immediate attention for the transformation of the social ethos to make it more conducive for the women to develop individuality in them. They can face the world bravely and boldly. They are decisive, determined, self assertive and dignified. They know what they want from life and strive towards achieving their goals with courage and determination.

Appachana’s short stories give the critical and realistic examination of Indian society’s claims and practices with reference to the community of women. Appachana has the perception and the analytical mind of a sociologist who provides an exact record of human life, society and the social system. In order to understand a society through literature, it is essential to find out the issues and problems they raise in their works. Appachana has done the same through her characters in *Incantations and Other Stories* that reflect the changing facets of man-woman relationship, marital disharmony, sexual exploitation and suppression of women in India. To Amar Nath Prasad “the women characters . . . are no longer the subdued sex, a figure of humility, neck bent, eyes downcast” (175), in their conjugal relationship outside marriage. The heroines of Appachana’s stories are solitary individuals striving for self-assertion.