

Editorial

Dear Readers

It's a moment of special satisfaction to present to you the latest issue of JTREL. Unlike earlier issues, where we tried to provide a mix of research pieces on various literary genres, the endeavour this time is focused on just one form of literary creation – the short story. In our fast-paced world today seeking instant connection and instant gratification, many experts believe that short stories may soon be the most popular and possibly most significant literary genre. Writing pen-paper letters has virtually become history as an instant connection through mobiles and cyber chats are now the dominant way to interact in the global order.

Besides being suitable for today's world of severe time constraints and shrinking attention spans, short stories have a charm that is timeless. From Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle book' to the bone-chilling works of Edgar Allan Poe, short stories have always had the power to captivate and profoundly move readers. We can broadly define a short story as 'a piece of prose fiction' that typically can be read in one sitting, and focuses on a self-contained incident or series of linked incidents with the basic intent of evoking a single, dominant effect or mood. Reading short stories is an engaging activity not only because they are quick to read but can also make a lasting impression or even change how we perceive the world.

We begin this issue with an article on a 1909 short story which is often cited as an early example of the Sci-Fi genre. In her paper entitled, "A Story That Resonates: Reading Forster's 'The Machine Stops' amidst the Pandemic," Sharada Allamneni discusses Forster's premonition that machines are supplanting humans and altering relational encounters. Hailed as a creation far ahead of its time, the story highlights how everyday technological interfaces can change the way one perceives the world and the possibility that with certain types of mediation there is a loss of connection with the Other.

Next, we have Praveen Mirdha's article "Mirroring and Mimicking: A Postcolonial Study of Khushwant Singh's Story '*Karma*'". Her analysis of Khushwant Singh's well-known short story '*Karma*' places it in the perspective of post-colonial literary studies and explores how the protagonist Sir Mohan Lal's migration from the East to the West transforms him into an ambivalent colonial subject. The article raises key questions about his stay at Oxford and articulates how the West became a standard identity marker for his lifestyle and how his personality mirrors the marks of colonial depersonalization on his Indian identity. She analyses the Western-educated Indian's mimicking mindset and reveals how the colonial ideology influenced the identity of a native Indian. Her paper also reflects on how Indian cultural-linguistic traditions have been erased and replaced by Western ethos in Sir Mohan's lifestyle and cultural manners on his return back to India.

S.Asha's paper seeks to critically examine Ruskin Bond's craftsmanship, his thematic concerns, his art of characterization, and his vision of life in Ruskin Bond's portrayal of the magic of supernatural elements in his stories which feature in the collection titled *A Season of Ghosts*. Stories of mysterious agents figure in every literature. Bond's fantastic tales of ghosts and spirits evoke mass appeal. Some of the stories are reminiscent of childhood tales replete with fairies and *rakshasas*. The treatment of the supernatural is unique. The agents of his supernatural who are endowed with different traits; humorous, witty, vicious and tragic present a moving spectrum of life. They are derived from myths and legends of the hills. The stories are set in the picturesque locale of the hills of north India. The outcome of Bond's experiment in theme and technique, his use of narrative devices like first-person narration, third-person

narration, flashback, narration within the narration, as well as the myths, symbols, and poetic overflows which are ingeniously incorporated in these narratives are brought to light in this interesting analysis.

In her paper, 'Then and Now: Reworking of *Mahabharata* by Shashi Deshpande,' Ruchi Goyal provides an in-depth analysis of some select mythological characters from the Mahabharata which are portrayed in Deshpande's short stories as a means to bring out the original ideals of womanhood. It studies how Deshpande rejects stereotypical characters of Kunti in *Hear me Sanjaya*, Amba in *The Inner Rooms*, Draupadi in *And What has been Decided*, and Lord Krishna in *My Beloved Charioteer* and re-interrogates their identities. Deshpande portrays these characters as not being dominated by any social conditioning. The paper explores the theme of patriarchal dominance and biased gender roles by analysing the feminist threads in these stories.

Akansha Kaushik in 'The Other Side of Autism: Mukhopadhyay's Short Stories' discusses the tricky potential of a person with autism. Children with autism are often misunderstood and treated as weak and incapable for inclusion in the mainstream. The paper looks into the possibilities in the minds of people with autism as explored in the short stories of Tito Mukhopadhyay who himself has autism. The paper also discusses the symptoms and weaknesses of autism which can be used as potential if trained and given proper therapies on time. The development of the autistic mind depends on the training/practices it is given from the very beginning and this paper attempts to spread awareness about the symptoms, diagnosis and care of autism.

We conclude this issue with a couple of original creations. Vinita Dhondiyal Bhatnagar tells us a touching story of Tambasini. It is the coming of age story of a young girl in Pipariya, Madhya Pradesh who is named after Shoorpnakha, the demoness whose nose was cut off so brutally in The Ramayana. Like her namesake, Tambasini is cursed with ugliness in a world that only values women for their beauty. The tragic consequences of her desire to become beautiful at any cost serve as a grim warning.

Finally, we have a moving short story entitled 'Gift Shop Blues' by Sanjay Kumar. The story revolves around a couple who go to the market to buy a birthday gift. They visit a nondescript gift shop run by a middle-aged woman, whom they find, to their utter surprise, crying as she stands behind the shop counter. As the story unfolds, the couple returns feeling moved, relieved and enlightened. They get completely and totally involved in the personal loss of the shop owners.

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