

Non-Fiction Prose and Short Stories

Muni reaches home, elated at having sold the goats at last and is no end surprised to see them come back to him. The story ends here, with him mystified and being scolded by his wife.

4b.3.2 Critical Comments

What is most remarkable about the story is the comic tone present in it from the beginning to the end. Though Muni is poor and the poverty has been dwelt on at length, there is no bitterness in the entire story. This is typical of Narayan. As has already been explained in Lesson 1a his comedy has no bitterness about it. The story gives a realistic picture of rural life with convincing characters and the entire story is a highly entertaining one because of its comic tone. It is not surprising that H. M. Williams had remarked :

Narayan is unusual in being apparently
at home with both the novel and the short story.

4b.4 Important Questions

1. Write a critical appreciation of the story 'The Barbers' Trade Union.
2. Give a character sketch of Chandu.
3. Explain Narayan's comic vision as expressed in A Horse and Two Goats.

4b.5 Suggested Reading

- | | | |
|------------------|---|----------------------------|
| K. R. S. Iyengar | - | Indian writing in English. |
| H. W. Williams | - | Indo-Anglian Literature. |



INDIAN ENGLISH SHORT STORIES II

BHABANI BHATTACHARYA TO JHUMPA LAHIRI II

Lesson Structure

- 5a.0 The Objective**
- 5a.1 Bhabani Bhattacharya : Introduction**
 - 5a.1.1. Steel Hawk**
 - 5a.1.2. Critical Comments**
- 5a.2 Khushwant Singh : Introduction**
 - 5a.2.1. The Voice of God**
 - 5a.2.2. Critical Comments**
- 5a.3 Ruskin Bond : Introduction**
 - 5a.3.1. The Thief**
 - 5a.3.2. Critical Comments**
- 5a.4 Shashi Deshpande : Introduction**
 - 5a.4.1. Hear Me, Sanjaya**
 - 5a.4.2. Critical Comments**
- 5a.5 Jumpha Lahiri : Introduction**
 - 5a.5.1. Sexy**
 - 5a.5.2. Critical Comments**
- 5a.6 Important Questions**
- 5a.7 Suggested Reading**

5a.0 The Objective

The objective of this lesson is to familiarize the student with the short stories written by

the writers who came after Anand and Narayan. The first to be studied, Bhabani Bhattacharya, is a contemporary of these two, but the others come later. In each case the writer will first be introduced briefly and then the prescribed story will be taken up.

5a.1 Bhabani Bhattacharya : Introduction

Bhabani Bhattacharya is better known as a novelist than as a short story writer. There is only one collection of his short stories, **Steel Hawk and Other Stories** (1968). His novels are never mere entertainments, nor are his short stories. Just as in his novels he presents the rural life that is typical of India and its gradual urbanization, he does the same in his stories. According to some critics his stories are not gripping enough, they do not have enough matter in them to be good short stories. But this is a biased view. His stories may not have much matter in them but, on the other hand, they appeal to the imagination as a poem does.

5a.1.1 Steel Hawk

The locale of the story is the village Sonamitti. A little away from the village, on a meadow an aircraft has landed. The villagers have seen the "flying wonder" in the sky, but not on the ground. The news spreads and people rush to see it. Bishan the carter yokes his bullocks to his cart and starts for the place. On the way he picks up Kamini and her child.

He talks to Kamini about how his grandmother is crazy about machines and how she had gone to see a railway carriage when she was about 14 or 15. She had almost worshipped the carriage and counted it a great good for the reward of "a hundred and one good deeds" to have been granted the sight.

When he arrives where the aircraft has landed he is disappointed to see it. It seems to be very small—he had expected a far grander thing. He decides he will not tell his grandma of how disappointing the plane is, that he will describe it as being far larger and more awe-inspiring than it really is.

But when the plane soars up into the sky he becomes thoughtful. Unaccustomed thoughts come into his mind and he imagines himself and his grandmother, who loves modernity and machines, flying in the sky inside the steel Hawk :

For the cartman of Sonamitti village had yielded to the impulse of the age and was riding the steel Hawk with his Grandma, zooming away mightily

5a.1.2 Critical Comments

Critics like Dorothy Shimer have found this story rather disappointing and it is easy to see why. Nothing much happens in it, it has no obvious plot or any "point" in it. The appeal of the story, in fact, rests, not upon a narrative told, but upon its imaginative appeal, much as in a poem or in a lyric. This is not a very obvious point and so it is missed by many literary critics. The reader will have to imagine how the story would have been if it had been a lyric or a sonnet. Then its beauty will be understood. Actually the last sentence of the story (quoted above) is a pointer in this direction. There are a few stories like this by other writers.

5a.2 Khushwant Singh : Introduction

Khushwant Singh is a popular journalist and novelist. His short story collections also are well-known, **The Mark of Vishnu** (1950) and **A Bride for the Sahib** (1967). The prescribed story is the title story of **The Voice of God and Other Stories**. He is a highly realistic and highly satirical writer. There is not much subtlety or philosophy in his writings as in those of Raja Rao or Anand. On the other hand he gives a savagely satirical portrait of Indian life, mainly of the Sikh Community.

5a.2.1 The Voice of God

The Voice of God is a highly satirical story of the dirty work that goes on under the cover of elections in India. It is set in a small village, Bhamba Kalan, where nothing exciting ever happens.

The time of elections for the Punjab Assembly draws near and the first to come campaigning is sardar Ganda Singh who is little more than a gangster. He is supported by the might of Imperialism, denoted by the person of the English Deputy Commissioner. Ganda is an Honorary Magistrate and a big landowner.

Next comes Sardar Kartar Singh, a thoroughly corrupt advocate of the Nationalist Party. He is supported by Seth Sukhtankar, an Nationalist Party. He is supported by Seth Sudhtankar, an opportunistic and corrupt man.

The two rival parties visit the village by turn and vilify each other, They, however, do not mention the kisan party.

Then one day Baba Ram Singh comes. He is a truly venerable figure who has devoted his life and property to the cause of the peasants and courted imprisonment for the best part of his life. He is a kisan. the villagers revere him, to them "he is like the "Guru himself".

The village goes to the polls in due time. thousands of them, "being illiterate, named their candidate". It is quite clear that they name Baba Ram Singh. But the results are rigged and Ganda Singh is declared the winner. The story ends with the significant sentence :

The people had spoken. The voice of the
people is the voice of God.

5a.2.2 Critical Comments

The story is a pitiless satire on the mockery that democracy has become in modern India. It is to be noted that khushwant Singh does not spare anyone, neither the British government-supported candidate nor the Nationalist party one. Both are equally corrupt. The only man who is the ideal leader is defeated by dishonest election rigging. The voice of the people, which is the voice of God, is throttled and not allowed to speak the truth - a false and corrupt version is given out. The story is realistic and satirical. The satire is far more savage and open than in any of the stories studied so far.

5a.3 Ruskin Bond : Introduction

Rushin Bond is a prolific writer of novels and short stories, but is known mainly as a short story writer. He has published several collections of short stories and edited three collections of Indian stories on different subjects. He is interested in the complexities of the human mind. The technique used in most of the stories is the first person narration technique, used in the prescribed story as well. He always writes with the reader in mind and has said himself :

....a writer has to have some reader
in mind – you feel that gives naturalness
to your writing and a conversational flow.

5a.3.1 The Thief

The Thief is the story of a young man who is actually a thief. He is only fifteen years old but an expert in stealing and in deception. He uses different aliases and the one used in the story is Deepak.

He meets Arun and tells him that he wants to work for him. Arun is a good-natured, trustful young work for him. Arun is a good-natured, trustful young man and takes him on as a servant. He himself is poor and frankly tells Deepak that he cannot pay him. Deepak does not mind.

Arun trusts him implicitly and starts teaching him how to write : Then one day, after two weeks, he earns quite a lot of money and keeps it under the mattress. When he is asleep at night Deepak steals the money.

He feels extremely uneasy after stealing the money and through he wants to leave the city and goes to the station, he does not go away. Though he is a thief he still feels qualms of conscience in having robbed a man who trusts him so much. He comes back and replaces the money. Arun is still asleep.

In the morning Arun gives him five rupees and tells him that he will be able to pay a regular salary. Though he does not say anything at all about it, the thief realizes that Arun knows he had stolen and then returned the money.

5a.3.2 Critical Comments

This is a typical story of Bond's because of the way in which he explores the psychological complexities of the human mind. Deepak cannot steal Arun's money precisely because of the fact that the latter trusts him so much. The two characters, Arun and Deepak, are created as foils to each other. Arun is a good-natured, trustful and honest man while Deepak is just the opposite. But the remnants of humanity are still there in Deepak and makes him return the money. Arun's nobility is highlighted by the fact that though he knows Deepak has deceived him he does not say anything about it, but gives him money, thus winning his eternal loyalty.

5a.4 Shashi Deshpande : Introduction

Shashi Deshpande belongs to the new generation of post-world war II writers. By this time the second wave of the Feminist movement had gained ground and her writings are mainly woman-centred ones. She has written novels as well as short stories and her pre-occupation with the sufferings of women has been clear from her very first novel, **The Dark Holds no Terrors** (1980). H. Roy has observed.

The portrayal of women in its true essence was what Shashi Deshpande was after... She says that women can never be categorized in any classified group of name.

5a.4.1 Hear Me, Sanjaya....

The story consists of the reminiscences spoken aloud by Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, to Sanjay, the charioteer of Dhritarashtra. The monologue is spoken when, at the

end of the great war. Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Kunti and Sanjay have withdrawn into the forest.

As the story consists of Kunti's reminiscences, it is her, a woman's point of view that gains priority in it. Post events are seen with her eyes. She goes back to the heart-rending parting with her first-born, Karna whom she had to abandon. She also acknowledges the fact that she had been jealous of Madhri as Madhri had been beautiful and she was not.

She confesses that she had been unfair to Draupadi in making her the wife of all five brothers when she would have liked to have been the wife of Arjuna only.

The entire story, in fact, is the story of her life in a nutshell with thumbnail sketches of the **Mahabharata** characters thrown in. It is a well-known fact that they had died in a forest fire. At the end of the story Kunti sees the fire blazing and the king and Gandhari standing there. She enters the fire willingly to join them and the story ends there.

5a.4.2 Critical Comments

This story is a reinterpretation of some of the events of the **Mahabharata** from the point of view of Kunti. This story is among the first of many such stories and novels, written by feminist writers, all over the world, during the late twentieth century. The technique she uses is a mixture of the stream-of-consciousness technique and that of the dramatic monologue. Kunti is speaking her thoughts aloud to another person and commenting monologue. But she also reminisces about the past, very much in the manner of an interior monologue. Her style is fully in keeping with this method. K. R. S. Iyengar has commented on this technique in a different context:

Shashi Deshpande's language itself flickers; like a candle, and blobs of remembrances melt and form icicles of furrowed thought.

5a.5 Jhumpa Lahiri : Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri is a contemporary writer as will be apparent from the fact that her first short story collection **Interpreter of Maladies** was published in 1999 and her first novel, **The Namesake** in 2003. She writes about those Indians who are staying abroad. She is, thus, variously known as a despairing author and a post-colonial author, both of which are ultra-modern contemporary concepts. She explores the many problems of diasporic or Immigrant Indian life—their domestic, cultural and other problems with great insight and sympathy.

5a.5.1 Sexy

This story is mostly about a young American girl Miranda, but it is also concerned with another Indian immigrant family. It presents the same problem in both the cases : the infidelity of an Indian husband concerned with western girls.

Miranda is a young girl who works at an office in Boston. she is in love with Dev, a Bengali married man. His wife has gone to India for a few weeks and they meet every day during her absence. But she comes back in due time and then they meet only once a week.

The other side of the coin is seen when Laxmi, who works in the same office as Miranda, tells her that her cousin has been deserted by her husband. The cousin's husband has fallen in love with an English girl and has left her and their seven-year old son.

After a few weeks Laxmi's cousin comes on a visit to Laxmi with her son. It is their seven years old son who opens Miranda's eyes to her own situation. She sees a family deserted by a faithless husband and realizes that she is playing the same role with Dev's family as the English girl is playing in this family. She realizes that her affair with Dev is a pointless thing, that she will go on suffering if she continues. So she breaks off her affair with Dev and the story ends there.

5a.5.2 Critical Comments

The story is an effective one as it highlights a very common problem in western society that has now become common in the Indian families residing there too—marital infidelity and the breaking up of families. The story is also effective because of the technique that has been adopted here with two stories developing simultaneously. The main plot is concerned with the girl who is stealing a family man and the sub-plot with another family bereaved in the same way. Lahiri shows both sides of the coin with impartiality. Though the focus is on an individual (Miranda) yet the wider context is indicated in the subplot which makes the story much more of a reflection of society in general. This maturity of the treatment of the story with the articulations of the young abandoned son's point of view. It is then that the point of the story and the relevance of the title become's clear.

5a.6 Important Questions

1. Write a critical appreciation of Steel Hawk.
2. Assess the merits of The voice of God as a short story.

3. **Write a note on the psychological complexities explored in The voice of God.**
4. **What view of the events in the Mahabharata do you get from Hear Me, Sanjaya.... ?**
5. **How does the technique used in Sexy influence its value as a short story ?**

5a.7 Suggested Reading

- | | | |
|------------------|---|----------------------------|
| K. R. S. Iyengar | - | Indian writing in English. |
| H. W. Williams | - | Indo-Anglian Literature. |



INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH I

H. L. V. DEROZIO

Lesson Structure

- 5b.0 The Objective
- 5b.1 Indian Poetry in English : Introduction
- 5b.2 Henry Louis Vivian Derozio : Introduction
 - 5b.2.1 Poetry
 - 5b.2.2 Critical Comments
- 5b.3 Important Questions
- 5b.4 Suggested Reading

5b.0 The Objective

The objective of this lesson is to familiarize the student with Indo-Anglian poetry in general and with the poetry of H. L. V. Derozio in Particular. First of all, Indo-Anglian poetry will be introduced in brief. Then a brief introduction will be given to Derozio and lastly his poetry which is the one that has been prescribed, will be taken up.

5b.1 Indo-Anglian Poetry : An Outline

Indian English Poetry, or Indo-Anglian Poetry is an offshoot of the Indian Renaissance. This new poetry first appeared in Bengal and later in other parts of the country. It began with Derozio. Then the poetical talent of Toru Dutt created a new kind of poetry whose language was English but the sensibility Indian. Intense subjectivity was the keynote of the poetry of Michael Madhusudan Dutt. The other poets wrote on many themes, using many forms. But they were more concerned with the inner world. The world of religion, philosophy and culture than

with worldly affairs. Then Tagore won the Nobel Prize in English literature for his **Gitanjali** in 1913 which focussed the attention of the world on India.

Among the other poets of this time are Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, Manmohan Ghose. This period is known as the Romantic Age and it has produced great poetic works like Sri Aurobindo's epic **Savitri** which is the longest poem in English literature, containing 24,000 lines. Literary journals like **Thought**, **Quest** and others played a pivotal role in promoting poetry in English. Several poets were brought into eminence by these journals, like Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, Kamala Das and many others who later became well-known figures in their respective fields. Many of them were already published in England and America. Much of this verse was influenced by English poets like Hopkins, Eliot and Pound and other continental poets as well. The poetry of this period was generally imitative in nature. Very often it was confessional and as such, intensely personal.

These later poets made a departure from the Romantic and mystical poetry written by the pre-Independence poets like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu and Toru Dutt. These poets were more concerned with mundane things like social reality etc. Ezekiel and Ramanujan, labouring under the influence of British and American poetry brought to their verse a technical and linguistic polish comparable with that of the poets they admired and emulated. Ezekiel's first collection of poems **A Time to Change** was published in 1952. This was an important event marking the dawn of modern Indo-Anglian poetry. Ezekiel's **Sixty Poems** (1953) is the first known publication of verse in India after Independence. He started the publication of the literary journal **Quest** the same year which helped in making modern Indian poetry of modern Indian culture. Several anthologies of Indian English poetry like **Modern Indian Poetry** (1958), **Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry** (1959) were brought out and the period became known as the Golden Age of Indian English poetry. Two groups of poets emerged at this time, led by P. Lal and Ezekiel respectively, leading to two different streams of poetry.

These poets gave a sound footing to Indo-Anglian poetry that benefited those who came after them like A. K. Mehrotra, Gieve Patel, Arun Kolatkar, Pritish Nandy, Keki N. Daruwala, Shiv K. Kumar, J. Mahapatra and other young poets. They brought different tastes, different aesthetics, standards, themes and techniques to Indian English poetry.

Many different factors played their part in building the mental situation of the poets who have created modern Indian English poetry. At one level there is the East-West encounter in

them as they are solidly based on Indian culture and tradition, but trained or educated in a western manner. At another level they are influenced by their own regional literary and cultural heritage as well as by the social, political and economic milieu of their time. Ramanujan, for example, makes use of south Indian Brahmin heritage in order to contrast his life in America with his Tamil background. Thus he creates images of contemporary alienation set in a specific situation. The results of this situation are two of the much publicized features of modern poetry, whether, in India or elsewhere— “dispersed sensibility” and the “theme of alienation”, which are also typical of the post-colonial and post-modernist mentality.

By the 1970s a new trend of experimentalism showed itself in Indo-Anglian poetry which was largely the result of the influence of American poetry. But experimentalism goes back to the 1940s as far as regional literature is concerned. Indian English poetry has now reached a stage where it can compete with the poetry of other commonwealth countries, in spite of debates about its purity.

5b.2 H. L. V. Derozio : Introduction

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) was the first Indian poet to write in English. Half Indian and half Portuguese by birth, it was he who heralded the Age of Pioneers. He died at the age of twenty-two. One can only guess at what he might have developed into had he been able to progress to maturity. We have only a few short lyrics and one long poem, **The Fakir of Jangheera**.

Derozio belongs to the generation of the Romantics. Shelley had passed away four years before him, in 1827 and Coleridge would go three years later, in 1834. He gives the impression of being another genuine Romantic poet, not just an imitator which is the false impression given by H. M. Williams. He might have been influenced by the Romantics, but that does not negate his poetic talent. Both Williams and E. F. Oaten point out his similarities with Keats, whom he admired intensely. Drawing a parallel between the two, the latter points out two features that they had in common. Derozio had the same “passionate eagerly responsive” temperament that Keats had and also the same “sympathetic tie with nature”. This passionate response to the external world as well as to the inner one of abstract thought can be seen in the prescribed poem.

But apart from Keats he had affinities with Wordsworth also in his attitude towards nature, and adds moral messages to his poems like him. H. M. Williams finds this particular effect of Wordsworth’s influence to be a detrimental one.