

**CHAPTER - II**

**JAI NIMBKAR'S SHORT STORIES**

**: The Form and the Technique**

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### JAI NIMBKAR'S SHORT STORIES : THE FORM AND THE TECHNIQUE

Jai Nimbkar spent her longer early literary career as a short-story writer since 1958. Her short stories have been published in the leading Indian periodicals in English viz. *Imprint, Femina, Quest* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. Later on, these short stories were published in the book form. The first collection of her ten short stories entitled, *The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories* was published in 1971 and the second one entitled *The Phantom Bird and Other Stories* was published in 1993. In addition, there are a few other stray short stories. With such contribution Jai Nimbkar has been regarded as one of the major Indian woman short story writers in English. Kamal Dhalla, therefore considers Jai Nimbkar as “One of the foremost Indian English short story writers”.<sup>1</sup>

*The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories* is not only her significant collection but also one of the most significant contributions to Indian English Short Story literature. In this context, T.S. Borate observes,

***“The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories*** (Writers’ Workshop 1971) was an important contribution to Indian English Short Story”.<sup>2</sup>

The literary work needs to be analysed from its literary form as well as contents for better comprehension and appreciation, because what is told (i.e. story or content) and how is it told (i.e., its literary form and technique) are important points of the consideration.

M.K. Naik writes, “Jai Nimbkar in her ***The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories*** (1971) deals realistically with middle-class Maharashtrian life...”<sup>3</sup>

Jai Nimbkar does not depict an Utopia or fictional world in her stories. In fact, she is interested in depicting the real world around her. She is the keen observer of the middle-class Indian life and articulates the reality of Indian life. Her characters and events in the stories are imaginary but they are projected in real Indian settings. She is motivated to search for the sufferings of common Indians in general and Indian women in particular. Her protagonists suffer from difficulties, troubles, loneliness, helplessness etc. caused by their typical Indian ethos. e.g. Sarojini

(Loneliness) helplessness (Mr. Tagde, the two mothers and Mrs. Raut) difficulties (Madhukar and Parvati) , sorrow (Mr.Shinde) etc.

Coincidentally Jai Nimbkar had American educational background and the first offshoots of short story form sprouted in America. Naturally, she might have been influenced by the technique of the American short story writing. She might have evolved her own concept of short story writing. But she denies it in her interview by T.N.Geetha.

“I have no theories, but although  
I enjoy a good story line,.....”<sup>4</sup>

She is more interested in story telling than its theory or technique. However, her stories follow the western art of story telling.

### **THE TITLES :**

In fact, a title is the real beginning of a short story. It is central and of greater importance. A title suggests the gist of narrated human experience at the same time reflects also the writer’s personality. A good title to a story should arouse curiosity in readers’ minds but hiding the subject matter. A good title to a short story is apt, specific, attractive, new and short as well as meaningful.

First, Jai Nimbkar does not follow the old convention of giving titles to her stories after the names of the protagonists. Not a single title from the ten refers to the central character in the stories. Similarly, she cannot give explicitly the titles after the themes also but almost all titles implicitly refer to the themes.

The titles of the stories in the collection can be classified as under :

**Simple but meaningful titles -**

This group includes the stories : *A Friend of the Family*, *With Intent to Kill*, *Metamorphosis* and *The Mother*.

**Old literary titles -**

Three stories viz. : *The Death of a Hero*, *Unto Each Man His Due* and *In Memoriam*.

Alfred Tennyson gave a title viz. *In Memoriam* to his famous elegy on the death of his bosom friend Arthur Hallam. Jai Nimbkar has used this literary title to her short story, *In Memoriam* narrating an elegiac story of a son's death anniversary rites. The title *Unto Each Man His Due* echoes the biblical parable *Unto This Last* and again which was chosen as the title to his famous book *Unto This Last* by John Ruskin. *The Death of a Hero* seems to be an

imitation of the title of a short novel by Mulk Raj Anand on a Kashmir freedom fighter entitled *The Death of a Hero*. Similarly, Jai Nimbkar's title *The Death of a Hero* echoes the title of an American play by Arthur Miller viz. *The Death of a Salesman*.

Jai Nimbkar has invented **some novel titles** to her stories, such as *Quit Yourselves Like Men* and *Cross Cultural Communication*. These are specific titles. But they neither refer to the theme nor to the human experiences narrated in the story.

The last but not the least, the title left to be explained is that of the first story *The Lotus Leaves*. This title seems to be **allegorical title**. It refers to the theme of American infatuation for fair Indian women and Indian woman's restraint. The Lotus is a national flower of India. Indian women are delicate, soft and attractive physically like Lotus. But in their psychological strength of the restraint they are like Lotus leaves, which are not wet though they are in water. Indian women may be in the mood of temptation but they show restraint and they are free from blame or stain during the moment of temptation. The writer uses the same title to her collection as it is important to her

among all other titles of the stories. The book title indicates the writer's intention to project Indian women's restraint as a praiseworthy moral quality in the infatuation. Indirectly, the allegory of *The Lotus Leaves* also suggests the Indian's approach of detachment in the midst of attachment of life. So the title is the most appropriate title to the collection.

In short, Jai Nimbkar's titles to her short stories are, broadly speaking, apt, specific, and meaningful ones.

### **THE PLOTS :**

A good plot in a short story is essential for its unified effect. The chronological and logical development of chain of events leading to the final effect in a short story provides its structure i.e., the beginning, the middle and the end. Every good short story must have a good beginning and proper end with equal balance. The beginning of the good short story should arouse curiosity and attraction in readers. Normally the beginning is introductory, reflective on life or with the setting of the story or with a dialogue.

Jai Nimbkar's short stories begin with the setting, the introduction of the protagonist or with the dialogue. *The Lotus Leaves* begins with the setting of a grape farm, Hirabai, the bird-scarer is at work while Levin, the

American visitor is snapping her photographs with great interest. This restores the bias against the white for their infatuation of low-Indian women. So the beginning directly connects the setting with the theme of story.

Similarly, *Quiet Yourselves Like Men* begins with the settings of college class-room with its black-board, adolescent students and the protagonist Jayawant ,the teacher engaging a lecture.

*Cross Cultural Communication* also begins with settings of the night club and the dance of the black negroes. Indian boy with his American fiancé has a conversation. The setting brings melancholy in the Indian boy.

*A Friend of the Family* opens with the introduction of the character of Lилоo, a lazy mediocre married woman taking fancy to having passion for her husband's friend Shekhar.

Similarly, *With Intent to Kill* opens with the description of Bairagi, his routine everyday begging in the market place in the first two paragraphs. This is connected with Madhukar's plan to grab the hoard of Bairagi's money by killing him and also to elope with his beloved, Parvati.

The beginning of *Metamorphosis* describes the traditional indecent stair-case through which the hero climbs up to see Tarabai Kharkar, today's famous singer and once his dream girl to whom he proposed in the past. This leads to a meeting of the two after a gap of so many years. We are curious to know what happens further.

*The Death of a Hero* begins with a dialogue between Mr. Tagde, a sincere teacher and the Principal, Mr. Deshpande about Tagde's report against Veerendra More's misconduct in the school. It takes us directly to the main conflict in the story.

*Unto Each<sup>M</sup>an His Due* begins with Patanakar's self-narration to introduce him as a newspaper reporter and suddenly the story plunges into an event in the police-station on a certain windy February morning when Mrs. Raut comes to report the loss of her husband. The conventional setting of the police-station, presents the indifferent mood of the police about Mr. Raut's investigation.

*The Mother* also begins with the description of poor middle-class dark congested kitchen with its chula and wreath of smoke and preparation of bhakri and a cradle in

the corner with a sick child in it. The sickness of the child and poverty are the subject matter of the story.

*In Memoriam* introduces in its beginning the reckless living son, Shri and his plan to picnic becomes the germ of the conflict in the story that leads to the misery of his mother.

The middle part of i.e. the proper growth of action of each and every story in the collection is through the conflict. It is quite interesting to observe carefully the artistic middle of *Cross Cultural Communication, With Intent to Kill, The Death of a Hero, Unto Each Man His Due.*

In other stories the growing action reaches to the proper climax and this leads to the proper ending. The end of a short story is significant as it is completeness of the experience narrated.

*The Lotus Leaves* ends in the loneliness and despair of Sarojini as it begins with the same. Similarly *Quit Yourselves Like Men* begins with the sight of a scorpion tied to the string of a nail by the black-board. After a lot of stream of his mind the story again ends with the sight of the scorpion in the class-room. This is the unity of effect. The

end of the *Cross Cultural Communication* is the breaking of an engagement by the American fiancé of Indian boy. In fact, this end is surprising and is full of ironical reversal. In the beginning they went for recreation in the club but in the end he is full of tension and despair on account of the broken engagement. This is the surprising end.

Similar type of ending is seen in *A Friend of the Family*. The beginning shows the growing excitement of Liloo in Shekhar but in the end Liloo is frustrated as Shekhar does not show any attachment to her at the farewell. This is a natural but sudden surprising end. The story ends with Lioo's remark, "I have been a blind fool". This end is meaningful and deep in its impression.

The end of *With Intent to Kill* is again with ironical reversal. It is Madhukar who comes to know from Parvati that the Bairagi is not dead as he expected but he is taken to hospital. Secondly, there is ironical reversal in their mutual attitudes to each other. Parvati's sincere love for Madhukar changes in his hatred as he has attempted to kill a man of God. It is the proper end because Madhukar gets proper punishment for his crime.

Similarly, *The Death of a Hero* ends with ironical reversal in Tagde's acceptance of the compromise plan by

Thakar. Indirectly Tagde withdraws his report against Veerendra in return of his full service and pension benefits. Mr. Tagde forgets his determination to teach a lesson to the school management. He is helpless common teacher like others. In fact, the end shows the victimization of a good teacher by the political control of the school.

The end of *Unto Each Man His Due* is exactly like that of *The Death of a Hero*. It ends with ironical reversal. The end effectively conveys the theme of the story, i.e. political victimization of the police department. It ends also with Sambhajirao's success in the election.

The last two stories, *The Mother* and *In Memoriam* end with despair of the two mothers. One ends pathetically because of the death of the sick baby. While the other one ends with the sobbing of the mother.

### **THE CHARACTERS :**

A short story displays one aspect of the central character and other minor characters with the help of the events. The success of a short story lies in the creation of convincing and memorable characters. The protagonists in almost all Jai Nimbakar's stories except the three stories are women characters.

Almost all characters, both major and minor, including the protagonists are from the Indian middle-class. All the protagonists are round characters. They grow and develop in the stories. All of them display their individualised certain traits of personality in the course of the plot. On the contrary, Jai Nimbkar arranges her plots with a view to the emergence of such traits of the protagonists. e.g. Sarojini undergoes a dramatic change in the story. She likes the company of Levin to forget her lonely life, she is very frank with Levin but she does not like Levin watching her in sleep, again at night she goes into his embrace under his charm, but takes back herself suddenly. Sarojini's attraction to Levin and later on her hatred of Levin are shown in progressive sequence.

Jayawant's fear complex is shown throughout in his stream of consciousness. Similarly, Lilloo's stream of consciousness is related to her imaginary one-sided affection for Shekhar is the central issue of the story. Madhukar's obsession of amorous love for Parvati and his frustration is narrated.

*Metamorphosis* presents the changed situation and changed characters of Tarabai Kharkar and the post-clerk. *The Death of a Hero* portrays the character of a determined

Mr. Tagde, the school teacher to struggle against the present rotten school system but suddenly he compromises.

Patanakar's hard work to help the poor woman by investigating the death of her husband in a jeep accident also fails to trap Sambhajirao, the culprit. On the contrary, Sambhajirao gets elected in *Unto Each Man His Due*. There is a graphic characterisation of : Sambhajirao's hidden efforts to avoid his arrest, Shinde's helplessness and harassment in giving witness against Sambhajirao and the plight of Mrs. Raut by the police department. In *The Death of a Hero* also indirectly the characterisation of the political leader and the chairman of the school Mr. Ramarao More is graphically done.

In the last two stories the pathetic characters of two mothers are drawn. One mother struggles in her poverty to save her sick child but fails and only encounters the death of the child. On the other hand, the second mother comes from a well to-do family but she becomes unhappy as her living son doesn't join the death anniversary of her dead son.

These stories have varieties of characters from different strata and sections of the Indian society. These are: teachers, family friends, bagaitdars, grape growers, a

laundry worker (Madhukar) a tourist (Levin) a bird-scarer (Hirabai), political leaders (Ramrao More, Sambhajirao, Vishnupant Joshi) their controlled men (Principal Deshpande, Thakar, Inamdar) a head-constable (Pawar) farm supervisor (Shinde) an innocent wife of a teacher, (Mrs. Tagde), Jayawant's wife Preeti, Shri, an impulsive boy, a working class woman (Mrs. Raut), Patanakar, the newspaper reporter, the frenzied women in *The Lotus Leaves*. These are ordinary men and women as Kamal Dhalla states,

‘Nimbkar’s stories are essentially  
about ordinary people’<sup>5</sup>

The major characters from these get full justice and treatment from the writer while the others merely occur in the stories refer to.

The characters serve the thematic purpose in the stories because they throw light on the main theme of an individual story e.g. Hirabai is introduced in the opening paragraph of the first story *The Lotus Leaves* which is directly connected with the theme of an American infatuation for Indian women and Sarojini's character is the mouth piece of the hatred of such infatuation.

### **THE SETTINGS :**

The setting gives effective characterisation as well as background. The context of time and space gives more realism and proper atmosphere in a story. The setting should be a suitable background to the mood, emotion and actions of the characters and events.

The grape garden of Pratap and the Krishna temple on the bank of the river, the head quarters of Krishna Bhakta sect are two important settings in *The Lotus Leaves*. The description of Hirabai's bird-scaring in the morning and Levin's photo snapping is connected with the central theme of American infatuation for Indian women. The festival of horses is narrated with realistic atmosphere. The procession with colourfully dressed drummers and mythological reference to the origin of the festival, the frenzied women screaming is appropriate setting for Levin's visit as a tourist. The second setting is suggestive of Mahanubhav sect in Maharashtra with Phaltan as its greatest religious centre. The Krishna temple is the temple of Chakradhar Swami, the founder of the Mahanubhav sect.

The college class room atmosphere is properly narrated as a background of *Quit Yourselves Like Men*

with Jayawant's reading of Shakespeare's play to the class, the black board cleaning and mischievous girls.

The setting of the night club in San Francisco with its drum music and players' dark faces with its melancholic atmosphere is proper background for the sad incident of broken engagement. Similarly, there is a good description of the old and dirty Indian house of the hero with the shed of cows filled with odour of cow-dung in *Cross Cultural Communication*.

*A Friend of the Family* draws the proper atmosphere of the idle hours of Lилоo that leads to her one-sided excitement for unfair looking Shekhar, her husband's friend.

The daily conventional begging of the Bairagi stopping before every shop, his fearful face and the far away deserted temple of Shiva, the atmosphere at night in the temple when Madhukar attempted to kill him - the frightful atmosphere is a suitable background of the story of the murder associated with Madhukar's love affair in *With Intent to Kill*.

The traditional staircase in the dark corner of the place and Tarabai Kharkar's half reclining and wrinkled disfigured legs definitely create a sympathetic atmosphere.

The old worn out place with its dull atmosphere resembles to her bygone beauty. The story writer uses effective background to the hero's mood in a story *Metamorphosis*.

The opening dialogues in *The Death of a Hero* between characters provide the growing conflict between Tagde and the others related to school management. These dialogues indirectly provide the necessary setting of the story. Readers realise the growing pressure on Tagde.

*Unto Each Man His Due* records the usual atmosphere in the Pimpalgaon police-station with its indifference to the commoners and the pressure tricks used by Sambhajirao Kadam on Mr. Shinde not to leak out the news of jeep accident are properly drawn backgrounds for the hush up story of missing Mr. Raut.

The dark smoky congested kitchen room with a crib in the corner with a lying sick baby provides effective setting to the pathetic story of the death of the baby after its mother's optimum struggle to save it in the story *The Mother*.

*In Memoriam* records the atmosphere of the smell of incense and creation of holy moods in the mother on the death anniversary of her son, Girish. The preservation and maintenance of Girish's room by the mother with all its

belongings add to the mother's sense of reverence to the dead son. But the living son, Shri's inconsiderate and reckless picnic serves as proper background to the despair of the mother.

### **THE TECHNIQUE OF NARRATION :**

*A Friend of the Family* and *Quit Yourselves Like Men* are basically Jai Nimbkar's experimentation in stream of consciousness technique. There are no series of happenings in both the stories. But the unclean black-board and a scorpion tied to the nail of the black-board sets stream of consciousness in the mind of Jayawant. He broods over the evil in life. The fear of the scorpion, the students as his enemies for seventeen years, his particular wife Preeti, her youth etc. He sits in the staff room and broods over again the displeasure of Preeti for being late to home. Only the thought of the scorpion again compels him to go to the class room only to find it there.

Similarly *A Friend of the Family* explores the psyche of Liloo. The customary daily lazy life and mediocre talent of Liloo take delight in taking fancy to excitement of her attraction to unattractive Shekhar. She thinks over Shekhar's intimacy in the present, his acquaintance at the

time of her marriage with Narendra, Shekhar and Narendra's close friendship since long, their stay in London, Shekhar's occasional visits to her home only in the presence of Narendra, her teasing of Shekhar about his marriage, his unattractive appearance, her excitement in preparing dinner for Shekhar and her extra-care in dressing on the arrival of Shekhar, her displeasure on the Shekhar's decision to settle in Calcutta and Shekhar's unheeded farewell to her all such feelings are shown flowing in her mind.

Jai Nimbkar uses a conventional structure and method of story writing. Her narration in almost all stories except in the two is usual, chronological and logical. She uses in almost all her stories the third person narration technique but in *Unto Each Man His Due* she uses the first person narrative technique in the form of the self assertion of Mr. Patanakar. It seems that the writer is a third party observer of all the incidents narrated in nine stories except *Unto Each Man His Due*. She is not involved directly or indirectly in the incidents taking place and conveying as the experience of human life. As such it can be a proper and safer statement to say that Jai Nimbkar observes the life around her with the impartial view and detachment.

### **USE OF DIALOGUES :**

Jai Nimbkar uses dialogues very effectively for the progress of the plot of her stories. She has used the dialogues either for the setting or development of the plot or characterisation.

The dialogues in different characters- between Sarojini and Levin, Sarojini and Pratap in *The Lotus Leaves*, between the head constable and Mrs. Raut, between Shinde and Patanakar in *Unto Each Man His Due*, similarly in other stories except *Quit Yourselves Like Men* and *A Friend of the Family*, the dialogues help in the growth of the plot and characterisation.

In short, Jai Nimbkar has made an excellent artistic use of dialogue for her story writing.

### **The Essential Parameters :**

The short stories in this collection are 'short stories' in the real sense of the term on the norm of brevity except *The Lotus Leaves* which is comparatively longer than the other stories. It runs into 13 pages having nearly 3662 words. *The Death of a Hero* (9 pages 2427 words), *Unto Each man His Due* (11 pages, 2864 words) and *A Friend*

*of the Family* (9 pages, 2644 words) have a moderate and medium size length as compared to the remaining stories in this collection. The other remaining four stories have adequately short length as they run into 5 to 7 pages each. They are : *Quit Yourselves Like Men, Cross Cultural Communication, With Intent to Kill, The Mother* and *In Memoriam*. The shortest story in the collection is *Metamorphosis*, running into five pages having nearly 1149 words. So the short stories in this collection do not cross the normally accepted maximum length and limit of words as prescribed by the theorists and the practitioners of the form. Her nine stories except the first one have less length and words than the prescribed norm.

The brevity imposes economy on the short story which is one of the essential parameters. In addition to the economy of words a good short story writer uses economy of the events and characters in the short story. He tells a story effectively in less words with a few characters passing through a few incidents. So the brevity and economy lead to the unity of action in the short story which ultimately produces one unified deep impression on the reader's mind which is called singleness of effect by the theorists.

Let us cite some examples of the production of such unity of effect in Jai Nimbkar's stories with the help of brevity and economy.

The very first story *The Lotus Leaves* narrates 3 important incidents. The first incident is introductory which narrates Sarojini's doubt about Levin's colonial infatuation to an Indian woman. The second incident relates to the joint visit of Sarojini and Levin to observe the festival of horses and Sarojini's loneliness. The last but more important than the earlier ones is the exact moment of infatuation between Levin and Sarojini and easy safe escape of Sarojini from the infatuation. There are only three main characters in this story viz. Sarojini, Levin and Pratap. Herabai is only referred to for the sake of the theme. So the economy of characters and incidents in the story rotating around the theme of infatuation gives the unity of action and even the singleness of effect. In the end of the story the reader breathes a sigh of relief for Sarojini's safe escape from Levin's embrace. This is how the brevity and economy totally contribute to the singleness of effect in *The Lotus Leaves*.

*The Mother* has four major characters viz., the mother of the baby, her husband, the lawyer's wife and the

sick baby. The story begins with the incident of the baby's serious illness and its father's negligence. The second incident narrates the mother's visit to the lawyer's wife to obtain monetary help for the fees of Dr. Monay, the private doctor, to save the baby. The last incident narrates the death of the baby, the careless character of the baby's father, the highbrow attitude of the lawyer's wife to the mother, the delay in the treatment - all these factors culminate into the shocking tragic end producing a concluding singleness of effect of great pity for the mother and the baby. In the same manner *The Death of a Hero*, with five major and two minor characters with four incidents, ends in great surprise i.e., Mr. Tagde, the determined teacher accepts the compromise plan and surrenders. It produces a deep single impression of social regret on Tagde's victimization.

In fact, almost all stories in this collection, with less words as well as with a few characters and incidents produce the singleness of effect on us as readers. *Cross Cultural Communication* creates the lasting impression of the white colonial attitude to Indians. *A Friend of the Family* produces the singleness of effect of one-sided psychological excitement in man-woman relationship. *With Intent to Kill* concludes with the impression that

Madhukar's means for achieving success in his love is faulty. *Unto Each Man His Due* conveys the naked reality of the political control in hushing up a crime.

In this chapter we have assessed ten stories from *The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories* written by Jai Nimbkar with the help of the accepted theory of short story form with regards to its elements and its parameters.

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## **CHAPTER - II**

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