

## Gradual Evolution of English Short Story and D.H. Lawrence



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### ABSTRACT

In early cultures the world over, the story-teller had a special place. Before written language was used, historic, religious and cultural knowledge was passed from generation to generation orally, and as the keeper of all this collective knowledge, the story-teller was one of the most important people in the community. While some stories can be deliberately told to perpetuate a narrow world view, most traditional stories can provide the "larger context" within which we are invited to move beyond conflict. The instinct of story-telling perhaps sprang up with human life, but the principles of the modern short story in English were not crystallized till the nineteenth century. The short story proper, which is a deliberately fashioned work of art, and not just a straight forward tale or one of more events, belongs to modern times. In England Rudyard Kipling was the first person who cultivated the art of writing short stories in the modern sense of the term and was followed by a number of eminent writers, such as Conrad, Galsworthy, Wells, George Moore, Bennett, D. H. Lawrence and Somerset Maugham. Life consists in the achieving of a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe about us... this, if we know it, is our life and our eternity: the subtle, perfected relation between me and my whole circumambient universe. Art, says Lawrence, is one of the ways of achieving and revealing the relation between man and circumambient universe at the living moment. For Lawrence there is no dichotomy between art and life, and the level of art is not different from that of life. Lawrence distrusted the abstract, unvital, cerebral orientation towards life. since such an approach takes one nowhere near the reality: it doesn't help man to develop and realize his 'self', his being. Lawrence sees man's tragedy as springing from his attaching too much importance to the mind and neglect of instinctive life. The emphasis on the primacy of the blood or the natural urge of man is central to Lawrence's thinking. It is only by obeying the natural urges, intuitions and instincts that a man can know the mystery of the 'outer darkness' that surrounds this world and that which is beyond the conscious mind.

**Keywords :** Natural urges, Circumambient Universe, Cerebral Orientation

### INTRODUCTION

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### **Main Thrust**

The jolly art of making something very bright and moving; it may be horrible or pathetic or funny or profoundly illuminating having only the essential, that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud is an interesting definition of the purpose and art of short story by H.G. Wells where-as Maugham thinks that the desired effect can be achieved by a strict adherence to form. This view was supported by Hugh Wolpole who says that a story should be a story, a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development leading through suspense to a climax and a satisfying denouement. Edgar Allen Poe emphasized that the short story should have unity of impression and singleness of purpose. This conception of short story was opposed by Tchechov who believed that story should have neither beginning nor end. It should be only 'a slice of life' presented suggestively. Hence, two different conceptions regarding the art of short story are visibly apparent. The followers of Poe emphasize plot and sacrifice some fidelity to the neat working out of a climax. The Russian school has on the other hand, evolved a more realistic type of story, concentrating mainly on character and atmosphere which allows the plot to develop naturally without being forced into a conventional pattern. The art of short story owes its origin to two great pioneers-Nicolai Gogol and Edgar Allen Poe. Gogol is the first known writer of the realistic short story in Russia. Maxim Gorky once pointed out, "we all sprang from Gogol's overcoat". The great followers of Gogol in Russia were Tolstoy, Turgenev and Tchechov and his influence can be seen directly in the works of Coppard, Joyce, Anderson and a host of other writers. Edgar Allen Poe was the first man in America who wrote the modern short story and achieved great technical perfection.

From America the short story travelled to France. Balzac, Flaubert and Zola exerted a great influence on the French short story and France produced one of the greatest short story writers of the world-Guy de Maupassant. In his stories he does not attempt to analyse human psychology, rather he allows the psychic process to work out naturally. His famous stories are the Diamond necklace, a piece of String, A Country Excursion, the duel and the harla. By the year 1860, the Russian, American and French short stories had developed into an appreciable limit, but England was won over very slowly to the ideal of the modern short story. Until 1890, therefore, in England short story had only a casual existence, as the occasional by-product of a novelist. It was Rudyard Kipling who first took to the art of short story writing and imparted to it originality and power. He did not imitate the French naturalists or the Russian realists. His stories are based on personal experiences and observations of his stay in India. There are several collections of his short stories, the plain Tales from the Hills, the soldiers, the phantom of rickshaw, willie winkie and others. The other short story writers during the closing decades of the nineteenth century were: R.L. Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, Conrad and H.G. Wells. R.L. Stevenson's 'Markheim' is a remarkable study of criminal psychology. Conan doyle's chief fame rests on a series of detective stories published as "The Case-book of Sherlock Homes". His notable works are: A study in Scarlet: the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, the Memories of Sherlock Holmes, the Return of Sherlock Holmes. H.G. wells opened a new vista of imaginative delight by writing short

stories on the possibilities of scientific knowledge and power. His well known stories are the magic shop, the Beautiful suit, the truth about pyecraft, the treasure in the forest and the country of the Blind.

The early years of the 20th century saw a considerable development of the short story in England. Arnold Bennett contributed two volumes of short stories. The second decade of the century saw the publication of Katherine Mansfield's first short stories in "A German Pension". G.K. Chesterton published his Father Brown stories and P.G. Woodhouse also tried his hand at this art-form. Galsworthy came under the influence of Maupassant and Turgenev. His well-known stories are *Quality* and *Ultima Thule*. E.M. Forster's collection of six short stories 'The Celestial Omnibus' has another individual experiment. The most dynamic contributions of the second decade were, however D.H. Lawrence's *The Prussian Officer* (1914). Lawrence learnt something from Zola's naturalism and much from Freud's psychological studies. His short stories deal with the impulsive and elemental life of men, especially the absorbing passion of sex. He made the short story more sensuous, more elemental and brought it nearer to life. Modern short story writers owe more to him than they owe to Kipling or H.G. Wells.

That D.H. Lawrence is a genius goes without saying, while the social range of his short stories is very wide, his interest in human beings is intense rather than broad. It is focused on certain themes and feelings which spring from the passionate intensity of his own experience. Lawrence is of course primarily a novelist, but he is also a writer of theoretical books about the working of the deeper dream like layers of consciousness spinning them with his genius of poet and story writer. Lawrence is not, in fact, a systematic thinker, but since he is one of the most integrated geniuses among creative writers, one can discover in his ideas whether expressed in the form of overstatements or in terms of concrete fiction, a certain consistency and interrelatedness, which speak of the Lawrentian philosophy.

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The common judgments that Lawrence's short stories and novellas contain a higher proportion of assured artistic successes than do his novels is substantially correct. A casual reader going through "The Fox" or "Daughters of the Vicar" or *The Prussian Officer* or even *The Captain's Doll* can witness brightness flow back into his eyes. There is no doubt that shorter fictions contain less strained argument and fewer lapses into uncertainty or confusion. Lawrence's stories are replete with symbols and one can never even imagine a single Lawrentian story devoid of it. In one of the important major stories 'The Fox' the important link between Henry, the protagonist, and the fox is a functional one. The animal symbol defines Henry's functional relation to the two feminine characters. The fox and the young man invade the mismanaged farm on different levels but in the same way.

## CONCLUSION

Psychological exploration of human character, man-woman relation, and a passionate belief in the physical world of nature which modern man has lost contact with, are the themes of many of his novels, stories and poems. Lawrence believed with a passion and was able to communicate this passion through his literary creations. Lawrence became the explorer of the 'flow and recoil' in the world around him. Ridiculing the Fabian belief in progressive

intellectualism, Lawrence maintained that in Europe an excessive mental refinement had impoverished the blood, the vital flow and recoil' of emotion. He believed that Christian civilization was in ultimate decay, and that we are waiting for new Gods to appear and initiate a fresh cycle, a belief which has much in common with the theory of yeats. Keenly interested in the rendering of personal relationships, Lawrence conceives of human relationship as a flow or flux or movement of feeling from one person to another.

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