



## **ANALYSIS OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S SHORT STORIES**

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Maybe the ability to tell a good narrative is a defining characteristic of Canadian identity, much like maple syrup and hockey. The same may be true about any contemporary nation that authors employ. Stories may be used to address issues of diversity, politics, psychology, and religion, adding a new layer of cultural distinctiveness in the process. Everyone agrees that women are better storytellers than men. This is merely a fact that has been verified by males, not meant to be sexist or insulting. Men have the ability to be intelligent, delightfully adventurous, stunningly beautiful, and fiercely demanding, yet they frequently leave a trail of their own stupidity and a taste of emptiness in their wake. Women are more inclined to write engaging stories that are brief. Reading them may be like taking a journey deep into one's own psyche and spirit due to the reality on which their stories are founded. Also, don't anticipate any sentimental ones; the finest ones are usually dismal and grim. Michael Ondaatje contends that literature presents a more accurate picture of a nation when compared to the media. He asserts that Canada is "documenting and creating itself" at this point in its history. Pablo Neruda expressed similar sentiments about South America: "There are rivers in our land which have no names, birds whom nobody has identified." In that circumstance, we believe it is our obligation to say what cannot be said. Every work of music and art ever made was created by Europeans. Because of this, a country's "identity" problem is complex, covering the political, social, and cultural worlds.

Themes and places are covered in great depth in Canadian new wave literature from the 1970s through the 1990s. Political challenges, diversity, interpersonal relationships, and other universal topics are all addressed in the short stories of writers like Audrey Thomas, Alice Munro, Mavis Gallant, and Bharati Mukherjee. Instead, they seldom ever make an effort to offer solutions to the issues that their heroes encounter. Munro and Thomas consider the short story form to be more elastic and open to experimentation as a result of this flexibility.



A personal connection between the reader and the author will be there in every well-written short story due to the inclusion of sensory details, developed characters, and moral quandaries. In addition to providing pleasure, tales like those told by Thomas, Munro, and Mukherjee also foster understanding and empathy amongst individuals whose lives couldn't be more unlike from our own. In their stories, the places they describe are significant. A watercolour landscape requires the artist to be very meticulous with the few finishing strokes that they do use, in contrast to an oil painting, which gives them greater freedom to experiment with the picture's final details. Like watercolour painters, writers who create short tales must be very meticulous with each brushstroke since every word is significant.

Contemporary Canadian short story authors explore the implications, issues, and conundrums of diversity in their works. According to Margaret Laurence, "art is actually honouring of the past, observation of the present in some form, and looking towards the future." She also believes that "all art is the result of human imagination." 1. Laurence wants to redefine what art is for in light of what today's short story writers think it should be. The stories depict a civilization with cultured men, strong women, and a sophisticated society, even if they also depict the flippancy and carelessness of life.

This analysis includes a selection of short stories from authors such as Alice Munro, whose *Dance of Happy Shades* is one of the stories examined, Audrey Thomas, whose *Goodbye Harold*, *Good Luck* is another, Mavis Gallant, whose *The End of the World and Other Stories*, and Bharati Mukherjee, whose *The Middlemen and Other Stories* is another. According to the authors, these stories do offer "a more honest personal representation of their places or countries." Using Mukherjee's *Toronto*, Munro's *Ontario*, Thomas' *St. Andrews*, Gallant's *Paris*, and any combination of the two, one may build together a realistic representation of the country. The stories in these anthologies provide readers a picture of Canada as a fledgling country while also highlighting the restricted possibilities available to the nation's youth.

The poem "The Peace of Utrecht" by Munro, which can be found in *Dance of Happy Shades*, clearly evokes a feeling of isolation and alienation. It is an example of autobiographical



writing that captures the range and intensity of an individual's feelings. Munro claims: "I created a story when I first started writing that made me cry. 2. She unearths instances from her own life that stand out, such leaving and then returning to the small Ontario village where she was up and her mother's lengthy sickness with whom she had "a really intimate bond." She claims that she and her mother had "a really strong bond."" 3. The female protagonists of her works have a strong feeling of independence and don't hesitate to place themselves in perilous circumstances. She draws parallels between the experience of being a woman and parental love and connection.

Portrait of an emerging female artist in Ontario, Canada, as told through her work in *Lives of Girls and Women*. "The basis of Munroe's work is the confusing and cryptic nature of female estrangement," writes Jancy James, "and it attests the sarcastic reconciliation of female reality and social reality and social reality."4. In its core, the novel is a work of brilliant and evocative brilliance. Del Jordan, the protagonist, is a young woman who struggles to find love and sexual fulfillment as she matures from the carefree days of childhood into the unsettling years of adolescence. Women in Munroe are stuck between the two extremes of independence and domesticity. Canada's home province of Ontario and her own gender as a woman are major concerns of hers. All of Del's adolescent struggles are met head-on, and he emerges stronger on the other side. She is ashamed because her body shames her by developing breasts and a desire for sex at the same time as she witnesses her mother selling encyclopedias to the farmers. The sexual awakening of women being able to speak freely about their feelings is one major social concern, as Munro reveals. "Diverse experiences, ecstasy and suffering in religion, faith, education, sex, and profound love" are depicted in Del Jordan's artwork. Del, as a young boy, is troubled by the fact that he must navigate a confusing environment. Because she is such a strong and independent person, she has never trusted her mother. She attempts to free herself from the constraints of the information provided to her. After visiting the town with her mother as a teenager, she describes how she was enamoured with its meticulous way of life, saying, "I loved the order the fullness, the intricate arrangement of town's existence that only an outsider could see." The author proposes three distinct societies: the urban, the rural, and the in-between, which is currently experiencing change. In this dynamic struggle between natural and



artificial, the past and the present are both involved. Dell can't seem to get this muddle out of his head. It's worth noting, as Howells explains:

All of the tales—or fragments of tales—about women's covert opposition to the society controlled by males typically include emotional devastation, shattered ambition, and memories of rejection, but they all demonstrate how women saw themselves as outsiders and critics.

"Epilogue: The Photographer," the collection's final piece, focuses on Del's creative endeavours, her devotion to the writer, and her efforts to recreate jubilee, the town she departed in search of a better life. Her artwork aims to portray life's essential truths. In Munro's short tales, the issue of becoming a woman is explored. Social historian Audrey Thomas draws her stories from people and places, such as the day she was going through St. Andrew's and suddenly detected the "smell of coal." She describes herself in the prologue to *Real Mothers* as "a compassionate observer of rich landscape of human emotions" and states that "the senses are my steeping stones across the flood of experience how to get from one side to the other (and back again)" in her stories "The Man with Calm Eyes," "Goodbye Harold, Good luck," and "Real Mothers."

My damaged heart is the reason I came to the water. I brought green bottles of wine.

I consume all the wine.

Like a glove, I fit. Shapeless isn't quite as bad as empty and yearning to be filled. How could I have slept with a broken heart?

Never in my life have I felt so alone.

(Pages 17–18, "Goodbye Harold, Good Luck")



When the author compels the story's wounded lover protagonist to divulge his deepest, darkest, darkest secrets, he experiences a tremendous sense of solitude. Because of the overpowering sense of discomfort that envelopes him, he is unable to eat, drink, or sleep. He doesn't seem upset, even though he packed a gun for a vacation to Rome with the sole purpose of killing his ex-wife. He improves both physically and spiritually when he swims. Finally, the tale comes to a satisfying conclusion:

I cast a quick glance in the opposite direction and nodded to the woman in the window. She has lit the lamp, is eating wine and soup, and her heart is crushed. The lantern illuminates her loneliness as she considers the man on the train who is about to murder her wife. I hope she does well. Goodluck, Goobye Harold, p. 23

It examines the symbolism of "The Man with Calm Eyes." The act of swimming causes the narration to slow down. The ocean contains both the beginning and the end of existence. If you go back to the water, it's like going back to a dying mother. The narrator feels liberated and clearer as a consequence, yet his loneliness seeps into his marriage. The complex nature of contemporary Canadian social interactions serves as the central theme of "Gondhve Harold Good luck."

Thomas asserts that the average person has an extremely regimented and precise existence. They conduct themselves in a fully professional way. While her musician husband is out on tour, the primary character, Francine, is forced to fend for herself. Their marriage did not last very long due to Francine's emotional rectitude, and she now spends her time listening to depressing music since it perfectly represents the suffering of its characters. She leaves her spouse and relocates since she finds it difficult to communicate with him due to his rigidity and mysticism. She begins practising yoga there and takes her daughter on trips in quest of excitement and personal growth.

Thomas' Real Mothers, the author's collection of pieces, makes the author's global perspective clear. She journeys throughout the globe with her main characters, stopping in countries like France, Greece, Africa, Galliano Island, and British Columbia. The relationships



between mothers and their children—including their sons, daughters, partners, and wives—are a common theme in the stories. This collection of short tales' title piece, "Mothers," peels back the layers to uncover a dysfunctional family. The author reads the story aloud in a little child's voice. Parents commonly decide to divorce without taking into account how it may affect their children. When Marie Anne's biological brother Clayton doesn't help out with taking care of their mother and newborn sister, Patty, their father moves out and moves in with one of his PhD students, Adele. In order to regain her sense of self-worth and financial security, the mother decides to seek a profession as a teacher. A few months later, she announces Lionel's reunion with the family (her new male friend). The kids are revolting; they can't handle living in the contemporary world. Patty and Marie Anne will reside with their father, it has been decided. As the episode comes to a close, the mother cries out in growing anguish. The author brings back the emotional abuse that wrecks lives of both youngsters and adults. People view the world and how things fit together from a variety of viewpoints. When emotional abuse is a component of domestic violence, they suffer the most. Thomas strives to emancipate women and the feminine gender through her writing. She thinks that the main cause of marriages breaking apart is the uneven nature of the interactions between the two parties. Characters created by Mavis Gallant, a Canadian living abroad in France, are reminiscent of those by Munro, Thomas, and Mukherjee. Through her characters and stories, she explores conflicts in love, grief, hope, and coping techniques. A striking analysis of two female characters, Mrs. Thomson and Jeanie, may be found in the story "My Heart is Broken," which she included in her book *The End of the World and Other Stories*. This story takes place in the years immediately after World War II, when Canada underwent rapid development, reconstruction, and transition. Both ladies belong to different generations and hold various worldviews. Mrs. Thomson is a steadfast conservative in contrast to Jeanie, who is a radical and progressive. outgoing. She pays her a visit and gives her a good scrub to help her get over the trauma of the rape. Mrs. Thomson is certain that a woman can always protect what is valuable, whether or not she is assaulted; she denounces the assault and the attacker but is unable to get past her assumptions. She really has no idea what Jeanie is experiencing on the inside. Jeannie, on the other hand, is tortured not by the physical attack but rather by the fact that Vern, the



guy she loves and who provides for her with shelter and care, doesn't give a damn about her. As she tells Mrs. Thomson: "He should at least have liked me... He was not even cordial. For the first time in my life, I don't have anyone's affection. My heart is broken because it has been broken. The narrative reveals the society's "transition," which includes changes in both technology and human ties. Nothing lasts forever in the big scheme of things.

Through the perspective of the narrative's protagonist, the narrator, "The End of the World" depicts the reader the disappointment and despair that might result from leading a human existence. He expresses his intense objection to leaving Canada right away since he is convinced that doing so will only bring him bad luck. In order to visit his brother and save him from a tricky position, he flies to Buffalo. Then he reluctantly makes his way to France to visit his dying father, who had left his name and contact details on the emergency information page of the passport. Because of his father's reckless behaviour as the head of the household, the narrator's father left the family when he was just twelve years old, and he has never fully recovered from this experience. He looks after his mother and helps his younger siblings with their education because he is the oldest. The narrator feels the urge to vent since his father has developed TB as a result of his self-indulgent lifestyle. As time goes on, the father starts to feel better, and he communicates his wish to lead a regular life again by informing his son that because of his confidence in him, his name was placed in the passport. The narrator reports the father as explaining what is wrong with his son:

Thank you, Billy.

I actually had scars. I can tell you how it seemed like the end of the world since I had been waiting for something without understanding what it would entail. I wanted you and not the others since I knew you wouldn't like me. (Page 16 of The End of the World and Other Stories)

The narrator holds himself accountable for his father's passing. It occurred twice—once when he fled his house and once when he appeared to be recovering. The final straw that broke his back was the bad news about his health. The characters' lives have a hint of



chance, faith, and superstition, which, due to Gallant, gives the book a Hardy-like (as one finds in Thomas Hardy's writings) flavour. She also speculates, like Eliot, that rather than a boom, the end of the world will be heralded by a whimper. The act of proclaiming a fact is the illness that kills the parent. The story illustrates how desertion and betrayal are common human experiences.

Images of Canada and India are referenced in Mukherjee's "The Management of Grief." The story recounts the events of the Air India crash and centers on the protagonist's attempts to go on with her life. It's seen as a link between the shadows and the power brokers. Canadian officials are shown to be woefully inadequate when the story's protagonist, bureaucratic Judith Templeton, struggles to cope with the loss of her loved one after the plane she was on crashes. Mrs. Bhavé travels back to India to seek comfort from family, but upon her arrival, she learns that numerous intermediaries were involved. She makes up her mind to go back to Toronto. Mrs. Bhavé came to India for a specific reason; after losing loved ones in an aero plane tragedy, she was curious in the cultural and religious practices commonly used in India for dealing with loss. Without the solace she sought, she follows her moral compass and heads back to Canada after realizing the presence of middlemen and feeling: "I am stuck between two modalities of knowledge ; between universes" (The Middlemen and Other Stories, 185). In this vision, she is encouraged to show courage by her loved ones. There is a similarity between Ursula Bran Gwen's rainbow sightings and the last scene of Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. She is able to overcome her emotional trauma and take on the world thanks to the voices she hears. The decision to come home was similar for Mrs. Behave, who realized that running away from her problems wouldn't solve them. Like Ursula, she came full circle in her search for meaning when she went back.

The preceding discussion is an effort to provide entertainment through the art of storytelling in Canada in a way that is reflective of modern Canadian society. The authors mine their own experiences or those of their communities for inspiration. *Goodbye Harold*, *Good Luck* features stories set in Galliano Island, British Columbia, and Greece, while *Dance of the Happy Shades* and *Lives of Girls and Women* are set in the quasi-pioneer





setting of south-western Ontario and jubilee. The stories in *The End of the World and Other Stories* by Gallant take place in many locations, including Paris, Montreal, Ottawa, and Germany. The cities of Toronto, Ottawa, New York, and Bombay serve as backdrops for the tales created by Bharati Mukherjee. This means that their view of human nature is informed by a wide range of cultures and perspectives from throughout the world. Munro's works, such as *Dance of the Happy Shades* and *Lives of Girls and Women*, focus on the lives of spinsters and just skim the surface of their illusory selves. The connection between art and life is something she often considers in her work, which is another fascinating aspect of her. The ladies in Audrey Thomas's works are seen struggling with their own personal demons and fears before confronting the craziness of the outside world, in this case the age-old battle that has always plagued women's relationships with males. In these narratives, the female protagonists are always on the lookout for a strong man to help them gain control. As compared to Munro, Thomas, and Mukherjee, Gallant has a slightly unique perspective on the world. Edith Wharton had a character in her debut novel, *A Fairly Good Time*, say,

There are lots of ways of being miserable but there is only one way of being comfortable and that's to stop running around after happiness. If you make up your mind, there is no reason why you shouldn't have fairly good time.

The characters in Gallant's work seem to accept the advice and stop chasing for joy. The characters created by Bharti Mukherjee seem to be influenced more by the renunciation and reconciliation found in eastern philosophy. But like Lawrence, these authors think that short story writing is an imaginative process, and they see the short story as a medium through which they may comment on Canadian culture by drawing parallels to India.

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