

Sundri Uttamchandani

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Sudhodhna the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd Century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi

Makers of Indian Literature

Sundari Uttamchandani

by

Mohan Gehani



Sahitya Akademi

Sundri Uttamchandani :

A Monograph in English by Mohan Gehani on
eminent Sindhi Poet

Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi (2016) Rs. Fifty only

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Edition : 2017

Published by

SAHITYA AKADEMI

Head Office

Rabindra Bhavan, 35, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi - 110 001

Sales Department

Basement in 'Sawati' Mandir Marg, New Delhi - 110 001

Regional Offices

172, Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg,
Dadar (East), Mumbai - 400 014
4, D.L. Khan Road, Kolkata - 700 025
Central College Campus, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi,
Bengaluru - 560 001

Chennai office

Guna, 443 Anna Salai, Teynampet, Chennai - 600 018 **ISBN**

:

Price : ` 50/-

Email : rs.rom@sahitya-akademi.gov.in

Website : <http://www.sahitya-akademi.gov.in>

Printed by : New Age Printing Press, Mumbai 400 025

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Chapter- 1

MAKING OF SUNDRI UTTAMCHANDANI

Sundri Uttamchandani was born on 28th September 1924 at Hyderabad (Sind) and breathed her last on 8th July 2013. She lived to ripe age of 89 years.

Her contribution to Sindhi literature is considered unique in many respects. It would not be out of place here to very briefly recite the social movements and literary traditions trends in vogue of Sindhi language at that time. In order to understand those we shall have to delve into the History of Hyderabad (Sind).

Sindh was the last province in India to be conquered by British in the year 1844 from the Mirs of Sindh. Till that time Sind was an independent sovereign state. The state was annexed to then Bombay Presidency though it did not have any common borders with it and its language, culture and History were quite different. It was purely an administrative and arbitrary decision. When British conquered Sind Hyderabad was its Capital. Persian language was the official language. This was a hangover of the Mogul period which hangover had lasted till then. Though poetry in Sindhi language had already attained its highest water mark in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif and other significant poets importantly Sachal and Sami, the popular poets of those times of Sindhi language continued that tradition and poetry of those times was mostly couched in Sufi- Bhakti traditions of that of those times. Thus a corpus of rich poetic tradition already

existed. At the same time the prose genres were mostly composed in Persian language. Sindhi was considered as language of kitchens and nurseries (*Randhana ain Tanjan ji boli*) by the elite of the times.

British displaced Persian by Sindhi as an official language on assuming power. But here they encountered an obstacle. They found that the Sindhi language was being written in 13 different scripts. Till that time learning was a personal accomplishment and not as a means to mass education as envisaged by the British. They set up a committee to go extensively into this vexed issue. It may be mentioned that some of the early British officers advocated Devnagiri script which they were already familiar with as they knew Marathi, the language of Bombay.. The committee came out with a standardized script of 52 letters based on Arabic- Persian based script. It is only in 1853 that the first modern western oriented school was started in Karachi by the then collector, as a Mission School. In the first year itself 10 text books were provided. Hyderabad soon followed the suit.

At that time Calcutta was Capital of the country and first graduates from Sind went to Calcutta for their college Studies and Graduation. Thus initial batch of educated Sindhi youth of Hyderabad who came from Calcutta were highly influenced and inspired by social reform movements sweeping Bengal at that time, mostly the movement of social reform unleashed by Brahmo Samaj. Thus inspired with the reform zeal, the first private school was established at Hyderabad in 1888 by **Sadhu Hiranand** as Union Academy. Initial writers who contributed to modern Sindhi prose and modern (Western) genres of prose literature were all in the late nineteenth century. Early twentieth century saw the enrichment of Sindhi literature from various languages particularly English language. **Mirza Qalich**

Beg (1853- 1929) played a significant role in this endeavor. He is credited to have contributed 300 books most of them translations from various Languages. In Sindhi literature social reform remained a main driving force and soon it was to be joined with a movement for freedom of India. Thus many stalwart writers like **Jethmal Parsram*** (* Footnote: He was in the forefront of nationalist journalism also and had to face imprisonment for his writing in which he quoted Shah Abdul Latif in heading of his article, protesting against Jalianawala Bagh massacre.) and **Lalchand Amardinomal** who is credited with writing first Sindhi Short Story in 1914. (He left his teaching post and would carry bolts of Khadi on his shoulders to hawk it.) All these movements which were sweeping across India found their presence in Hyderabad Sind. Thus this city had a robust intellectual life.

On the other hand Sindhi poetry that continued with hangover of court culture and was highly influenced by Persian poetry that was mostly was hackneyed was challenged by **Kishichand Bewas** who gave it a modern Urban Sindhi idiom and subjects from everyday life and nature following the along the lines of romantic poets of English, a trend that had already gained a strong foothold in other Indian languages by that time.

Pre -partition and even post partition generations grew up on staple diet of translated literature. **Sarat Chander Chatterjee**, **Bankim Chandra**, **Tagore**, **Munshi Premchand** and many from other languages become household names. They all were all nationalist trend. In this way the corpus of Sindhi literature continued to grow. We observe the first woman writer **Guli Sadarangani** who came out with her original Novel *Ittehad* in 1941. The theme of this novel is Hindu Muslim Unity which was much discussed subject of the times.

In 1944 Mahatma Gandhi gave the call for Quit India. This movement inspired many youth and from their ranks emerged a band of young writers who were influenced by Marxist Philosophy and became a part of Progressive writers' movement which was in its bloom all over India.

Sundri Uttamchandani emerged as young writer of this period. Sundri had translated a Russian Short story “Bhadur Maa Ji Bhadur Dea” (Brave daughter of brave mother). **Assan J Uttamchandani** was a leading figure in Student movement and became Editor of college miscellany entitled “Phuleli”.

Thus they knew each other by name before they came in contact with each other. They saw each other at the marriage of a common friend and liked each other. As per custom they got married in November 1947. The very fact that they got married in ‘troubled’ times after partition was their assertion not to leave their motherland Sind. It is only after partition when they were informed that refugees who had come from India had targeted their house for attack and even collector advised them to leave for safe place that they abruptly decided to migrate. Initially for some period they stayed at Indore, then moved to Baroda and finally to Bombay where Uttam could obtain a job in Bombay Secretariat. Sundri and Uttam lived their life in that city till end. In Bombay Sundri gave birth to two lovely daughters.

Not much is known about her early childhood. All that we know is through some interviews that she has given. She was living in an old palace like structure that was purchased from the courtier of erstwhile rulers Mirs and was named after her grandfather. It contained a vast library to which she had ready access. Her elder brothers and sisters were already grown up and she was left alone and this attracted her towards her library. In her growing years she had already read books by some noted English writers and most of the books by contemporary writers of the time. That included many translations of Bankimchandra, Sarat Chandra, Rabindranath Tagore and many others. In her early years she was exposed to religious stories of scriptures. Her mother used to visit a temple for religious discourse regularly and would relate to her the

stories heard there and interpret them in a lucid manner. Thus was laid the foundation of the moral humanistic values which was to become intrinsic to her individuality.

She recalls the times of childhood when she was returning from Burma accompanied by her parents and she was exposed to many religious festivals on the way and the sights sounds and atmosphere of the pilgrimage that they undertook permeated her being. This experience submerged in her subconscious mind was to be her treasure trove for her creativity.

As any youth of that time she was attracted to the freedom movement. She wanted to court arrest like her fellow students. A sense of loyalty to her domestic duty to look after her sister-in-law who was in need of her help due to child birth and going prison posed a personal dilemma. In the end sense of loyalty to her domestic duty prevailed and thus she had to forgo the distinction of 'Freedom fighter'. But she chose another way to be relevant to the freedom struggle. She took up to writing and her first translated story was published. That momentary decision latter on was to prove momentous decision for Sindhi Literature.

After partition of the country followed by a period of drift as many of Sindhi 'refugees' settled in Bombay or in the camps situated in the vicinity of the city, most important and populous being Ulhasnagar, the place which they started calling 'Sindhu Nagar', life of 'Refugees' started picking up threads. Writers got in touch with each other, and in Bombay the **Sindhi Sahit Mandal** came into existence which was to play a crucial role in Sindhi literary history.

Sindhi Sahit Mandal became a rallying point for all Sindhi writers. Every Saturday evening old as well as aspiring and budding new writers would gather and present their poems,

Short stories and various other writings before their peers and invite criticism. Sindhi Sahit Mandal got a veteran writer **Prof: M U Malkani** in a form of President of the institution as friend, philosopher and guide. He was in fact a fountainhead of inspiration and encouragement for many a budding writer who was to leave a permanent imprint on Sindhi literature in years to come. A J Uttam was one of the pioneers of Mandal. Sundri used to accompany him every Saturday to these gatherings. Sundri was one of the important writers that emerged from this institution with a lifelong commitment to creation of Sindhi literature.

To say the least it was a turbulent time in the history of Sindhi people who had migrated to India. It was a period of utter hopelessness and despondency. It has already been mentioned that some time before the partition a trend of progressive literature and Marxist ideology had already impacted Sindhi literature.

Those who were initially connected with Sindhi Sahit Mandal were persons who had already made their contribution to progressive literature and thought in Sind. A J Uttam was one of those. Believing in their conviction that a writer has to be of and for the masses the writers and poets would go to camps to present their creations to masses in camps who, for want of anything better, would gather in hundreds to hear them, reading their stories and poems that were promise of ushering in a new and better time and a society where justice would be meted to everyone and equality would prevail. The distinctions between haves and have-nots will vanish and that revolution was just round the corner. This did provide solace to troubled people of those times. It infused them with a HOPE.

Partition of the country had another significant impact on Sindhi Society. Sindhi woman who till then was confined only to home and hearth had to stand shoulder to shoulder to face the grim situation for survival and she also started contributing in various ways to economic survival of the family. Sindhi woman had to come out of cloistered existence rub shoulders with her man and in way this paved a way for her emancipation from the feudal patriarchal mindset. Though education was open to girls even in Sind but that a miniscule minority that availed this benefit but post partition this became a normal trend. Whereas before partition we see only one Sindhi woman writer and immediately after partition we observe at least 4 women writers in their late teens or just married who emerged on the literary scene. They were Sundri Uttamchandani, **Popati Hiranandani**, **Kala Prakash** and **Tara Mirchandani**. (Though Tara Mirchandani went silent for quite some time in between) but other three continued writing unabated. Popati Hiranandani was not a part of Sindhi Sahit Mandal but later on played a leading role in Sindhiyat movement.)

In pre partition days Sindhi Progressive writers had started a monthly literary Magazine 'Naeen **Duniyan**. The publication of this magazine was interrupted for a while. As soon as literary activities resumed the publication was re started in Bombay. Initially, keeping in mind the credo of collective working, the magazine had an editorial board. Uttam was one of the important people in the editorial board and this magazine was printed at Mahim where Uttam and Sundri lived. Thus the major work had to done at their home. Thus Sundri became an essential part of the venture. This also opened up an opportunity and an incentive for Sundri to spur her creative faculties. Ultimately as collective working found this to be economically unfeasible proposition Uttam took over the

responsibility of running it individually. In this way increasing responsibility devolved upon Sundri also.

When the Sindhis were still migrating from Sind Congress leaders thought that as the partition was result of culmination of communal politics as a logical step the pivot of the politics in future India would also be religion. This was to prove complete misreading of the course of future politics. Under that impression in order to identify themselves with Hindu majority they advised Sindhi Community to merge in the local population and believing in Credo “Hindu- Hindi- Hindustan” they advised to change the script of Sindhi language to Devnagiri script which government promptly did. The educationists, Scholars and people at large were not prepared for the division along communal lines of their Language, literature and common historical heritage. This created an outcry and the government came out with another circular leaving the question of script to option of parents. This created a division in the community that led to movement for preservation of the common script which was devised after a careful study by committee appointed by the British government and script of 52 letters was devised in which modern literature was published and was in vogue. Since the politicians were a powerful miniscule minority they succeeded in creating a schism which continues to plague the community till this day and is one of the reason of decimation of Sindhi language. To oppose this ill advised move a popular movement from amongst Sindhi educationists, teachers, writers, artists started.

When the constitution of India was being framed though Sindhi representative was present in the constituent assembly he did not press the case of Sindhi language in the eighth schedule of the constitution as he did not attach any importance to linguistic identity. This resulted in discrimination against all Sindhi

institutions. This led to movement for inclusion of Sindhi language in Indian constitution. This movement lasted for nearly 20 years and it is in this period that the some best of writers and artists grew and contributed their full potential in their field.

THE MAKING OF SUNDRI UTTAMCHADANI HAS TO BE SEEN IN THIS CONTEXT AS SHE LIVED AND PARTICIPATED IN ALL FIELDS.

In the year 2000 **KOONJ** a literary periodical devoted their special annual issue to Sundri Uttamchandani. In that issue Sundri speaks about her 'World of Creation'. In that article she gives quite an insight into her creative process and about her early life. It will only be appropriate to quote some passages from it at length.

She says "Perhaps I was about five years old. From that age I became fond of listening the stories. I was born into a house where early in the morning itself I felt myself wrapped in a dream world. A strange world! Mother would smoothen my silken hair to wake me up with the words' Get up sweet child! At this time Shiva and Parvati move around the world to give livelihood to all. Being you asleep you may miss this opportunity.'

'I would spread my small arms in wonder and enquire 'where are they? She would say that you will not be able to see them with these eyes, one could see them only with an inner eye.'

Perhaps at that time itself a wish to open' inner eye' sprouted in my heart. Today with that inner eye I behold the treasure of learning and human emotions around me. I am able to peep in the heart and mind of people. In spite of this I felt that my hutment is situated in a forest. All around are trees ...storms are raging... clouds roar but falling rain drops do not enter my

window. This spectacle is there only to entertain me? For what all this is about I wonder...'

May be nature comes to me only to fill my loneliness...

I have heard many say that literary creation is akin to labour pains of giving birth to a child. I do not agree with this view. At the time of creating anything I feel one with nature and I feel happy. The pain, grief, hatred, envy as well as love and sympathy and sense of belonging all mixed together create a world of their own in my imagination. My imagination wants to create such a world where truth, love and goodness combine to create a reality. Sometimes while portraying sorrow and misery, I suffer and my eyes start streaming. I often feel that I am crossing a river of sorrow to reach the pastures of happiness and joy.

For me the facts of life and themes for my stories are strewn all around me as diamonds in the valley of Sinbad. I know that one has to choose a diamond that would adorn the forehead of newlywed bride. When a writer combines imagination with reality and depicts it effectively then the reader is able to connect with that literature and wonders that no doubt this was I suffered or I enjoyed. Creation is like moving a thread from silk worm, create a silk garment with imaginative patterns weaved into it.

I attended first Asian Writers, Conference held at Delhi in December 1956. On that occasion a Hindi writer Ram Baba Saxsena enquired from me which province I was.

As if the earth moved away under my feet... my eyes were moist... I stammered 'I do not have any land ... I am re refugee.'

He put his hand on my head and said, 'Daughter! Where wine is, that place itself becomes a tavern. Wherever you are becomes Sind.' (Beti jahaan Jaam palate hain wahan maikhana ban jate hain. to jahaan Sindhi baste hain Sind ban jata hai.)

Normally every creation of writer carries in itself a reflection of times. Writer is endowed with a sensitive heart which quickly records the events and mood of the time with all its gamut of emotions at quicker pace than anyone else. Due to advance in technology even human emotions and values have undergone a change. The razor's edge on the conscience of writer can easily discern as to what is right and what is wrong. This way the thread keeps on moving. There is no time and season for any creation. After a long lapse when I read my own stories I am filled with happiness, sorrow and wonder!

In the same issue of KOONJ **Dr. Moti Prakash** in an interview asks her some fundamental questions. He wants to know as to why the female characters of her creation leave the reader with an impression that they have a sense of un- fulfillment about them and they tend to be incomplete and are always in search of something (perhaps happiness) which has eluded them.

To this she replies that concept of completeness is illusive. Human mind has always been hankering after something elusive. It keeps on knocking on the new doors of unraveling mystery and finding new horizons. Otherwise it would not be possible to explain so many religions and many ascetics. After all what is their quest? This quest is eternal. I do agree that my characters are always yearning for something that has eluded them and will remain elusive.

On the subject of her creativity she gives an analogy of a fire cracker with which children used to play with. A small piece of material when set on fire would uncoil itself and start spreading

itself. In the same way once the creativity of a person is ignited it keeps on uncoiling itself and this process remains lifelong.

Her first book was published in 1953 and last one was published 2004. In more than half century she published 19 books of various genres. As a significant writer and as an activist she strode in all her majesty and grace on the stage of Sindhi literature and culture.

Chapter-2

NOVELS OF SUNDRI UTTAMCHANDANI

Novel as genre of modern literature is post British Phenomena in Sindhi literature. Earlier many tales related by *Qisa gu's* of earlier times were penned but it was only in the year 1870 that first Novel of Johnson *Rasselas* was translated by **Sadhu Navalrai** and **Munshi Udharam** was published in Sindhi. This set a trend for original novels in Sindhi literature. First original was written by **Miraza Qalich Beg** named *Dilaram* in 1888 and Zinat in 1890 (Which is said to adaptation rather than original creation).

From the very inception in Sind, literature was used as vehicle of social change and became important medium to influence the society at large. In this manner *Ajeeb Bhet* by **Pritamdas Hakumatrai** in 1892 (A Strange Contradiction) was the first realistic novel contrasting the life style of two Hindu communities of Hyderabad- Amils and Bhaibhands. It dwelt on the issue of blind faith in old orthodox traditions and expensive after- death rituals to be performed in Hindu society. It contrasted the life style of educated serving class and business class.

In this manner in pre partition time we get many mile stones in Novel writing. **Lalachand Amardinomal's** Chouth Jo Chand in 1905, **Behrimal Meharchand's** two novels around 1909, **N H Gurbuxani's** Noor Jahaan, **Abdul Khaliq Morai's** Historical fiction, Freedom Fighter **Dada Shewak Bhojraj's** Ashirwad, and many other novels. In 1941 first woman writer **Guli Sadarangani** was to make a history by writing her novel *Itihad* on Hindu Muslim unity wherein she shows interreligious marriage of lovers. It was an attempt to reinforce the idea of communal harmony as advocated by Gandhiji during freedom struggle. Assanand Mamtaro in his *Shaair* (Poet) was to show marriage between a Sindhi boy and Kashmiri girl. Hundreds of novels from most of the prominent languages of India as well from English were translated but till the partition the pace of Sindhi original novel remained sluggish.

Sundri has written only two novels in her literary career spanning more than 50 years. Both Novels have been written in her early initiation in literature. Her first Novel "Klrandra Dewarron" (Crumbling Walls) was published in 1953. The very title of the novel is suggestive as multilayered metaphor of the turbulent times in the immediate aftermath of Partition of the country and uprooting of Hindu society from their native soil.

This was a period of convulsion in the history of Sindhi people. In this period the society rooted in trading and social modes and values underwent a great upheaval to say the least. It may be said that this novel does not portray the times of watershed movement I history of the community at epic level which might have made it a classic of its times. At that time Sundri was merely 29 years of age. Her age must have been a limiting factor and the ethos of those times which characterized trend of 'Progressive Literature' perhaps did not permit such a luxury. The purpose of literature in those times was to mirror a reality and give a message. In this background this Novel came as a perfect Text Book specimen of what a progressive literature should be. It is easier now in hindsight to say all this but during those heady times when the revolution was supposed to round the corner this novel for its very novelty created quite a ripples in the literary world. It must be mentioned that in Sindhi language the lone Sindhi Novel before partition of 1947 was only one and only female writer Guli Sadarangani Itihad in 1941. This by second woman writer came after the gap of 13 years and first by a woman writer in post partition India.

Sundri was a youth of 24 years when she left Sindh. She was brought up and educated in Sindh. She had live memories of Sindhi life before partition and was aware of social mores and values of the middle class families of that time. The constrictions and restrictions of the behavior particularly of the women folk and social fabric with all its flaws and aspirations were known to her. With this background in mind the novel starts in time frame before partition and midway travels to post partition period in India.

This novel is a study in microcosm of a single Bhaibhand family of Hyderabad (Sindh). Sindhi community in Hyderabad was divided in two social segments. One was called Amils who used

to work mostly in government offices and in field of education therefore thought themselves as more sophisticated in comparison to Bhaibhands who were engaged in trading actives mostly in the overseas countries. They were more affluent therefore had money power. Both segments had their own social mores and were proud to uphold them.

The protagonists of the novel are Rekha and Chandan. It is all about their families before and after partition. Only two chapters are devoted to pre partition times and the rest of the narrative deals with immediate post partition period. This novel can be cited as text book example of how the tenets of 'Progressive literature' were supposed to be adhered to. This novel deals with concepts of bourgeois' value system and the theory of Karl Marx that eventually the tail end of this class will merge into the working class and shall form the vanguard of the revolution. This novel is a study in contrast of these two opposite trends in middle class society and eventual triumph of 'de-classing'.

The plot of the novel could be summarized thus:

"Novel starts with pre-partition life in Hyderabad Sind. Main female character is beautiful girl Rekha. Though brought up in an affluent family now fallen on bad days due to inability to afford dowry, is married into a lower middle class family. Her husband Chandan is rational- political conscious communist-political activist. He is not able to fulfill dreams and expectations of Rekha's emotional life of being totally devoted to her. This emotional incompatibility leads to misery of Rekha. Chandan's mother has two younger sons who are also to be supported. Chandan's brother is quite his antithesis. For him money is main concern of life. He goes abroad to earn money by any means. He marries for money. He has one son. After partition of the

country the family settles in Mumbai. In keeping with traditional Marxist understanding that middle class will merge into working class and be in the vanguard of the proletarian revolution he joins a mill and is working for trade union. In the process after suffering great agony Rekha abandons her romantic notions and works for a factory and starts understanding her husband. She also joins in the great cause. In the end in a melodramatic way brother of Chandan and his family along with mother come and seek refuge because he has suffered great loss. Another lesson in capitalist system is that bigger fish eat smaller fish in this system.”

It would be worthwhile to look into treatment of main characters that inhabit the novel.

Rekha: She has been nurtured on the dream like fantasies of fairytale endings of love stories. “They lived happily ever after.” When she is informed that she is going into a poor family where her husband earns merely 80 Rupees per month. Her innocent reply, ‘so what of it. Why the entire house is so gloomy...? Marriage is meant for love. What it has to do with money? Love makes one forget the entire world!’.....

Her emotions of the eve of her marriage, ‘on that day when Rekha opened her eyes she found entire sky bathed in gold. She tried to remember, the thoughts she had before going to sleep. Like floating water lily a thought had surfaced. ‘Now is my marriage’. She had felt that till then the boat of her life had been simply been drifting towards this shore where it will find a firm anchorage.’

‘On the first night of marriage itself she engraved on stone that Chandan has no capacity to understand her emotions.’.....

‘When she got up from sleep in the morning she felt during night entire house has been a fire! Without getting any help of water to extinguish the fire entire house has been reduced to ashes.’.....

‘She felt that today her heartache had increased. When she tried to find the reason and peeped inside herself, there she found a strange picture. Early morning when after having a bath she had seen herself in the mirror with her ravishing silken brown hair, at that time a faint wish had whispered to her. On reaching threshold of youth you had only one dream. When you will perfume your hair with oil and come before your beloved would entwine his fingers in your hair and this very act would spread happiness all across and overwhelm her senses. But where did Chandan have time for all this!...

When she cried Chandan simply asked her what the matter was. Did she want anything?

“Wish Chandan whose fingers all the daylong moved on the lifeless papers would quiver on her hair and place her head on his lap and say: “Rekha! My queen how beautiful you are! Your moonlike face is intoxicating!’ Was this all needed to be said?’...

‘Yes I need a love Love in which we would get lost! Forget the entire outward existence! We would be well dressed and have fragrance of our bodies. Atmosphere should be filled with joyous melody! You should be oblivious to all the changes of world and society. You should exist only for me and I only for you!’...

Chandan: When Chandan after change of clothes sat for his food fully engrossed in some deep thought his mother said, ‘ Now we will have to leave Pakistan. Only a handful of families have been left in the neighborhood now”. He said,’ Listen to

one thing for certain. I am not going to leave my land of birth. I have here a job of rupees eighty and a roof above head. If we leave this place I will have to search for a new job and roof above our head.'

'Chandan could not sleep for a long time. He had heard his mother saying, all the day she keeps wailing and seeing her husband she becomes quiet. He pondered over these words and was as to loss to understand what this girl wants! Can't she see how difficult the life in Bombay is? In order to get this accommodation how hard he had to struggle and that too after paying goodwill of 1500 rupees he had been able to obtain this tiny roof over their head. He had subsisted with his family by doing odd jobs at various places and occasions and at last now he got a permanent job in Naserwanji Mill. He has been able to get this clerical job at the cost of sacrificing his final year for graduation. This girl does not understand the difficulties of others.'...

When he confronted her to ask her the reason for her sobbing he found that in those eyes there was no pain, instead there he found hatred. In spite of trying he could not find any cogent reason, he was irritated. Always a front ranker in school and college, winner of many debating competitions, reader of many complicated philosophical books and as a person who understand complicated social- economic political issues failed to understand his wife'...

Reconciliation:

'Chandan took her from her arm and led her to bed. What ails you? He firmly asked. 'Nothing' she replied.

‘No you will have to tell me today the reason. Do I not provide enough food clothing and security to you?’

‘One does not get married for food, clothes etc;. ... Marriage means happiness! And happiness is there where love is!’

Chandan softly says, ‘I have deep love for you. Only thing is that it is not restricted only to you. In my orbit of love are millions of men women and children and old people who are victims of this cruel social system that grips them in vice like stranglehold. I have devoted myself to bring about the change in the exploitative system. If all the time only your love remains axis of my existence I will have to abandon the call of my duty. It is not possible for me. I wonder why there should be a conflict between love and duty. Till I do not see any conflict I shall continue to adhere to both. In case a conflict is forced on me I am afraid I will have to choose one... I ask you why you also do not move from a narrow orbit of personal love to bigger concept of humanity and work for its betterment.... Rekha! If you consider me as a fanatic who loves only papers and books and does not love people like you, are completely mistaken. The vastness of my love pervades each atom of this creation.’

Change:

Thinking about the plight of middle class woman who is bound in traditions, false values and faces daily changes of life as if being squashed between two grinding stones for a mere existence she portrays that situation in exploration of subconscious through surrealistic dreams, symbols and metaphors. Here is one example:

“Entire night storm has been raging. Occasionally heavy rainfall was interspersed by heavy silence! Water continued to soak the walls with ruddy earth water and made potholes in the ground. Rekha lay uneasy entire night. For Some times she had disturbed

sleep and she saw strange nightmares. Some time huge mountains would convert into fireballs. Sometimes it would turn into strong wind running with hail storms. At that time rattling of windows created fear in her heart. She started questioning herself. What is that is clear to Chandan and his friend Hiro; I am not able to understand? She recalled a letter from her sister in which she had mentioned that circumstances could not be any worse. Since four days there is no food in the house..."

She resolves to free herself and venture out in the world with confidence. She seeks a job to improve her economic clout. When she fails to get a clerical job she joins as a factory worker. Due to trade union activities Chandan is arrested. She remains unfazed.

In melodramatic turns of events Chandan's brother who had married for the sake of money to come out of poverty and after earning overseas had started his own business, is overnight rendered pauper. Such is nature of the business in capitalist system which is based on the principle that big fish has to eat smaller fish.

One could wish that this contrast had been given more space.

When this novel was published it made a deep impact. It depicted the life in micro scale of the family in pre- partition Sind with its social mores and traditions. That catered the nostalgic memories of the generation who had endured the pain of up-rootment from their state. . It portrayed the reality of life in all its starkness and it provided a roadmap. (It is another matter that community did not adopt that road as is obvious today. That we can say only in hindsight)

According to eminent veteran writers of those times the most significant contribution of novel was depiction of woman

through woman's eye. It brought to Sindhi literature the colloquial language spoken by women folk that was rich in idioms, sayings and particularly female vocabulary. This novel proved to be popular even across the border that it saw 5 reprints in rapid succession.

Sundri's second Novel "Preet Purani Reet Nirani" (Old love New Path) was published in 1956. It deals with greatest human emotion love. This emotion has dominated human race in many facets but the love between man and woman and the romance associated with it has enriched the history of man in a splendid manner. It is at the root of all life forms. This instinct has evolved into a fine human emotion that has found expression in entire human behavior and forms a vital subject of all art forms.

The man woman relationship has undergone any changes. Though by nature created as equal but different due to change in modes of production and concept of private property the gender equality has become causality. The conditioning of man woman relationship has been changed to woman being relegated to inferior position in relation to man. Manu in his 'Law' stipulated that woman has always to be dependent on male. She as a daughter has to be protected by her father, after marriage by her husband as a sister by her brothers and as mother by her sons. The very concept of independence of woman vanished in this process. She was used by kings to forge powerful alliances increase their wealth or as a defeat had to be given away to buy peace. Thus obedience, submissiveness, loyalty, selfless service, fidelity to her husband's family became essential virtues for her. She was conditioned to sacrifice everything at the altar of her husband.

In such a situation the expression of love between man and woman which finds fulfillment in union finds itself socially in an

untenable proposition. Therefore old Poet Shah Latif counseled “Learn, learn from a kiln, it burns all the day, yet it does not emit any smoke.” Persian poet was to find out a lover from six signs. A lover is he who has paleface, cold sigh, tearful eyes, restlessness, eagerness and is wandering everywhere.” In France it was fashion among youth to be melancholic. Pain for lover was considered as a badge of honor. In early twentieth century Sarat Chander wrote his novel Devdas in Bengali language that was translated in all Indian languages, in which he showed that the protagonist character of the novel Devdas sacrifices his life on being a failure in love. Love of Devdas became iconic for the youth of the country for quite some time. It was accepted that one loves only once and since life is meant for love the failure in love should logically end in life also.

Marxist thinking among progressive writers changed this never changing, eternal concept of love. They derived their thinking from the basic concept of equality between genders. THEY CAME WITH A VIEW THAT LOVE IS NOT CONSTRICTING EMOTION RATHER IT SHOULD COME AS LIBERATING EMOTION. It should be all encompassing and not exclusive domain. They stressed that love is meant to enrich life and life is not meant to be sacrificed at the ‘*alter of love*’ after all love is also like any other human emotion and in relationship between man woman this emotion is naturally subject to change under changed circumstances.

Sundri’s Novel reinforces this progressive idea of love. The plot of this Novel can be summarized thus:

Her Second Novel, “Preet Purani – Reet Nirali. (Old Love - New Way). This novel for the first time brought a technique through which three characters interlinked tell their story in a

monologue yet the narration of the story moves along seamlessly.

The story is told through Moti, Sarla and Jamuna. Moti falls in love with Sarla, a cousin of his friend Vishnu who works overseas. Her cousin joins the same college in which Moti is already studying. Love blossoms. Moti is forced to sacrifice his love and marry a simple girl Jamuna under the parental pressure because she is the only daughter from a rich family. Sarla under the impact of betrayal falls sick. She is encouraged to live a purposeful and happy life. After the partition to make both ends meet at home she starts working in an office. She comes close to her male colleague Naryan who is also struggling for survival. She becomes aware of the life of struggle and the need to connect with wider issues of society.

In the meanwhile Moti is settled at Jaipur with his devoted wife and one infant son. He is looking for some work. He gets a letter from his friend who informs him that Sarla is settled with her family at Mumbai and is working. Her father is eager to get her married. He comes to Bombay and directly goes and settles in Salas parent's house and tells them that soon after marriage his wife died. Sarla's father sees it a good opportunity to get his daughter settled and be rid of the burden under which he finds himself crushed day and night. In the meanwhile Sarla gets a letter from his wife Jamuna which discloses that his wife is not only living but he is a father to one son also. Thus exposed he is rejected by Sarla and her family. He leaves Bombay after realizing the futility of his atrocious dreams and returns back to his wife and child. This new reality of new love is forced upon him.

This underlines one important fact of social life that in our society parents think of a girl as burden which could be removed

only through marriage of the girl. This pitiable fact and other social customs of dowry and ostentatious display continue to bedevil society even today. This mindset conditioned in feudal times continues to have sway even today

This novel has also seen 5 reprints. In this context it is relevant to give some passage from the Preface by eminent poet writer Dr. Tanveer Abbasi when this novel was published across the border.

He writes' "Love is an old and universal emotion. But it changes itself according to time. Sundri has presented this subtle emotion in a creative and deft manner with brevity and clarity. All characters of the novel are very well crafted and well placed. They are normal characters, realist and rationalists. Sentences flow as if all links of are chain are well forged. Even otherwise after the partition very few novels have been written in Sindhi language and this novel of Sundri occupies a place of pride in genre of Sindhi Novel."

Sundri has contributed only two novels to Sindhi literature which in themselves are a good contribution but ultimately she found her niche in form of Short story. It must be said though, that some of her stories have the potential of being developed into novels.

Chapter – 3

THEMES OF HER SHORT STORIES

World of Sundri's short stories mostly consists of domesticities in its entire myriad of forms. It dwells on contradictions and clashes of values, the inner power conflict within the family unit itself, power of orthodoxy and the painful change. It is about false values and new emerging reality and quest to come to terms with modern times or rather efforts to usher in change. She portrays mainly female characters with fineness and most of her male characters are positive and progressive. She employs a technique of creating characters and situations in contrast and brings out her progressive point of view across without resorting to slogan mongering, into which the literature of those time degenerated in lesser creative writings of the times. In order to give a proper perspective of her short stories and the themes she tackled it would be worthwhile to have a bird's eye view of her stories. With this end in view a gist of her stories given in various collections of stories will be appropriate.

Short Story Books of Sundri:

Koshan a short story of Sundri Uttamchandani was published in an anthology in 1954 by Kahani Edited by Jagat Advani in a series of Kahani Publication.

Koshan story was written by Sundri as a participant in a short story writing competition by Kahani publication of Jagat Advani in 1954. Koshan was prize -winning story among the many entries received. It is story of a couple who has come from camp life into a building where comparatively better off people live. Husband still ekes out living as a hawker of the cloth in various localities. Wife feels listless and lonely, suddenly she finds a friend who is rich and thus she being accepted in their company

feels happy and that is depicted in the husband wife relationship also. During rainy season wife has to go to see a movie with her new found friend and she succumbs to temptation to wear a costly sari from stock kept for sell by husband. Sari is spoiled due to rain; they have spent more amount than expected. This induces a feeling of guilt in wife while husband is infuriated. In the end message is that one should not live beyond ones means and should not be swayed away to socially compete above ones means. It is better to accept ones position without compromising pride in belonging to lower middle and poor class.

ACHA WARA GARHA GULA. (1965)

This collection of short stories contains 10 Stories. Pahredharin, Zahera Ji Puri, Kaku Mhal, Khechli, Hi Shahr, Dikar Adhikar, Pahiryon Pyaru, Aag, Zindi Moti Aae and Acha Wara Ghara Gula.

In this collection 3 stories stand out for detailed discussion. Zehara Ji Pudi, for life in Kalyan camp. Crumbling of value structure where the elder of the family wants the younger generation to uphold the values of thrift and hard work and younger generation is ranged against him and is so prejudiced to even go to extent of poisoning him to get rid of him so that they can lead their free life according to their free will. This story goes against the normal view of generation gap and turns it upside down as normally it is felt that it is elder generation which is more conservative and rigid and younger generation is more enlightened and progressive. It depicts life of struggle immediately after partition.

Hi Shehar is her one of her most enduring short story that depicts the life of a Nepali Guard in a Bombay housing complex of lower middle class families and his exploitation, his death and

state of his married wife with infant child. It depicts the process of urbanization in all its brutality and the cost that this entire process extracts from the simple people of countryside. The story in a way reminds one of Tagore's famous Story **Kabuliwala**. This story has endured the test of time.

Zindagi Moti Aee is about the family in Kalyan camp that is engaged in making of TRUNKS involving physical nature and their anxiety to hide this fact of their poor condition from newly married daughter-in-law. She with her understanding and frankness accepts this situation and ends their sense of embarrassment with her mature behavior and everyone accepts to lead a normal life. This also depicts life immediately after partition.

Acha Wara Ghara Gula the last story of this collection is psychological story. It does NOT convey any message which was considered essential in those times. It is a story of an old man living with his daughter in the mountains where her friend comes to visit them to recuperate after her examination. Due to her natural exuberance and her pristine beauty the old man is sexually attracted towards her. He knows that his attraction is doomed and he will have to suffer for it yet he feels helpless and his internal conflict and agony is well depicted in a story in a monologue format. A woman has instinctive understanding of paternal touch or otherwise; when the girl feels that his touch is not paternal but something else she determinedly leaves that house. This one story has endured the test of time.

To Janeen Ji Taat- 1970.

This Second collection of short stories contains 10 stories. To Janeen Ji Taat, Masum Iltija, Rajni Arsi, Kari Raat, Pakhi Sunhibo

Pahinje, Puraza Purza, Dil Shisho Ahe, Mamta, Jamoon Waro, Chachi Chele Maa.

First short story To Janeen Ji Taat is for a considerable period based on pre partition times. In a village it was custom to sleep on the terraces of houses during summer. Protagonist Gahano while getting up sees his elder brother's young wife shivering due to cold winds and unconsciously he covers her with his covering sheet. This upper cover is found by elderly relative of a bride and she is questioned as to how the covering sheet of younger brother of her husband? This leads to scandalous humiliation of both. Gahano is not able to explain himself and prove the innocence of his brother's wife. Under the sense of guilt he leaves his village and ekes out his life by selling 'Pakodas' and other eatables. He tries to go back and explain himself but is rebuffed. After partition when exodus of Hindu families begins he goes back to his village and finds that the family has already left. Thus he is separated from his family. In India, in spite of becoming affluent he defies his sons and continues to work as a cook in Dharamshala with the hope that may be in any marriage party he may come across someone from his own family. It underscores the fact that partition not only divided the countries but families also pining to seek and meet each other even if only accidentally. It underscores the greater tragedy of the partition of the country. Character of Gahano has shades of Dostovsky's stories. In fact this has a scope of being converted into a Novel.

Masoom Iltija is nostalgic story about the schools in Sindh and conditions of Sindhi schools in Bombay. Child grows upon stories about her school from mother and in her innocent mind conjures up an image of a beautiful school with all facilities, trees, gardens and playground. But here the reality is in stark contrast and hence her sense of betrayal.

Rajni ain Arsi deals with handling of marital discord of an office clerk by enlightened female co-worker. The contentious reason of disharmony among the couple is about medium of education of his child, whereas he is in favour of sending child to English medium school the child's mother wants to send to Sindhi medium school. The benefits of Sindhi medium are explained and he consents. It will be seen that Sindhi parents had already started moving away from Sindhi education even in early sixties and which gathered momentum with each passing year.

Kari Raat story portrays grim poverty in camp life and husband's inability and his instinct of male domination and a sense that his demands for tasty food is met at any cost. This leads to situation where the lady of the house desperately desires to end her life. It is really a pathetic situation where everyone is slave to the circumstances that are not of their making.

Pakhi Sunhibo Pahinje... This is a story about a lady who is not acquainted with Sindhi way of life and moves into Sindhi neighborhood with quite a lot of misgivings. In this story occasion of marriage is used to show case Sindhi culture wedding songs and fun and frolic of women.

Purza Purza story takes imagery of moving train to describe various stages of mental state of female protagonist. Husband in his greed takes to easy ways of money gets involved in underworld activities and gets caught by police. Thus the entire edifice of wealth and comfort comes crashing down.

Dil Shisho Ahe is a story in form of letters written by two friends between each other. It deals with questions of love and male infidelity and emotional cost on female characters. It depicts gamut of emotional life of a woman while trying to maintain equilibrium in his life.

Mamata Story was published in 1952. It deals with ravages of war and it is taken in a flash back when inspite of trying hard son is not able to get employment and as last resort tries to join army. Mother protests against the war. It was perhaps written at the time when Soviet Union had launched peace Movement at the beginning of cold war era.

Jamun Waro is story about a young mischievous, vagabond, bully and strong carefree boy in Hyderabad. After partition he comes selling Gulab Jamun. Owner of the house hold recognizes his childhood neighbor and tries to find out the reason of this transformation. He says that during riots in Sind he saved a widowed lady and after coming to India in order to spare her humiliation he married her defying all the age old traditions against widow remarriage and now happily settled and is proud of his earnings by sweating for it. In a way this story may be considered as precursor to her classic story “**Bhoori**’.

Chachi Chele Maa is a story of two women in contrast both married in the same family to two brothers. While the one is street smart and aggressive the other is accommodative and understanding. Both try to inculcate their own values in their children. The ever affectionate woman emerges with all the glory and sympathy for the reader.

Bhoori (1979) 11 short stories. Talash, Chaturi (On this is based Teleflex Kitty Party) Pyar Payar Pida Pida, Bhoori (Tele film) , Chamata, Insaan Jo Ahiyoon, Kashmiri Saree, Amulha Manakan Jo Vyapar, (Also a Play) Jana Ko Mari Viyo Ahe, Shikasta, Bajh Bajhan.

Talash deals with concepts of renunciation, quest, attainment, fulfillment and quest for happiness and fulfillment. Can this quest be a goal or is this a mere journey. All this is depicted

through an Actor producer who, while shooting a film on Buddha meets a sanyasin Ganga, who leaves her ashram to be with him comes a famous actress. While depicting the role of Abhisarika the train of thought ensues and above questions are raised and the concept of Abhisarika becomes a lynch point. This is most unlikely of Sundri's stories that deal with real world and do not venture into speculative realms.

Chaturi deals with a group of ladies who are engaged in Kitty Party. In guise of kitty party they indulge in gambling. One of the participants raises loan from all and sundry and is so much indebted that she has to resort to committing suicide. From this story a telefilm also has been produced.

Pyar Pyar Pida Pida is short story written in form of letters between lovers. It is about a woman trapped in a traditional mindset trying to free herself from self imposed traditional bounds. It is also about sense of false ego and self image imposed upon self. In spite of great desire to free oneself how difficult task it is. It is reflection of inner struggle to break free from the stereotype and change the values to give something of the self to the underprivileged.

Bhoori is considered one of the classics of Sundri Uttamchandani. It is symbol and metaphor for the Sindhi communities struggle for survival. It is about self respect and value of hard work and shedding of all inhibitions and letting oneself free. A lady, a beauty of past who was referred to as a doll in her early times is reduced to selling papads, she may have lost her outer beauty but she manages to retain her inner beauty by the values of self respect dignity of labour and her nonchalance. She comes selling papads to her old neighbor and this raises many questions in the mind of his wife. In the process

her entire personality is revealed by husband. A tele-film on this has proved to be very popular.

Chamata is about the life of overseas Sindhis and their decadent values about the free sex and indulgence with sex workers. A lady of the house who is very sensitive is not able to tolerate open activities. She pukes on such descriptions. (It appears to be a repeat story which I will have to check).

Insaan Jo Ahiyoon is a story about a youth who is not able to study further though he is very good at the drawing. In absence of formal education and due to unemployment he is subjected to humiliations by all relatives and members of polite society. This story about the state of number of unemployed youths in the country who though are poor and are not able to meet their basic needs also but at the same time are imbued with sense of self respect and are aware of dignity of hard labour as against the soft labour of the lower middle class.

Kashmiri Sari is about the atmosphere of severe money situation of lower middle class writer community who attend the writers' conference. One of the lady delegates has stealthily collected some money from her husband to purchase a Kashmir sari as advised by her friend. It is found out by other writers who wager with her husband that ladies have tendency to save money without knowledge of her husband. When her purse is found he loses the wager. There is another couple who have desire to see Taj Mahal as a tribute to those workers who spent their loves to build it. It is not a monument dedicated to love of an emperor to his wife but it dignifiedly symbolizes the glory of the labour and celebrates it. Lady gives away money to that couple to visit Taj Mahal and forsakes her desire for Kashmir sari.

Amulaha Mankan Jo Wapar this has been converted into a play. Please see details of this story as it has been discussed while writing about her book of plays.

Jana Ko Mari Wiyo Ahe it is story set in Kalyan Camp when the privacy became causality. It is about degradation of traditional values when two cousins fall in love with each other, a thing unheard of in Sindhi Hindu society, as blood first cousins are considered as brothers and sisters. As this marriage takes place instead of celebrations there is atmosphere of mourning.

Shikasta is a story related in the background of a spinster who has outgrown her marriageable age as she could not get a match who would earn more to keep her comfortable. Her nephew and one of her students fall in love. His nephew is only a teacher with a meager income and counsels them not to go ahead with marriage. They defy her advice and get married. They feel love alone is enough to overcome all. In the course of marriage due to financial stagnancy the disputes about the priorities arise and fight ensues. They come to her. She feels vindicated. Next day again they come together bound by love and understanding with each other. At that time lady feels defeated by her logic and her sense of false values lies exposed before her.

Baju Bajaan is tale of hectic morning life of working woman. As a teacher she is forced by circumstances to give morning tuitions also and has to undertake many responsibilities and her ability of multi tasking. It is a typical urban life story.

Yugantar. (1989) book has been published by Sangeeta Publishers Baroda. It consists of 11 stories. Maanhoon Matji Viya, Aqla Jo Andho, Amoli, Ganesh Janamu, Yugantar, Satia Jo Chabutro, Bombay Wari, Vanjan So Vanja Kedhan, Maju, Aransi Aazadi, Soamaan.

First story **Maanhoon Matji Viya** is set in a period immediately after partition when people were engaged in a grim struggle for mere survival. It is a story of two female friends. One of them had lent 1000 Rupees to her friend who is settled now at Baroda. Under extreme compulsion she comes to recover her debt and finds that her friend is in worst condition. Her son is plying rickshaw in spite of suffering from TB. They did not have a house to live for a long time and were forced to live under a tree. They all are in dire straits. This shows the ravages that partition brought about in the lives of the common people. Where even the decent values that they had cherished have vanished and people have completely changed.

Aqula Jo Ando is about a male vanity. He refuses to see the reality of life and clings to old notions of male domination and inflicts cruelty on his wife and children. They grown up, daughter who is capable of earning leaves him along with her mother to escape his cruelty. This story underscores the fact that woman's economic independence can ensure escape from cruelty that male deems his right to inflict.

Amoli is about a woman whose husband leaves her to pursue his ideals and his dreams. In the meanwhile Amoli keeps herself busy by creating awareness in neighborhood and working for their upliftment. When he returns as a headmaster he wants her to give up all her activities. This story also shows male domination and chauvinism.

Ganesh Janamu is about how gullible people are taken in by claim of a family that from coconut has emerged Lord Ganesh. This story vividly captures the fair like atmosphere that follows and the blind faith of the masses. Ultimately it turns out to be natural growth in the coconut that starts to decay and is

stealthily consigned to sea. This is an exposure of blind faith and its exploitation.

Yugantar is about a working couple in a nuclear family. They have a child who is named as Yugantar. (Change of an era). Both are working and grandparents refuse to take care of grandchild. They find a way out of this predicament. While one parent is on night duty the other opts for day duty. This unnatural situation complicates their marital life, as couple is not able to devote time to each other and satisfy their normal needs. One day husband gets order for a change of shift. Wife decides to give up her lucrative job and bring up her child. To augment their loss of income she decides to establish a crèche, inspite of protests from her husband that her qualification would be wasted.

Satia Jo Chabutaro it is story that depicts life in girls' hostel and their care free pranks.

Bombay Wari is story about the girl who is from Ajmer and gets married into family in Bombay. After giving a birth to a child when she comes to visit her parents at Ajmer she is changed person. She brings with her the values, habits and attitude of big city life to chagrin of her old family and friends. This exposes the wide divide that exists in India and Bharat. In turn this invites ridicule from her Ajmer friends who find her practices as ridiculous. It portrays a clash of big city life style and small town life norms.

Wanja So Wanja Kedhan it is s a typical story of power struggle in a family. Elder sister of husband and his wife are locked in a sort of a combat over control of the household. It focuses on an aged spinster in the house of her parents or her brother. This results in a complex of insecurity which in turn leads to many more complexes and makes her a control freak and she cries out

in anguish as where to go after all. It depicts a pitiable mental state which makes her control freak.

Manju is also a story of a couple. They keep on clashing. Wife feels that her husband does not love her and she married him out of compulsion of tradition rather than love. It was a compromise for her while all the while she was under the impression that husband loved her dearly. To this conflict are introduced characters of mother- in -law and sister- in- law to add fuel to the fire.

Ananasi Azadi Husbands brother returns from Paris. He is shallow in his thinking. His view about beauty is that as beauty of the moon is for everyone to enjoy so even human beauty is for everyone to enjoy. It deals with possession of beautiful women and appreciation of beauty. It deals with ownership of body of a woman and appreciation by all others. It deals with different perceptions of two generations.

Souman is a story of terminally ill lady, struck by cancer and her desire to see the person who courted her in her youth who refused to leave his parents staying at Sindhunagar and refused to move with her to Bombay. He refused to be ghar jamai. It is about repentance of false values and vanity. The false perception of Bombay life being better than a life at Sindhunagar.

It would be clear that the life that Sundri weaves in her short stories delves in the depths of gamut of human emotions, her painting of female mindscape and her emotions is quite deep which she manages to portray in all complexities with apt expressions and creative languages. In her short stories metaphors of rain, flood, lighting and darkness play an important role. All these metaphors have been well employed to convey various moods and complexes.

Bandhan: Published in Nov. 1982. Contains 10 stories. Kheera Bhariya Hatharaaa, Maan Tarsandus, Jeean Ji Tamana, Neenha Ja Natta, Sathi, Vilayati Ghoti Ji Golha, Sindhi Thi Viya Dano Dano, Bandhan, Dehau Thiyo Paradehu and Mini Khani.

Kheera Bhariya Hatharaaa won a prize in competition organized by literary magazine in which mostly important short story writers of that time participated. This story has two female cousins (Maternal) in a contrast study. One is married into a rich family because her parents could afford the dowry. While the protagonist, due to her financial position is married into a middle class family. Her husband is quite matured and loving. They live in conjugal harmony and understanding leading a life of struggle for a mere survival. When her cousin from affluent family comes for a visit she still has maintained her youthful beauty and in contrast the character finds her withered and aged. This feeling of envy unsettles her and confidence in her. It is during the conversation between her and her husband she regains her balance and self confidence.

Maan Tarsandus is a story of young girl swayed away by her youthful passion and surrenders herself to a taxi owner Maharashtrian who takes this relationship casually. This leads to question of inter caste marriage also. The writer is biased against such marriages and the girl decides to wait for a suitable Sindhi boy.

Jeean Ji Tamana is a story of grinding poverty and many mouths to feed, family clashes and wants brings in its wake. In the process father wants to give one of his son into a rich family which is resisted by mother and other children. One of the brothers got married as he was in love. Sister-in-law from a different background made house a happy home. She got her sister-in-law married in a good affluent house. Initially she was

happy though she knew that her husband is grown in age. But in big houses the values are different; there is hypocrisy in behavior, double talk, sycophancy in presence and bitching behind the back. She was not used to such a behavior and felt exposed in a rich house as a misfit. Her husband falls sick and doctors declare that he has limited time to live. In such a situation how shall she be happy to survive; she is quite apprehensive but her fighting spirit impels her to fight for her life quite tenaciously.

Neehan Ja Natta. This story is about a girl who has left her husband and on getting divorce papers looks back and in a letter form writes whatever had transpired between them and tries to trace the sequence of events and turning points where their relationship had gone sour. It was a process of one step leading in a reaction to another creating a wide gulf between the couple. Girl is an artist but is not allowed to perform because of her status while husband continues to sing and enjoy appreciation. Husband is under the control of father who due to military service is a control freak. She falls sick and doctor understands her predicament; they come closer that is not liked by the family and she is turned out of home. After getting the letter of explanation husband feels that it is not a letter but hand extended in friendship and love.

SAATHI. This short story is an imaginary story based on Lalchand Amardinomal whom writer herself met some times. It is about his sense of self respect and his poverty in the last days of his life, immediately after the partition of the country.

Vilayati Ghot Ji Golha is about craze for foreign with which Indians were besotted in mid-sixties. It is about a girl on husband hunt working in a foreign country and interesting

events that take place. A Tele film has been made of this story in which along with Sundri, all three generations have acted.

Sindhi Thi Waya Dano Dano, in this short story a match maker lady character is interestingly depicted that bemoans the dwindling values of the community after the partition of the country when Sindhis seem have made one point agenda of their life as how to make more and more money' and only money becomes important. This is due to scattered condition of Sindhi as if Sindhi community's connecting link has snapped and it lies scattered.

Bandhan is her much talked about story. It is reaction in a form of letter. This should be seen in continuation of Nihan ja Natta of this volume itself. In this story the couple splits because husband is attracted to another woman. Girl is helped by friend of her husband. He encourages her and gets her a job to be master of her own destiny. They come closer, they move together, she often goes to the office where both are working but they seldom exchange a glance. As he proposes she comes to know that her husband has been ditched by 'other woman'. Ex husband writes a letter for forgiveness and bound by her early sanskaras she succumbs and awaits his home coming. Shockingly this story is against all the norms set for a progressive thinking and concept of emancipated woman. In my opinion this is most regressive story as far as woman is concerned or self respect of woman is concerned. Story is told in a poetic prose where rain, storm and black cloudy night plays an important role in the narration which is poetic enough. This story finds a place in translation in an anthology of Short stories in which stories of world famous writers Katherine Mansfield, Pearl Buck, Italian, German and stories of other well-known Indian writers like Amrita Preetam, and Manu Bhandari are also published.

Dehu Thiyo Pardes is a story about nostalgia of village in Sind when lady of the house learns that some visitor from Sind from the same village from which she hails has come to Bombay for some work. She insists that he may be called and when he comes she asks him many questions about her village and he says that much has changed since the time she had left her village. In the course of conversation it is revealed that the guest is son of her long lost sister during ravages of partition. In this story she has depicted the life of her childhood and traditions observed to 'honour' girl child in Sind. The story is well told and underlines the fact that though the politicians may have drawn the boundary lines on the map and divided the country but people at heart remain same.

Mini story is about a sales girl who has been inspired by writer to speak in her mother tongue Sindhi and efforts that are set in her locality to know more about Sind. The way new generation is getting more curious about its identity and roots.

Vichoro - 1985. Consists of nine stories. Karo Ghotu, Akehera Ja Ablaakhi, Kunwar Peo, Mhanghi Gudi, Sindhua Jo Roop, Vichoro, Qaduru Konhe, Sooreea Sachu Chariyo and Nanki.

Karo Ghotu is about Indian obsession with fair skin. A person with fair skin is at premium in matrimonial market. A dark skinned boy/ girl however accomplished is considered as a handicap in this market and other social spheres also. Story revolves around a mock marriage conducted by brother of fair looking girl to his dark skinned friend on 1st April. Marriage is conducted with all earnestness with all marriage rituals. When the dark skinned bride groom gives a letter from her bother to bride that being 1st April if she does not agree to this match she is free to treat it as joke and come back. She decides after all the

colour is only skin deep and all other attributes of the proposed bride groom outweigh the disadvantage of color of his skin.

Aakhare ji Abalakha is about Sindhu Nagar and stresses the need for home town for Sindhis and come up with an idea that if overseas Sindhis lend their support it could be best city in India. It also speaks about lack of opportunities for Sindhi artists.

Kunwaaro Peo is story exposing the façade about the marriage without any pre conditions for dowry. Yet those who want to expose their liberal image how much do they want to extract from the father of bride in the name of Status is totally laid bare. In the end as bride's family is not able to meet the expenses for post marriage lavish party the bridegroom's party leaves in a huff. In this entire episode the death of bride's brother seems to be forcibly inserted for sympathy effect but it turns melodramatic and on the contrary it harms the overall architecture of her story.

Mhangi Gudi is about a spendthrift wife of a businessman. Lady is enamored by good clothes and moving in good, high society and enjoying life thus living beyond her real means. This leads her into debt trap. When it is exposed husband becomes quite strict and discharges her debt from his savings. Her marriage is also on the verge of collapse due to her such behavior.

Sindhua Roop is a story about a not so beautiful and a girl from a poor family. She is quite mature and full of understanding. With her behavior she endears herself to entire family of her in-laws and convinces them to send children in Sindhi medium school. She converts her home as an ideal Sindhi home where Sindhi culture and customs prevail.

Qaduru Konhe is a story about being not accorded due importance may it be in a family or in office. In this system everyone feels exploited.

Sooreea Sach Chariyo is a story about a teacher who has communistic leanings and wants to teach his students the basics of History and Science and does not want to restrict it to rote knowledge of books without thinking. He wants to ignite their curiosity and thinking ability. All this goes against the normal teaching methods and is beyond his teaching scope so under the pressure from orthodox parents has to leave his job.

Nanki is a short story about a married girl who due to shortage of accommodation and absence of separate room is not able to consummate marriage. This situation leads to frustration and enough reason for divorce citing her as sexually 'frigid' woman. Her father obtains the certificate from doctor to effect that woman is normal. He approaches the advocate of his son-in-law with a certificate who rejects it with a comment that his ethics bound him to espouse the cause of his client and he has no obligation to justice or society at a large.

Kherial Dharti: 1992. Eight stories. Abali, Maana ji Gandh, Berukhi, Jiandani Mari Viyo, Kherial Dharti, Naon Zamano, Tahin Khan Ta Dekharoon Ee Na Ha, Vich Dakan Te

Abali is story about a young woman living happily in Ulhasnagar moving in a flat bequeathed to her by her aunt in posh area of Mumbai. The flat is mere four and walls and all the furniture has been removed by the daughter of the deceased who has inherited all the moveable property of her mother. Here in posh locality she is considered too poor by her female neighbors and is named Abali. (Helpless-Poor). Ultimately she decides to move

over to her old familiar house at Ulhasnagar where she is respected and accepted as an equal.

Maana Ji Gandh is a story about a woman who has recently come to stay in a building complex of middle class. She has been tortured by her mother-in-law by her suspicion that she is in relationship with her father-in-law. This fact is cause of her great misery and does not allow her to lead her natural full life. On the ground floor is adda of ladies who come and ventilate themselves every day for half an hour every morning. She is invited to join that session. On being enlightened by them and giving vent to her pent up suffering she becomes bold to confront her mother-in-law. In the end the family decides to split and move into a separate family.

Berukhi is a story about a young beautiful girl who is married to a person who is not very expressive and is socially active on various fronts. When she joins her husband in his work all his friends are all praise for his wife. There is a question of comparison. This creates a chasam in marital life. This issue is resolved by elderly woman *Pufi of man and chachi of the lady* who explains to him that he is like a sun and his wife radiates only his light. In that way couple is reconciled and sense of envy spurred by sense of inferiority is removed.

Jiandani Mari Viyo is a story of group of stage artists and writer. Jiandani is an important member of the group and spreads the news of his own death. In between are etched many emotions and flash back of remembrance but story ends on a happy note.

Kherial Dharti combines many facets in itself. Enticement of elderly boss through various means who ultimately is proved to be braggart among his friends and is proved to be lecherous, the proposal of the girl from a boy who is handsome as well as rich and her emotional condition at that time (Which is well

expressed and some parts of it needs to given here as an example of her writing), the greed of the father that his daughter should earn for some more years. All these have been very well depicted and this is one of the good stories of Sundri.

Naon Zamano is a convoluted story about a young man's wife going away with her sister in-law's husband. It describes all the pain that both brother and sister suffer and in such a delicate situation the entire matter is kept under the wraps. Ultimately it turns out it was a shock therapy to seek greater attention from the husband who took relationship for granted and did not sufficiently nurture it.

Thin Khan Ta Dekharoon Ee Na Ha it is about a forecast by a Jyotshi that the girl is not destined to marry. It is a well begin story of a small girl wanting to marry and have small children as her elder married sister had got. Horoscope among others is shown to fortune teller who prophesizes that girl does not have marriage in her stars. She gets engaged a many times yet on the spur of the moment marriage is cancelled on one or other pretext. She goes as teacher to teach in the school. Her family is approached by some very good family who do not believe in anything like fortune or fortune teller's prophesies. Marriage takes place and they live happily. In the end it is said it would have been better if the horoscope would not have been given to fortune teller to read future.

Vich Dakan Te is a story about separation after marriage and ego problem of the girl. The ego of the girl does not allow the overtures of the husband to patch up. Emotionally she finds herself stuck on the steps of a ladder. It is emotional turmoil of love, hope expectation and a sense of ego. She feels she owes her firm decision to not forgive and forget as a step in the larger

fight for the dignity for woman in society. Though she is pained enough to take this position.

Murka Te Manaha: This collection has ten stories. Ladies' Hostel, Sirao ji Munda, Yaadun Ja Sunsan Mahal Maan, Roonjha Jo Dariyaha, Hoo Lekhak Keen Ho, Alagu Ragoon, Swagat, Wada Baara, Murka Te Manaha.

Ladies' Hostel is about a carefree life of girls in a hostel. It depicts the atmosphere of Hostel in a care free atmosphere and adolescent banter and practical jokes. It also dispels the superstitions about ghost and other or nether world and offers realistic and rational reason for every incident attributed to ghosts and ethereal beings.

Sirao Ji Munda is a story about a family living in abject poverty and a small girl who is exploited by a self styled social worker and family sympathizer. He slowly starts sexually exploiting the girl. They even start living together in a separate flat as husband and wife. As the novelty wears off she is abandoned. She continues her life by doing stitching work. A younger boy falls in love with her and gives her encouragement and dreams. In the end she finds betrayal here also. In fact it is plot for a novel which has been condescended into a short story as the time span covered is huge for a short story. The story appears to be meandering on. Though, it has flashes of her poetic and captivating prose style.

Muchad Maasi It is story of aged couple's behavior. Lady is pure vegetarian while husband is fond of eggs and other non-veg food. It moves along the normal aggressive stance of the woman and good humored disposition of husband. They are staying with their nephew and his family. Couple wants some time of privacy and brings tickets for a cinema for the old couple. It shows uninhibited behavior of the old lady.

Yeadon Je Sunsaa Mahal Maan is a nostalgic story about writer's childhood. Her neighbor and friend live in dire poverty. Mother dies due to infectious disease and she as child also falls prey to death due to serving her ailing mother and due to poverty. It is full of pathos and remembrances about childhood life.

Roonjha Jo Dariyaha is a story of two childhood friends. One grows as a writer and poet and wants to find employment while the other grows as a super rich businessman. One goes to seek employment but his friend leaves him in care of his wife who is delicate and sophisticated and quite attractive. Love and bonding in the family is missing as rich husband continues to chase other girls. In order to keep his wife busy he opens another office branch where his wife will be boss. It is done in order to have a sense of freedom from his wife for his wayward activities with a pretext that he wants to keep her busy. Writer friend is trained as a manager in main office for a month. It is a mirage of happiness that wealth creates and a vacuum that is created which leads to a sort of emotional starvation. It is a mirage- an ocean spread all along.

Hoo Lekhak Keen Ho is a character story based on personal experience about a lover of books literature and of poets/writers who is in fact a literary activist and is more committed to his language and literature than even writers themselves. His love is natural and spontaneous without any return in form of recognition. He is a common family friend to all writers. He encompasses in himself information about all writings of each writer.

Alag Ragoon is a story of a love triangle. Man is a poet and wife is aspiring dancer. After marriage she gives up dancing and husband keeps a picture of a dancer who is no more and

declares that he has married his wife in order to keep the memory of that dancer alive. On the scene comes a young woman as a singer. She is called to recite his poetry. This attraction to Singer becomes the cause of conflict. They divorce. The divorcee wife takes to dancing and proves herself in that field. Film producers take his lyrics, her voice and her dance. This is not acceptable to husband. He floats the rumour that if any producer gives a dance sequence to his former wife they will not get services of his lyrics and voice of his new found love. In this it is portrayed how sweet relations turn sour and how in performing arts it is envy that takes over.

Ba Wada Baara is a story as to how even grownups behave in their relationships like children when they fight and insist that their friends should stop speaking to other.

Murkate Manaha is written in a background of a picnic on the boat on one night in Mumbra creek. It depicts atmosphere of picnic and various moods of the participants of the picnic and some serious discussions. It is a diffused story as it does not dwell on one character or theme. One theme that emerges from the story is that there is one unique smile of a lady which is especially reserved for her husband or a lover. Writer wants to contradict this notion.

Aattama Vishwas (1999). This collection consists of 13 stories. Rosamo, Muhinja Maroo Kithe, Aakrin Faislo, Nindnki, Packing Girl, Qurbani, Aattama Vishwas, Bhed Bhahva Jo Bhoot, Harjas Ain Chetan, Sindhi a Sikka, Boosaat, Talaq Khan Talaq Taeen and Valar Khan Vichriyal.

Rosamo short story is about memories of a woman who at the time of marriage was on seventh heaven due to love her husband showered over her. Due to internal female politics he was given a wrong picture of extended females of extended join

family about his wife not following the conservative family traditions as she had come from a liberal family and the wife did not want to spoil his mood by complaining against them. He goes away to foreign country within months of the marriage and eventually abandons her and she lives with her mother. She is pining for her husband who has been estranged from her by no reason. Her loneliness and pining is effectively portrayed where mother and daughter share the pain and suffering.

Muhinja Maaroo Kithe is about teaching of Sindhi language to children who after the birth itself are reared on other language. It is a grandmother in Ulhasnagar who takes care of grand children and teaches them to speak in Sindhi. It focuses on Sindhi identity and the language being part of core identity. It brings about the love of grandparents to link grand children to their roots.

Aakhrin Faislo is about middle aged unmarried girl. She decides to marry a widower who has already three children. When he meets her he tells her that he wants mother for his children and that is reason he wants to marry. When girl seeks to lay down a condition that if he is marrying only for the sake of his children in that case he should agree not to touch her till his last child now only six months old is brought up till the age of five. This exposes all his tall talk about marriage without sex. Both realize that sex is an essential part of married life.

Nindnki is story about early period of life in Ulhasnagar. Protagonist goes for a night to stay in Ulhasnagar. Initially he is fascinated by everyone speaking in Sindhi and the markets full of things Sindhi and Sindhi shoppers. Soon the condition of the road full of pot holes and dark remind him about a popular song about Sindhunagar's roads. It is about difficult life of poverty and wants in Sindhunagar in those days. Even water for washing

hands was scarce those days. It speaks of lawlessness and murder which has become a common occurrence. The last paragraph about the condition of SINDHIS.

Packing Girl this story also is written in background of Ulhasnagar. It is a story in contrast between two families. The girl in one conservative family is not allowed to study and her father boasts that the girls from respected families should not be allowed to move out whereas the one who gets educated and gets a job as a packer in a pharmaceutical company is looked down upon. It transpires that his own daughter elopes with a compounder. This leaves a social message about educating and giving freedom to girls.

Qurbani story depicts the situation of terminally ill girl who has led happily married life. In the end she wants to reveal to her husband a secret. She has written letters about her unrequited love to her unknown lover. She says that her love for him was as pure as water and her first love was like an intoxicating. It transpires that her husband also was leading a life of duplicity as he was carrying on an affair with her own sister. She consumed sleeping pills and sacrificed herself to free husband from stigma of illicit relationship.

Aattama Vishwas is a story of a rich boy who has moved ahead in business in Hong Kong. He marries a simple girl from an austere and traditional family and he transforms her into a modern cultivated woman and she even is involved in his business. All his friends praise her beauty and business acumen.

This leads to a sense of jealousy. He beats her. When he loses everything in gambling she reassures him and with the help of her grown up sons brings him out from a depression during which period he was bent on committing a suicide. His self

confidence comes back and his wife becomes happy to see him again self confident.

Bhed Bhava Jo Bhoot is a story about a college love between a city girl and a village boy, between a Shahiry and Gothano. A girl spurns the advances of the boy for only reason that he is from village side and she is from a city. This difference between the status is a mental – social gulf which the girl is not able to cross to have a life partner who in all other circumstances may be been an ideal.

Harjas and Chetan is a story about elderly lady and man who is ten years his junior. It is a story of her husband's jealousy who suspects illicit relationship between two otherwise good friends. They meet once later in life to reminisce over old times and bemoan the prejudices harbored by their spouse which has no solid reason.

Sindhia Ji Sikka is about two old lady friends. One who comes visiting from Spain where her children and grandchildren are settled and other who live in Bombay whose children and grandchildren live in USA. One who is not able to stay in USA be moans the fact the she is not able have any communication with her grand children due to Language as they do not speak Sindhi while the one who lives in Spain says that she has taken efforts to teach Sindhi to her grandchildren so that they remain rooted to their original culture and language.

Boosaat is a story of a woman who is egged on by her friends in the neighborhood that dancing girl approved by her son as a daughter- in- law should not be accepted in a respectable family as hers. She resists the marriage but by resorting to civil marriage he presents her with fiat accompli. She detests her daughter- in- law and as retaliation she curbs her daughter's interest in music. She nips in the bud her blooming love. She

gives ultimatum to her son that either his wife will dance on the stage or she will have to leave her home. They both decide to leave the home. On the same night sister of the boy commits suicide due to being suffocation suffered at the hands of her mother.

Talaq Khan Talaq Taeen is a story in conversational style where the question of love and divorce is treated and question of positive and trusting behavior as against suspicious behavior is analyzed. It appears to be one of weak stories of Sundri.

Valar Khan Vichriyal is a story of a family who has left his daughter in Mumbai and stays abroad with his son and daughter- in- law. His daughter is murdered by male servant employed to look after her.

Nakhreliyoon. 2001. This collection consists of 11 stories.

Kamin Ghor, Aakahita, Likhyo Keena Khuliyo, Aakhro Fiti Piyo, Chota, Datar Ji Data, Likhe De, Roshni, Deeae Jo Tellu, Nakhreliyoon and Bahroop.

(Preface is informative apparently written by Uttam himself)

Kaamin Ghaor (A black magician) is a story based in Ulhasnagar when mother- in- law goes to attend a marriage of her niece at Ajmer and finds changes in her house. Her daughter- in- law has been completely transformed by a neighbor friend who is enlightened and is engaged in stitching to meet her ends and is wise enough to instill a sense of hard work and bring harmony in the strife torn household and thus bring about the peace between warring mother- in- law and deserted sister- in-law. Such a thing is unheard of among the ladies of older generation; they all are suspicious of new ways and energy of daughter- in- law. The very look of the house is changed and house remains

neat and clean and harmony is restored at home instead of conflict and strife and old ladies think that daughter-in-law has brought about all the changes by indulging in black magic as this is not the way which they are used to.

Aakahita is a story about the prejudices common in Sindhi society about the high and low families as the notion prevailed in Sind. It becomes crucial at the time of negation of matrimonial alliance. In this case a lady is going to Poona from Bombay with a lot of luggage to be given to in-laws of her daughter who is engaged to be married to a family of high status. She is proud of her family status and so about the family of upper crust to whom her daughter is engaged. She meets a girl in the train who endears herself to the lady and she says that it is evident that she also belongs to a high family. When she gets down at Poona station she asks her as to who is supposed to come to station for her. She tells her the name of the same man who has not yet turned up, the head of the same family into which she is happy and proud to get her daughter engaged.

Likhyo Ken Khuliyo is also a story of upper status family pride. When in a joint family a daughter of one late brother elopes with a person who is considered below their own status the man comes and resides away from the city so that other girls of the family are isolated. In the process the girls continue to grow. Instead of allowing them a natural outlet to see movies etc. he calls a Guru to conduct a satsang at place. It transpires that his own daughter one day elopes with one from the party of the saint conducting Satsang. As they say marriages are made in heaven so in this way the destiny worked in its own way and whatever was written came about.

Aakhero Fiti Wiyo it is a story about two couples staying together. In one case the girl is very talkative and emotional

while other is mutual. Husbands of both the girls start giving more importance to the wife of other. This is what a perception is created in both women. This leads to jealousy and marital discord and one of the couple decides to leave.

Chota is a story about a cousin who comes from abroad. He describes life in Hanoi which due to communist regime has become difficult as far as getting the girls as sex workers while still in Saigon they come very cheap and he describes their delicate and enjoyable bodies. He relates an infesting feature of ultimate champagne party of Paris where a pool is filled with champagne and the most beautiful girl goes naked for a swim in it. Afterwards all the people drink from the same pool. Hearing all this the lady of the house throws up in disgust and tells his guest as to how could anyone fall and degrade oneself to that extent. This comes as a blow to the guest who has been bragging about the luxuries of life.

Dattar Ji Datta is about a child stricken by chicken pox. In those times it was thought to be a visit by holy mother. Traditionally only mother goddess was worshipped and infection was allowed to run its own course and the victim was left to suffer. In this case to consternation of all the elderly members of the household medical help is sought in the midst of great protest by elder generation.

Likhi De is about a conversation between a moon and a married lady who is not educated nor is beautiful. It is a story about early marriage when the bride groom was still studying and he was adamant that the marriage would not be consummated till his studies last. In this way 14 years elapse. They do have relationship and live it for 14 years. Now husband insists on a divorce which she does not want to grant. They want her signature or force her to affix her thumb impression. She says

that she would rather die than consent. She implores the moon to bring light to those dark hearts.

Roshni is story about a woman completely under the control of mother –in- law. She has no freedom of movement. One day her old friend comes and takes her away on the pretext of purchasing a gift for her friend's marriage. Instead she takes her to garden for conversation, it is revealed that Roshni is suffering from Tuberculoses and making arrangements for a sanatorium. She completely lost interest in her life. She is counseled by her friend who tells her that her tears are testimony to her will to live. Thus she comes back with a resolves to live and fight for it.

Dea Jo Tell is about a first love that had sprouted in her heart but was nipped in the bud by her father. Her father had engaged an upcoming poet as her tutor. As soon as he smelt that his daughter is being attracted by her tutor he put an end to it. She was married of to some one of their own status and poet continued to grow in stature and contribute to the society by singing about its woes and giving expression to collective suffering. He was working as a teacher. Once she takes her child and he happily takes all the burden of educating her child and her son tells her about his teacher's sudden death. She immediately goes to his house. His body had been taken for cremation. She feels that she has contributed to his poetic inspiration may not be as a light of a lamp but she certainly was a fuel that kept it burning. She donates her bangles to perpetuate his memory though no one knows her.

Nakhreliyoon is about late marriage of girls who are ambitious and choosy. They are past their prime age of marriage. They initially reject the offers on one pretext or other and they reach the age when it is difficult to find any one worthwhile marriageable. It is impressed on the girls that only a

comparative pay packet should not be consideration for marriage. In this way one of the girls accepts the offer from a family of a boy who because he is in government employment earns less than girl earning in a private company. In case of marriage apart from fat package many other considerations should weigh. Otherwise the natural age of marriage passes by.

Bahroop is short satire on the ladies who indulge in oneupmanship in competition with their female friends. It exposes a lady who poses that she is married to a very sophisticated person. When her friends visit her the reality of her husband being abhorrent is revealed. Thus duplicity is exposed.

Chapter-4

TRAUMA OF PARTITION IN SUNDRI'S STORIES

Sundri was a matured married woman of 24 years when she migrated from Sindh. Her first story was published in 1952 when she was in her late twenties and her first book came out in 1954 when she was past 30 years of age. She had first hand vivid experience of the upheaval that the exodus from their home land, leaving settled life and being suddenly catapulted into an era of uncertainty and darkness. The pain was too intense to be internalized and its consequences to be grasped. After a stunning experience it took quite a while to find ones bearings.

The exodus from Sindh was quite unlike the exodus from Bengal and Punjab. Whereas both had a land mass with common language and culture across the border the Sind had nothing of the land that they could claim or fell their own. They were scattered throughout the length and breadth of India. It consisted of a narrow band of salaried middle class employees, shop keepers and traders. It has educated and professional middle class apart from sprinkling of landowning gentry. The big landlords, peasants, workers and artisans remained back as they constituted Muslim majority. Hindus and Muslims had lived side by side in mutual cooperation for centuries and it was Sufi ethos of Sindh that permeated Sindhi mindset. Even during partition apart from the stray incidents of violence Sind did not witness the extensive riots. It was influx of refugees from India which

vitiated the atmosphere and created an atmosphere of insecurity for Sindhi Hindus. There is another dimension to this historic reality. Hindus did not believe that the partition would be permanent. They tended rather to believe in an analogy of joint family breaking up under the stress of differences and after break up reconciling after some time. Temporary moving away due to natural disasters and epidemics was too well-known to them and they thought after the situation normalizes they would return back to their homes. With that faith they handed over the keys of their houses to Muslim neighbors. In India with that faith in their hearts many, for quite some time, did not unpack their trunks.

When they came to India mostly penniless they were herded into barracks of Second World War vintage which were vacated by outgoing Army. Thus clusters of barracks were constituted into camps. In Bombay near Kalyan station five such camps were established which eventually were named as Ulhasnagar in spite of Sindhis' demand that they should be named as Sindhu Nagar.

The life in these barracks was subhuman to say the least. Barracks were partitioned by Jute cloth into parts of 10X12 ft and every family was allotted that space. In this case the privacy of family life became first causality. The social life that was familiar in pre partition days changed overnight. One had new neighbors from different parts of Sindh from different strata of society to live side by side. The washrooms and toilets were at some distance outside the barracks and in dilapidated state. Instead of scavengers the pigs roamed around. Women would wash clothes in open and bemoan their fate and curse politicians for their plight. All this is reflected in the literature of those times. Dirge like songs of sorrow were sung at the displacement and lost memories. It was not only the geography changed but the whole way of life was in convulsion. While in

Sindh the geographical identity occupied centrality and there was vast difference in the perception of people living in cities and towns and in the countryside. In just a few months all these perceptions and identities lost their meaning and people were randomly found themselves living side by side. Privacy was lost and a sort of communal life commenced but it was living like in a big crucible before new relationships and bonds could be established.

All this broke the long cherished traditions of family life and only one point agenda for living a life emerged. It was tragic to see the affluent landlords and businessmen of yesterday to be standing in a long line for a dole of handful of food. The struggle for living a hard life began as dole was not acceptable and many ways to earn the living came to be explored. This entire struggle is History. Litterateur of those times has amply reflected all this.

In case of stories of Sundri we find three facets of this struggle.

1. Portrayal of Camp life if Ulhasnagar (Sindhu Nagar)
2. Social stress and breaking of customs and taboos.
3. Advocacy for Sindhi way of life.

As all above cannot be considered exclusive in her stories we often find elements merged together. Only a few examples from her stories can be cited here.

Her stories Zehara Ji Pudi and Zindagi Moti Aaee in her volume Acha Wara Ghada Gula (On this story we shall deal with at a later stage) published in 1965 deserve mention here.

Her first story is set in Ulhasnagar. It is about clash of values. Father wants to control the expenses of spendthrift children and his wife who refuse to see writing on the wall as to how the situation has changed and a father who is considered miserly

and even cruel by other family members. Daughter goes to doctor to get a small quantity of poison and doctor is shocked to find out she is demanding it to murder her own father for the perceived cruelties meted out by the other family members.

When doctor goes as a counselor to family he finds out the truth. Some of the passages from story are quite revealing.

“Indeed! On such strange demand from a girl I was curious to see her home. I disposed of remaining patients in thirty forty minutes and found a girl sleeping soundly outside in the waiting room. I thought it a strange as to how one who has decided to kill her own father can enjoy such a peaceful sleep? Strange is mind set of new generation!”....

“Kumaris house was barrack of two rooms. In one room was a bed of lacquer work from Sindh. A person for whom girl had used words like ‘angry- off head- willful ‘and many other unbecoming words was sitting there. From my experience I have found such persons to be internally very sensitive. I asked him “Kaka! How are you?” He in reply roared ‘who has called this doctor here?’ I ignored that barb and I remarked, ‘oh such a beautiful bed!’”, he said it is not the work of a doctor to appreciate the furniture.

‘I laughed because I thought that sick person remains sick and for him doctor is meant only to provide a medication. Why should patient think of doctors otherwise? I said ‘Uncle! Doctors are also human beings’.

‘Human beings?’ He thundered. ‘Who is human being in this camp? Give up your joke.’

‘Uncle! I see only human beings in this camp. They are quite large hearted. It is a fact if a plant is uprooted from one soil and

transplanted on another for a time it would become weak till it gathers new roots in the soil.'

'What roots? See now girls have all become shameless. What sort of revealing clothes they wear! Look at the boys all the time busy smoking cigarettes at the street corners. Gandhi used to say youth should go to villages to bring about reforms,'

Hearing him thus I kept staring at the face of this man. Children and the mother were standing near the door and they had bitter expression on their face. I found this angry-mad man to be quite sane. I gestured the other family members to come in. They wanted me to speak in private to which he objected and said if you want to speak to them speak to them in my presence...

Wife said 'doctor look at him all the time he continues to lecture at us. If we wear decent clothes and eat good food he would explode. I do not know what steam is hidden in his chest!'

By this time the girl who had come to me had a bath and was standing before me in a tight fitting dress. I could not imagine if this same girl that had come to me.

Father again said 'everybody is busy in his own self busy eating best and wearing best then why did we fight for freedom?'

"We did not demand freedom. Those who had demanded were well off then and are well off now also and are leading an easy life we are slaves of this angry mad-man" chorused children.

Wife added," See! What are you saying/ these children have not even enjoyed their youthful life they should sacrifice for the country?"

In this story the generation gap and utilitarian attitude of younger generation and idealist attitude of old generation is

bitterly portrayed. This story was written in early sixties much before the liberal economic consumer society had invaded the country.

In the same volume another story “**Zindagi Moti Aae**” is about a newlywed bride who in spite of getting all love and affection from her husband and in-laws feels tension in the atmosphere and suspects that something is being hidden from her. Behavior of all the family members appears awkward. It transpires that entire family was involved in manual work of making tin trunks in their backyard as a means to earn their living and this fact was hidden from her. They were afraid of the exposure of their weak financial position. At last the father-in-law could not bear this loss any longer and he resumed his work. The scene that unfolds as follows:

“Suddenly a child ran out from a door and it was left ajar. Bride was surprised as if she was caught preying. Her father-in-law and other children were also stunned. All children went quiet. She came back in a room, hung a napkin on the nail on the wall. She sat near her mother-in-law. Mother-in-law said ‘daughter it is cold you sit on the cot under the blanket.’

Bride was overwhelmed with emotion. She said, ‘Mother know how much do you care for me!’-

Mother-in-law’s lips smiled but her eyes were tearful. As if saying ‘yes daughter we care a lot about you but it is proving to be very costly.’

Bride looked at mother-in-law through her big deep eyes and she was filled with a sense of devotion towards her. She lowered her eyelids and scrapping her nail polish said, ‘Mother in Poona where you came to have a look at me as a prospective bride in fact belongs to my maternal aunt. In fact we are from Baroda.’

All were stuck dumb by her grave voice. With lowered eyes she continued as if speaking to herself "Our Baroda house is just like yours. My father now works on a cloth shop but some time ago he used to sell cloth on the footpath." ...

The old clock on the wall struck eleven. Bride brought a plate full of fresh 'Pakodas' in the working place. The entire backyard became silent. All family members, father- in- law, mother -in law, Gopal (her husband) and his younger brother and sister all were silent. She advanced the plate before them and ordered; 'Now you have to eat'. Plate was moved around, Pakodas were eaten, all were smiling as if saying, 'now secret is out'. There were smiles all around. Bride found a treasure in that smile. When she was returning, her feet were dancing. She had a song in her heart. When she came back she found her mother- in- law in depressing mood. ...

Bride advanced an empty plate to her mother-- in law and said," Mother! Today labour has freed itself from prison and in order to celebrate that event I have distributed Pakodas".

In this story two aspects stand out clearly that there is dignity in labour and the attitude to consider something inferior and tendency of middle class to appear a notch above its actual position stands exposed.

Her story in her another volume "**To Jini Ji Taata**" published in 1965 has also stories about camp life. In this volume the story **Kaari Raat**" (Black Night) is written about a period immediately after the partition. It is set in the background of Ulhasnagar camp. It depicts the reality of life as how the dire poverty and helplessness crushed all the delicate emotions and brings about the bitterness and brutality in relationships. Here are five glimpses of her story that are quite telling in themselves.

“Suddenly Depo came out shouting that mummy has emptied kerosene on herself.”

“Why is she not able to get a match box?” replied Sadhuram while lighting his bidi.

Janki came out soaked in kerosene. She struck two blows on the back of Sadhuram. “I am going to die anyway so why should I not vent my anger at least on you” she shouted....

Depo threw the matchbox in the open drain. Children clung to her legs and people from other barracks gathered around her, she shouted “Let me be free. Give me matchbox,”

Neighbors tried to console her, “Look we all are sailing in the same boat. How can one afford to live in such a situation with daily prices rising...”

“You have lost your head.” Shouted Sadhuram

“How it is possible to remain sane in the midst of so many demands. Some child has no book while other has no pencil, someone has no chappal to wear and that chit of a girl wants a necklace of eight annas!”

One scene arose before Sadhuram’s eyes. From the fire arose a figure. This figure was challenging death with a war cry! It was an explosive like a wheel it would take all in its fold. All people would come out shouting in panic but were not able to do anything about it. This figure of fire lay helpless and dead.”

Sadhuram felt that he had suffocated. There was darkness all around. He went in his barrack and found children sleeping on *chattais* in disorder. His wife lay curled up in a corner smelling of kerosene. He sat on the floor besides her. Janki woke up just

like a wound up toy. He tenderly told her, “Now go and change your cloths dear!”

Her story in her book “**Bhoori**” (1979) **Jana Ko Mari Viyo Ahe** (As if someone has died). It is about lack of privacy in the barracks, falling values and social and moral code.

Among Sindhi Hindus the relationship of first cousin has sanctity. They are considered brothers and sisters, whereas among Muslims the marriage between first cousins is preferred one. This story is about two cousins, boy and a girl, growing together and falling in love and eventually getting married. This sends unimaginable shock in the family and the marriage becomes occasion of sorrow rather than a celebration.

After the Partition of the country as regards Sindhi education and Sindhi identity at certain levels there crept in a sort of ambivalence in some peripheral segments of Sindhi community. Education being a continues process to give the semblance of normalcy schools had to start. Teachers were there, students were also available in plenty and the question of space was overcome by starting a morning shift of about 3-4 hours in the existing schools. It was not always possible to cater to such a vast need, therefore in city like Bombay some floors of any commercial buildings were rented, modified to some extent and schools commenced in those cramped unnatural surroundings and situations. At the same time the hangover of the freedom struggle and importance given to Hindi in upper sections of society was entrenched. They thought that ultimately Hindi will be language of entire nation and not being left out in the process they were first to jump the bandwagon and started giving education in Hindi to their children. Some businessmen thought that in order to ingratiate themselves with their customers it was necessary to learn their language. All these

currents and cross currents were present in the society that, after the uprootment was struggling yet to find its bearings.

The story **Masum Iltija** (Innocent request) is about the state of Sindhi schools in India in comparison to schools in which the elder generation had studied while in Sind. In a way this partially could be considered as a nostalgic story also.

Story starts with repentance of mother for having slapped her tiny daughter for forcing her to school. In this story the condition of schools in Sind and in Bombay are contrasted. She reminisces about her school: "I clearly remember that day of my childhood. It was Friday and I was returning from banks of Phuleli of Indus with my friends. On the way seeing Tolaram Girls school I literally jumped in joy. I told my father that I would study in this school. They told me to go to neighborhood school but I was adamant. I remember the first day when my mother took me to school. As I entered the school I beheld a vast playground and my heart jumped. I clapped my tiny hands. I do confess that I am also at fault. I have imparted wrong, ideal situation of the school to her imagination. In reality the school that she saw the classroom was smaller than a bedroom. On side of the wall were gaping holes that served as windows. There were no protective bars; any child could fall right in the middle of busy market lane. Some children were copiously and pitifully crying. Passage was very narrow. During recess children would often collide with each other. In such a situation if the bag of one child fell down a quarrel ensued. They fought bitterly with all possible might that they could gather. A teacher who happened to pass by he was also pushed around, without thinking he showered blows on the children.

"Next day the child refused to go to school. She is coaxed into going to school with a promise that when she will grow up she

will be able to go into the school of her dreams. She every day continues to “Mother when shall I have grow up!”

Sindhi community has built many big schools during the course but Sindhi is not being taught now in those schools. It is another matter!

In her volume of stories “**Vichoro**” (1985) there is one story “**Sindhua Jo Roopu**” (Image of Sindhu) in which two stands are woven together. One is about avaricious nature of mother –in-law for dowry and her frustration at not being able to encash the promissory note for dowry for her son who marries not a very beautiful (fair skinned) girl from Ulhasnagar. After initial resistance the girl with hr good nature and mature handling is able to win everyone in the family.

Looking at absence of any utilitarian scope for Sindhi language, as already mentioned, some segments of society moved to Hindi education while others who were more affluent and status conscience they sent their children to English medium convent schools.

In the house where the protagonist of the story gets married children are sent to convent schools. She endears herself to all the children of the house hold. Tells them Sindhi stories, sings to them Sindhi songs and keeps them glued to her. In this way they develop a taste for Sindhi Language. The conversation between her, her father- in- law and mother in law proceeds along following lines:

Shoba re- arranging *Pallu* of her *Rava* said, ‘ Mother! I have not instigated them. But listening to my Sindhi songs, jokes and stories they have been attracted to Sindhi language. Without knowing their own language they did suffer from a sense of deprivation and a sort of inferiority complex. They could not

indulge with you in their own language. While remaining in Sindhunagar they were deprived of reading Sindhi books and periodicals.’

Therefore they should not learn English?” Mother –in- law retorted haughtily.

Shoba very calmly replied,” Let them learn their own Language first. Then let them learn other languages. The child will be able to grasp the thoughts and concepts clearly in his mother tongue.’

“All is well said”” replied mother- in- law. “When Sindh itself is lost what use is Sindhi language?’ Saying this mother- in- law became pensive.

Shoba said, “Mother! On the contrary here it is more important to keep our language alive. We all Sindhis are connected with this common thread of language only.”

Shamdas said, “Leave her she will not agree with you. From the first of the month you shift all children to Sindhi language medium school.”

This is before liberalization/globalization overtook Indian middle class by storm and every one of a prosperous segment deserted their own language but Sindhi community was to be more vulnerable in absence of hinterland of villages.

Chapter-5

DISTINCTIVE STORIES OF SUNDRI

It is not infrequent in literature that some writings of some writers become a part of their identity. For example, when we think about Tagore we immediately by association think about his Gitanjali Kabuliwala and Gora. When we speak of Munshi Premchand we tend to think of Godaan and Kafan and in a similar way (I have no intention of passing any judgment to stature of Sundri as to those above mentioned writers) when we speak about Sundri some of her stories immediately come to our mind as a part of her identity by association.

Her Stories BHOORI, HI SHAHARU, ACHA WARA GADHA GULA immediately come to mind. In this chapter it would be worth the while to dwell on those stories that have been much cited and discussed by literary critics as well as readers.

Her story BHOORI is published in the collection of her stories bearing the same title in year 1979 and 2nd Print in 1981.

Bhoori typifies the travails and struggle of Sindhi community of post partition era. It epitomizes an entire epoch of post partition struggle waged collectively by Sindhi community. With passage of time that period may sink into sub-consciousness collective mind of the community but to those who have been part of it, it is very vivid, real and awe inspiring experience.

Bhoori in Sindhi language is used for a ceramic (Beautiful) doll. It is set in Sindh before partition time and she is known as beauty

of entire neighborhood of Hyderabad (Sindh). After partition she appears as haggard *papad* seller of Nenu who was her neighbor in Hyderabad. Though she has lost her beauty which she stoically accepts as a natural part of ravages of time and struggle but she has not lost her regal poise and demeanor in spite of her humble status. She bears herself with a sense of royalty and the deprivation of physical beauty is of no consequence to her. She has invested her labour with a dignity which could be envy of any. Her nonchalance and frankness about accepting the reality of life is commendable.

In the story when she enters the home to sell Papads as if she owns this house the wife is appalled. But when her husband introduces her as “BHOORI” to his wife she is taken aback and their frank conversation about memories of bygone days creates a jealousy in his wife and her behavior becomes jealous and becomes harsh to her. She ignores it all in her stride.

After she left, following is a gist of conversation between husband and wife.

‘... Why are you quiet now? When she was leaving you appeared to be very happy. “

“At that time I saw a new beauty in Bhoori.”

“Now what beauty has remained in her? What new beauty! You poets really are inscrutable. You speak in riddles now.”

“My dear Sashi! If you think about it deeply you will also see a new beauty now in Bhoori. In place of innocent mischief maker a new Bhoori has emerged. Self respecting, self reliant and hardworking Bhoori. You have seen her frankness and nonchalant behavior.”

“Hun! How did she come and dared to sit on the chair without any qualms!”

“Exactly. This beauty enchanted me. Her conscience does not allow her to consider beneath any person. By why should she feel lower? For her a person earning two rupees or three hundred does not matter, all are same to her. She works and asks for her compensation. She does not crave anyone’s pity. While working if she has aged prematurely she has no regrets. Her husband may earn two rupees or ten she has no complain about it. “

“If you look at it I have also no complain about you.”

“Now you are trying to be simpleton! Just ask yourself. You have bundle of complaints within you. You do not educate children in English medium school, do not come often for shopping, do not take a holiday in Kashmir, no Radio, no Fan, how can I go alone...and look at Bhoori she fearlessly walks on the streets all over the place with self confidence...”

YES MOVING WITH SELF CONFIDENCE HAS REMAINED CREDO OF SINDHI COMMUNITY.

Her story **Hi Shehar**, reminds one of Tagore’s Kabuliwala. Protagonists of both stories have come to big bad city to eke out living for their families and are in way in a self exile. The similarity stops here. They both move along different wavelengths. In Sundri’s story it is a Gurkha watchman who comes as a watchman in a building complex in Bombay which houses 48 families of lower middle class. He is free errand man for all the householders of that building. To augment his meager salary he takes up the work of bringing milk for the families for which he is paid a meager sum. On one occasion when he is

accused of mixing water in milk he protests and learns a hard way that it is not him to speak back and he becomes very quiet.

After some time he brings his young wife also. A small hutment is erected in the compound. He has learned in this city that he has to submit and not talk or argue. He dies in railway accident. As per ritual his young wife is made to perform all the rituals like breaking bangles, removing nose ring etc and when she is leaving the city with infant she is given some money to carry with herself.

This is a tale of brutalization of city life. That devours many from countryside in its unending appetite for exploitation of all sorts of labour.

It would be appropriate here to quote a few passages from the story:

" Thereafter Gurkha became mute. His villagers must have taught him that in this city service means slavery and slaves do not talk back. They have to endure silently all indignities heaped upon them. He has not to see anything inspite of having two seeing eyes, he has to ignore everything. Like others he has not to hear anything but orders of his masters." ...

A bamboo cot with sparsely woven thin coir cord; he is sitting there and is reciting something from a holy book. What a melodious voice he has. His recitation has a fascinating resonance! What music is this! All drenched in spirit of devotion! All alone his voice is wandering in the lanes and by lanes of 'new civilization'! A place where people do not know the language of each other, they do not have time to exchange sweet greetings! His voice wandering in those lanes gushing around! Today he is not mute. He has woven a magic of cementing hearts with his devotional music." ...

“Eighth month. This Gurkhan cannot sit in confines of her hutment. She comes out and sits in front of balcony of ground floor flats. There too some uncouth would stare at her and she would retreat into her hut. This inheritor of heritage of Sita!”

“Gurkhan is leaving with her village folks! No one cries,. No one sobs. All have gone.

Radha who is otherwise stern but she is in fact kind hearted also. She has collected five rupees from every house and has given that money to her. Tomorrow when this village girl, after losing her husband to this ravenous city will return to her home and board a train along with her infant she will have some money also.

WHAT CAN THIS CITY GIVE ANYONE BUT MONEY?”

Her other much talked about story is “**Acha Wara Gadha Gula**” (White hair and red flowers). It is in a volume which bears the same name and was published in 1965. This story is on delicate subject of old man’s love for young daughter like girl that is come to be known as LOLITA syndrome. This was written much before Nabokov wrote his Novel. Such a delicate subject of psychological import was never attempted in Sindhi literature. This story does NOT conform to progressive trend at all.

In this story a young girl, a friend of daughter comes to stay at hill station cottage after exams for recoupment. Here father and daughters gather, move in the valley and mountain path together. He falls in love with her which she takes to be fatherly love but at the end she recognizes the touch and she leaves in haste.

Some scenes described will convey the sense clearly:

"I desired that she should look back at me and see that small sun arising in my heart and my mind started to search how this all began. O! Be careful! Careful and I held her back from falling in the ditch. It was a matter of only one step. This fairy moving in the clouds would have fallen down a pit of a mountain. While holding her in my arms I felt that I am falling down... Drowning. As if ... with her eyes open with horror that weaved a magic for me she innocently said "Dad how concerned you feel for me..."

"It was difficult for me to respond to her as daughter! This was like an effort to move a canoe along an ocean... inside me my being was in a churn... I was trapped in a whirlpool...oblivious to this all, she continued to float, unmindful of my state..."

"Why are you silent all this time? She persisted"

"This hill station even after noon remains cold and deserted. We had purchased a hold all. Full road was covered with fallen flowers and leaves and were playing with the wind, on the left side sky was cast with clouds and she was plucking a flower from ground. I bent and took her in my arms and clasped her.. I am silent because you are going away."

"She did not disengage rudely but now she was tense like a straight stick... She put flower in her hair and moved ahead '

While leaving her friend's house she said to her 'You are right when you say that your dad is RISHI"

"As if someone had wounded my heart with a razor" (Kuhadi).

On the same subject but with quite different perspective is her story **"Kherial Dharti"** the volume of stories bearing the same name published in 1992.

In this story the aged boss is trying to entice his newly appointed secretary with all sorts of allurements and the father of the girl is very happy to see such a rapid 'progress' of his daughter and the affection that is showered on her by her boss.

He is happy to see her bringing more money every month by way of increment. In this case the girl herself innocently remains quite oblivious to mechanizations of her boss and considers her success because of her talent and hard work. Like any young girl she too cherishes the dream of getting married to her dream boy. While attending the marriage reception one perspective boy is pointed to her and she is overwhelmed. This is described in following words.

"I raised my eyes and looked at the boy. He was also looking at me perhaps but for a fraction of second he lowered his eyes as if in embarrassment. Now again this treasure of handsomeness was looking at me only. My heart beat started racing and I realized that in fact male is more handsome than a beautiful woman... I felt that some danseuse has suddenly descended on a big drum (Nagara) and started dancing on it with ghungroo on her feet. Unending earth was spread around that drum, the virgin earth upturned and sun is trying to find out something in the folds of this earth."

But the father is not even prepared to consider the proposal because he does not want to leave the hen that has started laying golden eggs. In the end it transpired that boss happens to be a habitually lecher and braggart among his friends about his new conquest very now and then.

She has written many such stories that depict camp life and are infused with sense of Sindhiyat or nostalgia for Sindh. The land left behind that she was able to visit again around mid sixties.

The reception that she received speaks volumes about her popularity in the country of her birth.

Chapter-6

POETRY OF SUNDRI

Sundri has two collections of poetry to her credit. *Hughao* 1993 and *Daat Bani Laat* 2004. **Hughao** is a collection of free poetry. It has Preface by veteran poet of that time Mr. Prabhu Wafa.

Creation is an all inclusive process and while creating any genre of literature involves a process of selection and elimination. In this entire endeavor much imaginative and creative material goes and remains at the margins. After mid sixties, when the poetry, in a new wave literature, was freed from the constraints of rhyme and meter 'free poetry' came into its own. And this raw material at creative level that remained on the margins in the consciousness of a writer it so happened that with many senior writers it found its expression in 'new poetry'. Prior to that it was called poetic prose and we have a very few specimen of that in Sindhi literature. Sundri brought out her first book of free poetry **HUGAO** in 1993. In a volume of literary magazine *KIOONJ* dedicated to her, in preface of this book she speaks about her creative process.

“Since childhood I had been reading Tagore’s poetic prose. May it be Phulin Mooth (A handful of flowers), Bala Chandrama (Crescent moon) or Gitanjali. Seeing his picturesque language a way was paved in my inner eye. Poet’s gift poured its creativity in my heart as a flowing river. Heart found in it a light house.. .’
“It plunged in flowing river making the light house as its beacon. In that boat a dancing girl stated dancing! Without any inhibition. On the way, seeing a path of beauty she stated running on that path. Stars also joined her in her dance. At that time dancer heard the music of the churning waves also accompanied it. She saw that on the other coast were plates full of pearls and Gems. Calling her Anon! Anon!!”

Mrs. Kala Prakash has this to say about her creative experience.
“On page 14 she is face to face with her creativity.

‘Creation has sprinkled in my heart
Constellations of stars,
That light has become fire
Turned into revolt.’

“... Imagery is peculiarity of Sundri’s writings. Sky, moon, stars, constellations, rain, wind, storm, light, darkness, earth, trees, leaves, flowers, brooks, rivers all become living characters in her pen. She portrays all these to convey human emotions in an excellent manner.”

Some of her poems translated are as under:

We have dived into a universe
Where one has scarcely ventured

Arms stretched At that
time a bird would have
Whizzed by breathlessly crying:

‘He is calling you... He is calling you’

....

All layers are darkness

Would have been peeled off

In the universe of light

I was bathing

You also would have been with me

You also would have been with One

is about flowers of Cupid.

The flowers had such a fragrance

It enveloped all around

Bride inhaled fragrant air

All spring pervaded her being

At that time fragrant white buds

Like twinkling stars

Showered from your lap As

an offering!

Beloved asked: ‘What are they called?’

May be they are called

‘Flowers of cupid’

There a sparkle of mischief in the eyes of bride

No

He said

Flowers of cupid are these*

Bride quickly unclasped her hand from his

And sprang as a shy deer.

*Pointing to her breasts.

Your letter.

What a writing of my beloved!

Like a dancing girl of Mohen Jo Daro

From a silent mouth

Whose words shine like glow worms in fields On
dark night.

.....

With a movement of eyes and arms
She unleashes the wind around trees
And flowers fall down in abundance
From every branch.

... ..

She has tiny feet like sea shells
From her ankles upward is pulled up
Her suthan* made of Susi**
That goes up from her calves
Crossing her buttocks
Is tightly strung to her waist.

- Suthan is pant like lower garment

** Susi of a luxury cloth woven in Sind.

.....

Beloved! Your letter
As if you have created a kaleidoscope
From broken colorful bangles
Every line wears myriad hues of dreams
Every sentence a beautiful picture
What sweetness!
As if birds are chirping from other world
What are their colors

What are their sounds See
how they entwine with each other.

.....

My beloved!
Once if you say
'My queen you have unsettled my heart
I cannot live without you'

Dear!

I would become cool and calm
Like new earthen pot filled with water!

On one side it is a rainy season
On the other you are estranged
My heart has become
A hut without a roof

There are no stars or moon
Sky has become listless
With rain drops falling
I cover my sleepless nights

With bed sheet
Flood from eyes mingles with rain drops
Bed sheet is wet again.

.....

She entered into a pool
Water swung round her waist
Eagerly cuddled her a lot
Kissed her for a long time
Her white waist adorned

With a belly button
Water kept on hugging

She swam straight and on her back

A light body in water
But her heart was heavy
She had waded in water That
was polluted by a CROW.

That day
With a heart full of pity

She crossed the line
To feed the hungry

Understanding that feeling Ram
was still confused.

Today after ages
Sita has crossed the line Now
Man of new age!
To create new traditions,

Do not blame Sita
To express her sentiments
Today also the blot on male ego
Has not been forgotten Banishment
Of pregnant Sita to forest
Has not been pardoned.

Daughter of earth shall
Never forgive,
But you are a male
You will not understand
PAIN OF SITA.

She has taken all the folk tales based on which great poet of Sindh Abdul Latif has created his immortal poetry. It is said that Shah Latif has only heroines but no hero. Sundri has taken the perspective from point of view of heroines and questioned the traditional folk tales.

One example could be given. It is story of Rai Diyach and Bijal. It is said that the King Rai Diyach was very fond of music and true to his word. His enemy Anirai seeks the master instrumentalist

Bijal to entertain Rai Diyach and seek a promise from him to give his head. Thus giving his word Rai Diyach beheads himself.

Sundri here brings in his wife Sorath to confront and question her husband.

“King of melody RAI
DIYACH!

Being immersed in beauty of Music
To keep your word
You gave your head
But whose head was it?

It was head of husband of Sorath
You never gave a thought
How Sorath would live without her husband?
This challenges the patriarchal base of society who feels that
wife is only a commodity.

Her second book of poetry “**Daat Bani Laat**” (2004) is in formal poetic forms adhering to rules of prosody and its various genres. She acknowledges the work on her poems by eminent poets Prabhu Wafa and Vasdev Nirmal who were acknowledged master craftsmen in this realm.

She says that while she composed her poems on the basis of rhythm it is due to efforts of these two poets that book has been able to come out in the present form.

It consists of 24 Ghazals, 24 Nazams and free verses, some songs and quitas. She has tried her hand on traditional Sindhi bait also.

In one of her Ghazals she bemoans the land of her own under her feet. Her anguish at losing her motherland is expressed thus.

“While everyone sings songs of his land
I do not have any land anywhere.”

In mood of nostalgia she remembers her days in Sindh. It was taken for granted that Hindus and Muslims would congregate at fairs of Fakirs and Murshids who were considered as a part of common heritage. She says:

“They and we had same Murshids
Were like brothers sisters at home”

She speaks about love. As Heart that loses itself without any reason or rationale.

“Heart has habit of loving
Has there remained anything worth loving.”
Referring to folk tale of Sasui Punhoon she says:

“Let the sand storms rage
Sasui is determined to march to Kech*

- Place from where Punhoon had come.

About her Nazams she has paid tribute to Munshi Premchand, Poet Naryan. She reminisces about Hyderabad where she was born and grew up. (This to be given in section about nostalgia in her literature)

In one of her bait she bemoans the sense of loss of Sindhi identity. She bemoans the fact that community is busy seeking only creature comforts, ignoring the serious concerns about the future of language, literature and Arts.

She says:

They did not read a holy book and never recited

They occupied only seats on shops and ate of ill-gotten wealth
Those who are on back foot How will community survive?

Chapter-7

SUNDRI'S PLAYS

After partition of the country Plays used to be initially presented in schools and colleges as a part of their annual day function. Soon the progressive writers thought that in order to connect with the people it is their duty also to cater to their cultural hunger. They used to organize music programmers and poetic symposiums in the camps in the midst of the masses. Soon writers of the Sindhi Sahit Mandal organized functions in the regular auditoriums of the colleges. Thus the first play of Sundri Uttamchandani was staged during the function of Sindhi Sahit Mandal in 1958. The play was **“Amulka Maanikan Jo Waapar”** (A trade of immeasurable wealth of Gems) an all female play, directed by her. The subject being dowry demand. This was very well received.

In late fifties All India Radio Bombay station allotted half an hour weekly slot for Sindhi programme. Mr. Moti Prakash was in charge of that weekly program. He used to pack in a lot of variety in it which among others included Radio Plays also.

This also proved to be source of inspiration for writers to write Radio plays and some of them were again staged also. Sundri's contribution as a playwright may be viewed in this context also. Her plays have been converted in Tele- plays also. Her Tele- play **"Vilayati Ghoti Ji Golha"** (Search for a foreign boy) has distinction that it has three generations- Sundri herself, her daughter Asha and her granddaughter Moomal, all in one play. Her other tele plays are **Bhoori** and **KITTY party**. All have proved to be very popular. She had a guest appearance for song sequence in Gobind Malhi's film **Sindhu a Je Kinare**. She remained artists of AIR and lent her voice for the documentaries of Films Division of India. In one of her article she writes that:

"Due to partition as a result of leaving Sindh, my musical instruments and singing and dancing like Meera were all crushed on the ground reality and all came to abrupt halt. At that time my husband's unshakable faith gave my emotional creeper protection and support like a strong trunk of a tree. Had this seed not been nurtured it may have withered. It blossomed as a writer instead.

SINDHU: (2000) Sundri has only one collection of short plays to her credit. Some of them have been staged and others are visualized as Radio plays' and have been broadcasted. Collection includes 10 Plays. Vanjaro, Gul Ain Kanda, Saheri, Sindhu, Naeen Kunwar, Usaata, Dil De Dil Wath,

Tarafh. Amululah Manikin Jo Waapar and Klrandra Dewwaroon. Preface is by A J Uttam in which he has placed her plays in a broader perspective.

First play **Vanjaro** is obviously a radio play based on the old business traditions of Sindhi businessmen going to foreign countries in search of wealth. It speaks about the pangs of separation that wife of this businessman suffers and expectation

of his returning safely. It extensively draws on Sur Sammondi of Shah Latif. It also relates to water worship as a god, a custom prevalent in Sind.

Gul Ain Kanda is a study in contrast of two couples. One is about a couple in which husband is a poet devoted to literature and busy with his literary meetings and poetic symposiums and discussion sessions with friends. All this irritates his wife till her wealthy cousin comes visiting and they set out for an evening of enjoyment in the club. The husband gets drunk and is brought back home in a pathetic condition. In the end the wealthy club going woman explains to her cousin as to what an empty life they are leading. This ends with a message that a useful middle class life is better than ostentatious wealthy life.

Saheri this play is about tough war between mother- in- law and daughter- in- law. It shows recrimination between the two and they decide to split and couple lives as a nuclear family. Afterwards daughter- in- law falls sick and mother- in- law comes back to nurse her to health. Thus they again decide to remain together as friends rather than mother -in -law or daughter-- in law. This goes against the concept of nuclear family and is for a joint family that provides a safety net.

Sindhu is based on her short story where in daughter- in- law from Ulhasnagar with practically no dowry, an eyesore for mother- in- law wins back everyone and converts the entire family and brings it in the fold of Sindhiyat sentiment.

Naeen Kunwar is about the new couple who resides in a new neighborhood. The bride does not have any ornaments or any sign of being married. This is a cause of gossip and scandal among the elderly ladies of neighborhood. In the same complex unmarried brother and sister also are residing. It comes to light that they are not married because they cannot afford heavy

expenses of marriage. She convinces them that it is not necessary for a marriage to be expensive and for a bride to wear ornaments.

Usaata is a play about a painter who depicts the life of the common man and wife feels that she is left alone, thus pines for true love. When painter husband returns he finds her sad and withered and he wants to paint her in that state that her anguish may become property of masses. But the bride thirsts for his love and she desires that he should rather be looking for her happiness than her helplessness. She wants all his attention to be only focused on him rather than anything else. It tries to explore the dilemma of an artist as being devoted to society as such or being a domesticated being devoted to his love.

Tarafh is about an elocution competition of a girl in school against the ravages of terrorism. A new topical subject for a radio play.

Amulaha Manakan Jo Wapar is scene in which the negotiations for dowry from boy's side are carried out. Seeing their greed the host shows them her step daughter instead of her real daughter. The hoax is exposed and those seeking dowry are unceremoniously driven out. It is an all woman play. (More details from the preface to be taken).

Klrandar Dewaroon is a play based on Sundri's first novel especially on demand by All India Radio. It was not broadcasted because it contained some criticism of the system and authorities thought that they were not in sync with policies of the government of the time.

Though her contribution is only one book in this genre but looking at the popularity that her plays enjoyed as Tele plays

due to change in medium this can certainly be counted as her significant contribution.

Chapter-8

TRAVELOGUE AND OTHER BOOKS

Sundri visited Soviet Union as a “Soviet Land Nehru Peace Awardee.” She has penned a travelogue titled **‘Naeen Sabayta Jo Darshsan’**. (Look at the new civilization.) This was published in 1985.

Her first stop over is at Tashkent. This is a easy to read travelogue that gives a pep into Soviet society’s achievements. The first thing that strikes her is gender equality. She finds all airports and hotels being handled by women. To a question what work men do she is informed that they are engaged in heavy labour in factories and fields and are engaged in national building activities.

As to religious independence she quotes an incident in which a sentry guarding the memorial to Lal Bhadur Shastri, in his melodious voice recited many verses from Holy Quran. But the religion there is a personal matter and not a central identity along which the society is divided. This leads her to reminisce about her native Sindh which she had left in the wake of unfortunate partition of the country and her exile from her land

Sindh. She remembers ethos of Sindh. Where Hindus as well as Muslims lived like members of one family and would share each others' weal and woe. They would take part in marriage ceremonies and religious festivals of each other with same enthusiasm. They peacefully lived along side each other without any friction.

She dwells on the ancient relations between Sindh and this part of USSR. After the revolution how Soviet Union inspired many and how Obaiduallah Sindhi who was Prime Minister in first Independent provisional government of India sought refuge in Soviet Union and how Jethmal Arsam was inspired to write a book on Communism and many writers were attracted towards socialist thought. She was informed that historically in this part of USSR existed a kingdom SINDHIKA which was in a region between CAUCASIUS AND BLACK SEA about 3000 years ago. At another place she was informed that the script of Mohen Jo Daro has been deciphered (WE do not have any authentic information about it till now).

She afterwards visited Sumerkand. It is said that this city was destroyed by Changez Khan and rebuilt by Temur Lang (Lame). (To whom our Moghl Emperors claimed their lineage.) There is an interesting folk lore related about the building of palace for his queen by Temur while the construction was on and how the main builder of the palace purposely delayed the construction for he fell in love with the queen.

In Moscow she participated in a literary discussion about Indian literature where she was informed that they have completed research on Surdas and now research on Meera was on going. There is complete documentation of Bhakti period and its historical implications are being extensively and intensively discussed.

Another book “**Bharat Roosa Bandha Beli**” (India Russia Comrades in Arms) does not fall into literary category though it won her above mentioned Soviet Land Award; is not being dealt with here. It is mainly a political book of its kind in Sindhi which is area due to readership constraints.

She has also translated many books the list of which is given in her bibliography. But the book of Sholokhov needs to be mentioned. In this book his story **Fate of Man** has been translated, apart from an excerpt from his novel, his article on Mahatma Gandhi as well as his speech on receiving NOBLE Award for literature. This is a significant contribution to translated corpus of Sindhi Literature.

Chapter-9

IN THE EYES OF CONTEMPORARIES

“About **Klrandar Dewaroon** before I add my own opinion I would like to quote three senior writers. In the eyes of Prof: Mangharam Malkani, ‘This novel set lineally time before partition in Sindh.... While in Bombay husband is not able to give love to his wife as he is busy in the service of people.... At last he is able to create a social consciousness in his wife and she becomes his comrade in arms in a real sense.... The scenes of family life are also beautifully portrayed. Character of wife is beholding and language is rich that is used by women in households.’ I also agree with Prof Ram Panjwani who says that ‘Klrandar Dewaroon is a good social novel in which the language of the writer is quite rich and her handling of social issues is quite mature and analytical. ‘

On the whole I agree with Tirath Basant and I feel that ‘writer has tried to bring in a ray of hope in otherwise dark world for which she needs to be congratulated. In her novel the way she has used her effective language to portray the sentiments and emotions of Sindhi people speaks volumes of her creative ability. In my opinion it is a fit portrayal of life of those troubled times just after partition of a country.”

GOBIND MALHI.

“Firstly the characters that she portrays are completely rooted in their social milieu. They have been created from real life situations. They are not artificial, they are living and breathing. They have a will to live and have strength to fight. They do not hide their weaknesses. They are not narcissist or ostentatious, they are natural in their expression.”

KIRAT BABANI.

“Sundri’s stories are based on real happenings of life. Characters of her stories are taken from around her live experience itself. Each of her character is made of flesh and blood. She has special ability to peep into hearts and minds of people and she has an ability to portray same brilliantly.”

PRABHU WAFA

“Sundri is the beauty and ornament of Sindhi Short Story. Creation is a big thing in itself so is craft. She has mastered both art as well as craft. She is blessed to have been endowed with both.”

LACHMAN KOMAL

“Sundri does not control her characters and coerce them but she lets them free to follow their own natural disposition and path and this way the story and the plot move on a natural course.”

KRISHIN RAHI.

**BIO DATA
OF
SUNDRI UTTAMCHANDANI**

Name : Sundri Assan Uttamchandani.

Date of Birth : 28th September 1924 at Hyderabad (SINDH)

Death : 8th July 2013 at MUMBAI.

Books:

Novels.

Klrandar Dewaroon 1953 (5 Editions) **Preet**

Purani Reet Nirali 1956 (5 Editions)

Short stories collections:

1. Acha Wara Garha Gula (1965)
2. To Jineen ji Taata (1970)
3. Bhoori (1979)
4. Bhandan (1982) 3 Editions
5. Vichoro (1985) 2 Editions
6. Yugantar (1989)
7. Kherial Dharti (1992)
8. Murka Te Manaha (1992)
9. Aattama Vishwas (1999)
10. Nakhreliyon (2001)

Plays: Sindhu

(2000) **Poetry:**

Hughao (1993)

Daatu Bani Latu (2004.)

Other Books:

Naeen Sabayta Jo Darshsan (Travelogue- 1985)

Sholokhov Ji Jhalaka (Excerpts from his works -1975)

Translations:

Malayya Zalima Memoirs of Leoind Brezhnev)

Hikka Sasui Sao Soora Novel by Amrita Pritam Pyasi

Dharti Pyasoon Diryoon Novel by Krishinchander.

Sagar Ji Santaan, A novel by T. Shiv Shankar Pillai.

Awards:

Soviet Land Nehru Peace Award.

(Visited Soviet Union for two weeks)

From Ministry of Education for her book Bhoori.

Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Sabha Award for contribution to literature.

Sahitya Akademi Award 1986 on book Vichoro.

NCPSL Life Time Achievement Award.

Delhi Sindhi Academy Life time achievement Award.