

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1. "Vanka" as a Social Entity

#### 1.1. Chekhov: Some Biographical Facts

Born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia, on the Sea of Azov, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov would eventually become one of Russia's most cherished storytellers. Especially fond of vaudevilles and French farces, he produced some hilarious one-acts, but it is his full-length tragedies that have secured for him a place among the greatest dramatists of all time.

Chekhov began writing short stories during his days as a medical student at the University of Moscow. After graduating in 1884 with a degree in medicine, he began to freelance as a journalist and writer of comic sketches. Early in his career, he mastered the form of the one-act and produced several masterpieces of this genre including *The Bear* (1888) in which a creditor hounds a young widow, but becomes so impressed when she agrees to fight a duel with him, that he proposes marriage, and *The Wedding* (1889) in which a bridegroom's plans to have a general attend his wedding ceremony backfire when the general turns out to be a retired naval captain "of the second rank".

*Ivanov* (1887), Chekhov's first full-length play, a fairly immature work compared to his later plays, examines the suicide of a young man very similar to Chekhov himself in many ways. His next play, *The Wood Demon* (1888) was also fairly unsuccessful. In fact, it was not until the Moscow Art Theater production of *The Seagull* (1897) that Chekhov enjoyed his first overwhelming success. The same play had been performed two years earlier at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg and had been so badly received that Chekhov had actually left the auditorium during the second act and vowed never to write for the theatre again.

But in the hands of the Moscow Art Theatre, the play was transformed into a critical success, and Chekhov soon realized that the earlier production had failed because the actors had not understood their roles.

In 1899, Chekhov gave the Moscow Art Theatre a revised version of *The Wood Demon*, now titled *Uncle Vanya* (1899). Along with *The Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), this play would go on to become one of the masterpieces of the modern theatre.

However, although the Moscow Art Theatre productions brought Chekhov great fame, he was never quite happy with the style that director Constantin Stanislavsky imposed on the plays. While Chekhov insisted that his plays were comedies, Stanislavsky's productions tended to emphasize their tragic elements. Still, in spite of their stylistic disagreements, it was not an unhappy marriage, and these productions brought widespread acclaim to both Chekhov's work and the Moscow Art Theatre itself.

Chekhov considered his mature plays to be a kind of comic satire, pointing out the unhappy nature of existence in turn of the century Russia. Perhaps Chekhov's style was described best by William Gerhardt in his book *A Critical Study* in the following lines.

All I wanted was to say honestly to people: 'Have a look at yourselves and see how bad and dreary your lives are!' The important thing is that people should realize that, for when they do, they will most certainly create another and better life for themselves. I will not live to see it, but I know that it will be quite different, quite unlike our present life. And so long as this different life does not exist, I shall go on saying to people again and again: 'Please, understand that your life is bad and dreary!' (P 48)

During Chekhov's final years, he was forced to live in exile from the intellectuals of Moscow. In March of 1897, he had suffered a lung hemorrhage, and although he still made

occasional trips to Moscow to participate in the productions of his plays, he was forced to spend most of his time in the Crimea where he had gone for his health. He died of tuberculosis on July 14, 1904, at the age of forty-four, in a German health resort and was buried in Moscow. Since his death, Chekhov's plays have become famous worldwide and he has come to be considered the greatest Russian storyteller and dramatist of modern times.

Chekhov (1860–1904) was born in Taganrog, Russia. He was the son of a despotic, dishonest and rough grained father, who was nevertheless eager to impart his children with his love for music and art. He was first trained as a physician at Moscow University; but he practiced medicine only intermittently. Yet, he is credited to his scientific trainings with conditioning him to be a realistic observer of society and individual behavior. While still a medical student, he began to write short pieces for humorous magazines. The popularity of these sketches roused his determination to become a serious artist. In 1890, he visited the Russian penal island of Sakhalin and without fanfare of special pleading wrote a moving account of convict life as he saw it there. He was at the height of popularity and literary powers. In 1901 when he married a young and beautiful actress, the state of his health by then was disastrous. In the short time remaining to him he was confined mostly to the house he had built from his literary earnings at Yalta in Southern Russia, infrequently able to accompany his wife to Moscow to watch her performances in his plays. Those plays, among them *The Seagull* (1896), *Uncle Vanya* (1899), *The Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) established him as one of the great dramatists of modern times, while his hundreds of short stories and novellas have immensely influenced the art of fiction since his death. In tribute to the humanity and responsibility of his work, Leo Tolstoy called him “an artist of life”.

## **1.2. Chekhov as a Leading Russian Storywriter**

Anton Chekhov published his earliest stories and sketches in various popular magazines under pseudonyms, the most often used being “Antosha Chekhonte.” As that pen name hints, he was at first an unassuming and relatively “hack” willing to dash off careless pieces fashioned for the popular reader. Most are light, topical studies of social types, often running less than a thousand words. Many are mere sketches or extended jokes, often banal or cynical. Some are farces, built on caricatures. Others are brief parodies of popular genres, including the romantic novel. Therefore, he has given a variety of taste in his writings. Regarding this, various critics have given numerous comments on behalf of Objectivity in Chekhov's writings. They find the objective description everywhere in his works. For them this technique is the unique one and is remarkable from various aspects. Among these critics, I think Leonov, Leoid is very appropriate for this. Therefore, here is given some lines about Chekhov's work from his book *Soviet Writers Today*.

Few display much originality in subject. Still, in their technique, economy of expression, themes, objectivity in writings, the early pieces prefigure are some of Chekhov's most mature works. In them, Chekhov experimented with point of view and most particularly the use of irony as a fictional device. He also established his preference for an almost scientific objectivity in his depiction of character and events, an insistence that, in the course of his career, he would have to defend against his detractors. (P 45)

By this citation, we may argue that Chekhov was a huge figure with diverse qualities in his writings. In his writings, the knowledge gained from science played a vital role in making him an objective writer. Furthermore Chekhov's penchant for irony is exemplified in his first published story, *Pis'mo k uchenomu sosedu* (A Letter to a Learned Neighbor), which appeared in 1880. The letter writer, Vladimirovich, is a pompous, officious oaf who makes pretentious

statements about science and knowledge with inane blunders and syntax, spelling, and diction, inadvertently revealing his boorish stupidity while trying to ingratiate himself with his erudite neighbor.

Similarly in another story, *Khameleon (The Chameleon)*, Ochumelov, a police officer, vacillates between placing blame on a dog or the man whom he has bitten until it can be confirmed that the dog does or does not belong to a certain General Zhialov. When it turns out that the dog belongs to the General's brother, the officer swears that he will get even with the dog's victim. Like so many other characters in Chekhov's fiction, Ochuelov is a bully to his subordinates but an officious to his betters. Other stories, not built on irony or a momentous event in the central character's life, are virtually plot-less fragments. Some chronicle the numbing effects of living by social codes and mores rather than fro-authentic inner convictions, while others record human expectations frustrated by a sobering and often grim reality. Another Chekhov's best Russian critic Marian. Fell also does have similar understanding about Chekhov's works. Here are some of the lines, which are best relevant to this thesis work taken from his book *Russian Silhouettes: More stories of Russian Life*. This makes further clear to the main purpose of this Thesis work.

In several stories, Chekhov deals with childhood innocence encountering or narrowly evading and adult world that is sordid, deceitful, or perverse-leading to neutralism. For example, in *V more (At Sea)*, a man decides to provide a sex education for his son by having him observe a newly married couple and a third man through a bulkhead peephole. Presumably to satisfy his own puerile interest, the father peeps first but is so mortified by what he sees that he does not allow his son to look at all. He simply stays away and observes what comes ahead. Therefore, he was one organizers of Objectivity in writing. (P 21)

This is how we can form a clear portrait of Objectivity in his writings. Despite the limitations, that popular writing imposed, between 1880 and 1885 there is an advance in Chekhov's work, born, perhaps, from a growing tolerance and sympathy for his fellow human beings. He gradually turned away from short, acrid farces toward more relaxed, psychologically probing studies of his characters and their ubiquitous misery and infrequent joy. In *Unter Prishibeev* (Sergeant Prishibeev), Chekhov again develops a character that is unable to adjust to change because his role in life has been too rigid and narrow. A subservient army bully, he is unable to mend his ways when returned to civilian life and torments his fellow townspeople through spying, intimidation, and physical abuse. His harsh discipline, sanctioned in the military, only lands him in jail, to his total astonishment.

### **1.3. Chekhov's Problem with the Contemporary Writers**

By 1886, Chekhov had begun to receive encouragement from the Russian literati, notably Dmitri Grigorovich, who, in an important unsolicited letter, warned Chekhov not to waste his talents on potboilers. The impact on Chekhov was momentous, for he had received the recognition that he desired. Thereafter, he worked to perfect his craft that excelled his Objectivity, to master the literature *nastoenija*, or "Literature of mood," and he works in which a single, dominant mood is evoked and action is relatively insignificant.

This does not mean that all Chekhov's stories are plot less or they lack conflict. *Khoristka* (The Chorus Girl), for example, is the dramatic piece in method akin to the author's curtain raising farces based on confrontation and ironic turns. The singer, confronted by the wife of one of her admirers, an embezzler, gives the wife all of her valuables to redeem the philanderer's reputation. His wife's willingness to humble herself before a chorus girl

regenerates the man's love and admiration for his spouse. He cruelly snubs the chorus girl and, in rank ingratitude, leaves her alone in abject misery.

In yet a drunken and deceitful but resourceful beggar Lushkov, whom he unmercifully scolds as a liar and a wastrel, approaches another, more involved story, "Nischii" (The Beggar), a lawyer, Skvortsov. He then sets Lushkov to work chopping wood, challenging him to earn his way through honest and hard work. Before long, Skvortsov persuades himself that he has the role of Lushkov's redeemer and manages to find him enough work doing odd jobs to earn a meager livelihood. Eventually, growing respectable and independent, Lushkov obtains decent work in a notary's office. Two years later, encountering Skvortsov outside a theatre, Lushkov confides that it was indeed at Skvortsov's house that he was saved—not, however, by Skvortsov's scolding but by Skvortsov's cook, Olga, who took pity on Lushkov and always chopped the wood for him. It was Olga's nobility that prompted the beggar's reformation, not the pompous moral rectitude of the lawyer. Leonov, Leoid again writes about Chekhov in another book *Bloom's BioCritiques*. These lines are powerful to cite here because they carry the central theme to know how he strongly determined in his writings objectively.

Sometimes severely restricted by magazine requirements, Chekhov learned to be direct and sparse in statement. Many of his early stories have little or no exposition at all expect some abstract description. The main character's lineage, elaborate details of setting, authorial incursions—all disappear for economy's sake. In his precipitous openings, Chekhov often identifies a character by name, identifies his class of profession, and states his emotional condition, all in a single sentence. Moreover, this is how we find him more Objective rather subjective. Others open with a snippet of conversation that has presumably been in progress

for some time. When he does set a scene with description, Chekhov does so with quick, deft, impressionistic strokes, with only the barest of the Objective details.

(P 61)

In 1887, when Chekhov took the time to visit the Don Steppe, he was established as one of the Russia's premier writers of such fiction. With the accolades, there inevitably came some negative criticism. A few of his contemporaries argued that Chekhov seemed to lack a social conscience, that he remained too detached and indifferent to humanity in a time of great unrest and need for reform. Chekhov never believed that his art should serve a bald polemical purpose, but he was sensitive to the unjust critical opinion that he lacked strong personal convictions. In much of his mature writing, Chekhov worked to dispel that misguided accusation.

For a time, Chekhov came under the spell of Leo Tolstoy, his great contemporary. Not so much for that moralist's religious fervor but for his doctrine of nonresistance similar to the didactic Russian folktales, a thief steals money from a peasant, who had collected it for refurbishing a church. The thief, baffled by the peasant's failure to resist, gradually repents and returns the money.

Among the very finest stories of 1886 and 1887 are *Children*, *Agatha*, *The Night before Easter*, *The Troublesome Guest*, *Not Wanted*, *Lean and Fat*, *Dreams*, *Hush Champagne*, *The Beggar*, *At Home*, and *Vanka*. In their different ways, they show Chekhov as already a master in the before said short story writing. The limitations to which I have been pointing in the mirror but serious stories up to this period—chiefly the over dependence on a single landscape metaphor are overcome here. All these stories make a positive value out of a creative tension now evident in Chekhov's artistic temperaments. In *Vanka* (1980), he insists imaginatively upon the transience of life and the loneliness of sorrow. Earlier Chekhov was thought of only as a



humorist, but some of his early works are serious too, especially in the end of 1980's when Chekhov abandoned his earlier role of Antosha Chekhonte forever. Now he was the Anton Chekhov the creator of the significant short stories on which his subsequent fame stood. Although, most of his early serious stories are still primitive and conventional, some of them begin to express elements of the new forms and styles, of which Chekhov was to become a master. Chekhov is commonly recognized as the most significant writer of the literary generation that ended the Golden Age of Russian authorship—the era of seminal novelists like Leo Tolstoy and Fedor Dostoevsky— and began the Silver Age— when the Russian symbolist movement flourished. He is clearly distinguished for his formal and thematic innovations in the short fiction and drama genres. Moreover, a profound depth of insight into the universal human condition marks Chekhov's writing. Although his early work demonstrated subjective sentiments and observations, the ultimate configuration of Chekhov's short fiction was one of the supreme emotional balance and tonal control.

#### **1.4. Objectivism in Chekhov's Writings**

This detached rational artfulness i.e. the feature of objectivity, distinguishes Chekhov's work from the confessional abandons of Dostoevsky or the psychological fantasies of Nikoali Gogol. Avrahn, Yarmousky is another best critic to Chekhov for this point. Following this issue, he writes of Chekhov in the following way:

Due to this literary composure, Chekhov is often considered a master of the modern short story and is perhaps the most important short story writers of all time. His writings have widely influenced world authors, especially short fiction luminaries such as Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Ernest

Hemingway, Leo Tolstoy, Guy de Maupassant, William Faulkner, Richard Wright and many more. (*The Portable Chekhov: P 98*)

In his stories, he simply observes the real problem in the society and tells the story with the help of his pen and ink certainly without any bias to any part, telling a story without the interpretive comment to be expected from a partisan or sympathetic observer. Therefore, he is the leading writer of objective literary genre. He focuses only on literary charm in writing. It should not be given any responsibility, as the Marxists tend to say. Marxists believe on the job of literature to correct the society. Literature is just to please the people through its literary taste. Some people like to describe Chekhov as a realist writer, since; there is a significant commonality between realism and objectivism. According to the *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition—New York, realism is an interest in and emphasis on life as it is. In literature, it does not mean what writers copy what they see or hear. It means that they will select from their observations through the materials suitable for constructing a story that faithfully represent what they have understood. Whereas, Objectivism is the way of seeing the issue through objective point of view. They, the writers play the role of chemist in the chemical reaction. They don't participate themselves in the functioning of the reaction but, their presence is of greater value to make the reaction fruitful.

Then, Objectivism is one-step ahead from the realism. After all, objective realism is near to Objectivism. That means all these take the issue from real life and expose them with two different perspectives. For example, in his story Vanka Chekhov does not say Vanka suffers because of the rich shoemaker but from himself and his primitive religion and cultures that compel him to stay in the grip of rich people. Basically Chekhov's fictions are called the Fiction of Manners because, they deal with the never ending social issues inherent in the society. In his

stories, we cannot find the individual antagonist and protagonists. However, all these roles are carried out by the abstract qualities. These qualities are inherent in every rational society. Both are essential in the society. Both are positive from their respective side.

Chekhov's grandfather was a serf who bought his freedom and Chekhov's father was a grocer in Taganrog, the village where Chekhov was born. When the family went bankrupt in 1876, the Chekhov, without Anton, moved to Moscow to escape creditors; Anton remained in Taganrog until 1879, where he completed his education and earned a scholarship to Moscow University to study medicine. After graduation in 1884, Chekhov went into medical practice, gaining from his experience a wealth of knowledge that would later become evident in his fiction; in fact, Chekhov had already begun publishing sketches in popular magazines to help support his family. He wrote hundreds of light anecdotes and potboilers, mostly humorous, but failed to take them seriously. These early works generally looked upon as the first major period of Chekhov's writings (1880–1887), did, however, display many Chekhovian narrative permutations in the short story genre: laconic introductions, impressionistic characterization through importance of detail, interior action, and surprise endings. Although the surprise ending did not originate with Chekhov's short fiction, he did coin the "zero ending", as described by Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky for Viktor Chekhov's fiction has no proper end. The ending or the central message differ from reader to reader. It depends on how one takes his stories. Therefore he prefers to name this end as Zero Ending. He again does not find any hints of surprise ending as other tend to say. In place of surprise ending, he finds Zero Ending. In another words he cannot find any proper end to most of Chekhov's fictions. This innovation is the penchant for dislocating the narrative of a story from its expected denouement and diverting, sometimes deflating, the story lines itself, allowing a stress among the factual and the supposed.

Skazki Mel'pomene (Tales of Melpomene), Chekhov's first collection of short stories, appeared in 1884 and soon after he befriended Aleskey S. Suvorin, editor of the conservative Moscow daily journal *Novoe Vremja* (New Times), in which Chekhov contributed his first truly literary pieces. From 1888 to 1893 Chekhov was profoundly influenced by Tolstoy's ethics concerning morality, nonresistance to evil, and altruism; objectivism represented and this being the second epoch of Chekhov's fiction in which he experimented with lyricism and thematic contrasts: beauty, sensitivity, and life as opposed to hideousness, banality, and death. After Chekhov made his investigatory journey to the eastern Siberian penal colony at Sakhalin in 1890—a trip he would later use as the subject of his sociological monograph *Ostrov Sakhalin* (The Island of Sakhalin, first published in the leftist monthly *Russian Thought* between 1893 and 1894; 1895 in book form) – he came to reject Tolstoyanism as an insufficient response to human suffering. This spiritual upheaval brought about Chekhov's third creative era during which he produced his most complex and unique short stories and dramas. In 1901 Chekhov married Olga Knipper, an actress with the Moscow Art Theatre, Chekhov died at a German spa in 1908, having earlier contracted pulmonary tuberculosis in 1884.

### **1.5. Chekhov's Works in Short Fiction**

Chekhov's transition from the prodigiously written, early humor stories to tales marked by themes of isolation and concern with social and psychological problems was marked by experimentation, a philosophical searching, and a creative evolution from realism to a melancholic lyricism. Chekhov combined a keen use of brevity, inspired from the stories of Guy de Maupassant, with a poetic and symbolic sensibility, culminating in new casts of short fiction, specifically the plot-less story. *Step* (The Steppe), the long prose narrative published in 1888, is without external action and depicts an inner symbology expressed through the interaction of

themes and counter-themes, motifs and counter-motifs. By this, he wanted to bring two opposite things together. This according to Chekhov himself is a good example of objective writings. Some early, serious stories produced by Chekhov were told from a child's point of view, a technique used earlier by Tolstoy. *Vanka* is the greater example of this. The tales are satires of the adult worlds as viewed through the lens of a child's perception. An important story, *Spat Khochestsya* (1888; *Sleepy*), depicts an exploited, young nursemaid who, while watching the infant of her employers', strangles the baby in weariness and drops to sleep-relieved. Chekhov also included in this story an adept portraiture of a child's dreams. Numerous critics have made numerous critical remarkable recommendations on Chekhov's work. Yuri Kuzmenko is another pioneer critic to Chekhov. He gives the leadership to those critics who criticize Chekhov's work from very near. And, Yuri Kuzmenko in his book *Soviet Writers Yesterday, Today, And Tomorrow* describes Chekhov's works as follows:

Other stories using an ironic twist leave the principal character's fate to the reader's imagination. *Noch' pered sudom* (*The Night Before the Trial*) is an example. The protagonist, who narrates the story, makes a ludicrous blunder. On the eve of his trial for bigamy, he poses as a doctor and writes a bogus prescription for a woman. He also accepts payment from her husband, only to discover at the start of his trial that the husband is his prosecutor. The story goes no further than the man's brief speculation on his approaching fate. (P 105)

At the end of the 1880s Chekhov abandoned his penname *Antosha Chekhonte* and adopted the doctrine of nonresistance to all evil, due to an influence of Tolstoy. This led Chekhov to write stories such as *Pripadok* (1888; *The Nervous Breakdown*), about the immorality of prostitution and *Khoroshie Lyudi* (1886; *Good People*), a moralizing story that

celebrates labor and passivity of inequity. In other stories, such as *Nepriyatnost* (1888; *An Unpleasantness*) and *Vragi* (1887; *Enemies*), Chekhov advocated Tolstoy's belief in the immorality and futility of violence and anger. However, beginning in the 1890s, Chekhov no longer wrote stories overshadowed by Tolstoy's moral dogma. In *Palata No 6* (1892; *Ward No 6*), Chekhov rejected the religious and ethical tenets of Tolstoy's philosophy, specifically in that the character Gromov explicitly besets the tenet of nonresistance to wickedness. Chekhov's trip to Sakhalin was largely responsible for this narrative mutation and philosophical rejection of Tolstoy; for it produced in Chekhov's a concern for social issues such as injustice, corruption, and violence of Russian society, and it was after this experience that his writing was dramatically refashioned. The stories *Vory* (*Thieves*) and *Gusev* (1891; *Peasant Wives*) and *V ssylke* (1892; *In Exile*), Chekhov renders the mistreatment of women in a patriarchal peasant society, prefigures later Chekhov's stories like *V ovrage* (1900; *In the Ravine*) which also demonstrates concern for the mistreatment of women. In *Zhena* (1892; *The Wife*), Chekhov renders the effects of famine on the Russian peasantry, coloring the landlords and philanthropic aristocracy as *pocourante* and ineffectual, and displaying a self-conscious didacticism. "*In Exile*" is also consumed with social evils and was inspired by the Sakhalin sojourn, but is more subtle in its portrayal of Siberian exiles—contrasting a young Tagar who longs for his wife and homeland with a patrician and abandoned by his wife, who yearns for a doctor to save his dying daughter. During this time, Chekhov was not only absorbed with worldly issues, but also sought to establish his own individual philosophy toward the world.

The stories *Skuchnaya istoriya* (1889; *A Dreary Story*), *The Duel* (1891), *Gusev*, *Ward No. 6*, and *Chorny Monakh* (1894; *The Black Monk*) consider specific philosophical questions and ideas, like the human proclivity for the intellect and science. In "*A Dreary Story*", a scientist

is isolated and is miserable due to his unhealthy obsession with the rules of science; "Gusev" satirizes the superciliousness of the intellect. The Dual, Chekhov's lengthiest story, describes a scientist consumed with the Nietzschean concept of a superman. In "Ward No. 6", the capitulation to evil is conjugated with over-importance of the intellect. Moreover, "The Black Monk" renders a scientist visited by the specter of a monk who informs the former of his omnipotence stemming from the scientific intellect. Of Chekhov's most mature stories, spanning the years 1894 to 1904, a common, uniting theme is one of concern towards the newly emerging strata of Russian society. Chekhov was interested in the keen sense of isolation felt by Russian in both the social orders of the new bourgeoisie and the village peasantry. Chekhov charged the stories Babe Tsarstvo (1894; A Woman's Kingdom), Sluchay iz Praktoiki (1898; A Doctor's Visit), and Novaya Dacha (1899; The New Villa) with motifs of solitariness and the failure of communication amongst humankind. In 1898 Chekhov published his short story trilogy Chelovek V Futlyare (The Man in a Shell), Kryzhovnik (Gooseberries), and O Lyubvi (About Love), which consider the characters that insulate themselves from others and warns of man's inclination for social withdrawal and the spiritual stricture individuals place on themselves. Toward the end of his life, Chekhov underwent a transformation in his worldview through his short fiction. Kuzmenko, Yuri further comments in another place of the same book about Chekhov in the following way:

Dushechka (1898; The Darling), Dama S Sobachkoy (1899; The Lady with a Dog; 1899), and his last story Nevesta (1903; The Betrothed) retain a tenuous and somewhat rueful optimism, allowing the characters sympathy and hope for spiritual fulfillment. "The Betrothed" exemplifies the pinnacle of Chekhov's innovation in such short fiction form. Herein one can grasp the radical character

of Chekhov's prose: its manipulation of time and space, preference for an interior lyricism, poetic and symbolic ideological implementation of syncretism, all elements common to the contemporary short Story. (P 185)

Anton Chekhov's literary reputation rests as much on his drama as on his stories and sketches, despite the fact that he was a far more prolific writer of fiction, having written only seventeen plays but almost six hundred stories. *Chayka* (The Seagull, 1909), *Dyadya Vanya* (Uncle Vanya, 1914), *Tri Sestry* (Three Sisters, 1920), and *Vishnyovy sad* (The Cherry Orchard, 1908), Chekhov's chief dramatic works, are universally considered classics of modern theatre that advocate the objective reality in literary works especially in fiction. Chekhov was also an indefatigable correspondent, and his letters, along with his diaries and notebooks, form an important segment of his writing. He also wrote numerous journals scholarly exposing an island penal colony that Chekhov visited in 1890.

### **1.6. Chekhov's Writings in Contemporary Russian Society**

In many ways, Chekhov was representative of his turbulent times, which was why he becomes a father to those people who are revolutionaries. (The Russian Revolution occurred a year after his death.) In Chekhov's day, poverty and disease had been freed, it ran amok among the peasantry, and the upper classes that were running out of money and becoming useless. Money was to be made by sons of serfs, merchants who had to go to university but were still deeply conscious of their roots. Chekhov was, after all, a member of the category. By remaking himself as a doctor and a writer, he almost seems a symbolic figure for the potential common person. Nevertheless, one wonders what might have been his response to such radical adoration. For the thing, he has none of the lyrical views shared by the well-bred Tolstoy and Tugenev. One might say his class-consciousness was cynical because he had gone through it. His



experiences were the disillusioned ones of an upstart person. Rampant through his stories are men who try to be better themselves with their landlords who aid their tenants, daughters for factory workers who grow to be factory owner's possessions; shopkeeper's sons who aspire to marry rich girls and many more. In the end, such efforts are for naught. The peasants always hate their property owners, no matter how much the property owners try to help them. Anna Aldmovna in woman's kingdom sits in her rich house longing to return to the humble life of a workers daughter. The compassionate merchant 'Lopakhin' of The Cherry Orchard never overcomes his pedigree as an embittered son of serfs. He gloats, "Come here, all of you, and you just watch Yermolay Lopakhin axe into that cherry orchard, watching the trees come crashing down... music, boys!" In the Vanka itself, the helpless child 'Vanka' suffers because of the entire socio-economic structure of the society. The entire story is told from the point of view of the child. Here, the focusing point is that the child is not the protagonist. He is simply the character carrying one strong abstract qualities of poverty. Then, similarly, the shoemaker is the character carrying the abstract qualities of rich people.

He also concentrated his writings on the contemporary bureaucracy system. Here he also observes objectively and dictates them into his writings. He gives a clear view on how this system has failed to win the hearts of the juniors. Seniors have special consideration from the top-level management however; juniors have to suffer from such discriminative offence. He does not think to blame any particular body for such miserable condition. Avrahn, Yarmolinsky is another landmark to Chekhov's criticism. He makes a remarkable comment on Chekhov's work with respect to the contemporary Russian society. He in his book The Portable Chekhov writes the following lines on Chekhov's work.

As does this sketch, many of Chekhov's first piece lampoon types found in Russian society, favorite satirical targets being functionaries in the czarist bureaucracy and their obsequious regard for their superiors. One sketch, "smert' chinovnika" accidentally sneezes on a general and is mortified because he is unable to obtain the man's pardon. After repeated rebukes, he resigns himself to defeat, lies down, and dies. (P 48)

He further says his sense of self-worth is so intricately bond up in his subservient role that, unpardoned, he has no reason to continue living. In conclusion, we can say that the unhealthy system has badly corrupted the contemporary Bureaucracy system.

We have to take time to discuss the members of the Chekhov family; all of them figure important writing. There was his illiterate, gentle mother, whom he loved and, whose humiliations by his bullying father made him shrink in pain and often appears as the haggard woman in stories like *Three Sisters*, *Three years Life*, and *Difficult People*. However, completely unlike Gertrude, she is the engenderer of countless Chekhovian Hamlets. His persistently amorous younger brother 'Mikhail' made an appearance in *About Love*. The formidable sister 'Aria' nursed and loved him steadfastly throughout his life; he loved and yet was suffocated by her. After his death, she was responsible for censoring much correspondence. It was Chekhov's older brothers, Alexander and Nikolai, who initially showed the most artistic and the precarious in the family. Alexander was a talented writer and Nikolai a talented painter, and they both escaped to University in Moscow. Both encouraged him aesthetically; especially the young Chekhov up to the oldest brother Alexander. For instance, when Anton confessed a liking for Harold Beecher Stove, Alexander urged him to consider Maupassant instead. Nothing is worse for a boy than to be left behind by the people that he loves.

Such was young Chekhov's plight when Pavel became bankrupt and fled with the family to Moscow. Abandonment runs rampant through Chekhov's work. The story that is arguably the most personal, not in fact, but in mood is *The Steppe*. This almost novella chronicles the journey of Yegorushka, who, after being entrusted to his uncle and priest, finds himself abandoned to journey along the stretching steppe terrain with his peasants people. The similarities between Chekhov's story and his life are many: Yegorushka is nine and Chekhov is fifteen; and while Yegorushka is traveling, Chekhov is left behind. Still, they must have "felt the most abject of mortals and wanted to cry." "Had they forgotten him?" Chekhov writes. Although that he had been forgotten and left to the mercy of fate he felt chilled and so frightened.

### **1.7. Historical Movements on Objectivism: A New Theory of Self-Interest**

According to Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, self-interest, rightly understood, is to see oneself at the end of oneself. That is to say, that one's own life and happiness are one's highest value, and that does not exist as a servant or slave to the interest of others. Nor do others exist as servants or slave's own interest. Each person's own life and happiness are that person's ultimate ends. Self-interest, understood, also entails self-responsibility: one's life is one's own, as is the responsibility for sustainable growth. It is up to each person to determine what values his or her life requires, along with his personal treatment and act to achieve those values. Thus, Rand advocates rational self-interest: one's interests are not whatever one happens to feel, rather it is by reason that one identifies what serves one's interests and what does not. By the reason one takes into account all the factors one can identify, projects the consequences of potentialities of the action, and adopts principled policies of action. The principled policies of a person should be of two fold qualities i.e. evil and virtues. A virtue is an acquired character trait; it results from identifying a policy as good as committing to acting consistently in terms of that policy.

### **1.8. Vanka: Chekhov's Leading Example of 'Objective Writing'**

Chekhov's *Vanka* (1886) a Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century lower middle class story unfolds the bitter realities of contemporary peasant Russian life. It centers on the evocation of the low economic groups— the poor and the rich represented by a nine-year-old boy 'Vanka' and 'The Shoemaker' respectively. The same critic talking about Chekhov's short fiction again describes *Vanka* as a rigid portrait of the 19<sup>th</sup> century lower middle class peasant Russian life in his book *The Portable Chekhov*. It further unfolds the gap that existed between the so-called poor and the rich. His short stories depict life as it actually is. Here, he does not say what is right and what is wrong. In this sense, he is neutral.

According to Chekhov himself, a writer should be as Objective as a chemist. A chemist always stands far and makes his experiments. He never participates himself in the functioning of the chemicals. In *Vanka*, also it is true that Vanka suffers from the presence of entire socio-economics surroundings of the society. He does not say Vanka suffers because of the shoemaker only. Similarly, another English translator and publisher of Wordsworth Classic say in its introduction that Chekhov presents life as he sees it, with no apology and certainly without any moral judgment. He says either is wrong. But the existence of both is essential in each rational society. We cannot negate the rich and only support the poor.

Rich people have their own age-old culture and civilization. It is unreasonable to tag them as the barbarians, uncultured, rude and uncivilized, as the poor tend to say. Moreover, the poor people possess their own age-old culture and civilization. In addition, it is too unreasonable to tag them as barbarians, uncultured, rude and uncivilized. The primitive religion of the poor themselves pushed them to the poorer. In addition, the whole construction of the society is to be

blamed. Here, in the story both Vanka and the Shoemaker are bound to continue their age-old social trends. They are only the stage actors.

Chekhov stands neutral in between two extreme social polarities represented by the poor and the rich respectively. In this regard, he dictates them objectively and leaves the decision on the readers themselves. Thus, this study contributes to understand how they are bound to play their centuries-old roles in the society and how the social vitality is strictly maintained in Chekhov's works. Some people take Chekhov as the writer of the poor only. Then, there is no any justice to the Chekhov's writings at all. This thesis also tries to change the general beliefs about Chekhov's writings. This thesis will show Chekhov as the writer of both the rich and the poor. Moreover, he is the writer who firmly believes on authorial objectivity in writings. Finally, this work would also try to clear some conventional general misbelieves about Chekhov.

### **1.9. Critical Reception**

Reception to Chekhov's short stories varied widely during his lifetime. Chekhov was often vilified in the press for his alleged indifference to the color of humanity, as well as to other social and political questions. A month before his trip to Sakhalin, Vukol Lavrov accused Chekhov so sharply of "unprincipled ness" in Russian Thought that for the first and last time Chekhov wrote a riposte. Social concerns aside, however, Chekhov is acknowledged as one of the most illustrious writers of short fiction. In 1888 Chekhov was awarded the Pushkin Prize for his volume of short stories, *V Sumerkakh (In the Twilight)*, published in 1887, and lauded by J. Middleton Murry as early as 1920 as "a standard by which modern literary effort must be measured." Even though Chekhov has been viewed as an utter pessimist, largely due to his realistic portrayal of Russian society during an era of imminent revolution, his personally expressed view was one of uneasy optimism with regard to social progress and scientific

advancement. Chekhov's literary artistry, combined with his medical knowledge and insight into human textures, resulted in short stories that have altered the narrative standards for an entire literary form. Here, in order to make a more transparent it to the Chekhov's works, I like to cite again from the book *Soviet Writers Today: 'Speech on Chekhov'* by Leonov, Leoid.

Other stories using an ironic twist leave the principal character's fate to the reader's imagination. Noch' pered sudom (The Night Before the Trial) is an example of this. The protagonist, who narrates the story, makes a ludicrous blunder. On the eve of his trial for bigamy, he poses as a doctor and writes a bogus prescription for a woman. He also accepts payment from her husband, only to discover at the start of his trial that the husband is his prosecutor. The story goes no further than the man's brief speculation on his approaching fate without any proper outcome with biasness. (P 119)

In his lifetime, Anton Chekhov gained considerable critical acclaim. Apart from winning the Pushkin Prize in 1888, he was selected to honorary membership in the Russian Academy of Sciences for both his fiction and his drama in 1900. Chekhov's fiction departs from the formulaic, heavily plotted story to mirror Russian life authentically, concerning on characters in very ordinary circumstances that often seem devoid of conflict. A realist, Chekhov draws a fine line between detachment and whimsical but sympathetic concern for his subjects. In his mature work, he is perhaps the most genial of Russian masters, compassionate and forgiving, seldom strident or doctrinaire. Equally important, that mature work reflects very careful artistry, worthy of study for its technique alone.

## Chapter Two: Critics on Chekhov

### 2. Arguments on Chekhov's Fictional Works with Special Reference to Vanka

Anton Chekhov's literary reputation rests as much on his drama as on his stories and sketches, despite the fact that he was a far more prolific writer of fiction, having written only seventeen plays but almost six hundred stories. As mentioned in previous chapter, *Chayka* (The Seagull, 1909), *Dyadya Vanya* (Uncle Vanya, 1914), *Tri Sestry* (Three Sisters, 1920), and *Vishnyovy sad* (The Cherry Orchard, 1908), Chekhov's chief dramatic works, are universally considered classics of modern theatre. In addition, we have already noted that Chekhov was an indefatigable correspondent, and his letters, along with his diaries and notebooks, formed an important segment of his writing. He also wrote numerous journals of scholars exposing an island penal colony that Chekhov visited in 1890.

The fictions being an old publication on economic disparity and a Russian writer at that time, much criticism on it is not available. Therefore, some book reviews and excerpts from the various sources are provided here:

#### 2.1. Based on Social Circumstances

Yuri Kuzmenko is another equally important critic to Chekhov's work. He studies stories by Chekhov one by one and makes heavily comments on these stories. He in his book *Soviet Literature Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* mentions these lines, which directly says Chekhov's fictional circumstances on which he stands imagining and writes stories.

Man depends on circumstances, circumstances are created by man. These are two aspects of a single process closely connected to and conditioned by one another on which he has mastered. Chekhov's fictions may be seen as two successive polarities in the accomplishment of a complex duel. The recreation of that new

quality which emerged in people's consciousness at the turn of the century and entered the world's outlook and inner being of the objective writings. (P 49)

It is difficult to believe that this helps account for the permanent popularity of Chekhov's plays in the English speaking theatre or of his stories with readers of English. Chekhov, as Mirsky also says, "is uniquely original and powerful at one mode of representation in particular." No writer excels him in conveying the mutual unsurpassable isolation of human beings and the impossibility of understanding other. They merge upon vision or phantasmagoria; Chekhov seems to represent a simpler and more available reality, but by no means a cruder one.

The best critical observation of Chekhov that I have encountered is a remark that Gorky made about the man rather than the stories and plays: "It seems to me that in the presence of Anton Chekhov, I felt an unconscious desire to be simpler, more truthful, more himself. " That is the effect upon me while rereading *Vanka* or *The Lady with the Dog*, or of attending a performance of *Three Sisters* or in *Cherry Orchard*. That hardly means we will be made any better by Chekhov, but on some level we could be better. That desire, however repressed, seems to me an aesthetic rather than a moral phenomenon. Chekhov, with his artist's wisdom, teaches us implicitly that literature is a form of doing wonderful and not a form of the good.

He again, in his superb essay on *Vanka*, observes "what makes Chekhov seem most is precisely the means by which he achieves strict form—namely, the series of tea—drinking, arrival—departure, meals, dances, family gatherings and casual conversations of which his plays are made. Apparent formlessness, as he further goes on to show, allow Chekhov to naturalize such unrealistic conventions as the tirade and "self explaining soliloquies" spoken with others present but with no to others. "Naturalizing the unrealistic" is indeed a summary of Chekhov's most indisputable power is the impression we almost invariably reading his stories or attending his



plays, that here at last is the truth of our existence. It is as the Chekhov's quest had been to refute Nietzsche's declaration that we possess at least we perish from the truth.

## **2.2. Depicts Objective Reality of the Society**

Three sisters seems to me, as to many other readers, Chekhov's masterpiece, outgoing even the epilogue to his work in *The Cherry Orchard* and such magnificent stories as *The Darling*, *The Lady with the Dog*, and *The Bishop*. But *Three Sisters* is darker even than *Uncle Vanya*, though more vitalistic. Darkness. "That suggests to me a particular tradition in tragedy that includes the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus and the *Book of Job*, and *Job's* inheritors in Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and Shelley's *The Cenci*. Since, *Three Sisters* is not a tragedy, but deliberately great drama," of no genre, we are left perplexed by the play's final effect upon us, which does appear to the Chekhovian ambiguity. Same critic again in the same book writes these lines that are relevant here to the issue.

Chekhov once said, "A writer should be as objective as a chemist. Chekhov's stories depict life as it actually is... A doctor himself, Chekhov's clinical analysis of realities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century lower middle class and peasant life in a comic vein reflected in his writings of short stories and plays. (P 87)

Vanka is far less intricate in theme than other short stories; we read the stories and are compelled to find in it the author's pastoral elements for himself and his world. There are strong elements of farce in Vanka as well as in *The Cherry Orchard*, and the mercy to Lopakhin, though he has some complex elements, could be at home in a relatively pure farce. But distinguished and doom-eager protagonist, Luubov Andreevna Ranevsskaya, who is fated to lose

*The Cherry Orchard*, is a figure of immense pathos, stylized yet intensely moving, and she still prevents the play from being farce or pure comedy. *The Cherry Orchard* is a lyric meditation theatrical though and Vanka is a purely thematically built story, as Francis Fergusson usefully called it. He is still not satisfied with Chekhov's writings. He in his next book *Cyclopedia of World Authors* has a separate taste of Objectivism in Chekhov's writings. He again says Chekhov is an evergreen writer who can sustain strongly for centuries with the wide range of authors around the globe. This is possible for him due to his unique objective representation of the issues from the contemporary society. He again writes comparatively with other world renown writers in his way:

Genre hardly matters to Chekhov anyway, since, like Shakespeare he excelled in the authorial representational change, or even impending change, and the dramatic image of a crossing or transition necessarily participates in the nature of what Emerson splendidly termed “shooting the gulf” or darting to an Chekhov is not much interested in the aim or in change as such. So I am impressed by Emerson’s complete phrase for *The Cherry Orchard*: “A Theatre-Poem of the suffering of change.” The pathos change in this play is strangely similar to the pathos of stasis in *The Three Sisters*, so it seems clear that Chekhov by “change” does not mean anything as vulgar or reductive as social and economic, let a political metamorphoses. Lopakhin, before the play ends, is almost as much a figure of pathos as it is true that her life has been one long disaster: an alcoholic husband, dead of drink; an endless lover with a scoundrel, who stole from her and abandoned her; the death by drawing of her little boy; coming sale of her ancestral property. In contrast to this self-destructive and charming gentlewoman Lopakhin

is a very tough soul archetype of the self-made man. Son of a muzhik, Lopakhin came hopelessly, in love, but then, so are we, with its endlessly mobile and magnificent woman, this long vision of passion on the old, grand, high scale. In his elegy for himself, the lover of woman Anton has given us his most vivid representation of an embodied Sublimity in Lyubov. (P 589)

Yet Lopakhin is even more interesting, and perhaps enables us to encounter a more profound pathos one respect in *The Cherry Orchard* could be termed an advance over the astonishing. Three Sisters that in his masterpiece Chekhov had to give us Natasha as a very negative figure. I don't agree with Robert Burstein when he sees Natasha's victory as "the triumph of pure evil" and says she is "with only single redeeming trait." Unlike the sisters, whose vitality is thwarted, the uncultured Natasha is exploring the life of the Prozorovs family; she is peopling the house with babies, though it is unclear whether Prozorov or the children of her offstage lover, one Protopopov, whose splendid name is that of a contemporary literary critic whom Chekhov despised. In any case, Lopakhin is no Natasha; he is now villain, but a good one, though clownish and hard, and there is something curiously alike of Shakespeare as complex mixture of force and nostalgia, his pragmatic workmanship and his reverence for, almost the glorious Lyubov. And several critics have given their own view regarding Chekhov's fictional work. Among them here is given Kuzmenko, Yuri's critic from another book named *Bloom's Modern Critical Views* published in Moscow in the year 1999.

It is almost as frustrating to attempt a description of the aesthetic effects of *The Cherry Orchard* and venture an analysis of the almost absurdly rich Three Sisters. Chekhov, in his two finest plays, writes theatrical poetry that relies upon perspectives unlike any achieved before him. (P 30)

The Steppe was one of the works that marked the turning of Chekhov's career. It is a careening, almost surreal work through the rural Russian landscape. The hero begins with his uncle and a philosophizing priest and ends up in the company of traveling peasants. The story had been inspired by his grandmother's adventures as she traveled through the Russians to visit her husband's grave. Landscape, in *The Steppe* is as vivid as cut glass. Though *The Steppe* is a coming-of-age story, it is not a conventional one. Boy goes on January, relationships, is abandoned, forms more relationships, and then discovers that he will be alone for most of his life. Yet it does not follow the ordinary narrative arc. *The Steppe* is told in terms of feeling, especially that of a young boy. Nature is seen through the eyes of someone who is frightened and is very small. Hence, seemingly slight moments take on monumental proportions for the boy. What is in this child's mind of this journey are the "dragonflies and feathers" that "soared towards the heaven black rotating column and darkened the sun." There is the woman who bends to kiss him when she found that he is asleep—"velvety black eyebrows, dimpled female cheeks, from which her smile radiated sunbeams." There is the strange, lackluster figure of Vasya, who spots a vixen in a distance,"play little dog." There is the stew of crayfish and fish that smells of "fishy wetness" and is cluttered with. Above all, there is the idle handsome, cruel Dymov, one of the companions on Yegorushka's journey type of man every sensitive boy hates. "Hit him," Yegorushka screams with tears in his eyes, "Hit Loneliness at the end of the story is far from existential. In *Anyuta*, the title character stands naked in the middle of a grimy apartment while her medical student lover draws her ribs with a passion and says only seven words in the entire story, among them "Your hands are cold!" when the student is ready to pack her things and leave, the whole of her devastation is crystallized in simple gestures and a stammered phrase. By all these we can understand that Chekhov's stories carries a remarkable load of objectivism while

writings. Leonov, Leoid in his book *Bloom's BioCritique* further gives critical comments on Chekhov's character and his unique technique of presenting minor things minutely. Chekhov goes deeply to the character's psychology and sketches these in his writings.

Anyuta put on her coat again, and silence wrapped up her embroidery in paper, gathered together her needles and thread; she found the screw of paper with the four lumps of sugar in the window and laid it on the table by the books. "That's .... Your .... Sugar...." She said softly. (P 10)

### **2.3. Focuses on Social Injustices to the Poor**

In Agafya, the heroine has an adulterous affair with an indolent, woman-hating, handsome young peasant. Again, she says little. The most powerful image is of her "exhaling noisily" after a gulp of milk when the train bearing Agafya's husband returns Agafya ignores it. In the morning, she is left to husband's mercy.

"Never before have I seen anyone, drunk or sober, walking like that", says Agafya as she seemed to be thrown into convulsions her husband's looks. She was zigzagging across the field, stopping dead, arking time, her legs giving way under her, and her arms floundering about helplessly, or walking backwards. Again Kuzmenko, Yuri has a new understanding on Chekhov's writings. In the same book that I just cited about, he comments on *The Huntsman* in this way:

In *The Huntsman*, a woman and a hunter share a few words on the road on a day when "everything was hiding from the heat." It becomes apparent that the woman is the man's wife, and that he had seen her in the twelve years that they have been married, except on the odd occasion that he comes drunk and beats her. Still, there is "sadness and tender affection..... Her gaze flitted over her husband's lean figure

and caressed and fondled it.” The story ends with her standing “on tiptoe to see the window (of the huntsman) once more.” (P 61)

Each of these stories—all of them fewer than ten pages in length—is marked with a poignant evocation of the atmosphere. The dirty cigarette butt swimming in the pail of the student’s room, the “sun-baked disconsolate, hopeless” in *The Huntsman*, The idyllic landscape in *Agafya*, and with its willow trees, Chekhov is demonstrating an admirable insight into the female psyche. These women speak and yet somehow in their movements he is unable to convey “reckless determination, weakness, and yet the narrative remains detached.” We expect to feel sorry for these women, and yet, by restricting the descriptions to surface details. Chekhov forces us to retrain our judgment. We are merely confused, and vaguely depressed.

In 1888, Chekhov wrote and published *Step (The Steppe)*, inspired by his journey across the Don Steppe. The story, consisting of eight chapters, approaches the novella in scope and reflects the author’s interest in trying a longer work, which Grigorovich had advised him to do. In method, the piece is similar to picaresque tales, in which episodes are like beads, linked only by a common string—the voyage or quest. The main characters are a merchant, Kuznichov, his nine-year-old nephew, Egorushka and a priest, Father Christopher, who set out to cross the steppe in a cart. The adults travel on business, to market wool, while Egorushka is off to school. The monotony of their journey is relieved by tidbits of conversation and brief encounters with secondary characters in unrelated episodes. Diversion for young Egorushka is provided by various denizens of the steppe. These minor characters though delineated but briefly, are both picturesque and lifelike.

Some of the characters spin a particular tale of woe. For example, there is Solomon, brother to Moses, the Jewish owner of a posting house. Solomon, disgusted with human greed,

has burned his patrimony and wallows in self-destructive misery. Another miserable figure is Pantelei, an old peasant whose life has offered nothing but arduous work. He is nearly frozen to death several times on the beautiful but desolate steppe. Dymov, the cunning, mean-spirited peasant, is another wretch devoid of either grace or hope.

#### **2.4. Wittily Deals with the Poor Peasants Personal Romantic Mood**

Some story involves a realistic counterpart to the romantic quest, for the merchant and the priest, joined by the charming countess Dranitskaya, seek the almost legendary figure, Varlamov. Thus, in a quiet, subdued way, the work has an epic cast to it. Its unity depends on imagery and thematic centrality of the impressions of Egorushka, whose youthful illusions play off against the sordid reality of the adult world. The journey to the school becomes for Egorushka a rite of passage, a familiar Chekhovian motif. At the end of the story, about to enter a strange house, the boy finally breaks into tears, feeling cut off from his past and apprehensive about his future. The Steppe marks a tremendous advance over Chekhov's earliest works. Its impressionistic description of the landscape is often poetic, and though, like most of Chekhov's fiction, the work's hypnotic attraction comes from its sparse, lyrical simplicity and timeless theme. It is the first of the author's flawless pieces. L. Leonov again in his book *Soviet Writers Today* mentions Chekhov's works in this way:

Chekhov dealt with all the sore subjects under the calm, deep-blue dome of his native sky and not in a cramped, wretched garret. He, as a doctor, sometimes made a cruel diagnosis, but it was never simply an angry statement of fact—the diagnosis itself contained a curative system, albeit at times hazy. (P 59)

Another long work, *Skuchnaia Istoriia* (A Boring Story), shifts Chekhov's character focus away from a youth, first encountering misery in the world to an old man, Nikolai

Stepanovich, who near the very end of life, finally begins to realize its starts. It is presented in the third rather than the first person. It soon becomes apparent, however, that the voice is the professor's own. The story is actually a diary, unfolding in the present tense. The reader learns that although Stepanovich enjoys an illustrious reputation in public, of which he is extremely proud, in private, he is dull and emotionally handicapped. Having devoted his life to teaching medicine, the value of which he never questions, the professor has sacrificed love, compassion, and friendship. He has gradually alienated himself from family, colleagues, and students, as is shown by his repeated failures to relate to them in other than superficial, mechanical ways. He admits his inability to communicate to his wife or daughter, and although he claims to love his ward, Katya, whom his wife and daughter hate, even she finally realizes that he is an emotional cripple and deserts him to run off with another professor who has aroused some jealousy in Nikolai. The professor, dedicated to academe, has become insensitive to such thing as his daughter Liza's chagrin over her shabby coat or her feelings for Gnekker, her suitor, who, the professor suspects, is a fraud. Unable to understand his family's blindness to Gnekker, whom he perceives as a scavenging crab, Nikolai sets out to prove his assumption. He goes to Kharkov to investigate Gnekker's background and confirms his suspicious, only to discover that he is too late. In his absence, Liza and Gnekker have married.

Bordering on the tragic, *A Boring Story* presents a character who is unable to express what he feels. He confesses his dull nature, but, though honest with himself, he can confide in no one. Detached, he is unable to penetrate the illusions of other, but his approach to life is so abstract and general as to hinder meaningful interpersonal relationships. Near the end of life, he is wiser but spiritually paralyzed by his conviction that he knows very little of human worth. One notes in *A Boring Story* Chekhov's fascination with the fact that conversation may not ensure



communication, and his treatment of that reality becomes a signatory motif in Chekhov's later works, including his plays. Characters talk but do not listen, remaining in their own illusory worlds, which mere words will not let them share with others.

Chekhov's best critics tend to agree that he is essentially a dramatist, even as a writer of short story. Since, the action of his plays is both immensely subtle and absolutely ineluctable, the stories are also dramatic i.e. in Chekhov's utterly original way. D. S. Mirsky is one of the best widely known critics of Chekhov. Mirsky in his helpful *History of Russian Literature* severely remarks upon "the complete lack of individuality in his character and in their way of speaking." That seems unjust, but critics, like myself, who read no Russian writers. He comments of Chekhov as follows:

It is colorless and lacks individuality. He had no feelings for words. No Russian writer of anything like his significances used a language so devoid of all raciness and verve. This makes Chekhov (except for topical allusions, technical terms and occasional catch-words) so easy to translate; of all Russian writers, he has the least to fear from the treachery of translators. (P 32)

Duel (The Duel), a long story, is representative of Chekhov's most mature work. Its focal concern is with self-deception and rationalization for one's failures. It pits two men against each other. The one, Laevsky, is a spineless, listless, and disillusioned intellectual who has miserably failed in life. The other, Von Koren, is an active, self-righteous zoologist who comes to despise the other man as a parasite. In his early conversations with his friend Dr. Samoilenko, Laevsky reveals his tendency to place blame on civilization for human failings, a notion espoused by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and a host of other romantic thinkers. The doctor, whose mundane, pragmatic values simply deflect Laevsky's lament, cannot understand his friend's

ennui and disenchantment with his mistress, Nadezhda Feydorovna Laevsky perceives himself as a Hamlet figure, one who has been betrayed by Nadezhda, for whom he feels an increasing revulsion, which he makes with hypocritical sweetness. He envisions himself as being caught without purpose, vaguely believing that an escape to St. Petersburg without Nadezhda would provide a panacea for all of his ills. Laevsky's antagonist, Von Koren, is next introduced. Von Koren is a brash, outspoken, vain man who believes that Laevsky is worthy only of drowning. He finds Laevsky depraved and genetically dangerous because he has remarkable success with women and might father more of his parasitical type. During their encounters, Von Koren is aggressive and takes every chance to bait Laevsky, who is afraid of him. Laevsky's situation deteriorates when Nadezhda's husband dies, and she, guilt ridden, looks to him to save her. Laevsky wants only to escape, however, and he runs off to Samoilenko, begging to doctor for a loan so he might flee to St. Petersburg. After confessing his depravity, he swears that he will send for Nadezhda after he arrives in St. Petersburg, but in reality he has no intention of doing so.

Caught up in his won web of lies and half truths, Laevsky must deal with those of Nadezhda, who is carrying on affairs with two other men and who has her own deceitful plans of escape. Convinced that Samoilenko has betrayed him through gossiping about him, Laevsky starts an argument with him in the presence of Von Koren, who supports the doctor. The heated exchange ends with a challenge to a duel, gleefully accepted by Von Koren. The night before the duel, Laevsky is extremely frightened. He is petrified by the prospect of imminent death, and his lies and deceit weigh upon him heavily. He passes through a spiritual crisis paralleled by a storm that finally subsides at dawn, just as Laevsky sets out for the dueling grounds.

## **2.5. Presence of Dual Qualities**

The duel turns into a comic incident. The duelists are not sure of protocol, and before they even start they seem inept. As it turns out, Laevsky nobly discharges his pistol into the air, and von Koren, intent on killing his opponent, only manages to graze his neck. The duel has a propitious effect on both men. Laevsky and Nadezhda are reconciled and he gives up his foolish romantic illusions and begins to live a responsible life. He is also reconciled to Von Koren, who, in a departing confession, admits that a scientific view of things cannot account for all life's uncertainties. There is, at the end, a momentary meeting of the two men's minds.

The Duel is representative of a group of quasi-polemical pieces that Chekhov wrote between 1889 and 1896, including Gusev (Gusev), Palata No. 6 (Ward Number Six), and Moia Zhizn (My Life). All have parallel conflicts in which antagonists are spokespersons for opposing ideologies, neither of which is capable of providing humankind with a definitive epistemology or sufficient guide to living.

Furthermore Yuri Kuzmenko in his same book *Soviet Literature Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow* says the modern reader has long since ceased to regard Chekhov as Merely a pessimist or a singer of twilight and gloomy people. Yet, various critics branded him for his objective writings. He says:

This explains his fundamentally different approach in writing as compared to his predecessors...this insight into simple realism of life is clearly reflected in his fictions. In his fictions he vividly writes about the harshness and hopelessness of provincial life in Russia (P 108)

In this story The Darling, Olenka, the protagonist, is a woman who seems to have no character apart from her marital and maternal roles. She is otherwise a cipher who, between husbands, can only mourn, expressing her grief in folk laments. She has no important opinions of

her own, only banal concerns with petty annoyances such as insects and hot weather. She comes to life only when she fulfills her role as wife and companion to her husband, whose opinions and business jargon she adopts as her own, which, to her third husband, is a source of great annoyance. Ironically, alive and radiant in love, Olenka seems to suck the life out of those who she adores. For example, her love seems to cause the demise of her first last love, that for her foster son, Sasha, in her maternal role, does Olenka develop opinions of her own. Her love, however suffocation, instills rebellion in the boy and will clearly lead to Olenka's downfall.

The Bride, by implication, the comic, almost sardonic depiction of Olenka argues a case for the emancipation of women, a concern to which Chekhov returns in *Nevesta* (The Bride). This story deals with a young woman, Nadya, who attempts to find an identity independent of roles prescribed by traditional mores and oppressive influence of her mother, Nina, and her grandmother.

Nadya, at twenty-three, is something of a dreamer. As the story begins, she is vaguely discontent with her impending marriage to Andrew, son to a local canon of the same name. Her rebellion against her growing unhappiness is encouraged by Sasha, a distant relative who becomes her sympathetic confidant. He constantly advises Nadya to flee, to get an education and free her from the dull, idle, and stultifying existence that the provincial town promises. When Andrew takes Nadya on a tour of their future house, she is repulsed by his vision of their life together, finding him stupid and unimaginative. She confides in her mother, who offers no help at all, claiming that it is ordinary for young ladies to get cold feet as weddings draw near. Nadya then asks Sasha for help, which, with a ruse, he provides. He takes Nadya with him to Moscow and sends her on to St. Petersburg, where she begins her studies.

After some months, Nadya, very home-sick, visits Sasha in Moscow. It is clear to her that Sasha, ill with tuberculosis, is now dying. She returns to her home to deal with her past but finds the atmosphere no less oppressive than before, except that it comes announcing Sasha's death. She leaves again for St. Petersburg, resolved to find a new life severed completely for her old.

As well as any story, *The Bride* illustrates why Chekhov is seen as the chronicler of twilight Russia, a period of stagnation when the intelligentsia seemed powerless to effect reform and the leviathan bureaucracy and outmoded tradition benumbed the people and robbed the more sensitive of spirit and hope. While the contemporary reader of Chekhov's fiction might find that perspective, no one can doubt Chekhov's mastery of mood. With Guy de Maupassant in France, Chekhov is rightly credited with mastering the form, mood, and style of the type of short fiction that would be favored by serious English language writers from Virginia Woolf and James Joyce onward. His impact on modern fiction is pervasive.

The chapters ahead will again clarify about how Chekhov brings his career up with Objectivism, a new theory of self-interest. What are the basic grounds that established Vanka as a leading example of Objective writing?

## Chapter Three: Textual Analysis

### 3. Textual Analysis of Vanka and Other Short Stories

#### 3.1 Themes and Styles

Many stories dramatize a young person's loss of innocence, but few embody the theme of the misery of a child as young as Vanka. Vanka's plight is especially bewildering and painful for Chekhov because of the earlier good years with his mother and grandfather and the others on the estate who petted him. As Vanka sits alone on Christmas Eve, watching for his tormentors to return and struggling to find words that will move his Granddad to action, he is a picture of forlornness.

While concerning with the theme of Chekhov's short stories we can find him addressing or dealing with subjects such as poverty, wealth, suppression, the long tradition of the class system and the class difference in the society. On the other hand, nature, real life-like settings, and portrayal of pastoral life are also within his focus. Equally powerful thing is that his stories carry the theme of the existence of the poor in the society. Longing for hope and aspirations is another powerful theme in his stories. All these themes are also evident in the story Vanka.

Although this story has only four pages, it creates with swift characterizations a scene that goes far beyond a lonely boy's composing of a letter that will surely never reach its addressee. A whole social world opens up in Vanka, with its rigid class system, its family life, and its cruel indifference to poor children. Much can be read into the narrative's silence about Vanka's father. Vanka describes himself as an orphan, but the story says nothing about his father's fate. Did he die by farm that died early and left no trace behind except in their progeny? Vanka's touching love for his grandfather, as well as his fond memory of bringing home a Christmas tree, suggests a kindly Granddad. Why then did the old gentle Granddad let the child

be sent to such a cruel master i.e. the shoemaker? From this perspective, Vanka is an example of the critical tradition known as literary naturalism, with its victims tossed about by forces beyond their control. The hope that buoys up Vanka as he thought his letter into the letterbox and dreams of Granddad reading it to the servants, are merely the typical hoaxes of a creation pervaded by irony.

### **3.1.1. Objective Reality of the Poor, Peasants Life**

It is a story of 18<sup>th</sup> century Peasants life in contemporary Russia. It unfolds the plight of both extreme social polarities of haves and haves-not represented by the shoemaker and the poor helpless Vanka respectively. Vanka is a poor child, took birth in a poor family. He has to work for another man in order to get his daily food. He loves his Granddad very much and his Granddad loves Vanka too. Nevertheless, their love is restricted by the economic scenario of the society. The following line, according to Avrahn Yarmolinsky who rewrites the lines from Vanka's letter to his Granddad in his book *The Portable Chekhov*, sees the core message to the society. For him, these lines also represent the objective realities existing in the society. Here, the Christmas Eve represents the heavenly world that has been created with every child in their memory. He again says, the two opposite qualities going simultaneously is the important feature in objectivism.

“Dear Granddad Konstatin Makarich,” he wrote. “I am writing a letter to you. I send you Christmas greetings and hope God will send you his blessings. I have no father and no Mummie and you are all I have left.”

(P 48)

Granddad is bound to send his Grandson to the shoemaker's home to work so that he could earn his food—expenses himself. Granddad is not young enough to earn for another's living.

What happens to his dad is not given in the story. However, we can imagine how he was. He was also poor, working in another man's field, died of hunger and aggression. The same thing may have happened to his mother too. Because in such a poor house what new things can happen except the fight with hunger for own existence. And currently this is what has happened to Vanka himself. Is he all right and well at the shoemaker's house. Is he happy with his master? Does his master love Vanka or not? This is the main concern of the objective study here. Leonov, Leoid finds more abstract ideas on the very Vanka regarding objectivism in the following lines. According to him, it has that sufficient thing to meet the objective target. For Leonov Leoid the following lines re quoted from Vanka itself in his book *Soviet Writers Today* are enough to understand objective writings. He says such expressions are an added advantage for Chekhov to objective writings.

And yesterday I had such a hiding. The master took me by the hair and dragged me out into the yard and beat me with the stirrup-strap because by mistake I went to sleep rocking their baby. And the one day last week the mistress told me to gut a herring and I began from the tail and she picked up the herring and rubbed my face with the head. (P 35)

His master beats him frequently and repeatedly. Being a child, he would not be subjected to any excuses from the master. Not only the master but also mistress is also not good enough to Vanka too. Their prime concern is the only work without any sympathy to the little child Vanka. They, the apprentices again make fun of Vanka and force him to mistreat his master by doing wrong deeds. This time again, he is beaten by his master bitterly. He further considers some lines that play a vital role while dictating the objective realities in the society.



“...The other apprentices make fun of me, they send me to the tavern for vodka and make me steal the master’s cucumber and the master beats me with the first thing he finds...” (P 49) “...And there is nothing to eat. They give me bread in the morning and gruel for dinner and in the evening’s bread again but I never get tea or cabbage soup they gobble it all up themselves. And they make me sleep in the passage and when their baby cries I don’t get any sleep at all I have to rock it...” (P 56)

Here making fun of and beating by the master are two opposite qualities in the society. It is the textual analysis only. By every letter, word, sentences, expressions we can form clear portrait of the two opposing qualities i.e. good and virtue existing in the contemporary society. By putting both of these qualities in his stories he mastered in Object writings. He has nothing to eat in the master’s house. They forced Vanka to eat non-hygienic things only. He again says they do not give him even a cup of tea or cabbage soup to make him safe from the hunger and cold. During the whole days, they only give him two time breads without any soup and tea. They all finish the soup themselves. He has to sleep in the passage whole night without any warm clothes. He cannot sleep well whole night when their child wakes up and cries. He has to wake up and rock the cradle of their child throughout the midnight.

### **3.1.2. Advocates the Existence of Poor in the Society**

From all these things written in the letter, we can imagine that he has hardly survived in the master’s house. Then, he does not like to stay there any more. In each letter to his Granddad, he pleads his Granddad to bring him back to the village. However, what can the poor Granddad do for the helpless child Vanka, as his own poverty makes him to suppress his heart and act as

indifferent even to his nearest one Vanka. His plea to take him away for the dear lord's sake from the devil's mouth otherwise it may finish his dreams and aspirations are equally powerful, Chekhov develops the plot like this: "... Dear Granddad for the dear lords' sake take me away from there take me home to the village I cannot bear it any longer. Oh Granddad I beg and implore you and I will always pray for you do take me away from here or I'll die...."

From all these development of the plot, *Vanka*, we can imagine how he has survived his life in the demon-like man's house. He cannot enjoy the environment any more. He feels it is far better to die than to stay in that house any further. All these things are only few evidences for the suppression in the contemporary Russian society. He hates his master and loves another rich man named Zhivarev who owned the estate where Vanka's Granddad is a guard. By showing this man, Chekhov wants to balance his writings. It also says that even at the time of this cruel master of Vanka there was a nice good behavioral man. Then, it is not true to say that, all the rich people of this time did hate the poor people. Nor do all poor people hate their master. Then there is not the question of rich and poor hierarchy in the society. In the case of this question, there is only the question of manner of the people. Vanka is further frightened with his master because he respects his master very much. If one does not respect his master then there is not any loyalty to his master. This is clearly seen in the selection of the words and its combination. Even in his frightened mood, Vanka finishes his letter with much pretty words and does not use any harsh words in the whole letter. Regarding this Leonov Leoid in his book *Bloom's BioCritiques* writes about that quality to balance the two opposite things in his stories.

In his letter, we cannot get even a single glimpse of fragmented and deserted words. Therefore, in his letter itself there is the presence of objective writing. The objectivity comes in two fold options. One in the theme and another in styles and

technique. While dealing with the theme of his stories we can find the abject descriptions of what is seen in the society with no apology, judgment to either side. Similarly, impact of styles and themes can be seen in the selection and combination of each word. They are selected and combined in such a way that they stand in between the two opposite polarities of the context. In addition, in every context the two opposite polarities can be found in vice and virtues. (P 61)

In contrary to this there is a shoemaker who is able to hire a child labor for his household work. He is seen as a cruel man always hurting the workers in his house. He used to beat the child when he cannot do the specific work properly. He did not give any kind of excuses to the boy. He represents the rich people of that period. Then they are playing the role that is given to them from their ancestors. Chekhov says that these two quiet opposite forces of the society are essential for a rational society. It is because it makes equilibrium by correcting the bad things from the society. They are the pathfinder of the future civilization. For him this can only give the full-fledged output for the present social contradiction. The society can show its good/evils to its people so that they may enact to correct these evils. Therefore, while writing about these social things no one should tilt towards either side. They should give what they have seen in the society correctly.

### **3.1.3. Longing for Hope and Aspirations of the Poor in the Contemporary Society**

The slight glimpse given of the Zhivarev family who own the estate comes in the person of is Olga Ignatyevna, Vanka's personal favorite. Miss Olga treats Vanka with sweets and would "amuse herself by teaching him to read, write and count to a hundred, and even to dance the quadrille." The word "amuse" reveals Miss Olga as one who reads Vanka as equivalent to a trained monkey whom she should exploit for her private entertainment. Her relationship to

Vanka suggests what is called a synecdoche, a term for a situation in which the part stands for the whole: in this case, Miss Olga's patronizing treatment of a child is the part that stands for the Russian class system. Vanka is thus a fitting document for a literary criticism that stresses a social conscience. Leonov, Leoid again in the same book *Soviet Writers Today: Speech on Chekhov* comments on Chekhov's writings like this:

The economy of Anton Chekhov's style is a model for writers of even the present time. The first paragraph identifies Vanka and establishes his plight in just ten quick lines. Granddad leaps to life in two sentences that fix his appearance and his habits. However, Chekhov's genius for minute observation shows up perhaps most wonderfully in his characterization of the dogs. Kashtanka is old and resigned to a dog's life, but the clever Eel is such a romantic, satanic figure of life in the servants' quarters that Chekhov concludes the story with Eel pacing the floor, wagging his tail within Vanka's dream. The brief descriptive passages achieve genuine poetry. (P 41)

The desperate Vanka, struggling with his "rusty nib" and his "crumpled sheet of paper", imagines the village on Christmas Eve. The air is still, "transparent" and "fresh" on a dark night; above the village with its white roofs, the sky is sprinkled with stars and the Milky way stands out as clearly as if newly scrubbed for the holiday and polished with snow. When Vanka visits the forest with Granddad to get a Christmas tree, the young fir trees coated with frost stand "motionless, waiting to see which one of them was to die. The pathos of this story is so sharp that its depiction of childhood loneliness does not fade over time.

#### **3.1.4. Chekhov's Economy with Words**

The use of simple periodical sentences from the very beginning of the story is an added advantage for the materialization of the styles and technique in the story. He uses simple sentences joining each other, balancing the sentences with each other. Moreover, he is the master of economical use of the words. Similarly, he is the profunder of the objective writing. He advocates objective writing in literary works. His choice of words and its combination all are fine and they stand neutral. They do not give any decision properly. They just create a fictional character and shows what actually has happened with him in the society. Both vice and virtue go simultaneously. They exist as per the social value. All these things are present in his writings. Everyone can feel these things in his stories like Vanka. The selection of the fictional character Vanka who is only 9 years old is also remarkable in the story. However the Christmas Eve, being alone in the masters house Vanka imagining his Granddad figuratively, writing a letter even in his frightened mood shows an extra bonus for the objective writing. This is so because there is not much about Vanka's suffering. Here, how Vanka is remembering his Granddad is presented in the story and how he harmoniously expresses the barbaric treatment in the master's house is equally important here to quote to our targeted study. He minutely writes the figurative description of his Granddad and his supposed surroundings in his writings. This quality in writing at least tries to minimize the existing social contradiction made by the poor and the rich people. Moreover, how he developed his career in writings technique and style in various stories as an objective writer is especially highlighted in this study. Kuzmenko, Yuri in his book *Blooms Modern Critical Views* has written these lines about Chekhov's writings. In these lines, he has tried to justify Chekhov as an objective writer.

The mastery in Objective writing can be frequently found in majority of his writings. Perhaps Chekhov's most autobiographical passages relate to his father. The protagonist Laptev's father of *Three Years* is also a merchant, albeit a wealthier one than Pavel, but he is also a religious fanatic, terrifies his staff, and makes his children work in a warehouse at a young age. (P 125)

*The Steppe* was one of the works that marked the turning point of Chekhov's career. It is a careening, almost surreal work through the rural Russian landscape. The young hero begins with his uncle and a philosophizing priest and ends up in the company of traveling peasants. The story had been inspired by his grandfather's adventures as he traveled through the Russian steppes to visit her husband's grave. Landscape, in *The Stepp*, is as vivid as cut glass.

Though *The Steppe* is a coming-of-age story, it is not a conventional one. Boy goes on journey, forms relationships, is abandoned, forms more relationships, and then discovers that he will be alone for the rest of his life. Yet, it does not follow the ordinary narrative arc. *The Steppe* is told in terms of feelings, specifically that of a young boy. Nature is seen through the eyes of someone who is frightened and very, very small. Hence, seemingly slight moments take on monumental proportions for the boy. What remains in this child's mind of this journey are the dragonflies and feathers" that "soared towards the heavens in a black rotating column and darkened the sun."

In *Anyuta*, the title character stands half-naked in the middle of a grimy apartment while her medical student lover draws her ribs with a crayon. She says only seven words in the entire story, among them "Your hands are cold!" when the student asks her to pack her things and leave, the whole of her devastation is crystallized in simple gestures and a stammered phrase.

Again, Kuzmenko has a separate idea regarding Chekhov's work. It finds Anyuta more objective than others. He again re quotes some lines from itself in his book *Soviet Writers Yesterday, Today And Tomorrow* and convinces readers its objectivity as:

“...Anyuta put on her coat again, in silence wrapped up her embroidery in paper, gathered together her needles and thread; she found the screw of paper with the four lumps of sugar in the window and laid it on the table by the books. “That’s ... your...sugar...” she said softly....” (P 45)

In *Agafya*, the heroine has an adulterous affair with a indolent, woman hating, handsome young peasant. Again, she plays little. The most powerful image is of her “exhaling noisily” after a gulp of vodka. When the train bearing, Aafya’s husband returns, Agafya ignores it. In the morning, she is let to her husband’s mercy.

Avrahn Yarmolinsky on his book *The Portable Chekhov* describes The Huntsman in the following lines.

In The Huntsman, a woman and a hunter share a few words on the road on a day when “everything living was hiding from the heat.” It becomes apparent that the woman is the man’s wife, and that he has hardly seen her in the twelve years that they have been married, except on the odd occasion that he comes home drunk and beats her. Still, there is “sadness and tender affection... Her gaze flitted over her husband’s tall, lean figure and caressed and fondled it.” The story ends with her standing “on tiptoe to see the white cap (of the Huntsman) once more. (P 46)

Together with *Agafya*, *Misery* is one of the first stories to which he penned his real name. The story is almost puritan. A Cabdriver has just lost his son, and cannot find anyone to talk about it. He finally finds solace murmuring the night away to hi mare. It is a fantastic example of

the expert handling that Chekhov applies to potentially sodden material. There is no grandness about the grieving in *Misery*. Grief is juxtaposed with everyday hurl-burly activities. Life is cruel because it continues on its pragmatic way. On this regard Kuzmenko, Yuri in his book *Blooms Modern Critical View* has different ideas on Chekhov:

‘...and Iona turns round to tell them how his son died, but at that point the hunchback gives a faint sigh and announces that, thank God! They have arrived at last...’ (P 63) “...if Iona’s heart was to burst and his misery were to flow out, it would flood the whole world, it seems, and yet it insignificant shell that one would not have found it with a candle by daylight...” (P 93)

The protagonist is not a Cabdriver-cum-poet; he is an ordinary old man. Mourning for his son is juxtaposed with the “big flakes of wet snow” whirling, the sight of his little white mare, delicate as a gingerbread horse, and financial worries. “[Iona] thinks about oats, about hay, about the weather.” Ultimately, it makes his grief more poignant.

### **3.1.5. Chekhov's Simplicity in Language**

Grief is rawer when it is ordinary. The beauty of Chekhov’s early work is its simplicity, a quality which some of his later, more celebrated works lack. Though Chekhov had commented his reputation as a writer by the 1880’s, he still considered himself, first and foremost, a doctor. Medicine also had tremendous impact upon his writing, for Chekhov would always be a tremendously clinical writer. As a doctor, he saw that death is not overblown in the Tolstoyan manner, but that it is often weak and an anti-climax, while in the background, life goes on its murmuring way. We see this in the almost flippant suicides in *Ivanov* and *The Seagull*; the swift deathbed scenes in stories like *The Grasshopper*; the homicide in *Murder*. There is something forensic, yet witty, about murderers’ stepping gingerly around a piece of potato stepped in their



victims' blood. The body of the title character in *Gussev* thrown overboard in a shoddy ceremony; and then his death is immediately eclipsed by the magnificence of the sea, and the green, lilac, and purple lights in the sky. Besides Nikolai there is Astrov from *Cherry Orchard*, Lvov from *Ivanov*, Samoylenko from *The Dual*, Ragin in *Ward No 6* just to name a few. Chekhov, the doctor is self-made man, educated but not elite. By virtue of his profession, however, he is able to penetrate the milieu of aristocrats, and often prospects them as his superiors. Avrahn, Yarmolinsky again re quotes these lines in the same book *The Portable Chekhov* from the Chekhov's own story *The Dual* and finds it more powerful statement for which we are looking for.

“...The fact that Layevsky was once a university student... and often spoke so cleverly that only few could understand him that he was living with a woman of culture — all this was beyond Samoylenko’s understanding and it pleased him...”  
(P 42)

The doctor also consorts with the poor, and this mobility gives him the capacity of observer. He is fascinated by physical and psychological weakness; in the case of Ragin in *Ward No 6*, such a fascination proves fatal. When he is combined with high moral principles like Lvov, he is insufferable. Nevertheless, *Ward No 6* leaves me cold, as it did Chekhov, who called it “very dull.” The characters talk too much. Monologues are lecture length.

### **3.1.6. Chekhov's Observation and Concise Expression**

In his short, during his productive life, Chekhov (1860-1904), a mild mannered, hardworking Russian doctor, managed to influence profoundly the development of two branches of world literature, the short story and drama. The stories that you read today in literary journals and magazines and what you see in many plays are something of what they are because of Chekhov. His nearly 600 short stories demonstrate, in Wallace Stegner’s view, that he was “the

most ordinary master of that form in literary history.” For writers a century later, Chekhov’s fiction remains a model of clear-eyed observation and concise expression, and, as we will see, his many letters contain a great deal of writing instruction.

Chekhov showed, in such famous stories as *The Lady With the Dog*, *The Darling*, *The Kiss*, *Lean and Fat*, *The Malefactor*, *The Beggar*, *Not Wanted*, *Death of a Clerk*, *Antagonists*, *The bride*, etc. That short fiction could be about characters rather than events, and that stories did not need trick endings. An author did not have to be a puppet master or judge and jury; instead, the narrator was, in Chekhov’s view, an observer, quiet and deliberately objective, usually with an unstated but sympathetic moral point of view.

“Measures, judgments, analyses, are foreign to Chekhov’s genius,” while “impartial observation is basic to it,” Stegner wrote in *Atlantic Brief Lives*. “If fiction is a mirror in the road way, it may also be a mirror in a hallway or drawing room and in Chekhov often is. It reflects pompous entrances, treacherous kisses, false friendship, agonized self-examination, and ridiculous self-deception-reflections of an extraordinary complexity.”

Chekhov believed that how characters see themselves is more important, finally, than how an author sees them, and that we as readers can understand characters more deeply if we don’t have an author standing between us and them. If we remember the heavy-handedness of most 19<sup>th</sup> -Century short fiction, Chekhov’s attitude, coupled with his fine comic and tragic sensibility, was a revelation.

## Chapter Four: Conclusion

### 4. Chekhov: The Pioneer in Objective Writing

#### 4.1 Circumstances Influencing Chekhov as an Objective Writer

As I already mentioned Anton Chekhov published his earliest stories and sketches in various popular magazines with other names. And his sheer irony is vividly seen from his very first published story such as *Pis'mo k uchenomu sosedu* (A Letter to a Learned Neighbor), that appeared in 1880. Other stories may not carry such irony. Those momentous event in the central character's life, are virtually plot less fragments. However, Chekhov deals with childhood innocence narrowly encountering through an adult world that is strongly sordid, deceitful, and perverse.

Countering his criticism from different quarters, Chekhov learned to be direct and sparse in his statements. Similarly, dozens of his stories have little or no exposition at all. Regarding this, Maxim Gorky in his criticism *Reminiscences of Anton Chekhov* writes, "By 1886, Chekhov had begun to receive encouragement from the various contemporary Russian literati, who warned Chekhov not to waste his intellects on such meager things." (P 124)

From the very beginning of his stories, Chekhov identifies a character by name, identifies his class of profession, and states his emotional condition, all in a single sentence. He has that capacity to deal with such a long sentences with a very balanced output. In another words he focuses on scientific objective parts of the character. Chekhov also learned the value of symbols guiding to inner character. In *Unter Prishibeev* (Sergeant Prishibeev), Chekhov again develops a character who is unable to adjust to the change because his role in life has been too rigid and narrow. The impact on Chekhov was momentous, for he had received the recognition that he desired. Other stories using an ironic twist leave the principal character's fate to the reader's

imagination. The protagonist, who narrates the story, makes a ludicrous blunder. The story goes no further than the man's brief speculation on his approaching fate. Yet, in much of his mature writings, Chekhov worked to prove such accusations false.

#### **4.2 "Vanka" as a Rigid Portrait of Objective Reality**

In *Vanka* (1980), he has insisted imaginatively upon the scientific objective parts of the life and the sorrow of loneliness. Nevertheless, the early Chekhov was thought of only a humorist. According to N. Bryllion Fagin "Chekhov is essentially a humorist". (Anton Chekhov: The Master of The Gray Short–Story, P42) Still, some of the early works are serious, especially when he abandoned forever the role of Antosha Chekhonte for that of Anton Chekhov the creator of the significant short stories on which his fame rests even today. Although, most of his early serious stories are still primitive bearing those conventional norms and values. Some of them begin to express elements of the new forms and styles, of which Chekhov was tagged to become a master. Yet his early work demonstrated subjective sentiments and observations, the ultimate configuration of Chekhov's short fiction was one of the supreme emotional balance and loyal control.

Some people like to put Chekhov in the category of a realist writer. Basically Chekhov's fictions are called the Fiction of Manners. Chekhov's grandfather was a serf who bought his freedom. A serf is a labor who is bound to the land. Serf differed from slaves because serfs were not property themselves and could not be sold apart from the land in which they worked. Chekhov's father was a grocer in Taganrog, the village where Chekhov was born. Although, the surprise ending did not originate with Chekhov's short fiction. From 1888 to 1893, Chekhov was profoundly influenced by Tolstoy's ethics concerning morality, nonresistance to evil, and altruism; objectivism and this being the second epoch of Chekhov's fiction in which he

experimented it with lyricism and thematic contrasts: beauty, sensitivity, and life as opposed to hideousness, banality, and death. This spiritual upheaval brought about Chekhov's third creative era during which he produced his most complex and unique short stories and dramas.

As we know Chekhov combining a keen application of brevity—gleaned from the stories of Guy de Maupassant—bearing a poetic and symbolic sensibility, culminating in new casts of short fiction, specifically in the plot-less story. This according to Chekhov himself is a good example of objective writings. Some early, serious stories produced by Chekhov were told from a child's point of view, a technique used earlier by Tolstoy. Chekhov also included in this story an adept portraiture of a child's dreams. This makes Chekhov write stories such as *Pripadok* (The Nervous Breakdown), *Khoroshie Lyudi* (Good People). In other stories, such as *Nepriyatnost* (An Unpleasantness) and *Vragi* (Enemies). Chekhov advocated Tolstoy's belief in the immorality and futility of violence and anger.

However, beginning in the 1890s, Chekhov no longer wrote stories overshadowed by Tolstoy's moral dogma. The stories *Vory* (Thieves) and *Gusev* (Peasant Wives) and *V ssylke* (In Exile), Chekhov renders the mistreatment of women in a patriarchal peasant society. It further prefigures later Chekhov stories like *V ovrage* (In the Ravine) which also demonstrates concern for the mistreatment with the women. Chekhov was interested in the keen sense of isolation felt by Russian in both the social orders of the new bourgeoisie and the village peasantry. Chekhov charged the stories *Babe Tsarstvo* (A Woman's Kingdom), *Sluchay iz Praktoiki* (A Doctor's Visit), and *Novaya Dacha* (The New Villa) with motifs of solitariness and the failure of communication amongst humankind. In 1898, Chekhov published his short story trilogy *Chelovek V Futlyare* (The Man in a Shell), *Kryzhovnik* (Gooseberries), and *O Lyubvi* (About Love), which considers characters that insulate themselves from others and warns of man's

inclination for social withdrawal and the spiritual stricture individuals place on themselves.

Toward the end of his life, Chekhov made a transformation in his world-view through his short fiction. The Betrothed exemplifies the pinnacle of Chekhov's innovation in the short fiction form. Herein one can grasp the radical character of Chekhov's prose: its manipulation of time and space, preference for an interior lyricism, and poetic and symbolic implementation of syncretism, all elements common to the contemporary short Story.

Similarly, Chekhov's literary reputation rests as much on his drama as on his stories and sketches, despite the fact that he was a far more prolific writer of fiction, having written only seventeen plays but almost six hundred stories. *Chayka* (The Seagull), *Dyadya Vanya* (Uncle Vanya), *Tri Sestry* (Three Sisters), and *Vishnyovy sad* (The Cherry Orchard), Chekhov's chief dramatic works, are universally considered classics of modern theatre that advocates the objective reality in literary works especially in fiction. In one way, his writings seem to be naturalistic because it focuses on scientific objective parts of the character, setting and plot fictional writings. In many ways, Chekhov was pioneer representative of his turbulent times, which was why he becomes a father to those people who are revolutionaries. Chekhov was, after all, a member of this category.

Chekhov's *Vanka* (1886) a Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century lower middle class story unfolds the unwanted physical realities of contemporary peasant Russian life. Several critics agree on the same point that Chekhov's *Vanka* as I said earlier is a rigid portrait of that 19<sup>th</sup> century lower middle class peasant Russian life. According to Chekhov himself, a writer should be as Objective as a chemist. Rich people have their own age-old culture and civilization. Here, in the story both *Vanka* and the Shoemaker are bound to continue their age-old social trends. Chekhov stands neutral in between two extreme social polarities represented by the poor and the rich

respectively. People have the tendency to believe Chekhov as the writer of poor only. Then, there is no any justice to the Chekhov's writings as well. In addition, this thesis will help to change the general beliefs about Chekhov's writings. This thesis strongly presents Chekhov as the writer of both rich and the poor. Finally, this work constantly answers to those conventional general misbelieves about Chekhov.

### **4.3 Other Relevant Characteristics of Vanka**

Reception to Chekhov's short stories varied widely during his lifetime. A month before his trip to Sakhalin, Vukol Lavrov accused Chekhov so sharply of "unprincipled ness" .Social concerns aside, however, Chekhov is acknowledged as one of the most illustrious writers of short fiction. Chekhov's literary artistry, combined with his medical knowledge and insight into human textures, resulted in short stories that have altered the narrative standards for an entire literary form.

In his lifetime, Anton Chekhov gained considerable critical acclaim. Chekhov's fiction departs from the formulaic, heavily plotted story to mirror Russian life authentically, concerning on characters in very ordinary circumstances that often seem devoid of conflict. A realist, Chekhov treats a fine line between detachment and whimsical but sympathetic concern for his subjects.

Chekhov's stories depict life as it actually is. A doctor himself, Chekhov's clinical analysis of realities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century lower middle class and peasant life in a comic vein reflected in is writings of short stories and plays. Man depends on circumstances, circumstances are created by the man him selves. L. Leonov in his book *Soviet Writers today* says "Chekhov dealt with all the sore subjects under the calm, deep-blue dome of his native sky and not in a cramped, wretched

garret." (P 25) Chekhov's best critics tend to agree that he is essentially a dramatist, even as he is a writer of short story. Since the action of his plays is both immensely subtle and ineluctable, the stories are also dramatic i.e. Chekhov's utterly original way. It is difficult to believe that this helps account for the permanent popularity of Chekhov's plays in the English speaking theatre or of his stories with readers of English. Chekhov, as Mirsky also says, 'Chekhov is uniquely original and powerful at one mode of representation in particular.' *Three sisters* seems to me, as to many other readers, Chekhov's masterpiece, outgoing even the epilogue to his work in *The Cherry Orchard* and such magnificent stories as *The Darling*, *The Lady with the Dog*, and *The Bishop*. *Vanka* is far less intricate in theme than other short stories. Chekhov's inner intentions, we read the stories and are compelled to find in it the author's pastoral elements for himself and his world. *The Cherry Orchard* is a lyric meditation—theatrical through and *Vanka* is a purely thematically built story, as Francis Fergusson usefully called it.

#### **4.4 Impact of Family Members in Shaping Chekhov as an Objective Writer**

We have to take time to discuss the members of the Chekhov family, all of whom figure important writings. It was Chekhov's older brothers, Alexander and Nikolai, who initially showed the most artistic presence in the family. Both encouraged him aesthetically; the young Anton Chekhov up to the oldest brother Alexander especially. Abandonment runs rampant through Chekhov's work. The similarities between Chekhov's story and his life are many: Yegorushka is nine when Chekhov is fifteen; and while Yegorushka is traveling, Chekhov is left behind. Chekhov writes. *The Steppe* was one of the works that marked the turning of Chekhov's career. By all these, we can understand that Chekhov's stories carry a remarkable load of objectivism while writing.



Chekhov forces us to retrain our judgment. In 1888, Chekhov wrote and published *Step* (The Steppe), inspired by his journey across the Don Steppe. The Steppe marks a tremendous advance over Chekhov's earliest works. The story is actually a diary, unfolding in the present tense. Bordering on the tragic, *A Boring Story* presents a character that is unable to express what he feels. One notes in *A Boring Story* Chekhov's fascination with the fact that conversation may not ensure communication, and his treatment of that reality becomes a signatory motif in Chekhov's later works, including his plays. *Duel* (The Duel), a long story, is representative of Chekhov's most mature work. While the contemporary reader of Chekhov's fiction might find that perspective, no one can doubt Chekhov's mastery in objective mood, a new theory of self-interest.

Many stories dramatize a young person's loss of innocence, but few carry the theme in the misery of a child as young as Vanka. A completely social world opens up in *Vanka*, with its rigid class system, its family life, and its cruel indifference to poor children. Much can be read into the narrative's silence about Vanka's father. Vanka describes himself as an orphan, but the story says nothing about his father's fate. It is a story of 18<sup>th</sup> century Peasants life in contemporary Russia. Vanka is a poor child, take birth in a poor family. What happens to his dad is not given in the story. Does his master love Vanka or not. This is the main concern of the story.

From all these expressions made in the story *Vanka* itself we can imagine how he has survived his life in the demon-like man's house. By showing this man, Chekhov wants to balance his writings. Further Vanka gets frightened from his master because he respects his master much. Chekhov says that these two quiet opposite forces of the society are essential for each rational society. The economy of Anton Chekhov's style is a model for writers of even

present time. Everyone can feel these things in his stories like Vanka. The selection of the fictional character Vanka who is only 9 years old is also remarkable in the story. Perhaps Chekhov's most autobiographical passages relate to his father. The Steppe was one of the works that marked the turning point of Chekhov's career. The story is almost puritan. The beauty of Chekhov's early work is its simplicity, a quality which some of his later, more celebrated works lack.

Medicine also had tremendous impact upon his writing, for Chekhov would always be a tremendously clinical writer. Chekhov, the doctor, is self-made man, educated but not elite. In his short span of life, Chekhov (1860-1904), a mild mannered, hardworking Russian doctor, managed to influence profoundly the development of two branches of world literature, the short story and drama. The stories that you read today in literary journals and magazines and what you see in many plays are something of what they are because of Chekhov. His nearly 600 short stories demonstrate, that he was "the most ordinary master of that form in literary history." Chekhov showed, in such famous stories as *The Lady With the Dog*, *The Darling*, *The Kiss*, *Lean and Fat*, *The Malefactor*, *The Beggar*, *Not Wanted*, *Death of a Clerk*, *Antagonists*, *The bride*, *The Lady With The Dog*, that short fiction could be about characters rather than events which formed him background with the scientific objective parts of the characters, and that stories did not need trick endings. "Measures, judgments, analyses, are totally unknown to Chekhov's genius," while "impartial observation is basic to it.

In his stories, we can find the slight glimpse of social change and progress together. Furthermore, the theme of independence, emancipation, and freedom is another facet of it. Memory plays an important role while seeking for happiness and sadness to the characters. They

like change as an inevitable thing. Conflict between Idealism and Realism is another added advantage in his fictions.

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