

Preface

The short stories of William Sydney Porter, better known to millions of readers under his pen-name O. Henry, have been approached by the critics down the ages from various viewpoints. While these scholarly analyses include many perceptive studies of his works mainly focusing on various facets of the development of his mind and art, critics are seldom eloquent about the ways O. Henry gradually became a champion of women's right and empowerment in his stories. Hence the chief object of this enquiry is to explore and examine, in whatever details possible, how O. Henry depicts the working women of his times in his writings, so as to project him as the authentic voice of the deprived and the downtrodden womenfolk of the contemporary American Southwest and New York—the regions which he knew at first hand.

In writing this dissertation I am greatly indebted to the works of all my illustrious predecessors in the field whose names have been duly mentioned in the footnotes. I am grateful also to many others whom I have failed to include in the list. A select bibliography has also been appended to the work.

Above all, I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of respect and gratitude to my revered supervisor, Dr. Suhash Kumar Roy Moulick, Professor of English, University of North Bengal, but for whose guidance and inspiration this humble work of mine could never have been completed. In this connection I gratefully recall

the generous encouragement and priceless suggestions I had received from him at all stages of my research.

My acknowledgement will remain incomplete if I do not mention my indebtedness to some of my friends and relations who helped me in various ways and would not like to be mentioned individually; I cherish their affection in my heart of hearts. My thanks are also due to the personnel of North Bengal University Central Library, and the National Library, Kolkata for the excellent co-operation I received from them while preparing this thesis. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge my obligation to the authorities of Indo-American Centre for International Studies, Hyderabad, the American Centre, Kolkata, and last but not least, of O. Henry Museum, Austin, Texas, USA for providing me with some rare and valuable information on O. Henry's life and works.

All references to O. Henry's short stories are from *Collected Stories of O. Henry* (ed.) Paul J. Horowitz; Gramercy Books, New York, Avenel, 1993. The work has been done in strict adherence to the guidelines prescribed in *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Joseph Gibaldi, seventh edition, 2009; Affiliated East-West Press, Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.¹

1. Please read in italics only and ignore the underlining.