

SELECT SHORT STORIES OF V.R.BADIGER : A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract : Dr V.R. Badiger is one of the emerging Indian English short story writers and novelists. Having served for twenty-five in the Department of English, he published several books, texts books and reference books and collection short stories and critical works. His Collected Stories was published in 2019 in which there are sixty-one short stories. Of which the present research paper examines select short stories, focusing on the themes and narrative techniques used in the stories. The stories portray the tribulations and trifles of the middle-class people who believe in the superstitions, gender discrimination, adultery, hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy etc. The present paper crucially examines the select short stories

IndexTerms - Literature, short story, books, stories, theme, techniques, trifles and tribulations., gender discrimination, male dominance, hypocrisy, moralistic stories etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Prof Badiger, one of the important Indian English writers of Karnataka, South India, has been published nearly twenty -five books, besides editing a journal of Literature in English for ten years from 2018-2018. He has been teaching English literatures in the Dept of English Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi. Recently, he retired from his long service and involved himself in creative writing and publishing his short stories and novels. Besides, he is also a critic and editor, a short story writer and a novelist.

His *Collected Stories* was published in (2019)¹ by Notion Press, Chennai. In this collection there are nearly sixty-one short stories exposing the various aspects of the Indian life-rural and urban. The locations are vividly described and characters are fully realized in flesh and blood. Some of his short stories are semi-autobiographical. They are not only interesting but also very appealing to the common readers and academic readers. Of sixty -one stories, we shall take up ten important stories for the critical evaluation. To define short story- it is minor literary genre containing nearly 2000 to 3000 words. "The short story is short because it is short."² Compared the short story the novella is slightly bigger and novel is the biggest, having nearly one lakh words and above. Short story deals with usually single incident or characterizes a single person in a single situation or the locale or setting.

The selected short stories are- "God Man Govinda", "A Rose for the Baby boy", "God Send Daughter", "The Resurrection", "The Day of Retirement", "The Costliest Corpse", "Marriage is Not a Private Affair", "A Fairy Tale", "The Renunciation", and "The Silent Death".

"God Man Govinda" reveals the hypocrisy and a falsehood in the life of a Brahmin spiritual person. This is one of the dimension of our society. A spiritual man, dressed in saffron, sits on the tiger skin at home and earns a lot of money by giving some suggestions and trying to solve their problems. For which he demands money more and more. The beguiled narrator goes to him with his problem and salutes him to his feet and asks him to give solution for it. Govinda, was "in a red mixed saffron silk saree and he simply wound around his half-naked body" (p. 13). The Goodman calculates something on a piece of paper. He asks him to give "three meters of red cloth, a coconut, three kilos rice and a kilo of ghee" (p. 14). In addition to that he takes some money. Every time the narrator goes he demands more and more money and one fine morning he disappears. The narrator is at loss. Neither he finds the solution nor his problem is solved completely. After some months, he hears a news that he has built a house in a big city.

"A Rose for the Baby boy" is about the gender discrimination in our prevalent in our society. A young man, Raghu married to a middle-class woman. Soon she begets a female baby. The hero of the story is a "male dominant, male-chauvinistic and male oriented" (p.26). He is not happy with his wife, Laxmi for begetting a baby girl after getting treatment by a lady doctor. He thinks of the discrimination between a Hindu and Muslim; a Muslim who can marry four wives and beget more children-boys and girls. On the contrary, "he wanted to have a baby boy". (p. 26). He became full of tension and was very afraid whether she would get a baby boy or not in his life. Urgently he wanted to have a baby boy. Again she goes to the lady doctor and again she was given a treatment. At the end a baby boy is born for which she keeps it a secret and reveals him to his surprise. He, being proud and happy, gives her a box of *pheda* and a bunch of roses expressing his happiness.

"The God Send Daughter" is another interesting story in a multi-cultural set up of our society. In this story, a Muslim couple- Ameer Ali, being cancer patient, and his wife visit a hospital for their personal illness for a checkup and treating a treatment also for not having a baby. But accidentally they come across the news that a baby was left in the hospital by its poor mother, Kamala who has disappeared. The "a good Muslim" (p.36) couple take pity on it and with the advice of the doctor and others, adopt the baby as their daughter without thinking that it is a Hindu baby. She is named as Mumtaj, the wife of King Shahajahan. In course of time, the couple get their own daughter named Noorunnissa. His wife says- "For a new born baby there is not Hindu or Muslim. Is it not of divine nature? It is only the God Allah the Almighty who sent this baby girl for us." (p.35.) Ameer Ali expresses his humanitarian feeling that his act of kindness is beyond the boundaries of religion. They grow up the baby of their own. Meanwhile, they beget their own children also. So the title of the story is "God Send Daughter".

"The Resurrection" is story of an unbelievable incident. It means that Kallappa, an employee comes back from the state of death like. He had "his old Yezdi two wheeler" (p.41). A two wheel rider meets with an accident and his has fallen to the ground . His head was broken into pieces and Instantly the passersby by looked at him and take to his hospitalized by tied a cloth around his head. He is later to taken to the bigger hospital in a big city where he lives in the state of coma for three months. Dr. Shiva "with a black coloured stethoscope" (p.44) and his team gave him the treatment. and he became enlivened again and began to identify them and speak. This wife suffers and children suffer by this long hospitalization. They pray to the lord Venkateshwar of Tirupati and become happy that their father is survived at last from the deadly accident. He again rides the same two wheeler on the same road fearlessly. Both blood and money are important in the matter of medical treatment."(p.45).

"The Day of Retirement" is about the greediness of a university's professor's wife. In this story Prof Shankar retired on a day. On that evening, he vacates his room and takes all his books and papers in a n auto and goes home. His wife is waiting for him anticipating what he brings home on the day of his retirement. She expects that he brings a lot of money after retirement. When she looks at the books and papers , pouring down the auto and shifting to the house, she cries , " What I expected you to bring-a bundle of currency notes and you've come with bundles of waste paper."(p.51) a lot of money but you have brought a lot of *ruddi* (waste paper.). This shows the materialistic attitude of the wife of the university professor. There is a tinge of irony and humor in this story. However the professor pacifies her by saying that he will get his post-retirement benefits money after a month and also the pension. He is invited for the retirement felicitation by the Registrar but he dies even before attending his felicitation and the opist0returemnet benefits are settle d after week and his wife goes to America to live with her son. It is day of embarrassment that every job holder faces in one's life time.

"The Marriage is not a Private Affair" is about the unusual marriage of low-middle class family members. There are two friends in the story who studied together and passed matriculation- one is Shankar and other, Suresh. Both "were hard working and intelligent."(p.59) and got jobs in telephone departments. Shankar by his hard work and intelligence, passed BA. external and appeared for KAS and passed successfully. Meanwhile he came in contact with a "Dr. Annapurna, MBBS, a lady doctor in local primary health centre."(p.61) They fell in with each other., but they sought the consent of their parents and married traditionally in their native place. Later he got through IAS examination also and became Superintendent of Police and became a successful man in his life. Suresh, being more emotional asked his beloved Sushma to give up her MBBS education in the middle and eloped with her. They got married by in course of time, Suresh became a drunkard and died early. leaving two children. One of the children died . Her father also died of blood pressure and sugar disease. She has to work as a teacher of English in the local school. She , being from a rich family suffered a lot. Suresh became unsuccessful in comparison to his friend. The love marriages are not bad, but they should be approved by the elders. The narrator concludes by saying that the tradition marriage is better as it is approved by all relatives and friends who can help them in their periods of crisis. It is the critically analyses the lives of two friends both intelligent and hard working but they were different in their approach to love marriage. It is said that" it is not purely a private affair to be handled carelessly."(p.66).

"The Costliest Corpse" is story full of tragic irony. A friend, named Shekhar is suffering by gastroenterological disease and asks for a suggestion Shekhar is advised to go to the biggest hospital Columbia Asia in Bangalore. Accordingly, he goes to the hospital and gets his body checked up.The doctors advise him to go for liver transplantation so that he will survive. During the operation, the a piece of liver from his wife's body and fixes it to his damaged liver. He was hospitalized for more than a month and at last he dies unfortunately as the transplantation was not successful. But the "treatment was the costliest" (p.69) and the medical bill is made in twenty -five lakhs which are unable to pay instantly. Unless the bill is paid the authorities said that they will not give the body. After a week they arrange for the payment, selling two plots and pay the huge bill and get the corpse and take away the corpse for the burial in their native. The narrator advises the people " not go to the big hospital without having a big bag of money."(p.73). The story criticizes the exorbitant medical charges made in the big cities. There is ring of irony around the title.

"A Fairy Tale" is a study in the life of a lucky man so to say. The life is not fiery tale to many who have to struggle to achieve something. But one Mr Basavaraj, though born small village, got education while "working in the fields".(p.74). He was a village boy who could complete in his BA. externally and got into the teaching post. He became a primary school teacher. Having passed M.A. examination externally he passed with NET examination. Meanwhile he got in contact with a musician teacher whom he made his wife. He also learnt to play on *tabla* when she went for signing in the programmes. He did Ph.D., surprisingly under this own caste Professor in that university. He got into the portals of the University as a lecturer. Surprisingly he visited England where his "English he knew was of no use" (p.79). He became a Reader and a Professor. Then he also became a Registrar and "no wonder one day he might become the Vice-Chancellor" (p.82) in the university. It is a wonder that how a village boy could go up the ladders of success easily. For some person's life is a 'fairy tale' for someone but nor for all.

"The Renunciation" is about the departure of a sincere and loving husband, seeing his wife's adulterous act of having relationship with another man. Mr. Policepatil was "well behaved and well trained teacher"(p. 83) in the Saradar high School. Kamala his young wife was "a native beauty with an attractive body figure."(p.85).She has no child for a long years of married life. So she fell in fell in love with Mr.Mahajan, a Hindi teacher. When Mr. Policepatil want for the market to buy vegetables, the Hindi teacher got into the house and the they were in love in the bed. This extra-marital love affair was seen by the returned husband who was shocked. Keeping the bag of vegetables he left the house, and the town also. Years later they meet again- he as an ascetic monk, "dressed in total saffron" (p. 89) and she as a h housewife married to Mahajan. It is a strange incident in the life of low-middle class man.

Thus V.R.Badiger emerges as a major short story writer in Indian English Literature. His "realistic"³ stories unravel various facets of Indian life- rural and urban, focusing on the "social"⁴ themes of greed, jealousy, exploitation, gender discrimination, adultery, male-dominance etc.. The characters are vividly portrayed and places are fully realized in their description. Most of the stories are highly moralistic⁵. Often he uses the third narrative techniques to narrate a story. Irony and wit are the main elements in all stories that are stories are not only interesting but also highly appearing to the common readers.

REFERENCES

- [1] V.R. Badiger. Collected Stories. Chennai: Notion Press, 2019.
- [2] the definition of a short story as a literary genre from O'Conner, Frank. *The Lonely Voice: a Study of the Short Story*. Cleveland: OH, Word Publishing Company, 1963, p.2.
- [3] The realism is another dimension of these well-written, well -chiseled stories
- [4] The 'social' themes reveal the social awareness of the writer
- [5] To communicate the moral through a story is always important.

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