



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

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Abstract

V.R.Badiger is a renowned academician and short story writer. His masterpiece *Collected Stories* was published five years ago, in 2019. The collection has nearly sixty stories which is equal to six collection of short stories. Some of his short stories are moral tales. Some are excellent anecdotes. A short story is short, having almost all ingredients of a novel- it has setting, characters, dialogue, narrative plot and narrative techniques and style. In the present research paper some of the short stories of V.R.Badiger are taken up for examination, evaluation and placement of the author in the ranks of the short story writers of Indian English Literature.

Keywords: academician, short story, moral, anecdote, evaluation and rank etc.

Prof V.R. Badiger, now retired, is one of the modern, contemporary major short storywriters who is an brilliant academician and a researcher. He published *Collected Stories*¹ (2019) that consists of sixty-one short stories and of 459 pages. He taught for 39 years English Language and Literature in colleges, and universities. Having a vast teaching experience of countryside and urban life. All sixty-one short stories which are of even length. The themes of the short stories are corruption, dogma, superstition, bigamy, gender discrimination fantasy, thrilling murders, etc. His short stories are of curiosity and simplicity and lucidity, having a straight forward narrative technique. The characters are unique with flesh and blood, in a sense realistic. His prose style is full of native words in his typical Indian English which is flawless. Let us examine some of the short stories in the present paper.

The short story is one of the most popular literary sub genre, having a history of thousands of years. It is defined in *Encyclopedia Britannica* as-"A short story is a piece of prose fiction. It can typically be read in a single sitting and focuses on a self-contained incident or a series of linked incidents, with the

intent of evoking single effort or mood."² L.C, Mitchell defines it- " A short story is sometimes referred to as a genre."³ Fatma Gunnaz further explains that "A story should be a story, a record of things happening full of incidents, swift movements, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and a satisfying denouement."⁴ In this light, some stories are to be analyzed as follows.

"The Godman Govinda " is the first and the topical short story of this collection. It is the national and universal theme of corrupt *sadhus* and *sanyasis* who deceive the poor people and gain money and establish themselves economically secure once and for all. The central character of the story is of Govinda, an *avadoot*, who, being tall and handsome *brahmin*, is half-shaved is head and wear saffron and give prophecies and fore-telling to some of the problems of the religious-minded and innocent people. The narrator is the disciple of the Godman Govinda. He goes to the *avadoot* and attend to his meditation span of time, and asks for the solutions of the problem he faces in life. Every he goes he takes money in hundreds and in increases month by month reaches to fifty thousand above. But his problems are never solved even after spending money. At the end, one day he disappears and all the devotees are flabbergasted for having lost their bundles of currency notes. They realize their foolishness and give complain to the police for the same. But the Godman is never found. After some years, they hear the rumour that he is Hyderabad with a disguised name, having a built a beautiful temple, and made it a very good source of regular income. This story has moral that one should not go the fake *sadhus* for solving their problems and give them money by which they become overnight rich.

The second story is "A Girl for the Goddess". It is about the prostitution in the country side, presumably in the north Karnataka. Ajay and his friend go leisurely to the area of prostitution and they go to the house of a prostitution owner and have rest and sumptuous food at night. Afterwards, they are introduced to their respective young girls who take them to their beds humbly and politely. One of them is totally innocent and does not know how to have intercourse with the girl. He is slapped on the cheek by the girl prostitute. The other one enjoys as he is experienced in the sexual process and laughs at his other friend. The short story has humour and laughter mainly, revealing the poor life of the young girls in the countryside and their life of earning livelihood by selling their bodies at night. It is common theme in many of the novels and stories. Though the story is short it is crispy and direct. The narrator makes fun of the youngsters who visit the prostitutes for fun and delight in the country side.

"A Fairy Tale" is about a strange phenomena in human life. In olden days, there were folk tales of this sort. An ordinary man achieves a high water mark in his life without any strong will, hard work,

persistent efforts towards the goal. He is taken to the high pedestal by some invisible power by the end of his life. In this story it is focused in Basavaraj Patel, a central character, is a village boy who works in the jawar field, gradually goes to school late and complete his matriculation and the next classes and becomes a school teacher at the lowest level after a training. From there, he goes to dream of getting a Ph.D. degree from the guide of the university though he has bad English. For that his guide was very kind and considerate. He simply parodies somebody's thesis, submits and takes the degree and then, he marries to a music teacher who was one year older than him though a matrimonial agent. Then he is said to apply for post in the university and gets into the university system by chance. There he spends sometime, promoted as reader and professor and at last becomes the registrar of the University. Thus he is taken to the higher levels of life by some magical power, it seems. The author concludes that this does not happen in everyone's life. Rarely it happens in someone else's life, though it is unbelievably true. It is very interesting story which reveals a rare aspect of human life like a beggar becoming a prince, after marrying a princess. The language is simple and lucid.

"Mad Mallayya" is another short story focusing on the futility of higher education. There is a central character named Mallayya whom the narrator meets as a beggar with a side bag full of dirty news papers, dirty clothes, and uncoiled disheveled hair and with no *chappals*, barefooted. The narrator knew him previous as a post-graduate student on his university campus. At the first sight, the narrator is shocked to see him in that miserable state. He gives him money, pities him and asks him to shave his beard and make him modest. Being curious of his transformation, he digs into his story and finds that he has become unemployed even after getting the third rank in M.A., Economics. He studied in Kannada medium and he has to teach in Both in Kannada and English medium; so he is not appointed anywhere. Moreover, he is afraid of the bribe to be given for getting post of a lecturer in the college. Hailing from a poor family, he is choked to the core of his heart and his mind is fragmented. The ultimate blame is not heaped on the student but on the university system which produces non-employable candidates. In a sense, the university misguides the innocent, poor rural students to opt to write him in the mother tongue which shall be no use for them after the post-graduation and at the working spot. As they are not able to teach both in English and Kannada, they are not recruited and remain unemployed. The language is simple and direct.

"The Wild Boar Hunt" is a thrilling story of hunt. Baburao is the hunter. who is the neighbour of the narrator. He is stable keeper and horse trainer in the palace of the local prince. He has a licensed *bandooka* for killing the wild animals and hogs and wild boars which come to his sugar cane and maze

fields and spoil and harvest. He is an expert hunter, having a sturdy body, immense physical strength as he, under moonlight, goes walking for ten kilometers everyday to his field and spends the whole night, watching for wild animals. He does protect the harvest at night as the wild boars come at night only. One night he goes with loaded gun to the far off field and takes rest for some half an hour. Then, he waits for the arrival of the wild boar, making a grunting sound to eat the maize cobs. He knows the exact timing of the coming of the boar, so he is ready with his gun holding horizontally to his shoulder with keen observation and directing to the spot of arrival. After some time, he is bored with his waiting and relaxes for a while. Then unexpectedly the wild boar comes, he fires one bullet which misses it. Then angry wild boar, comes straight and attacks the hunter and injures him terribly. This is story of the hunter is being hunted. There is irony at the end of the story as something opposite of what the reader expects happens. It is one of the most interesting stories. The description of the nature is vivid and of the wild boar is natural. The language is simple and lucid.

"The Mysterious Elixir" is a different kind of the story, as it is based on fantasy. In the centre, is an old man-the narrator who, being old, is left alone at home. He is bored and longs for the youth as he wants to enjoy love and sex with the young girls. He dislikes being old now and often thinks of becoming young again. In the old iron box, kept under the mantle, consists of a bottle which has some red liquid. He does not know what it is. He finds it when he cleans the house. Out of curiosity, he drinks some drops of it and falls in a deep sleep on that night and next day morning he gets up as a young man, looking at the front mirror ; he himself does not believe what has happened to him. However, he is happy that his wish is fulfilled. His servant does not recognize him and give him a young man's dress. The old man lies a line that he has a young guest to his house. He goes out and makes enjoyment. He falls in love with a girl who takes him to her house, introduces to her parents and comes to the subject of marriage. The parents are also happy to know this. Somehow after some weeks, he finds that his life of a young man is boring. Then, what to do? Again he goes back to the bottle of mysterious elixir and drinks few drops of it and reverts to the old man what he really was. This is another most interesting story in the collection. The language of autobiographical narration is natural; the description is vivid. The narration is interestingly excellent.

"A Half- An Hour Love" is about an educated man's illicit sexual relationship outside the framework of marriage. The protagonist Dr. Shivarasan, being dalit, has a wife and a son. The wife is less educated and tradition-bound woman. The husband protagonist is a professor and he has several women scholars, working under him for the doctoral degrees. He develops attraction to a young brahmin scholar

and falls in love with her. She has no mother and only father who is ailing. The professor maintains his love relationship in the same town for half an hour in the car as he cannot go to her house and sleep with her at their house. His father knows about his daughter's relationship but he is helpless. He is a little guilty about his secret acts of love with his second woman and is a little afraid of his loving wife. The moral dilemma is at the heart of the protagonist. The story is narrated in a very interesting way as the title is interesting. The language has biblical simplicity.

"A Piece of Red Brick" is more strange and unbelievable story of a man's negligence regarding his health and his nature of hide his disease from his innocent loving wife. The protagonist Prof Pasha, is a well-read man, a lecturer in a degree college, teaching English to the graduate students. He by mistake, once in the public urinals, uses a piece of red brick to clean urine drop from the tip of his penis. After some weeks, he finds a sore on the organ and leading a sexually transmitted disease. He is so afraid that he keeps it a secret from his wife. Although he goes to a doctor for treatment but the doctor advises him to cut off his male organ which, for him, a matter of a great male pride. The question in front of him, how to live without it, what to say to his wife? By negligence, it becomes more infectious. By this, he goes into a state of depression and commits suicide by hanging himself by a *lungi* in his room to the ceiling fan. Unexpectedly the tragic incident is revealed and wife is at loss, weeping. His students and neighbours also wept for the suicidal death of the gentle man. His suicide it is itself an irony- the most handsome man with a great courage dies like a fly.

"The Worst Burial" is a historical story about the Muslim ruler, Afzal Khan and his possessive love for his sixty five wives. When he is invited by Chattrapathi Shivaji for a meeting he was afraid that he might die in the duel and might not return to this palace and wives. Being possessive of this beautiful wives he decides to kill one by one in nearby flowing water of the river. He kills sixty-four of them all and buries them except the last one who escapes his killing, so there is no grave for her. This reveals a brutal nature of a tyrannical ruler and his heinous act of killing so many of his wife, presuming that he would die. Of course he goes and is get killed by Chattapathi Shivaji later. This historical story is powerfully narrated by the story writer, arousing suspense and curiosity. The story is a part of south Indian history. There are sixty four graves on the outskirts of the town of Afzalpur and there is no sixty-fifth grave because she escaped by chance. The poetic style is remarkably lucid.

"The Doctor of Death" is weird story about a village doctor, named Dr. Bhupali in the north Karnataka region. It is a remote village where there is no police station or police. A constable used to

come from a nearby police station in nearby another village. The doctor is kind and considerate, giving medicine to all those who were suffering from the various diseases. The some old women and women, who suffer from the disease want to die instantly. The living with terrible disease and unbearable sorrow was a hell for them. Such old man or women used to beg him to give him injection to die. The doctor, being inevitable was giving such injection and bring them peaceful death. This all goes unnoticed or recorded. If recorded it would have been a crime for which there might be severe punishment. This interesting story of a village doctor is one verge of fantasy. The language of narration is not only simple but also lucid.

Thus, the short stories of V.R.Badiger focuses on the variety of social, economical, psychological, cultural and historical themes of contemporary society. His stories are full of action, vivid description and interesting narrative technique. His realistic characterization is of variety. On the basis of his choice of themes, and adoption of narrative techniques, portrayal of the country side Indian rural and urban life in realistic terms, he is considered as one of the major short story writers of the contemporary Indian English Literature.

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