

A Kaleidoscopic Vision: Short Stories of Basavaraj Naikar

Dr. Shashidhar G. Vaidya
Dept. of English
B.E.S.M. Arts and Commerce College
Byadgi, Karnataka, India.

Abstract: A modest attempt is made in this paper to analyze the short stories by Basavaraj Naikar in detail in the light of the theory. His stories depict the South Indian life quite vividly. The stories included in the collection present various themes ranging from the historical to the contemporary, from the religious to the secular and from the elemental to the academic. All in all there are twelve stories in the collection, which may be divided into two categories viz; historical and contemporary.

Keywords: Short story, novella, Indian English literature, yarn, marchen, historical incidents.

Paper

Short story, though, the most popular genre among the reading as well as writing community of the contemporary times, short story is the most elusive form of literature. It frustrates the attempts of the erudite critics and the persistent practitioners of the form to encapsulate all the features and elements that go in to render a story successful one in a single and neat definition. If one stresses “the economy” of words, other stresses “the impression” and yet another emphasizes “the purpose” or “narrative” and so forth. It is quite incontrovertible that all these are essential factors for a successful short story. Yet for our convenience let us assume that a short story is a monument erected for a moment. It is an attempt to “catch the eternal in the casual, invest a moment with the immensity of time.”

Though, handled by distinguished practitioners of fiction, though enjoyed by diligent readers, enough critical attention is not paid to the genre. In spite of the widespread innumerable academic journals very few of them publish a paper on this neglected genre. Moreover because of its heftier counterparts like drama, poetry and novel the form however gets elbowed out of the curriculum at higher levels of study.

Due to aforementioned reasons and unquestionable critical ignorance the genre is pushed to the dusty corners of the libraries and many good short story writers remain and rot in darkness of unrecognition. But whatever may be the state of affairs around it the short story has grown in abundance in occidental as well as oriental literature.

Being perhaps the most chameleon form of literature the short story has changed its form, structure; plot design etc, from nation to nation thereby altering the previous conceptions of its nature. In accordance with the tendencies of readers as well as writers the short story has manifested in the diversified forms viz; sketch, yarn, marchen, parable, novella, cycles etc.

Now let us cast a glance at these one by one. Sketch appears to be static in its nature. As Washington Irving wrote, it is “the play of thought, and sentiments and language: the weaving in of characters, lightly yet expressively delineated: the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life; and the half concealed vein of humour that is often playing through the whole”, and it also shows some movement towards narrative dimension.

The word ‘yarn’ seems to be derived from rope making which is much connected with nautical field. Further it seems to have become applied metaphorically for story weaving. It is the most suitable kind of genre for the storyteller who identifies himself more with the oral tradition. It is “an elaborated anecdote or series of anecdotes” presented in colloquial or casual tone. When stretched further it results into a Tall Tale. Its features may be gathered at random as under. (1) It is comic in its tendency. (2) It makes use of vernacular idiom. (3) It attaches importance to external elements. While marginalizing the psychological ones.

Marchen is an adopted form of the fairy tale by a modern writer. But in that a Faerie is usually replaced by magic. But the magic it employs is the magic of peculiar mood and power etc. it also remains close to the outlines of oral narrative. In marchen we may witness the profusion of supernatural elements. The maximum number of action does not exceed thirty-one.

If a parable is a story, which is didactic in tone and realistic in its approach to life intending to bring home some moral, fable is a story, which again intends to teach some moral. In that it employs animals as characters, which act as though they were human beings. When these two forms refuse to teach some moral deliberately soon they enter into the frontiers of short story proper in the modern sense of the usage.

A Novella is another form of literature, the aspects of which appear to be different from that of the normal work of fiction on the one hand and short story on the other. There are some writers who opine that on independent status and enough critical attention to this form must be assigned. In other words novella is unique form of literature, the features of which crosses and go beyond the regulations of the short story proper and also cannot fit properly into the framework of the novel proper. "The narrative task of these forms is quite different" says Judith Leibowitz. Her view may be summarized as follows.

Novel - elaboration

Short story - limitation

Novella - compression.

One can infuse serious, tragic, comic and satirical elements in it. "The kind of satire which gravitates towards novella is that in which the object of ridicule is a single one rather a compendium of the follies of mankind" (Judith Leibowitz). This does not signify that there is a sort of tacit compromise or agreement or whatsoever between novel and short story.

Man's tendency to have mixed taste seems to be the cause for the entwining and concatenation of one story with other. And this might have resulted into cycles. But the conspicuous element is that the writer avoids the tight and terse/continuous structure of the novel quite consciously. The best example of the form may be found in Kannada Literature, *Vaddaradhane*.

Indian English Literature, comparatively a new body of writing, has revealed its all-round growth in almost all form of literature and has won the acclamation. In the latter half of the previous century short story has grown considerably. Story telling impulse is quite natural to human beings, particularly for Indians because of their beings fed upon by grandmother's tales, since there infancy and also because of their hoary, rich and incessant tradition. The seedlings of Indian English short story bay be traced in *The Brihatkatha Saritsagara* of Gunadhya and *The Jataka Tales* of Buddha. Further with the introduction of western education and impact of Western writers and their writings modern Indian writers learnt something new which added up to their knowledge of their own tradition. Begun by S.C.Dutt's *Realities of Indian Life* (1885), the tribe of short story writers has continued to allure the attention of the readers down to present day.

Professor Basavaraj Naikar's second collection of short stories, *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories* is a welcome addition. A modest attempt is made in this paper to analyze the stories in detail in the light of the theory mentioned above. The book depicts the South Indian life quite vividly. The stories included in the collection present various themes ranging from the "historical to the contemporary, from the religious to the secular and from the elemental to the academic". (Author's Preface). All in all there are twelve stories in the collection, which may be divided into two categories viz; historical and contemporary.

To condense the historical incidents into a short story great acumen is essential. It requires not only sympathy and understanding of the past generation but also the knowledge of environment and conditions under which people lived and the ideas that dominated their minds and actions. It is not only wrong but also foolish to judge the past life with the contemporary standards of thought and behavioral patterns. Their faith, religion and customs were quite different from ours'. Whatever mode of life a particular generation imbibes may have surely had some relevance and meaning to it though they seem strange and different for the other generation. If we look at the past generation with sympathy, understanding coupled with the knowledge of environment etc, we witness the dead dry bones vivified, teeming with life and buoyancy in their childhood, adolescence and prime in their own suitable clime though very different from ours yet much like us and our own with the same kind of human passions, feelings and failings. It is in this context that we may consider history though not magic but a magic mirror held to the past life.

Of the twelve stories, three stories may be listed under the first category, namely "The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi", "Blood Bath" and "The Golden Servant". Of the three stories the first one deals with the life story of a Warrior Princess Mallamma. Mallamma was a daughter born to madhulinga Nayaka of Swadi and Rani Viramma with the blessings of Kartikeya Swami. She was born on "ashtami tithi of Kartika paksha of Sravana month of Salivahana Saka 1580. Mallamma studied under Sankarabhatta. She attained sufficient proficiency in Sanskrit, Kannada, Urdu and Marathi. She could even compose poems in Kannada. After knowing that she had to face a danger of death by a tiger during her sixteenth year, Raja Madhulinga Nayaka arranged a *Swayamvara* to avoid it. Ishaprabhu, Prince of Belavadi married her, as he was a great tiger hunter. This was so done to provide double protection to Mallamma. After the marriage Mallamma moved to Belavadi *samathan* which "extended from Yakkundi to Devarahuballi and Gokak to Halyal"(P.10). they lived happily

for some days. Then they went to Gokarana and came back. On the way they rested on the banks of a lake where Rani Mallamma had to encounter the tiger attack. Soon Rani Mallamma fought with with them lest her husband who was in deep sleep be disturbed. On waking, Ishaprabhu was full of appreciation of the heroism of his wife. Chhatrapati Shivaji was a strong supporter of the Hindu cause. Hence he waged wars relentlessly. around 1676-78 A.D. he proceeded towards Tanjavuru and on the way back he attacked the cities of Karanataka also. When he had camped at Yadavada village, Ishaprabhu and his men planned to invite and honour him. But before thir plan materialized Sivaji's men captured the cows of the *Gollas*. When this was brought to the notice of Ishaprabhu, Rani Mallamma took her army of female warriors and attacked the soldiers of Sivaji when they were sleeping, defeated them and also regained the cows. This defeat was an unswallowable pill for Sivaji. Hence he ordered his commander to attack Belavadi. Ishaprabhu had sought the help from Gaviappa Nayaka of Huli and Virappagouda of Sigehalli. But before their troops came, Belavadi was attacked. Ishaprabhu died heroically in the protection of kingdom. Thus, the responsibility of the kingdom fell on the shoulders of Rani Mallamma. She resumed the battle. She ambushed Sivaji with her women warriors when he was returning from the temple of Jagadamba. Sivajsaw in her his mother Jijabai and also Jagadamba. Hence he supplicated and surrendered to her. later peace was made and Sivaji returned to his capture her and keep her as his mistress. But Tarabai, his wife came forward to protect the chastity of Rani Mallamma and helped her. After the death of Sambhaji she visited his capital. Shi breathed her last in Belavadi in saka 1639.

The other story *Blood Bath* deals with a historical event that took place in one of the dynasties that ruled over the Vijayanagara Empire. Though bred and brought up and provided with all that he needed by his uncle Devaraya, Jayadeva kills his cousin Sivaraya (Devaraya's son) and the latter's father Devaraya II. He conspires against his cousin and uncle with a desire to encroach upon the kingdom. Ultimately everything winds up with his own death.

Another story that deals with historical theme is "*The Golden Servant*" which presents the life and achievements of Kanakadasa, a saint-poet of Karanataka. Kanakadasa was not only a saint-poet but also a fighter who fought for the cause of his own people, self-respect and the like. He was a good administrator and above all a soul that hankered constantly for a healthy society.

A women is not helpless and timorous because she is born as women. Women though tender and tender-hearted by nature at times can surpass any brave man. It is witnessed in many cases of many nations. She can breast-feed the man when she is overwhelmed with motherly affection. When her heart is charged with hatred she can play umpteen numbers of tricks and bring the downfall of man. According to an old saying none equals the mother in protecting and cherishing the man and similarly none can surpass a wife in satiating and subduing the emotions and manliness of man. In both these forms of mother and wife, women's role in the life of man is of certain altitude. In the first of the stories under discussion, namely *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi*, we witness the female heroism of Mallamma displayed lavishly. She fights with the two tigers quite heroically single-handed. Here is raja Ishaprabhu, her husband, full of applause "Bravo, my darling Rani, i am really proud of you. You have put the men folk to shame. You have proved that a woman is never weak or helpless. Our kingdom is really proud of a heroic Rani like you" (14). He is even apologetic for not being able to protect her for which she had married him.

There is no wonder if a woman awakes and arises and answers t Rani Mallamma is a rare person, a first, and a special phenomenon in Indian History to organize the woman and train them up in fighting. It is possible only for an Amazonian woman like Rani Mallamma to lead an attack against the Maratha army and put them down. When Rani Mallamma and her female warriors brought back the cows captured by the Maratha soldiers the *Gollas' happiness* knew no bounds. Raja Ishaprabhu once again indulges in her praise, "Bravo... you have disproved the traditional notion that woman is weak and helpless. You have indeed become Goddess Chandi in your military achievements" (22). Even the enemy Sivaji, commended her heroism and displayed his gentle manliness though he expressed his insult and anger later. When the war with Sivaji's army was prolonged Raja Ishaprabhu was down hearted and worried a lot. Again it was Rani Mallamma that ignited the fire of encouragement in him by her fiery words. "...We are the heroes of Kannada Land... we shall achieve either victory in the war or attain heroic death on the battlefield" (25). Though Raja Ishaprabhu died in the war with the Marathas she never lost her heart. On the contrary she steered a plan to ambush Sivaji and teach him a fine lesson. She did it too. He even fell to her feet and said that she was his mother next to Jijabai and she must bless him in his future plans. Thus, one witnesses the picturesque description of Rani Mallamma's personality as a good administrator, an able organizer and also a ferocious fighter.

The other side of the nedal of heroism is spiritual heroism. Kanakadasa may be regarded as the pioneer of spiritual heroism among the downtrodden section of the society. To lead a sequestered spiritual life is one thing, which is easy while compared with that of a spiritual life living in the midst of community. The days

of Kanakadasa's decision to embrace a spiritual life are really laudable one. It requires guts on the part of man from a downtrodden section of the society. In such a predicament Kanakadasa's growth from political heroism to spiritual heroism becomes not only significant but also recognizable, which demands serious attention. To become a *dasa* is to dedicate and surrender to Lord Sri Hari. Certain qualifications like good health, courage to protest and criticize the follies of people around and including correct understanding in society etc, are require for a man to become a *dasa*, Kanakadasa would have lived a happy life of ruler as *Mandalika* but he abandoned it along with its glorious aura and embraced the life of spiritualism with its austerities with an intention to bring reformation in society while immortalizing himself in the spiritual world. As he was a relentless traveler wherever he went, he arranged and addressed the gatherings to improve the people. As a part of his advice to society he has left a body of *Kirtanas* and immaculate poetry, which is in need of critical attention.

Another important element which the dignified dynasties of the past were that of their display of pomp and glory. When Mallamma married Ishaprabhu their marriage was performed in a glorious way. Here is the description of their wedding "The hall was decorated with festoons of various flowers and mango leaves... She was decked with a variety of flashy golden ornaments studded with rubies, diamonds and jewels and looked like a veritable goddess called Rati"... All the princes offered valuable gifts of golden ornaments and silken garments to the couple. It was followed by a grand feast of a variety of delicious dishes. The marriage ritual continued for *ten days* [italics mine] (8-9). Their married life was also full of glory.

Though glory adds to the pleasure of an ordinary man in the ordinary sense sometimes it becomes the cause of hatred and tussle. The staunch desire to possess it may also lead one to conspiracy and assassination when one is motivated by morbid desires as we witness in the story *Bloodbath*, wherein we see Jayadeva killing his nephew and further planning to kill his own uncle who had bred and brought him up into a full grown man in all respects, to acquire the same glory and the seat of power.

However, the case of a pious man is altogether different. Though he enjoys the glorious life and the gifts of glory he indulges in it with a sense of detachment and very soon gets disillusioned and decides to abandon it. He may even stoop to share that personal glory with all around him. Such a noble soul was Kanakadasa. His desire to attain the highest state of bliss goaded him to invest the gold, which he had got for ameliorative purposes. Philosophy in general and Indian attitude in particular holds the view that wealth and glory are *maya*. They are often held to be the hindrances on the path of a spiritual practitioner and his spiritual progress. Hence, Kanakadasa's selfless generosity in the story *The Golden Servant*. He like the Buddha, renounced his position as a ruler of a province and the accompanying pomp and glory and turned in to a *dasa* (servant) of God. It holds up a mirror to the life of Kanakadasa. Thus, the three stories breathe the ample air of glory of daily life and activities of these glorious characters in their full swing.

Contemporaneity is the most important component of human life. No human being can escape the clutches of contemporary tentacles. And ignorance of contemporary life especially on the part of a writer is suicidal. In fact, a writer is a child who is vulnerable to contemporary influences. At the same time no writer can ignore the past. This concept of Time has been bothering man since times immemorial. Time is infinite and eternal. Time is, for the convenience again, divided into past, present and future by man himself who lives, thinks and acts in the present. Present is full of pressures, tensions and is concerned more about the instant and the immediate, in other words "here" and "now". Speaking of this phenomenon D.H.Lawrence writes, "Eternity is only an abstraction from the actual present. Infinity is only a great reservoir of recollection or a reservoir of aspiration, man made. The quivering nimble hour of the present. This is the quick of Time. This is the immanence. The quick of the universe is the pulsating carnal self, mysterious and palpable." Thus to capture and encapsulate the present seems to be the attempt of a writer in general and short story writer in particular, because short story writing is a process of limitation as has already been discussed. Basavaraj Naikar's preoccupation with present and the contemporaneity in various forms and colours is quite clearly seen in the collection under discussion. Contemporary life is full of complex elements in umpteen numbers. Let us discuss these elements as reflected in the stories in the collection.

"Change is the law of nature" is an oft-quoted statement. Change in itself is neutral. But in accordance with the time, convenience and circumstance man labels the change as 'good' and 'bad.' If the antisocial elements change into pro-social it is good and fortune of the society. Change occurs when one person or a thing comes into contact with the other. That a good person can transform the heart of a thug or a bad man is shown very effectively in the story "Change of Heart". In the story we see the house of Siddhalinga and Sivalilia attacked by the thieves in the midnight of a new Moon Day. When the thieves held the daggers in their hands and began to move towards Siddhalinga, Sivalila rushed to the bedroom to bring the keys of almirah. No sooner did she bring the keys than she handed them over to the thieves who ransacked their wealth and ornaments. Then they attacked the couple again and demanded other jewels if they had any. Sivalila

mustered up her courage and came before the leader of the thieves and surrendered the golden bangles and other ornaments including the sacred *tali* she had on. With tears gathered in her eyes, she said to the thieves who asked for other ornaments, in piteous voice that they had given all they had with them even if they were not satisfied with that they must kill her first and then her husband. Puzzled by Sivalilia's words the thieves made towards the door. But soon Sivalila called them back and advised them in the following words; "See man, please don't waste this gold by drinking or playing cards. You are like *my brothers*. (Italic mine) You start a shop or some other business with that money and settle down to a respectable life instead of leading such an irregular life" (47). These words of Sivalila spoken in affectionate tone of a sister affect the leader of the thieves and leave an indelible impression on his mind. Within the period of a fortnight he came back to the couple and fell at the feet of Sivalila and said that he had decided to stop thieving. Here are his words. "Dear Madam, you are not an ordinary lady, but a veritable goddess. *You are like my elder sister* (Italics mine)... You advised me like a sister to make use of that money for some useful investment... *Your words have been ringing in my ears, without my knowing. My heart had accepted you as my sister.* (Italics mines) I have now decided to stop thieving and start living a respectable life. *My dear sister,* (Italics mines) please take back this gold and bless me to lead a pious life" (50). Thus, a humane approach can convert the heart of even a hardhearted thief.

University and College campuses are considered to be pure and untouched by hypocrisy and corruption. Since Universities and Colleges are the highest seats of learning the human belief in and expectation from them is very high. But the author it seems is hurt much by the pollution that has been infested on them. A couple of stories deal with the theme of campus life in the collection under discussion. The long short story that can be classed, as a novella is *A Chronic Patient Became a Doctor*. The story presents before the reader how Mr. Nandiswar became a Doctorate Degree holder. It is a saga of the protagonist. The story is full of satire on the campus life of the Indian Educational Institutions in general and the University in particular. The protagonist met his professor after announcement of the M.A. result. Then he met Professor Nagaraj who proposed to take him as his research assistant and took him to the City of Rocks. It was from that day onwards that the protagonist's difficulties commenced. He was caught in the triple hot streams of attending the clerical job, teaching the M.A. students and carrying on the research work. In his staunch and unflinching desire to acquire Ph.D. he had to surrender himself to the severe austerities and ordeals. Ultimately his Ph.D. thesis was finished and submitted to the University. Amidst the difficulties Ph.D. was awarded to him after a continuous combat with a cynically tenacious guide. Very soon the advertisement of the University for the Post of a Reader was in sight. The protagonist was elated and applied with innumerable expectations. He thought that he was the only person who deserved the post of a Reader. But much against his expectation and hope he did not get the post of Reader because one of the candidates was the daughter of a central minister. She had wielded much political pressure and thereby got appointed. The news was given to the protagonist by a senior member of the Department, Professor Sitaram. He disclosed the news to the hero of our story. Here is protagonist Nandiswar speaking about the shallowness of the drama of the appointment. "I was deeply disturbed by the absurd drama called the interview. I experienced and learnt that the idealist U.G.C. Rules were made a farce by the opportunistic practice of the university" [276]. The mode of appointment followed by the authorities in the contemporary Indian set up is often commented by the characters in this story. Even the guide of the protagonist while working on a selection committee of Mangalore University selected an ordinary woman without a Ph.D. while ignoring the merit of Ramaswamy. Here are the words of the professor defending..." I fought for her vehemently. I pleaded that she should be appointed as Selection Grade Reader because she has a brilliant mind. Besides her father and I were jail mates in 1942. So I had to help his daughter" (237). Today most of the Indian Universities, their activities academic as well as bureaucratic administration in every rung are politicized. Here are the words of the seasoned professor of mathematics"... But our Universities never follow the UGC norms honestly. They always follow practical and opportunistic methods. You know our Vice-Chancellors happen to be puppets in the hands of politicians. Their sole intention is to please the Ministers, MLAs and MPs and never to maintain academic excellence" [273] which shows the predicament of the rotten academic ambience in contemporary India. Thus, the story is full of satire on the hypocrisy and shabbiness of the guides in the P.G. Departments and the helplessness of the students who believe them to be their well wishers and guides not only in academic life but also in their personal matters, while hinting at the hapless state hurled upon the innocent candidates who anticipate a job and economic security from such institutes.

Politics is a part of public life. He who responds to the contemporaneity around him must take into consideration the activities that take place in public. If for political people politics is a game where from they derive diversion and benefit, for an innocent and also a subordinate it is a vortex, which ultimately suffocates and kills. People in politics can entice as well as enforce control on the people from a layman to learned

professor and poet. There are a couple of stories in the collection that deals with the theme of politics. The story "Felicitation" shows how even the learned professors and popular poets become a prey to the brainless politicians and their petty politics. Since politics is a process of dehumanization, the politicians shows no real concern for any one. In the story a poet, a critic and also the protagonist are invited by a group of petty politicians to be felicitated. The trio travels by a car to the village and puzzled to see the people showing much importance to a political personality rather than to these writers. They are totally ignored and kept in abeyance. Finally the person who had gone to invite these people sent a message that he was very busy with the M.L.A. who was to address the public at the Guest House and that the trio must go there to be felicitated. The trio since they were illustrious took it as a sort of mortification and decided to go back to their place unfelicitated. Thus the story holds up the mirror to the state of things in academic world. The desire of writers and critics, to be recognized and honored, thus becomes the cause of their insult. The desire of such persons (men of letters) to be felicitated ultimately lands them into difficulties, because it is the brainless politician who enjoys the highest respect by the public.

Another story that deals with the theme of politics is *The Spiders' Web*, wherein we see the narrator becoming the cabinet level minister by virtue of his caste. Caste/religion plays a vital role in politics at least in the matters like issue of tickets by the parties to contest in the appointment and then adjusting the portfolios. The narrator in the story says that he is an idealist by nature and hence desires strongly to improve his department. He undertakes a visit to many of the offices of his district. Then he eats the sumptuous meal of fresh fish. The dinner is grand. But he never bothers to pay. When addressing a public gathering as a response to the complaint of the people against a local Circle Inspector he orders for the suspension of the said officer. As soon as he announces it this man collapses near the dais and is carried out for medical aid. Later on the protagonist learns from the District Commissioner that the man who collapsed was none but the man (Mr. Durgadas) who had arranged the grand dinner of fresh fish. The District Commissioner also narrates the story how Durgadas had arranged for the money to meet out the expenditure of such expensive parties. The protagonist feels inexplicably sorry for the predicament in which he was thrust by his own desire. How politics and politicians together play with the lives of laymen is shown in the story heart rendingly.

In another story *The Circle of Vengeance* wherein we see Nagappa who worked as a coolie on Naragunda bus stand, sought shelter in Jagapur. He chose Jagapur village only because there was a pitch of land of about twenty acres unaccounted for in the rural documents. Moreover according to the conventions in the village the greatest rowdy could become the owner of the land and enjoy the status or benefits whatsoever. Hence Nagappa, a born rowdy, decided to go there, exhibited his heroism, captured the land and begin to live. Adjacent to that land-patch was another patch of two acres owned by Huchchappa. By his high handedness Nagappa merged that land also into his twenty acres land and began to cultivate, soon he became wealthy and opened three canteens and owned a herd of sheep. Hence Huchchappa met a lawyer called Dharmappa who was also a native of Jagapur but had settled at Dharwad practicing law. When Huchchappa approached the lawyer he gave him *abhaya* and then went to Jagapur and asked Nagappa who was an incorrigible fellow by nature was angry with the lawyer as well as Huchchappa. Then a quarrel ensued. There was factionalism in the village. Dharmappa brought a revolver by way of precaution. There occurred murders. Dharmappa shot a man of Nagappa's party at Navalagund. Through the case was registered against him, Dharmappa bribed the judges and lawyers who investigated the case and escaped the punishment. Meanwhile the entire wealth of Nagappa melted in spending for the court, the lawyer and the police station and also in maintaining the hefty group. He was forced to close down the canteens and sell his herd of sheep. Therefore his followers lift him and joined the group of Dharmappa. In the meantime some men of Dharmappa's party pretended hatred towards him and joined Nagappa's group. They began to show extraordinary fidelity in him. Now Nagappa became confident. One day he was attacked by Dharmappa and his men. He became furious and opened his revolver and began to shoot. As there were only three cartridges in the revolver, they were lost soon in the encounter. Now Nagappa came to know that his hours were numbered. Hence he threw away the revolver and began run. He caught a taxi and got into it. No sooner did he get into it then the men of Dharmappa caught him and pulled him out. "Nagappa fell on his back on the earth and before he could get up, some one in the group dealt a heavy blow with a big axe. The axe fell on Nagappa's forehead and the bleeding skin turned down and fell on his eyes and blinded him. Nagappa's body sagged to the earth" (107). After the death of Nagappa, Dharmappa, the lawyer, became the uncrowned monarch of Jagapur. But Kalinga, the son of the villager who was shot by Dharmappa at Navalagund, had grown into a strong and angry young man. He was sharpening his axe against Dharmappa. Once there was the fair of the temple of Kalmeswara. That night Dharmappa slept outside the house due to stuffy weather. Kalinga waited for the opportunity and hacked Dharmappa who was in deep sleep. the circle of vengeance was thus completed. In this way the stories discussed above shows the writer's power of depiction of the rural life and rivalry in all its elemental reality.

Human relation from one of the major themes taken up by the writer. Human beings, as they live amidst the people, will inevitably come in contact with other human beings. That the relationships are the results of necessity is a known fact. Of the human relations man-woman relation is conspicuously delineated in the stories *Cross-Roads* and *Basavanti*. In the first story the protagonist is estranged from his beloved Kalpana due to Razakar Movement whom he meets accidentally while he drops in a garage to get his motorcycle repaired. Then he learns that his friend and classmate had married her. As the friend had some urgent work at Hyderabad he leaves Sivaraj at his home and goes away. It is then that the protagonist's past beloved engages him in conversation and says that she accepted life as it made her to act. Here are her words. "We come across so many things, whether it is natural or inevitable or necessary; we come across so many kinds of persons. We compromise with them in one-way or other. If we fail to do so, we see our life slides away from us. That is why I accepted life. And that itself is life" (87). In another story we see the protagonist Basavanti, a young girl of fancies confronting hard with her predicament. Though she was wedded to Kalamesh her connubial life with him was not a happy one. For her husband would ill-treat her, and moreover she longed for the company and caress of her former lover. As per the latter's secret advice she even severed her relationship with her husband and went back to her village Nagarahalli even without telling him. Chinnappagouda, her former lover, felt ecstatic about her return and renewed his visits to her house. He continued his diurnal as well as nocturnal visits to Basavanti's house. He got her golden bangles, necklace, earrings and other ornaments. He gave her economic support. Their illicit affair becomes the talk of the village. Both Chinnappa and Basavanti grew unmindful of the talk and comments of the villagers. Nearly half a dozen years went by like thin amorous enjoyment. But one day Basavanti's eyes grew dim suddenly. She could see nothing around her. When Chinnappagouda came to know about this in the night he was shocked and gave her some money asking her to consult some doctor immediately at Hubli. But the gravity of the situation demanded that she must go to Bangalore. When the news was made known to Chinnappagouda he was terrified by the gravity of the situation. He then assured her that he would supply her enough money that would suffice for the journey as well as the doctor's fees at Bangalore. But on Basavanti's asking him to accompany her to Bangalore his reply to her in apologetic tone was, "Dear, please try to know my difficulty also. I cannot stir out of the village because I have to attend to the farms. This is the sowing season. I must see that all the farms are sown in right time" (745). Instead he deputed his faithful servant Siddappa to escort her and her mother to Bangalore. But on their consulting the doctor it became clear to them that there was less chance of success of operation even if carried out quite dexterously. Hence, they came back to their village helplessly. When Chinnappagouda came to know about this he grew restless and lessened his visits to Basavanti's residence. Basavanti grew restless and felt insecure. As Chinnappagouda's visits became rare she fell short of money. Therefore she was forced to sell the ornaments one by one. "Basavanti decided to live on only one meal per day as a punishment for her illegal existence with her lover" (150). Finally, she abandoned that single meal also. As a result her health deteriorated completely and she died. When Chinnappagouda heard that his ex-beloved was no more, he rushed immediately to her house and offered his "last homage" to her. Then he paid enough money to Siddappa and asked him to arrange Basavanti's funeral rites properly. Thus the story of Basavanti's love and life come to an end. What becomes noteworthy in the story is Chinnappaagouda's lust towards Basavanti. It was he who motivated her to get severed from husband permanently so that he could remain her permanent paramour. It was his selfish desire that sucked away from Basavanti, her youthfulness, her beauty, the social status as a respectable woman in the society and ultimately her life itself. This is so, because of Chinnappagouda's possessive nature. Thus, the male possessiveness and female gullibility become important elements in spoiling the human relations. This is seen in a majority of the stories in the collection.

If a novelist has a vision of life a short story writer has reflective moments. Contemplation leads forward the thought towards reflection at the first stage and when reflection receives reaffirmation from the conscience and gets firmly established in the mind it becomes a vision. Since the canvass of the novelist is vast he proceeds to vision whereas a short story writer has a limited space and time he rests at the stage of reflection and stares at life with analytical look. There are a couple of stories, which shows the writer's mettle in writing the reflective stories. The story *Pilgrimage to Kashi* happens to be reflective. In the story we came across a character of Govindacharya who was irreformably orthodox, who went to Kashi but never felt free from the tangles of mundane life. A person like Govindacharya, living in the evening of life could have enjoyed the pilgrimage. By his adamant nature he had forced his sons to send him to Kashi who feared that he might not get adjusted with the co-pilgrims. But ultimately they yielded and waved him off at the railway platform. "He had a purseful of money and a strong desire to eat, nearly a month had elapsed after he had left his place, but he had never befriended any co-pilgrim in the compartment. He never participated in their chatting and laughing. He used to remain ever serious thereby showing of his riches" (127). He remained so with his contorted and morose face in spite of repeated attempts of Nagesharaya, another pilgrim to Kashi.

Here are his words, “see Acharya, you have not laughed even once during these days and never relaxed your contorted face... shall I show it to you by holding a mirror?” (129). All along the journey Govindacharya remained introverted. The party reach the Kashi, bathed in the holy water of Ganga and had the *darsan* of Lord Vishwanatha. Acharya participated in these pilgrimage formalities mechanically. Later during the conversation with Nagesharaya, Acharya said that they had all finished their pilgrimage happily and would go back to their homes to stay happily but his lot was quite different and he was compelled to go back to that hell of his sons. At these words of Acharya, Nagesharaya said, “Who doesn’t want happiness? But can one get happiness if one goes in search of it? We have to generate happiness in ourselves. Happiness and sorrow are two states of our mind... But people remember how we live our life... our happiness lies in what good we do to others...” (130). These words cause the dawn of awareness in Acharya. Thus the story is full of reflective dialogues. Likewise the story *Cross-Roads* is also full of reflections. The protagonist Sivaraj again and again reflects on time. “Time is a strange thing indeed. Time, they say, has stood still. It moves neither backward nor forward. It has no limits to this side or that. Is it then infinite? ... time is travelling eternally... We breathe but an infinitesimal moment of this eternity and thread our sensations and disappear into oblivion” (77). In the same way, *The Golden Servant* being a life story of the great saint, poet, philosopher of Karnataka, Kanakadasa, is full of reflective passages.

Technique heightens the effect of the story, while helping the narrator as an effective tool in building up a proper rapport with the reader and in making an impact on him through indelible impressions of men and their manners; it alone cannot suffice in making the story a memorable and successful one. Basavaraj Naikar emerges as a successful raconteur by making use of diverse devices to suit his purpose.

It seems most of his stories are plot-oriented. Plot may be taken to be schematization of events in a linear form. It shows, in other words a proper beginning, muffled middle and an exact ending. Most of the stories in the collection under discussion fall in line with the above observation. But setting predominates over plot and character as in “Cross-Roads” very rarely. As for as the effective use of setting is concerned the story is comparable with that of Chinua Achebe’s *Marriage is a Private Affair*.

As for narrative mechanism he makes use of various narrative manners such as flash back technique, stream of consciousness technique, point of view technique and also first person narration. He handles these narrative techniques quite dexterously. The flashback method is very effectively used in *Cross Roads* again.

Very often the characters created by the writer seem to be types-a common feature of Indian English short fiction writers. One wished the kind of multiplicity in the type of characters as the author does with his manner. What becomes quite noteworthy is his power and inventiveness he reveals in creating the typically south Indian ethos. To show his attempt to convey the typically South Indian atmosphere the following lines may be quoted.

(I) “My sons offered water to the guests in small tumblers. Each one of them sprinkled water on their feet, washed their faces and rubbed them clean with towels offered to them” (53).

Here is the picturesque depiction of bride examination prevalent in the Lingayat community of northern Karnataka. “The priest Panchayya asked her to be seated on the wooden seat with her face to the east. She touched the floor with her palms and symbolically saluted all those seated there and sat on the wooden seat in a lotus posture. Then Panchayya... took her left palm and examined the lines on it meticulously like a scientist examining the bacteria through a microscope... he nodded his head by way of approval. Then he asked her to stand up. She lifted up her sari six inches from her feet so that everybody could see the symmetry of her toes and ankles... Panchayya took out a *Shiva* string of silk and measured her ten fingers and two palms and compared it with her height i.e., from feet to the vermilion dot on her forehead” (54). Likewise, he makes references to South Indian dishes and food items and food habits to make the atmosphere living and real. Here is a list of food items, which we came across almost invariably in every story in the collection. *Uppittu*, sweet balls, mirchis, fried-parched rice, puffed rice, *Kadabu*, *holige*, *shyavige*, *sandige*, *rottis*, brinjal curry and curds – a fine and typically North Karnataka staple food item.

He even makes reference to many rural games like *Tiger-House*, *Chakka* etc., which one can come across if one undertakes a tour across Karnataka and especially North Karnataka the locale of which forms the prominent picturing in his works. The rural games and the participants in such a games he alludes to, often in this stories, are held in the afternoon – siesta or lounging in the temples or in the *chavani* (veranda) of *Gourimani* (a place where village rustics spend their leisure hours and indulge in the rehearsals of village drama and *Yakshagana* and *Doddata*) during hot summer afternoons.

The author’s desire to create the atmosphere has so many times motivated him to coin the archaic Kannada words in italicized forms. Here are some words, which he uses, in his historical stories to create the administrative atmosphere of antiquity. *Paragana*, *Dhandanayaka*, *palegar*, *Darbar*, *Karbhari*, *Subedar*, *Sarot* (a horse drawn cart), *Pathashala*, *niskha* etc.

As though he is not satisfied with the mere use of words, many times Naikar employs the similes and metaphors which are peculiar to Indian life that go a long way to create Indian sense and sensibility in general and that of Karnataka in particular. Examples culled at random can suffice to show this, “bird of his breath had flown away” (29), “bewitching figure of Goddess Rati and handsome like mythical Lord Kama” (II) and “Mallamma fought with the enemies like the terrific Goddess Chandi” (27) and also his description of the furrowed land in one of the stories as “The ridges of mud in the field looked like the folds of a black Ilkal Sari” (67).

One more striking feature of Naikar’s prose style, like Raja Rao’s, is the translation and even some times transliteration of Kannada idioms. Here is a bunch of such Kannada Idiom translated/transliterated, “we must speak ten lines to arrange an alliance” (57). “The villagers had not kindled their ovens for three complete days” (58), “even a single hair of yours not hurt” (67), “the sun rose to an elbow’s length from the horizon” (68), “Viranagouda had warmed the palms of the police authorities” (70). Such and many other elements in the matter of style as well as theme make the reader reminiscent of the stories of Bhabani Bhattacharya and raja Rao. It would be interesting to study how an author makes use of his mother tongue and incorporating it in his English thereby making it typically Indian English.

The above listed achievements of Naikar as a short-story writer show him as a renowned raconteur. It wouldn’t be tantamount to sacrilege either to consider or point out that there could be some areas of darkness in ‘the resplendent corpus’ of the short stories by him. It is a reiterated fact that the brevity is the soul of short story and it depends for its success on suggestion rather than the exposition. If there is one enemy of whom a short story writer must be dreaded and always try to subdue, is the superfluity. There are couples of stories, which seem to suffer from the superfluity. My reference in this regard is to two stories selected at random. The story “Blood for Blood” which has already been discussed in detail has for its subject the bride examination. The narrator, who after the bride examination goes to Naragund, meets his friend Channappa, collects the information about the background of the Viranagouda’s family. He decides personally not to marry off his daughter into the family. After coming back home he consults his family specially the bride who dissents and his wife is also angry and refuse the alliance flatly. Actually the story ends here but the author has elongated the story with addition of one more paragraph, “A weeks later Viranagouda’s messenger came to our house... a great burden had been lifted off our chest” (74), which does not contribute anything to the effect of the story. In the same way in the story *Basavanti* the eponymous protagonist forsakes her husband and comes back to Nagarahalli on the secret advice of her former lover Chinnappagouda. After her arrival he visits her continuously and renews his former love to her. During his visits he would engage her in long conversations. Here is the description. “She would tell him all the stories and hearsay that she had heard or could remember and make him laugh, similarly he would narrate to her all the adventures of his younger days and keep in good humour” (141). Here the author could have stopped the description and gone ahead to the next point. But instead he proceeds to make Chinnappagouda indulge in circumlocution. Here is the piece from dialogue, “When I was a young boy of about sixteen,” he said to her one day, “I had observed the purity... until he had his fulfillment for the day” (141-2). So also another paragraph, “Basavanti never attended... in the enjoyment of their glorious love affair” (143). And also the last paragraph in the same story, “After three days when the sepulchral gravity had thinned... said Lingavva” (151). The excision of the above quoted paragraphs would certainly not hinder the pleasure of the reader but on the contrary would enhance it. In other words their excision does not cause any harm to the total effect of the story. This is only to show that as the sparsely scattered dross enhances our reverence for the veritable gold mine that the collection really is.

Thus, the range and variety in theme and technique and the kaleidoscopic view that Naikar uses in his short stories shall surely secure him a firm position of honour and recognition in the realm of Indian English short fiction.

References

1. M.K Naik, A History of Indian English Literature, (New Delhi : Sahitya Academy,-) 179 quoted by Ian Reid in The Short Story: The Critical Idiom, (London: Methuen & Co.1977) 31.
2. Quoted by Ian Reid
3. Op.Cit. 44.
4. ibid. 45.
5. Basavaraj Naikar, The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories (New delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2001) all subsequent references to the stories are to this edition and have been absorbed in the text by giving page references in parentheses.
6. K.R.Hayagrivachar, Selected Essay From D.H.Lawrence (Chennai: Macmillan India Ltd. 1986) 43.
7. C.V.Venugopal, The Indian Short Story in English: A Survey (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot)
8. T.R.Sharma, (Ed), Perspectives on Rabindranath Tagore (Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan. 1986)

