



Social Significance of Telugu Short Stories

*Dr. M. Sreedevi Xavier

* Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, The M. S. University Of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyse sociologically the short stories in Telugu in order to find the significant role played by them to mirror the social realities from time to time. In Telugu, the short story has acquired popularity and incultation comparable, though not equal, to the folk songs and folk tales of the oral tradition.

The analysis of the short stories is done from the perspective developed in sociology of literature. While passing through the collection of short stories, one can possibly discern the gradual development of various social movements, through their various phases reflecting the society in its completeness.

The short story, then, is a revealing window into the formations and transformations of the social context and psychic universe of the middle classes, even though, the thematic content remains unrestricted, cutting across all boundaries of class and status, of interiority and exteriority.

Keywords: Dialectical, Social Formations, Social Transformations, Tales

Introduction

In its eastern habitat of transfer (that is India), the short story form continues to exhibit the openness and flexibility associated with its original habitat in the West, but a closer examination of its underlying spirit reveals elements which are, unconscious or deliberate, infusions from the folk-form - the tale or 'Katha' - which was probably the oldest indigenous genre of literature, of the Andhra region, alongside folk-songs. It is also worth recalling that this genre of 'tale' remains the single most precious contribution of the Indian literary tradition to the western world. Contemporary scholarship has reached a fair degree of unanimity, in tracing the global diffusion of the 'tales' from India to Europe, through successive centuries, through commulative metamorphosis and mutations. The land that produced the most outstanding genius of 'tales' (Katha), around 200 B.C. / 100 A.D., was Andhra, for it was in Pratisthanpur, the capital of the Satvahana rulers on the Godavari banks, that Gunadhya wrote his encyclopaedic work of tales - the Brihat Katha; and it is this work, which in its later abridgements and re-telling, starts on its international career of translations, transcreations and adaptations, in its rebirth as 'Pancha-Tantra'. By circa 550, it is rendered in Middle Persian; by 750 into Arabic, by 1270 into, Greek and Latin; by 1520 into Italian, and by 1570 into Elizabethan English - of Sir Henry North's 'Morell Philosophy of Doni'; and the story material thence moves on to infuse the Fables of La Fontaine, the stories of Grimm, the fairy-tales of Anderson et al (Dimocks, E. C, 1974).

The modern 'avatara' of the 'Katha' that is the short story, therefore, preserves the spirit and poetry of its authentic folk-roots, through its contemporary 'form' and/or 'structure', in Andhra Pradesh. This subtle interface between the 'Kavya' as the soul of the 'Katha' has been noted by Sri Sri (1978).

K. N. Subramanyam (1978), in his introduction to the anthology 'Contemporary Indian Short Stories', arrives at a simile appraisal, even though his articulation is relatively subtle, and marked by 'furtiveness'. He details elements for reorganising the short story as: 'a certain realism in method, a certain idealistic romanticism, a large dose of sentiment, a quality of either, or, a vague attempt at delienating psychological moods and situations, a dose of lyricism and a conclusion that is recognisable as no conclusion.

It is, therefore, no surprise that in Telugu, the short story has acquired a popularity and incultation comparable, though not equal, to the folk songs and folk tales of the oral tradition. Its universe of circulation however, is largely the middle classes of Andhra society, who are the principal consumers of the printed meaning structures of the periodical press and book trade. The very extensiveness of the material, its sheer volume and variety, therefore, puts limitations within which this genre can be explored and analysed for the purposes of our study.

Apart from the folk-songs, the short stories came in an appreciable number. Songs and short stories, being very small, they are very convenient for propagating and also very easy for the comprehension. Moreover, the writers, during the various social movements were deeply immersed within the activities of the movements and did not have much time to concentrate on lengthy stories.

During the period 1940-1970, several brilliant story writers appeared and though they might have been inspired by the short stories of the west, they succeeded in varying degrees in presenting stories that were genuinely Indian and to a large extent Telugu.

Viswanatha Satyanarayana's Neerunam Tirchukonna is a very pathetic story. The writers like Narasimha Sastri, Adavi Bapiraju, Malladi, Kutumbarao, Gopichand, Buchhi Babu, and many more depicted various social, economic, political, humours, domestic, love and socio-psychological problems of people of Andhra Pradesh.

1. Nationalist Movement

Most of the short stories covering the conditions of Freedom movement were from all over the Andhra region. Portraying the personality of Alluri Sitha Rama Raju, his heroic death many short stories were written by the patriotic writers. Inspired by the Dandi March and Quit India Movement many writers depicted these events in their works. Kutumba Rao with his short stories created socio-political awareness among the people of Andhra.

2. Telangana Movement

Most of the short stories covering the conditions of Telangana region before 1946 were written by the Progressive Telan-

gana writers. Except very few all most all of them were published in Meejan (Daily). These writers were not professionalists in any literary creativity. So, one can find in these works some irregularities. But, as such, these works are superb in their own way. They are very close to the people and their problems. Another important point is that in these short stories the language used is Telangana colloquial language.

But the short stories appeared from 1946 to 1948 were mostly written by the Andhra writers, who were professionals in literary creativity, so one can find a strong story built up in these stories. However, as these writers are from Andhra region and also as they are not very familiar with Telangana village life etc., their stories could not depict the socio-economic conditions so effectively. It is to be noted that the only story which depicted the Police Action is Jeevakarunya Charya. None of the writers either from Telangana or from Andhra depicted the consequences of the Police Action and the Communist's 'Guerilla Warfare'.

Keeping the above mentioned factors in mind and also giving due consideration to the sequence developed in Telangana Porata Kathalu (1982), the following short stories have been selected for the present analysis. While passing through the selected short stories, it is expected that, one can possibly discern the gradual development of Telangana Peasant Movement, through its various phases.

These short stories have been grouped author-wise, the sequence being determined by the chronology of the stories. In addition, they have been clustered into three categories, based on their relevance to the phases of the movement which portray the social conditions of the Telangana, prior to the emergence of Telangana Peasant Movement i.e. 1946; the stories that depict the Peasants' Armed Struggle and its various aspects between 1946-48; and finally the only story which records the Police Action i.e. in 1948.

2. 1. Prior to 1946

The stories like 'Rahim Bhai', 'Sangham Chitti', 'Mana Vullo Kudana', 'Davatu' and 'Chinnappudae' portray the social conditions of the Telangana people and the emergence of Telangana Peasant Movement.

'Rahim Bhai' by Venkateswara Rao, P. (1946) deals with the true life history of 'Bandagi', a Muslim young peasant. Visunuru Deshmukh gets him killed when Bandagi wins the case against him, in 1920. This is the first known fight against landlords by a single individual. In those days, no body could be expected to stand against Doras, for any reason whatsoever. In case of standing against, the Doras take revenge some way or other. Depicting such inhuman reactions, the author clearly writes – Insulted by this, the Dora takes revenge on Rahim by getting him killed when he is returning from city with his court documents. At the place of his death, people constructed the tomb and start offering prayers to him every year. People in that village even now celebrate his death anniversary in the name of 'Ursu'.

Rama Rao, K. Ch. V. (1945) quite vividly portrays in his story, 'Mana Vullo Kudana' (In Our Village Also), the prevalence of Vetti system in Telangana villages. He clearly demonstrates that the primary requirement to fight against social evils is unity and it is brought around by the Andhra Maha Sabha and the Communist Party under the banner of 'Sangham'. Once it is achieved, the Sangham naturally started attacking the age old socio-economic and political problems.

'Chinnappudae' (Right in the childhood) by Alwaru Swami (1945) clearly reflects the views of the Sangham leaders regarding the miserable conditions of the children. It also reveals a feeling of responsibility on the part of the leaders for the future citizens.

2. 2. From 1946 to 1948

The stories like 'Vuregimpulu', 'Pannulu Ivvarn', 'Vadisela', 'Notice' 'Kottavarta', 'Guerilla Govind', 'Sandhi Ledu', 'Meeru

Gelustaru', 'Vimukti', 'Maha Shakti', 'Mattanayya Maranam', 'Pagal Yellamanda', 'Aayuvupattu', depict the various aspects of Peasants' Armed Struggle between 1946-48.

In Vuregimpulu (Processions) the author Pichhayya (1948) gives a vivid picture of spontaneous attention given by the people to the call of their Andhra Maha Sabha leaders to join the Procession and also their deep rooted sympathy for the sad demise of their leader Komarayya. The author even goes to the extent in elaborating that the animals, birds etc. are also felt the grief. This is the story, which deals with the events that occurred during the initial stages of the movement and also records the people's consciousness at that period.

'Vadisala' (The Sling) by Prasad Rao, P.D. (1947) deals with the tools which they use to fight against the military armed with guns. 'Vadisala' is a brilliant portrayal of a young village lady who along with other villagers tried bravely to repulse the army using her sling. The Sangham had trained the villagers to make use of the slings. It had mobilized people towards an organized fight.

In 'Guerilla Govindu' (The Guerilla Govind), the author Sarada (1948) gives an excellent depiction of the intelligent plans of Guerillas through the story. This story is a brilliant portrayal of the plans and tricks of the Guerillas in attacking the military and the Nizam's Razakars.

'Maha Shakti' (The Great Power) by Lakshmi Kanta Mohan, (1948) depicts the sacrificing nature of a lady, Kotamma. In those days, at the time of Movement many ladies joined hands with the Andhra Maha Sabha and the Communist Party and started working in different ways. Here, the author clearly portrays how the police torture the ladies. There is no limit to their atrocities. And also, the author depicts how firm the ladies are. In this story, one can observe the sacrifice of Kotamma in giving her life for the sake of the Communist Party leaders.

In Aayuvupattu (The Grip of Life) the author Reddy (1972) depicts the distribution of the land and cattle after the liberation. After the people's revolt, many of the villages are liberated and under the same leadership of the Communist Party, they have distributed their lands and cattle. It portrays how people in those days took the land distribution programme.

2. 3. After 1948

The only story which records the Police Action is 'Jeeva Karunya Charya' written by Venkata Rao, M. (1948). Union military entered Telangana on September 13, 1948. Indian Union Government proclaims that the aim of the Jeeva Karunya Charya is to attack the Nizam and his Razakars. But it joined hands with the Deshmukhs and their followers. The ending of this story depicts the same. Unfortunately after this police action, none of the writers depicted the last stage of the Guerilla warfare with Union Military.

In the later half of the 1940 and in 1950s writers with progressive outlook and socialistic background wrote very popular stories. Many writers dealt with the social problems, family responsibilities, and intolerance to injustice.

During 1970s and 1980s an altogether different wave emerged in the literary world. The Revolutionary writers came out with certain aims - to create literature that helps in bringing around cultural revolution that leads to Marxism; to strengthen the class conflict, that is conducive to the people's great revolution, through literature; to portray the reality in the light of socialism; to attack, through literature, the concepts regarding the feudalism and imperialism, religious and spiritual attitudes, and any other mean methods that derogate the people's strength; to support the literature that deals with revolution and also to achieve coincidence of opinions with such writers; to critically review the cultural traditions and accept the items that are convenient to the people in order to enrich the culture of the workers; to help social, cultural and political great revolution through literature and to dedicate

literature for real freedom and independence of mankind; to proclaim the argument of universal humanism in the light of Marxism-Leninism etc.

3. Naxalite Movement

The Revolutionary Writers Association can therefore be described as a 'Stormy Petrel' in the cultural sphere, to borrow Gorky's words. It was first of its kind in the country as a whole. The bourgeois press published the RWA as 'Naxalites in Literature'. The peasants' struggles added their own share of inspiration for writers and artists sensitive enough to react to the fresh stirrings. The RWA published the Anthology of short stories, Ippudu Veesthunna Gali. Srujana, Jana Natya Mandali, and Arunodaya regularly published various forms of literature. Among them short stories are quite popular.

4. Separate Telangana Movement

Many magazines are published dealing with Separate Telangana issues. Among them are "Mana Telangana", a quarterly magazine and "Telangana Katha", a yearly magazine. In these magazines there are innumerable stories related to various aspects of the problems of Telangana people. Coming to the stories of Separate Telangana movement, Sujata Reddy compiled two volumes of stories written by various writers of Telangana since the last ninety years. Ashok Kumar's four volumes of short stories elaborately discussed the socio-political and economic issues of people of Telangana.

In the other regions of Andhra Pradesh many Progressive and Revolutionary writers as well as others dealt and dealing about the socio-economic and political issues, family con-

flicts, social evils, juvenile related problems, etc. In most of the stories common man has taken the central stage.

Conclusions

The picture that emerges from the foregoing needs to be set in perspective. First, the audience reached by the genre is largely, the literate sector, which is still a minority of the population. Within this limitation, however, the possibilities inherent in this genre have been explored and developed widely, and with a large measure of success. As creative literature, it is steadily moving to the centre stage of recognition and acceptance. It has acquired a specificity, which is rooted in its socio-cultural context. It is therefore, legitimate, to raise the Goldmannian question as to its appropriateness for the theme of 'resolution', or even its mild prolegomena- the exploration of 'possibilities' beyond the existing order. Given our social formation, and its stage, the opportunities for such explorations and uses are virtually unlimited. The dialectic of utopia and ideology remains to be unfolded in its full working. The dialectic of utopia and ideology remains to be unfolded in its full working. The dialectic of 'I/We' relationship has been barely scratched. What has undoubtedly been tried is to introduce, through this genre, a whole range of new sensibilities, a new mode of self-consciousness, and a new way of linking oneself, to the ensemble of relationships constitutive of our social order, in short, the pre-figuring of a new subject as agent of action, of transforming action. And the first articulation of a new 'world-vision', as understood by Goldmann, even if the social group which is its locale, is somewhat precarious and unsure of its strength and potentialities.

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