

# Language in India

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### Historical Growth of Short Stories in Tamil and Telugu A Comparison

A. Boologa Rambai, Ph.D.

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## Introduction

“The Short Story is essentially a product of Modern age; it is perfected by great masters from Edger Allan Poe onwards. It is peculiarly a modern growth” - (Mahakavi Sri Sri). In 1842, Edger Allan Poe has defined short story “as a prose narrative requiring anything from half an hour to one or two hours in its *perusal*; a story that concentrates on a unique or single effect and one in which the totality of effect is the main objective; in the end the form has shown itself to be so flexible and susceptible of so much variety that its possibilities seem almost endless”.

The main purpose of this paper is to highlight the historical growth of short stories in Tamil and Telugu from a comparative perspective.

## A History of Short Stories

One may claim that in comparison to the history of short story literature in European languages, the short story genre in India is very young. However, ancient Indian didactic literature is full of short narratives as part of long epics. Buddhist literature abounds in short stories narrated by the Buddha and other sages. Parables of Buddha and the parables in Jaina traditions have moved the hearts and spirits of the people of Indian subcontinent for centuries. Moreover, there are many allusions to happenings that hide stories in every piece of Indian literature. In this sense short story is not a new content for Indian literature. However, the focus and form of short story that we have in modern times are somewhat different.

Short stories stand on their own, need not carry any morals (unless we do some conscious research into their deep meanings), and are written in prose. Introduction of prose as the major medium to express thoughts has changed Indian literary scene greatly. The translation of the Bible in prose and making available other materials in prose through the Christian missionary activity helped the spread and acceptance of prose as the chief medium of expression even for literature. Emergence of novel and short story as distinct genres in Indian literatures was made possible by the acceptance of prose in all walks of life.

## Pioneers in Bengal

Bengal and Bengali seem to have mastered the modern art of short story and novel writing earlier than other Indian linguistic communities. Bankim Chander Chatterjee (1838-1894) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) are the pioneers of that genre. Rabindranath wrote short stories for nearly 15 years (1887-1903). He wrote about 100 short stories like *Postmaster*, *Kabuliwala* (*kaabulioYaalaa*) and *Hungry Stone* (*kShudhita paashhaaN*), etc. He followed many techniques in writing short stories. His characters are of the type that the normal humans are exaggerated as abnormal ones. This is his speciality. He was not following anybody's style. He had an individual style of his own.

### **Tamil Short Story Writers**

The first remarkable collection of short stories in prose is by a great Italian Jesuit missionary, Father Beschi 1680-1746 A.D., known for his mastery of Tamil and its literature and literary traditions. He was fondly referred to as Veeramaamunivar. Veeramaamunivar's *paramaatha guru kadhaikaL* -- a collection of humorous stories, written in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is, indeed, more a collection of stories relating to virtues or lack thereof.

In this prose satire collection, Munivar presented eight stories focusing around his five followers namely *maTTi*, *maTaiyan*, *Peedhai*, *mileechan* and *muuTan*. These were certainly short stories and they mark an important deviation in the use of Tamil literary forms. However, the stories were so focused on virtues or lack thereof, critics may have some reservations about their claim to be short stories. George Buffoon says, "Style is the man himself". He criticizes that Veeramamunivar's above-said stories are the style of him, perhaps in the sense that Munivar's focus was more on evangelization than on the creation of a new genre *shot story*. But, we need to state that no literary writing is without a purpose behind it. So, simply based on the purpose and style, the importance of early pioneers such as Veeramaamunivar should not be dismissed. These stories may be aptly-named tales, not short stories considering modern approaches to short story.

### **Modern Writers**

Next to him in the last period of the nineteenth century are Taandava Raaya Mudhaliyar's *panchatandhirak kadhaikaL*, Selvakeesavaraya Mudhaliyar's *AbinvakkadhaikaL*, which are in prose narrative style. These also do not have the strict short story style.

Va.Vee.Su. Iyer (1881-1925) is also considered as an early pioneer of short story through his masterpiece short story *kuLatthankarai aracamaram chonna kathai* in the collection *mangaiyarkkarasiyin kaatal mutaliya kathaikaL*, which appeared in 1927.

Va.Vee.Su. Ayer's *kadhaikaL* are emotional stories. All these stories have an introductory part which was given by Iyer. In his stories Iyer narrates all the scenes very interestingly.

From 1927 – 1933 there was a dark period in the Tamil short stories.

### **Manikodi Period – 1933**

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This period was the Golden period for Tamil short stories. In this period enthusiastic young creative writers are encouraged and they are considered to be more important. In 1935, B.S. Ramaiah enriched and uplifted the Tamil short story to the international level. He reshaped the structure and the theme of modern short story. The writers of MaNikodi period were called as *MaNikodi group* and each and every one of this group flourished in their own style of writing. This group was very successful in making short story a major literary genre in Tamil.

Pudhumaippitthan (1906-1948) impressed his readers through deep themes, moral implications, variety, artistry of his style and narrative method.

This MaNikodi group laid the masterly foundation for the genre of modern Tamil short stories.

### **Kalki And Anna Period**

Apart from this Manikodi group, there were some other short story writers who were very popular in the Short Story world. Kalki (who paved the path for many short story writers through his editorship of some magazines) and Anna (C. N. Annadurai) are some of the leading writers that I should mention here.

Kalki's style is neither a traditional standard style nor a spoken style. His writing style was in the mid way of the standard language and the spoken language. This means that he used the speech variety in the conversation of the characters. His main aim was that the writer's theme must reach the readers completely. The author appeared himself as the story-teller in most of his stories.

In 1934 Anna started writing short stories. His first short story titled *kokkarakkoo* was published in the monthly magazine *Anandha Vikadan*. His last one was *kadhaiyin Ullam*. He has written 89 short stories. His main themes of the short stories focused on the elimination of social evils including superstition and oppression of communities based on caste discrimination, etc.

While Kalki strove his best to bring in changes within established norms of Tamil society (hard to define, but easy to understand!), Ann focused on transcending these "norms" which he considered hindering the progress and onward march of Tamil/Dravidian society.

### **Modern Period**

In 1950s Tamil short story world were enriched by the writers like Akilan, Ku. Alagirisamy, La. Caa. Raamaaamirudham and Ambai. Akilan's short stories have been divided into three parts. His first short story *miTiyaaL maTital* which was published in 1938 with his original name P.V. AkilaanDam. His last one *kaakkai ViraTTap poonavaL* was published in the monthly magazine *kalaimakaL* (Deepavali Special) in 1975. He had been writing short stories for 37 years. They have been collected in 16 volumes after his death. According to Akilan, the short story must need form, content and techniques.

K. Alagirisamy was one among the important and powerful writers of short story in Tamil. His aim was to make his short stories explicate the real life in the society. Social problems were expressed through his own voice. Next Laa. Caa. Raa's style was content-oriented. The women writer Ambai's style is somewhat impressionistic

In 1960s, some of the best and the notable short story writers entered the field. The first one is Jeyakanthan. His originality and artistry brought to him great name and he is ranked with the short story masters from around the world. Sudamani is another writer of this group. She is a writer of brilliance and genius. Last half of the 1950's the revolutionary group came into the field.

Until 1970 the major feature of the short story was plot. In 1970 there was a notable change against plot and the new writers were more concentrating on the interpretation of life. Recent trends concentrate on the stream of consciousness. Individual's life is taken as the theme for their writings. Social emphasis is there, but this is not the major focus.

### **Telugu Short Story Writers**

In Telugu, Gurazada Appa Rao (1861–1915) was the first person to write a short story, named *Diddubatululu* "correction, reformation". The story was published in the magazine *Andhra Bharathi*. It reveals the theme how a housewife weaned away her husband from his immoral contact with a dancing girl. Next he wrote the story titled *mii peereemiTTi?*, (What is your name?) which described the theme in an apt manner which revealed the Modern situation. His other stories were also of same type. He was describing the scenes in an artistic manner. His stories have been collected under the format *aaNi mutthukkaL*. Gurazada's stories have been very attractive and they are also of memorable situations and ideas.

### **Tribal Life as Short Story Themes**

Next, Chinta Dikshitulu (1891-1968) was another pioneer of Telugu short story writer. His main concept was to deal with the life style of the tribal and their wandering life. The author reveals his belief in the traditional cultural aspects and humour. He also concentrated more on portraying rural life. Some of his stories are Daashin BaaTa, Abipiraaya Beedham, etc.

### **Use of Caste Dialects**

Sri Padma Subramaniya Sastri (1891-1961) was famous for the use of his spoken dialect of Brahmins. His stories were in dialogue form without any narration. His pattern of writing was the mixture of Veeresalingom's theme and Gurazada's structures. He also used the elements of Dalitism. Some of his stories are *illaNTi tavvaay vosthee*, *saagara sangamam*, *vadla ginjalu*, *gulabi attaru*, *chali chimalu* and *Kileriginu*.

### **Focus on Structure – Use of Western Models**

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Gudipathi VenkaTachalam (1894-1970) was responsible for reconstructing the Telugu short story's structure by introducing many of the western models of short story. His stories are in colloquial style. He made an attempt to portray the incidents with extreme realism. He admired the western scholars' way of writing and took them as his model. Everyday's life was the focus of his stories to reflect the social realities of life. If Chalam was not in the field of this genre, many of the writers like KoTavaNTi KaNTi KuDumbaRao, Gopichand, Pucchi Babu, Renganayahamma, Volga, and Sathyavathi may not have emerged so soon in this field. He was a straight forward man to tell anything face to face. He wrote many short stories. Among them *puuvu puuchinti* was famous and a remarkable one. He also dealt with the Dalit theme in his short stories.

### **Social Realism**

Next, Viswanatha Satya Narayana's short stories revealed the real life situation and the social traditions of the people. He was the first person to introduce the philosophical concepts in his short stories. His themes included the remarriage of women. He questioned in his short stories whether beauty was necessary for sexual life, etc.

Adavi Pappi Raj wrote nearly forty-four stories. His stories were full of imaginations divided into four types:

- i) *vaastavika kathalu* (real story)
- ii) *Baala vaanmaya kathaalu* (Children's stories)
- iii) *caariththriigak kathaalu* (historical stories) and
- iv) *kalpikai kathaalu* (Kalpikai means poetry+suspense mixed together to form new technique).

Kanuparthi Varalakshmiamma (1896 -1970) was one of the notable women writers. She wrote about the downtrodden women.

Karunaak Kumara (original name Kantukuuri Anandhan) concentrated more on structures than themes. His story characters were drawn from a variety of social strata from Brahmins to the most downtrodden people. The plots of his short story were of different kinds. His style of writings covered both the dialectal language and the common language. This is his speciality.

### **Translation of Short Stories**

Velluri Sivarama Sastri (1892 -1977) was the man who translated the writings of Sarat Babu. He was also a novelist. He wrote so many noteworthy short stories. The major theme of his short stories was the traditional culture and the wisdom of the Ancient.

Puripanda Appalasamy's speciality is to translate the Telugu short stories into other languages and vice versa.

## Focus on Spoken Language and Structuralism

Teekkhmalli RameshwaraRao was a famous person for spoken language short stories. His famous short stories were raja jaanakhi, prema kadha sampuTTalu. MokkaPaTi Narasimha Sastri was famous for his humorous short stories. Many characters of his stories are simpleton and the nature of the stories was in the realistic way. Munimanikkham Narasimha Rao was a man writing stories with humorous themes. He was concentrating on middle class people. Those stories radiate with offensive humor but at the same time present an absorbing picture of middle class life. Rao created a memorable character in his stories named *kantham*. *kantham* who is the main character of all his stories. (Kantham was his wife in his real life). She was focused as the most intelligent and resourceful women. Malladi Ramakrishna Sastry (1901-1965) wrote some remarkable stories. Those stories describe women's mind very clearly. His main characters were the dancing girls. He has an ideal style of story writing. His stories were not only for the reading purposes but also they revealed the reality of life. He introduced a character named *daatha gaaru* in his stories. He narrates the important incidents of life through this special character.

## Social Inequalities and Injustice

KoTavaTTi KaNTi KuTumbaRao gave a turning point to Telugu short story. He was a social writer with organic unity. Criticism about the inequalities and injustices were part of his writings. He used a blunt language. The theme of the story suppressed all the embellishment.

Telugu short story literature has a fresh stage with the emergence of eminent writers like A.V.SubbaRao (1908 -1970) Tripuraneni, Gopichand (1910–1962) and G. V. KrishnaRao (1914–1979). They had different themes for their stories and developed the genre in a notable manner. Then their themes have now returned to the contemporary society.

A.V.SubbaRao's main theme was the social impact on the individual. Gopichand was used Rationalistic ideas. People like Dhanna Vaddi, Bharyallone Vundi discuss the irrational streaks of the human mind resulting in utter calamity. Rao expressed imaginatively and conceived stories with great philosophical sense.

Palagummi Padmaraj was a writer of the human mind based on the psychological perspective. This made him one of the notable writers in the short story world. His stories had strange endings, which made the reader confused. His famous stories were *gallivaanaa* and *pandava prayana*. Buchi Babu was another short story writer concentrating on psychological themes in his stories. His main theme was the unpredictable mind of human beings. His famous story was *sivarikhi mikkileedhi*.

## Introduction of Folk Styles

Gopala Krishna Gokale (1917) was the first short writer who introduced the folk style in his short stories. ChanganTi Somayajulu's (Pen name Cha Soo) style was somewhat of different from others of motivated by progressive ideals. The hard life of the poor people was his main theme. His style was very simple. Kommuni Padmavathi Devi's theme of short story focused on the unexpected things of life.

In the post-independence time, the following writers are in well known. Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry, Ravuri Bharaduaaya and Madhurantakam Rajaram. Bharaduaaja's main theme was concentrating on the lives of the poor people. Madhuranthagam Raja Ram's central theme was the relation between the human beings and the circumstances. Viswanatha Sastry was the first person to introduce the expressionistic style in Telugu short story. He was of the opinion that short story writing was the smooth diversion of life. For him experience in life was the corner stone.

### **Telugu Short Story - Coming of Age in a Great and Dynamic Tradition**

In 1985 the Telugu short story celebrated its platinum jubilee during which the writers used different kinds of new techniques. The Telugu short story is appreciated as the "National Art form".

Short stories in Telugu are multi-dimensional and occupy a very important part of Telugu literature.

### **Conclusion**

1. The Tamil short story flourished in a different way once it made a break from the trends of 1927–1933. Thinking of political independence and social reformation, Tamil short story began to experiment with the use of spoken language, making some compromises between traditional written style. Again from 1933 *aanandha vikhadan* started a story competition and announced Rs 100/- as the prize amount. This paved the way for the revival of short story literature in Tamil. Telugu short story literature flourished in another way without any break. Continuity of social themes is very strong in Telugu short story. Experimentation with new ideas and new techniques also appear to be very strong in Telugu.
2. In Telugu, women short story writers were writing about issues relating to feminism and Dalitism in a vigorous way. But the Tamil women short story writers write very little on Feminism and Dalitism. In any case these themes were not dealt with as vigorous as we find in Telugu short story.
3. In Telugu short story writers seem to select and specialize sub-genres within short story. One short story writer may become famous in one particular variety such as Folk story, Children's story, Tribal story, etc. But in Tamil the difference between the

writers are based on tradition. That is, Manikkodi tradition, Kalki tradition, Anna tradition etc.

4. Regarding the modern short story in both the languages, writers concentrate on the social contemporary problems. Both the language writers write the humorous stories, stories about the downtrodden people, stories about the Tribes, etc.

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