Chapter III

NAIKAR’S FICTIONAL WORLD

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar is one of the distinguished academicians and has made a humble entry into realm of Indian English Literature. He happens to be an important emerging Indian English novelist, short story writer, dramatist and translator in addition to being a critic, researcher and professor and Chairman, Department of English, Karnataka University, Dharwad. He is a bilingual critic and creative writer in Kannada and English. He has published several reviews and research articles in national and international journals.

Basavaraj Naikar was born in Naragund, District Dharwad, and Karnataka on August 1, 1949. He took his education in Naragund and Dharwad. He lost his father in 1963 and it was blow to the entire family. He had a great passion for classical Hindustani vocal music. He completed his BA from the prestigious Karnataka Arts College and MA from Karnataka University, Dharwad. During his MA days, he wrote his first story entitled Fulfillment. He was greatly influenced by Mulk Raj Anand. When he was a student, he got opportunity to start his writing career. After completing his MA, he was appointed as a lecturer in English at the Post-Graduate Centre of Karnataka University, Gulbarga. He struggled hard to obtain his Ph. D degree. While doing his research, he decided to become a creative writer, especially a novelist, a short story writer and a dramatist. As he was rather disillusioned with the world of criticism, which is growing stale and dated, he wished to be known as a creative writer. He has been a voracious reader and right from the beginning of his childhood, he was nourished on religious and spiritual literature. During his school days his maternal great grandfather initiated him into the religious poetry.

He has passion for music and philosophy in general. His Kannada publications include:

Huchchuhole, Kollada Neralu, Paduvana Nadina Permaivia, Jogibhavi, Nigudha Saudha, Govardhanaram, Vatsalya, Beowulf, Samrachanavada, Asangata, Gilgamesh Mahakavya and Bharatiya English Sahitya Charitre.
His English publications include:

**Short Stories:** 1) The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories

2) The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories

His *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* was short listed for the Commonwealth Fiction Prize for the Best First Book from Eurasia in 2000.

**Novels:**  I) The Sun Behind the Cloud

II) Light in the House

III) The Queen of Kittur.

**Drama:**  I) A Dreamer of Freedom

**Awards and Honours:**

I. Gulbarga University Award

II. Gemini Academi Award

III. Olive Reddick Award

Basavaraj Naikar has been influenced by the great Indian writers. He says-

I admire writers like Kuvempu, Karanth B. Puttaaswamayya, S. L. Bhyrappa, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Swami Vivekananda, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Niradh Choudhari, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal among others. All these writers seem to have influenced me directly and indirectly.¹

Basavaraj Naikar has presented the South Indian life and culture in particular, and situations quite Indian in general. O.P. Mathur observes:

The portrayal of Indian culture as manifested in one of its important regions is the avowed objective of the short stories of Basavaraj Naikar.²

After close reading of his stories we can say that Basavaraj Naikar happens to be a brilliant short story writer. He has written not only historical short stories but two historical novels and as a novelist he may be compared to G.D. Khosla, Rama Mehta, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Chandra and
Manohar Malgonkar. He has translated many works from Kannada into English and vice versa and as a translator he may be compared to Dilip Chitre and A. K. Ramajun. It is indeed commendable job he has done in writing short stories and as a short story writer, Naikar is comparable to Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya and the supreme short story writer R.K. Narayan. It seems that Basavaraj Naikar is least interested in themes like dislocation of identity, search for authentic voice, exile, alienation, expatriate, sensibility, etc. Here the observation of Pashupati Jha and T. Ravichandran should be noted with regard to Naikar’s themes:

….the author (Basavaraj Naikar) is unpretentious about the reiteration of simple themes as man’s primordial obsession for the possession of opulent wealth and succulent women, and his subsequent fall from grace; it is equally a meritorious one. These are precisely the themes around which our mythical pots were boiling and so many of our master craftsmen were weaving their plots.  

Naikar has been writing short stories in English for the last thirty years and has depicted Indian life in his stories. In his preface to his first collection The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories, Basavaraj Naikar says:

The ten stories that I have selected here represent various aspects of human relationships in our life. They range from the elemental to the social to the mythical dimensions of life.

Naikar’s stories have a wide variety of themes. Christopher Rollason [France] observes:

In their diversity (multiplicity of themes) framed in a certain continuity [the Karnataka Setting] Naikar’s stories may be read, for the most part in a classical realist sense, as typical and representative of a certain Indian cultural, social and psychological reality. In addition, the collection acquires a deeper coherence from the presence of a recurring theme, namely that of human identity. Through their diverse narrative strategies, these stories examine such crucial questions as how an individual can create and maintain an identity within society, how far that identity is malleable to our will or mutable at the
hands of outside forces, and whether people’s social masks correspond to their hidden drives and desires.\(^5\)

Naikar’s stories are firmly rooted in the Indian milieu and he has written historical as well as contemporary stories. In his preface to *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories* Basavaraj Naikar clearly states:

The themes range from the historical to the contemporary, from the religious to the secular, and from the elemental to the academic. These stories, I believe, will capture the attention of the reader on account of the Indian sensibility and add up to the image of Indian life in some way or the other.\(^6\)

The author has used the word *elemental* in his prefaces to his two collections of short stories. It indicates that Naikar wants to penetrate deeper into the underlying human impulses that shape and govern human character, thus broadening its range from the regional to the universal. But at the same time it retains the regional at its core.

Basavaraj Naikar has definitely established himself as one of the best short story writers of India. As an adept at the art of writing the short story, he knows how to play on the heart-strings of his readers. He spellbinds his readers taking them through his bewitching stories. His short stories display a great deal of variety in theme and local tone and treatment. His historical stories introduce old figures of history and myth in a way, keeping in view their contemporary relevance. In his stories dealing with contemporary themes, we come across contemporary figures of politics, society, etc. The author’s attempt is to explore the past, investigate the present and entertain the audience. A Royal Banquet or a wedding feast takes days of planning and many hours of preparation. But the food thus produced for that occasion is consumed in a matter of minutes. Similarly, Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has put all his blood, sweat, toil and tears and days, months, years to write these two collections of short stories and we read them in just five or six hours.

Naikar’s stories may be thematically, classified into various groups. For our convenience his stories may be classified into two categories:

- Historical Stories
- Contemporary Stories-
Historical Stories

Good literature is always concerned with significant socio-economic and political problems and it gains essential unity when a genuine writer gets an insight into the fundamental social and historical trends of his time. The literary artist artistically and aesthetically recreates the life and recaptures the true spirit of an age and presents a historical consciousness through characters. It is true that to condense the historical incidents into a short story or novel great acumen is required. One should have sympathy and understanding of the past generations. In addition to that the author requires the knowledge of environment and conditions under which people lived and the ideas that dominated their minds and actions. The true artist, in fact acts as a meaningful and significant link between the past, and the present. In this regard Ralf Fox’s comment on novel is important which is also applicable to the short fiction.

The novelist (short story writer), therefore, has special responsibility both to the present and the past of his country. What he inherits from the past is important, because it shows what are the sections of his country’s cultural heritage, which have meaning today. What he says of the present is important, because he is assumed to be expressing what is most vital in the spirit of time. Basavaraj Naikar’s artistic talent is revealed in his portrayal of historical characters. Endowed with a rich imagination, he is certainly a conscious artist. His historical characters seem to be living characters of flesh and blood. It is true that the
past lives in his pages. To trace the history of the past is not difficult thing but to humanize the characters is indeed what matters and Basavaraj Naikar has done it excellently. In his historical stories, Basavaraj Naikar has drawn life, passion and emotional states like valour, love, anger, courage and the actual vibrations of historical events from the ashes of history. He completely indentifies himself with the age and the people.

In his interview with Dr. Vishwanath Bite, Basavaraj Naikar has clearly stated his views on his historical fiction:

I feel that we Indians have very little historical consciousness as compared with our vast and variegated history. I wish to write about the historical celebrities of my area i.e. North Karnataka and get national and international recognition for them.8

Writing historical works like novels or short stories is really a difficult job. Only those who have practiced this art know the troubles and tortures of these adventures. One has to do research, field work and conduct interviews and study the relevant documents to write historical works. Naikar has worked hard and undoubtedly has got tremendous success in writing historical stories. In his interview with Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi, Naikar makes it clear that writing historical fiction is challenging task:

I have also written same stories about contemporary themes. But I consider my historical work as more important and challenging than the works of contemporary themes.9

The title story The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi deals with the heroic deeds of Rani Mallamma of the Old Kingdom of Belavadi. It is a historical biography written in the genre of popular fiction. Naikar narrates Mallamma’s life and career from her childhood to becoming the Rani of Belavadi Kingdom. She is presented like Rani Laximibai or other great Indian queens of Indian history. The portrayal of Rani may be regarded as a role model in all walks of life. P.P. Mathur points out the qualities of the historical figure of Rani of Belavadi in these words:

....the inspiration of courage, bravery, generosity, patriotism and peace is provided by the The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi.10
Naikar narrates the birth of Rani, her childhood, marriage, valour, etc. She was the daughter born to Madhulinga Nayaka the king Swadi and Rani Viramma. As a child Mallamma looked extremely beautiful as she had bewitching appearance. Her eyes were like the petals of a lotus. As a student Mallamma was serious and became proficient in Kannada, Marathi, Urdu and Sanskrit. Even she could compose poems in Kannada and Sanskrit. At the age of twelve, the pondiff of Huli Shri Siddavirayogi told Raje Madhulinga that Mallamma had to pass through a dangerous period during her sixteenth year. As a result, the worried father arranged a Swayamvara to avoid danger. Right from the childhood Mallamma’s valour and her resourcefulness are highlighted. At the time of her Swayamvara she suggests to her father:

You marry me off a prince who will bring within a month as many tigers killed by him as the years of his age.\(^{11}\)

It was Iswaraprabhu of Belavadi who was declared as the winner and married Mallamma happily. This was done to provide double protection to Mallamma. Basavaraj Naikar has inscribed the best aspects of the historical figure of Mallamma as a daughter, queen, administrator and mother. The historical figure of Rani Mallamma is presented with care. Her fight with the two tigers quite heroically and single handed inspires the reader and proves that woman is never weak or helpless. While Raja Iswaraprabhu was in deep sleep, the valiant Rani Killed the two tigers single handed. She looked like Goddess Chamundi herself. The author has described the scene in a very frightening manner. Her husband was shocked and surprised to see his queen and was full of praise. He said:

Bravo, my darling Rani. I am really proud of you. You have put the men folk to shame. You have proved that woman is never weak or helpless. Our kingdom is really proud of a heroic Rani like you.\(^{12}\)

As a woman warrior Rani Mallamma appears as the fine specimen of Indian womanhood. She felt proud to indentify, herself with the Rastrakuta dynasty to which her husband belonged. She was an able administrator and always worried for the peace, prosperity and security of her subjects. One of the remarkable features of this historical story is its reflection of the actual fight between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Rani Mallamma. When Chhatrapati Shivaji’s soldiers were running short of milk, they requested Gollas of Belavadi to give them some milk and curd.
However, the gollas could not satisfy them as they had regular customers. Angered by the milkman’s frank refusal the Maratha soldiers captured the cows of gollas. It was Rani Mallamma who took initiatives, came forward and said in her firm voice:

Sarkar, instead of you, I shall go there along with the women soldiers of Belavadi and regain cows.\textsuperscript{13}

Rani Mallamma and her woman soldiers attacked the soldiers of Chhatrapati Shivaji while they were relaxing themselves and regained cows. This incident clearly indicates that Rani Mallamma was courageous. Even the people of Belavadi wondered at the valiance of their brave Queen and felt proud of her. When Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj came to know the defeat of his soldiers, he was puzzled. However, we should also take note of the great human quality and philanthropy of the noble Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, when he admires the heroism and courage of the Rani of Belavadi.

Vah vah! Our soldiers are destroyed by the Rani and her female army of Belavadi. I must admire the heroism of the wonderful lady. But why did our foolish soldiers kidnap their cows?...These fools are properly rewarded for their foolishness.\textsuperscript{14}

Chhatrapati Shivaji felt that the defeat of his soldiers was a black spot on his immaculate image. Belavadi was attacked and while fighting with Maratha soldiers Raja Iswarprabhu died heroically in the protection of Belavadi. Hence, the whole responsibility of of Belavadi Kingdom fell on the soldiers of Rani Mallamma. With tears in her eyes, she resumed the battle with enthusiasm. Rani Mallamma’s diplomatic strategy and with the advice of Shri Siddhavira Yogiraja ambushed Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj when he was returning from the temple of Goddess Jagadamba. In the hour of danger, she gave proof of her courage with her women warriors. At the end, agreement was signed and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj withdrew his army form Belavadi. Both warriors felt pity for each other and realized that the evil situation was brought about by mutual misunderstanding and thus peace was made and Chhatrapati returned to his capital.

The character of Rebellious Rani of Belavadi is memorable because she may be considered a rare person, perhaps first who organized the women and train them up
in fighting. When her beloved husband dies in the war, Rani Mallamma does not lose her heart. Thus Naikar’s portrayal of Rani Mallamma’s personality as a good administrator, an able organizer, a ferocious fighter, a kind mother and ideal wife should be appreciated. The short story also marks the superhuman power and uncontrollable heroic fights of Rani Mallamma in her fight with the great king Chharapati Shivaji Maharaj. One of the remarkable aspects of the story is Naikar has given a touch of feminist assertion to his women characters. Regardless of whether the individual may be victorious or vanquished the lesson or the values suggested by Naikar in this excellent short story are indelibly impressed upon the reader.

The heroic qualities are skilfully and emphatically highlighted by Naikar. One more aspect of Rani Mallamma’s personality is that her patriotism is noteworthy. Every now and then she ignites the fire of encouragement in her husband and soldiers by her fiery words:

We are the heroes of Kannada land. We must fight bravely in the battle. We shall achieve either victory in the war or attain heroic death on the battlefield.\(^{15}\)

The readers are quite convinced that the women like Rani Mallamma are source of inspiration for them. Traditionally, woman is considered as weak, helpless, subordinate because she is born as a woman. However, Rani Mallamma though she is a woman has proved her merit, though she is tender hearted by nature. She has surpassed any brave man, and it is commendable.

The Golden Servant anthologized in the second collection ‘The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories’ is another story which deals with historical theme. Naikar skilfully presents the historical figure named Kanakadasa. Kanakadasa was the much loved and revered saint-poet, philosopher, musician, and a good administrator, who actually lived (1509-1609). His compositions are part of the tradition of Karnataka culture. The final effect of Naikar’s presentation makes Kanakadasa appear a larger than life figure. That indeed is fitting because Kanakadasa continues to live through his compositions.

Naikar’s The Golden Servant is a compressed account of the long life of Kanakadasa. Kanakadasa was born when Lord Venkatashwara visited his parents in a
dream. His parents, Biregouda and Bachchamma belonged to the shepherd community were ecstatic about the birth of a son to them. Lord Venkateswara of Tirupati blessed them with a son and their dream was realized after a long and anxious waiting. The couple named the baby as Timmappa as he was born due to the grace of the Lord of Seven Hills at Tirupati. When he was a boy, Timma participated in a drum competition and played his drum very dexterously and enthusiastically. Not only parents but the people expressed their joy and wondered at Timma.

Right from the beginning the boy had the great potentialities so he was sent to Srinivasacarya, a great scholar of Bankapura for education, who carved him into a beautiful statue. He learnt wrestling, swimming, archery, horse riding and other martial arts. Once while singing the bhajans rapturously, oblivious of the world around him, there came the snake and raised its hood, but Kanakadasa did not open his eyes. His companions ran away in fear. After the bhajan the snake disappeared and his friends awakened him from the trance. Asked him why he did not run away from the spot, he replied that he did not see any snake as he was seeing the image of Lord Adikesava before his minds. His companions could not understand the meaning of his reply.

When Timma was just thirteen, his father Biregouda unfortunately fell ill and died. Basavaraj Naikar describes the deep sorrow of Kanakadasa:

Timma felt as though the glass palace in which he was living had been shattered to pieces...In-between his sobs he asked his mother, Mother, will not father ever return? How shall we live without him? Who will help us in our life? 16

After the death of his father, Kanakadas and his mother are driven of their village because of the machinations of his father’s arch-enemy Mallanyaka. So, both went to their kith and kin at Kaginelli, an important paragana of Vijaynagar Empire. There Kanakadasa finds copper pitchers full of gold coins when digging in a field. As he was selfless, pious, he did not hoard the wealth for his selfish purposes. He used it for feeding the needy and for the repair of dilapidated temples. Thus the people wondered at his non-possessive nature, considered him as a great donor and began to call him Kanakappa or man of gold. He became more and more popular as days went by. Mallanayaka, his father’s rival heard about the popularity of Kanakadasa,
sent his henchmen to kill Kanakadasa. Kanakadasa not only survives but when recovering from illness composes a famous poem called *Haribhakati Sara*.

Due to Kanakadas’s reputation as a great devotee, poet and disciplined man, the Emperor of Vijaynagara appointed him as the administrator of Bada and Bankapura. As an administrator, Kanakadasa did much to improve the lot of the people. Meanwhile, his mother wished her son to be married and one day Kanakadas got married Laxmidevi from a famous family of Bankapura. He led a happy married life and was blessed with a son. Lakkamma, the daughter of Mallanayaka, the archenemy of his father also wanted to marry Kanakadasa. She was passionately in love with him. She came to Kanakadasa. When she came to know that Kanakadasa could not marry her as he was already married to Laxmidevi, Lakkamma decided not to marry anyone other than Kanakadasa and so she became a *Sanyasini* till she took her last breath.

When Kanakadasa’s young wife and son die unexpectedly, he undergoes a spiritual transformation. He gives up the material world. The Lord visits him in a dream. Kanakadasa takes up the life of a wandering minstrel. He feels the transitoriness of worldly life very acutely. He now discards the administrator’s uniform and adopts a new type of garments. As a first step, he joins the monastery of a well-known spiritual master, named Vyasaraya Swami and despite the jealousies of the other high-caste disciples; he passes all the spiritual tests he faces. Once, his guru asked Kanakadasa to show him God. The next morning a crowd of people gathered to see how Kanakadasa would show them God by his magical power. Suddenly a terrific dog came from within the crowd. Everybody was scared of the animal and people shooed it, beat it heavily with canes and the dog ran away. The people waited for long for the arrival of God and went away disappointed. In the evening Kanakadasa made it clear and replied in a very sophisticated way:

Holy sir, this morning God had come in the form a dog, but these people did not recognize the spirit of God in it. God could be seen only by the inner i.e. subtle eye and not by the external i.e. gross eyes.\(^{17}\)

On another occasion, Kanakadasa tamed and quietened a terrific elephant in the forest near Nanjanagudu. Kanakadasa spends the rest of his life visiting the various places of pilgrimage, performing miracles, composing *bhajans* and turning
people godwords. In 1606, Kanakadasa died and merged into the spirit of Lord Adikesava.

The days of Kanakadasa were custom bond. The caste contrabands were quite impregnable. In such a hostile ambiance, Kanakadasa though belonged to shepherd community, his decision to embrace a spiritual life is really laudable. It requires guts on the part of a man from a down trodden section of the society. In such a predicament Kanakadasa’s growth from political heroism to spiritual heroism becomes significant and recognizable. The other side of the medal of heroism is spiritual heroism. Kanakadasa may be regarded as the pioneer of spiritual heroism among the down trodden 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.

Kanaka becomes a ‘dasa’ and dedicates and surrenders to God. To become a dasa, one requires good health, courage to protest and criticize the follies of people around and inducing correct understanding in society. Kanakadasa, selfless and pious saint fights for the cause of his own people, self-respect and the like throughout his life. The noble Kanakadasa would have lived a happy life and become a good administrator but he abandoned it and embraced the life of spiritualism in society. Wherever he went, he addressed the people and tried his best to reform them. His desire to attain the highest state of bliss goaded him to invest the gold for ameliorative purposes. For him, wealth and glory are ‘maya’. He knows very well that they are often held to be the hindrances on the path of a spiritual practitioner and his spiritual progress. For the welfare of his people and to attain the highest state of bliss, he renounces his position as a ruler.

In the matter of theme, Basavaraj Naikar seeks his inspiration from the classical treatise, the Natya Shatra. According to the Natya Shashtra each creative endeavour should exemplify a particular ‘rasa’ or pleasure principle but which must find resolution in Shanta. The title of the story The Golden Servant suggests the ‘rasa’, the thread of the necklace round which the events are beaded. In this story the rasa is that of Bhakti devotion.

The story Bloodbath that deals with historical theme, narrates the unfortunate events that took place in Karnataka Kingdom. King Devaraya II was a very popular
ruler and he had a very extremely handsome son called prince Sivaraya and a nephew, Jayadeva. Jayadeva had lost his parents and king Devaraya had brought up him as his own son. Both Sivaraya and Jayadeva grew into handsome youths and lived like real brothers. They soon became models for others and people praised them:

Look, brothers should be like Sivaraya and Jayadeva. They are indeed ideals for our own children.\(^1\)

King Devaraya had never discriminated between his son and nephew. However, Jayadeva in his heart of hearts was planning something different and conspired against his cousin and lovable uncle with a desire to encroach upon the empire. Cunningly, he invited his cousin Jayadeva along with his ministers. Though reluctant Sivaraya attended the ceremony but the stonehearted Jayadeva killed his own cousin while he was eating the feast. Then, he with a small dagger dipped in deadly poison went to king Devaraya and attacked him. This was unexpected and ungrateful act of the nephew. The king became alert and drew up his sword and severed his nephew’s head. Thus, the wicked plan of Jayadeva was not materialized. When Devaraya came to know that his son was murdered by his own nephew, he wept a lot and burst out:

My darling son, where did you go?  
What shall I tell your mother?\(^2\)

In the story \textbf{Bloodbath} the historicity of the fact is fictionalized in the excellent account of King Devaraya II. One of the important aspects of the story is that King Devaraya II is presented as a man of upholder of values and idealism.

\textbf{Campus Life}

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar, an outstanding professor of English and renowned scholar has been closely associated with the academic world and he must have keenly observed the college and university life. He has authored two stories dealing with the campus life. Universities and colleges are considered to be the respected seats of learning and at the same time the higher educational institutions should be run by the lofty and noble men with high ideals. However, Basavaraj Naikar, it seems that he is
hurt much by the corruption, hypocrisy, politics prevalent in the academic field. In these stories academy is shown as a place of intellectual tiff, where little intellectual work takes place and the academics are portrayed as normal human beings who are not different from common people. Naikar powerfully projects the relentless realities of an Indian University campus which is replete with expediency, ethical degeneracy and all kind of menacing politics, jealousies and intrigues.

A Chronic Patient Became a Doctor is the last story in the collection and it may be called a novella as it runs into 81 pages. (Page No.196 to 277) The story is written in the first person. The present story deals with the campus life which seems to be rotten and polluted. Naikar holds up mirror to the state of things in the academic world and severely satirizes tough and egoistic head of the department of English who happens to be the guide of the protagonist. After the result of M.A. English, the protagonist, Mr. Nandiswar joins as a Research Assistant at the Post Graduate centre of the city of Rocks. Mr. Nandiswar is studious, innocent and hard worker but soon he comes to know that he is caught in the triple of hot streams of attending the clerical job, teaching the MA students and carrying on the research work. His colleague Mr. Reddy makes it clear: “Mr. Nandiswar, our professor (guide) recommended you for this post because others refused to come here.”

The protagonist is ambitions; however, neither the guide nor the colleagues show any sympathy for him. He is not able to register with his guide after three years of waiting while his classmates have submitted their thesis. Also he finds difficulty in preparing his synopsis, yet he continues his struggle for fourteen years to obtain his Ph.D. degree. His colleagues call him a bookworm missing all pleasures of life. To make the matter worse, his brother separates from him and in such a situation his mother dies. He has no time for his wife or his son.

His wife’s harsh words hurt him deeply. Above all, his guide shows much more indifference to him and does not co-operate with him sincerely. He wants to produce a very substantial work and it would be a real contribution to knowledge.

We see how Mr. Nandiswar is burdened with a difficult topic and a most unhelpful guide who does not give him any positive guidance. The guide even does not correct the drafts of chapters submitted by the candidate. After travail of fourteen
years he is awarded the long-coveted degree and the patient scholar becomes a doctor.

In the story the author presents the hero in a hapless state who strongly desires to obtain Ph.D. and anticipates a job and economic security. But he is harassed and does not know how to please his guide so he says, “It’s easier to please God than him.”

Naikar points out how corruption lurks even in the immaculate personalities of university academicians. As he has no any other alternative, the protagonist offers bottle of bears to his guide. It’s indeed degeneration of values. The guide’s immoral relationship with his lady assistant is another example to cite.

Naikar in this story presents the evil of delay process. It is the sorry state of affairs that this evil lurks even in the highly educated societies who are considered to be the cream of society. Naikar sheds light on the shallowness of the drama of the appointment. Dr. Ramaswami has obtained his Ph.D. from the Cambridge University. Though he is eligible for the post of selection grade reader, he is not selected. Instead a non Ph.D. candidate is appointed by the guide who was on the selection committee because the candidate’s father and the guide were jail mates.

The reader feels sympathy for the victims of the negative aspects of the so-called academic world of today. In case of the protagonist also the similar procedure is adopted. He is the senior most candidates with fifteen years of postgraduate teaching, a Ph.D. on Shakespeare, and twenty five research articles. In spite of the fact, he does not get the post of a Reader because one of the candidates was the daughter of a central minister who wielded very powerful political influence over the vice-chancellor. Thus Naikar points out that our educational institutions are politicized. Professor of Mathematics states the harsh truth:

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.

As the story proceeds, the corrupt world of education is unleashed layer by layer in front of the readers. The kind of corruption which is found among teachers is
ethical corruption. The story is a biting satire that attempts at exposing the depression that is eating up the present day academia.

**The Anonymous Letter** anthologized in the celebrated collection of short stories *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* also deals with hypocrisy, callousness, narrow-mindedness; jealousy prevailing in the post-graduate departments and universities. With a touch of humour, Dr. Basavaraj Naikar narrates the story with a genuine insight and skill. The author points out how dirty politics has entered the universities and colleges and the readers are pained to see the stark reality of our institutions of higher learning and at the same time shallowness of the so-called academicians. The callousness of the professor and chairman of the Rosegarden University is exposed in the present story. He is a non-Ph. D and suffers from that complex. In order to harass his colleagues and to perpetuate strong hold on them, the chairman of the department instigates the MA Final students to submit complaints against them. Without signing any names the students complaint against their teachers and thus want to address their problems. The charges made by the students are typical to a large extent and also they are carefully framed. But their allegations against their own teachers are hurting and silly. Naikar writes the allegations in these words:

Professor Gangadhar dictates notes and does not explain anything. He speaks English like Kannada. We cannot understand Dr. Balchandra’s Pronunciation. He cracks jokes in the class and kills time. He makes students bring cigarettes from the shop.  

In another anonymous letter also allegations are made against the teachers and the teachers are offended. They get united and finally realize that it is the Head of the department of English who instigated the students to write anonymous letters. In their meeting the teachers discussed the treachery of the Head of the Department and unanimously decided to teach him a lesson. Also the decision was taken to boycott the Head and the classes and send an allegation to the Vice-Chancellor of the Rosegarden University. However, the Head of the Department, on behalf of the students begs pardon and the whole matter comes to an end. The character of the Head of the Department is convincingly drawn and at the same time the author has criticised both teachers and students. Instead of pursuing knowledge the teachers also waste their valuable time in discussing non-academic issues. With a touch of humour,
Naikar draws our attention how non-academic discussion in the staff-room takes place.

Even the students are also satirised for they betray their own teachers and have no respect for them. It seems that the stories dealing with campus life are based on the experiences drawn from Naikar’s own life. Dr. Asha Choubey’s comment on the story is worth quoting here. She says:

Gone are the days when academia comprised of lofty men with high ideals. In present times dirty politics has entered the academic life and deceit and cunning have become the hallmark of the so-called scholars. The foppery, meanness and petty politics of highly educated intellectuals have been exposed.\textsuperscript{24}

Basavaraj Naikar in these stories presents some very authentic characters in an equally authentic setting. The teachers, the heads of the department who are not competent, the teachers who try to pull the legs of the counterparts are also exposed. This is the sorry state of affairs. Thus, the stories of Basavaraj Naikar dealing with campus life expose much of the reality of the present higher education in India.

**Theft**

Basavaraj Naikar has two stories that deal with thieving and the significant aspect of these stories is that better change takes place in the lives of the thieves. The story \textit{The Thief of Nagarahalli} from \textit{The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories} is an excellent story that depicts the life of Malla, a notorious thief from Nagarahalli. Malla is Naikar’s memorable character. After trying his hand in many odd jobs like ploughing, carpentry, masonry, he settles down at Nagalahalli and becomes an expert thief. He has chosen thieving as his profession for he feels the path of good to be less challenging and uninspiring. Christopher Rollason states that-

The title story, set ‘in a village called Nagarahalli situated thirty-five miles away from Dharwad’ (9) in the days of the Raj, centres on a thief whose skill is such that he may, paradoxically, be considered an artist in dishonesty.\textsuperscript{25}

Technically Malla is a criminal; however, he deserves our admiration. He has his own moral code and accordingly he commits thefts from the rich men’s house. Malla is glorified for his notoriousness in the village Nagarahalli and the surrounding
area. He lives in the house of his patron called Marigouda, the village leader. Marigouda offers him shelter and cunningly reaps the benefit of Malla’s thieving. The people know the unholy Malla Marigouda alliance but nobody has courage to open his or her mouth about it. As already stated Malla has his own ethics so he never steals like an ordinary thief. Within a short time, Malla becomes a legend. Naikar aptly writes:

Malla’s name was proverbially associated with success. He had thus become the object of public respect and fear. Crying children were silenced by being threatened to be handed over to Malla of Nagarahalli. He haunted the imagination of the rich Desais, Patils, Deshpandes and Jahagirdars, who spent sleepless nights in contemplation on him. He inspired a heroic spirit in the hearts of young men. He kindled amorous sentiments in the minds of young girls. Thus “Success” had become another name for Malla. He had taken an oath that he would stop his thieving profession the day he met with failure in his ventures.26

In fact thieving in any case must not be glorified. However, the character of Malla is depicted in such a way that the readers take much more interest in him. Dr. Asha Choubey comments on the character of Malla:

The verisimilitude is so striking that long after one has finished the story, Malla keeps haunting the imagination. This is a character-centric story wherein Malla is a thief who attains heroic stature at the hands of Naikar… This adventurous man imparts halo to the otherwise looked down upon profession.27

It seems that Malla has been glorified like that of John Milton’s Satan in Paradise Lost. In the story there are two awe-inspiring incidents of Malla which are unforgettable. One day Malla came to know that an old woman had died in the village Morab and the dead body of the old woman belonging to the rich family had been decorated with a number of golden ornaments. The notorious thief ventures to steal the golden ornaments from the dead body. The job was extremely challenging since the dead body was surrounded by the mourning relatives. Even Marigouda also thinks that Malla cannot be successful in his mission. He says, “My dear fool,” said he, “how can you rob a dead body which is surrounded by kith and kin. Your attempts seem to be really absurd.”28 Malla accepts the challenge, he feels secretly irritated. He decides to execute his ingenious plan to rob the dead body. His sharp
imagination makes ingenious plan for the most intelligent robbery. He seems to be intelligent skilful and resourceful to accomplish his task. First, he studied the construction of the house from outside and came to the spot he had marked mentally. Undeterred, Malla makes a hole in wall just behind the dead body is laid in the dim light. All of a sudden, a brilliant idea occurs to his mind. He instantly inserts his hands into the hole, collects the dead hands together and makes them clap twice. As a result, the relatives grow terrified; manage somehow to escape from there thinking the old woman’s ghost has returned to the body and clapped. Meantime, Malla gets sufficient time to rob the ornaments from the dead body. We laugh at the relatives’ folly along with Malla. Not only readers but Marigouda, Malla’s patron appreciate his exciting adventure and skill in thieving. The readers are spellbound and win him applause.

The second episode takes place in the village named Annagiri where rich Desai lived who possessed a pitcher with golden ornaments, placed before the family god. In this case also the operation is carried out in a smooth manner without anyone detecting the theft. Malla clad in dhoti up to his knees and a half-shirt, a turban around his head mounted his pony and marched towards Annagiri, slowly walked towards the house of rich Desai. As usual he pretended to be a passerby and with his keen eyes surveyed the house and here also a new idea flashed across his mind. This time he managed to hide himself skilfully among the oxen brought into the house and found an easy entry into the house of Desai at the time of evening. He waited for two hours in the darkness. When the members of Desai family went to central hall to sleep, Malla rose from his hiding place and entered the kitchen. There he found the old woman keeping an eye over the pitcher full of gold. Malla showed her knife and the old woman grew dumb with fear and could not shout. He then entered god’s room got possession of the copper pitcher filled with golden ornaments. His self-confidence was over flowing. However his success in many daring exploits leads to over confidence and brings about his doom in the end. With the golden pitcher in his hand Malla challenges Desai, the owner of the house in these words. In fact he wants to tease the Desai.

He went to the door of the sleeping room and called out:

Dear Desai, I am Malla of Nagarahalli. I have come to tell you that I am taking your pitcher full of gold. You can take it back from me if you have the guts.
Overjoyed Malla escapes the big chase that follows and before Desai’s men reach Nagarahalli, he is fast asleep in his patron’s house.

Malla though successful in his every mission, fails when he steals the golden bowl from the landlord of Imrapur. The legendary thief is very cautious and takes utmost care to hide the golden bowl in some ditch to save himself from the police. The clever village carpenter Monappa steals the golden bowl from the secret place. Soon Malla comes to know that his golden howl is stolen by the carpenter. Malla could have got the golden bowl either by force or persuasion but-

Malla thought it below his dignity to take the bowl from the rival by force. It would be an insult to his profession. Therefore, he accepts the challenge that he would steal it from Monappa. Malla tries his best to steal the bowl from Monappa’s house but now unfortunate Malla fails miserably and accepts his defeat. For the first time in his life Malla is failure. He says with folding hands: “Dear Friend, you have won the bet and I accept my defeat.” Like a tragic hero Malla has one hamartia i.e. overconfidence which brings about his doom. At the end Malla disappears and nobody knows where he has gone and that is the end of his brilliant thieving career.

Naikar’s Malla undergoes a decisive change in his attitude and understanding. A man intoxicated with perpetual success suddenly realizes himself as a creature driven by vanity. This realization brings about fitting finale to the life of the notorious thief. The close reading of the story reveals that the author’s focus is on a single character. The three episodes that establish Malla’s extraordinary skill in stealing are narrated skilfully and beautifully.

**Change of Heart** is Naikar’s excellent short story that deals with transformation of a thief brought about by a good-natured woman. Such transformations, though rare, are not incredible. A virtuous person can transform the heart of a dacoit is narrated artistically in **Change of Heart**. Naikar effectively presents the daily life of Southern Indian people in particular and Indian life in general. In the beginning the focus is on women, how they chat, their shyness, etc. When Siddhalinga returns home, Sivalila’s friends get up and go “away from their adjusting the hems of their sarees upon their buxom breasts.”

Unfortunately, the house of Siddhalinga and Sivalila is attacked by the thieves at the time of midnight. Three hefty men with faces covered in black cloth entered
through the hole made at the ceiling. Holding the daggers in their hands, they demanded the key of the cupboard. The couple was frightened and Sivalila handed over them the keys who ransacked their wealth and ornaments. The thieves once again threatened the couple and demanded for other ornaments. Both husband and wife shuddered to see the shining blade of the daggers. Sivalila thought that their lives were precious than gold, so she surrendered the golden bangles and other ornaments including *mangalya sutra*. Tears had already gathered in the eyes of Sivalila. She mustered up her courage and said to the chief of the thieves who asked for other ornaments:

We’ve given you everything we have. I have given you even the sacred ‘tali’. We have nothing else to give you. If you are not satisfied, you may kill me first and then my husband.\(^33\)

The thieves were puzzled by the words of Sivalila and were about to leave the house. However, Sivalila called the thieves back, now a little bit recovered, and advised the thief with confidence and firm voice:

See man, please don’t waste this gold by drinking or playing cards, you are like my brothers. You start some shop or some other business with that money and settle down to a respectable life instead of leading such an irregular life.\(^34\)

Sivalila’s words left an indelible impression on the mind of the thief and after some days he came back to the couple at the time of night. He went straight to Sivalila, touched her feet reverentially and placed all the golden ornaments which he had looted. There was a change of heart and the thief had decided to stop thieving. The couple was still confused and asked the thief why he was bowing down. The leader of the thief made it clear in the following words:

Dear Madam, you are not an ordinary lady, but a veritable goddess. You are like my elder sister. That day when we robbed you of your gold, you advised me like a sister to make use of that money for some useful investment. From that day your words have been ringing in my ears. Without my knowing, my heart had accepted you as my sister. I have now decided to stop thieving and start leading a respectable life. My dear sister, please take back this gold and bless me to lead a pious life.\(^35\)
The couple wondered when they clearly understood the change in the heart of hardhearted thief. True, ‘change is the law of nature’. But change in itself is neutral. In accordance with the time, convenience and circumstance we label the change as ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ It is also true that that change should be better. 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. Thus, good-natured Sivalila, co-incidentally comes in contact with the stone-hearted thief and transformation takes place.

Reflective Stories

Basavaraj Naikar has authored two reflective stories in his famous collections of short stories entitled The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories. In Cross Roads the author brings out the significance of “Time” while in Pilgrimage to Kashi he shades light on “happiness”.

Cross Roads, one of the powerful stories in which Basavaraj Naikar has excelled in presenting deep emotional conflict between passion and acceptance of the norms of society finally resolved into tranquility. Once again the themes of sanctity of marriage and self-sacrifice are taken up in the story. It is said that the use of appropriate symbol intensifies the effect of the narratives and crystallize the reader’s response. Here in this story the symbols of chessboard and the snake are used effectively.

Cross Roads is about the two lovers who are separated from each other due to the post-independence Razakar riots in the erstwhile Hyderabad state. The protagonist is Sivaraj. Coincidently, he met a very beautiful girl, Kalpana while he was doing his M.A. in Hyderabad. Once, Kalpana had lost her little sister. Sivaraj saw her and helped her to find out her sister. Kalpana and her mother Saradamma thanked Sivaraj wholeheartedly. It is the sheer chance that brings together Sivaraj and Kalpana. They fell in love with each other. It was a love at first sight. He came, saw her and conquered her heart. Saradamma, Kalpana’s mother came to know the attachment that was growing between them and happily gave her consent for their marriage. The delighted Sivaraj expresses his love for his sweet heart in the following words:
You are a very sentimental girl. You are a flower on a creeper meant for me, whereas I am a tree born to support it. Don’t have even a remote idea of our separation. If that happens it means my death.36

Kalpana was also passionately in love with Sivaraj and she also expresses her feelings with tears in her eyes.

Just within a few weeks after this event, there started the Rajakar Riot in the city. The entire civilian life was upset. All the colleges and schools were closed down. So Sivaraj returned to his village. When the civilian life was restored to normalcy, Sivaraj came back but alas! He did not meet his lovable Kalpana and her mother. Sivaraj felt the earth under him. How could he forget his sweet Kalpana as she was rooted in his heart so deeply? He searched Kalpana everywhere but all in vain. Whenever he remembered her, he used to stare at her photo.

Time passed. Sivaraj was disheartened. He felt like a fish out of water. Naikar ponders over time philosophically:

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. It is then infinite? I remember the poem of Kanavi who says he would like to thrash the animal called Time if he could come across it. I think for myself and decide not to leave this animal unthrashed. Time is traveling eternally far and far ahead with me on the road. We breathe but an infinite moment of this eternity and thread our sensations and disappear into oblivion. What remains there is only the aura of existence. Kalpana saw me at such a moment or rather I saw her. O, she disappeared from my life unexpectedly without allowing me to have that moment again! This happened ten years ago.37

Thus, Kalpana disappeared from Sivaraj’s life. Both had sworn to marry or remain unmarried forever. So Sivaraj kept his word. Once, Sivaraj was on his way, riding his motor cycle. The engine stopped working and he took the vehicle to garage belonged to his old friend Mohan. There Sivaraj, by a coincidence met Kalpana who had married his old friend. Sivaraj felt as though he had been flung to the sky all of a sudden. When the two lovers are introduced to each other by Mohan, Kalpana, keeping her eyes calm “could not help the shaking of her hand holding the tea-tray.”
Mohan had some urgent work at Secunderabad and he left Sivaraj at his home and went away. Then the two lovers got opportunity to express their feelings. Fate had played such a strange game with them. During the Razakar riot, unexpectedly Kalpana and her mother boarded the lorry of Mohan and Kalpana’s mother died of heart attack. While she was taking her last breath, she just kept Kalpana’s hands in Mohan’s hand. Kalpana had no any option left and she got married and had a daughter named Sarada. Kalpana said:

Everything is the sport of time.” When Sivaraj asked whether she was happy, Kalpana replies:

Sivaraj, life has never given me a chance to think about happiness or sorrow. Nor had I the capacity to question the things that came my way. Hence I accepted life. Further she says:

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 all in one way or the other. If we fail to do so, we see our life slides away from us. That’s why I accepted life. And that itself, I think, is life.

It seems that Naikar is practical in his approach and his message to the reader is valuable. When Sivaraj was biding Kalpana good bye, she unmistakably hinted at her final acceptance of what life had to offer them by asking Sivaraj come again, but “not alone.” Catching her hint, Sivaraj drove off past away from her on his motor cycle by changing the gear of his motorbike i.e. life.

In our life, we come across many people. The relationships are the results of necessity. Co-incidentally the two individuals come very close to each-other and because of the fate, they are separated. That is the saga of mankind. Human relations form one of the major themes in Naikar’s stories. **Cross Roads** is a much more powerfully appealing story embodying both the themes of the sanctity of marriage and sacrifice.

Naikar’s use of appropriate symbols in **Cross Roads** is effective. The two lovers are symbolized by the scattering king and queen of chessboard, and their long
pent-up powerful emotions by the emergence of a powerfully writhing snake. Ultimately the snake is killed, like the emotions of star-crossed lovers forcibly suppressed. At the end of the story, Sivarja’s determined acceptance of life and his decision to escape from the past is well expressed in the fast speed of the vehicle, on which he quickly moves out of Kalpana’s life forever. Moreover, the story is full of reflective dialogues.

The short story is a fragmented and restless form, a matter of hit or miss, and perhaps for this reason it suits modern consciousness. Life in modern time is full of complex elements in umpteen numbers. As the short story writer has a limited space and time, he has reflective moments. Since the novelist has a sufficient space and time, he proceeds to vision. On the other hand the short story writer is not so free so he rests at the stage of reflection and stares at life with analytical look. **The Pilgrimage to Kashi** is Basavaraj Naikar’s reflective story. The central character is Govindacharya, an old orthodox Brahmin. He is a strict follower of all the traditional but wholly outdated rules of conduct not only in his own life, but also wanting the members of his family to follow them. He is adamant. His son Shrikant thinks that he is born only to advise others. He behaves like a dictator. Even if he is given heavenly pleasure, he is not satisfied and will complain that it is hell itself. He has three sons and two of them are married and he is leading a widower life in the house of his eldest son. He has a contorted face and when he is angry, nobody dares to go near him. It is very difficult to deal with him. He is of the opinion that no one in the family has any concern for him. He is always ready to pick quarrel with somebody. The acharya reflects-

If only my wife were alive…this predicament would not have been there. I could have lived without any dependence upon these sons and daughters-in-law. My wife is lucky one who left me to rot here in this hell and who resides in heaven.42

The old Acharya is short-tempered. He decides to go to Hubli where his second son Shrikant lives. There he stayed for eight days comfortably but soon “started showing his colour”. As he was a vegetarian he did not like eggs, and thought that the house was polluted. Acharya lost his temper and abused his daughter-in-law and son.
Acharya being a strict follower of the tradition decides to go to Kashi in order
to be away from the wretched atmosphere of domestic life. Discounted with all of
them, he proceeds on a pilgrimage. An old person, living in the evening of life could
have enjoyed the pilgrimage. But he keeps himself soberly aloof from all the other
pilgrims who mix with each other without any inhibition. The other pilgrims
converted the journey into an occasion for entertainment. Even the oldest pilgrim
Nagesharaya whose wife died forty years ago and son died in a railway accident was
enjoying himself to the fullest along with other pilgrims. Acharaya realized that the
co-pilgrims lived like frogs in the well in the company of their kith and kin. He never
had a chance in his life to understand the life-styles of others. Naikar reflects-

The pilgrimage to Kashi had made him (Acharya) understand the world
around him like a newborn baby opening its eyes to observe the world around
it. The acharya who carefully observed Nagesharaya’s laughter, enthusiasm
and merry talk felt disgusted with himself.  

Acharya thought that Nagesharaya is so happy because he has got everything.
But Acharaya never went to the extent of befriending Nagesharaya or other pilgrims.
He never relaxed or laughed though Nagesharaya tried his best to make him laugh. He
never participated in their chatting and laughing. He remained ever serious with his
contorted face all along the journey. All the pilgrims reached Kashi. They felt
satisfied by the holy bath in the Ganga and the darsan of Lord Vishwanath. But
acharya completed these formalities rather mechanically. He could not understand
why these people were so happy. The pilgrimage was about to finish and all of them
were eager to go back to their homes. But Acharya’s lot was quite different. He says
that he has to go back to that hell of his sons, daughter-in-law and children.
Thereupon, the old Nagesharaya brings a new light in the acharya. Here are the
words:

Where is the home for me acharya?” Forty years have elapsed since my wife
died. Fifteen years have gone by since my son died in a railway accident….

Further Nagesharaya says:

See, Acharaya…who does not want happiness? But can one get happiness if
he goes in search of it? We have to generate happiness in ourselves. Happiness
lies in being contented with whatever little we have. Happiness and sorrow are two states of our mind…Our happiness lies in what good we do to others.\textsuperscript{44}

These words of Nageshharaya cause the down of awareness in acharya. Nageshharaya, though he has lost his wife and son has attained everything by possessing nothing. On the contrary, acharya possesses everything but attains nothing.

Thus the story \textit{Pilgrimage to Kashi} is full of reflective dialogues. The character of Govindacharya is drawn skilfully which remains allegorical figure. In our society we come across people like acharya who are ever unhappy, always in mood of making complaints, in confronting a progressive society and inevitably failing in trying to pull it back by a century or two.

\section*{Greed for Gold and Lust}

In most of Naikar’s stories the \textit{Greed for Gold} happens to be the main theme. Lust for gold creates havoc in the lives of many individuals leading to vengeance, murders and bloodshed. Both greed and lust are at the root of the story \textit{All for Gold}. In fact, lust for gold and \textit{lust per se} are blended in equal proportions in Naikar’s fictional world.

The author “skilfully blends in its intricate pattern religiosity and amorousness, conjugal love and extra-marital passion, friendly royalty and betrayal, roguery and simplicity, mercy and revenge.”\textsuperscript{45}

The story \textit{All for Gold} is firmly rooted in the Indian soil depicting rural life through its various activities and festivals. The story opens on the day of the \textit{rath-yatra} festival of the village God Lord Kalmeswara. Initially, the author has created the festival atmosphere with a remarkable success. In the village Ganga and her husband Virabhadra have been living happily. Virabhadra is a well-do businessman of the village and often goes to Bellary on business where he has to delay his stay for many weeks. In the \textit{rath-yatra} festival, Sangappa the son of wealthy landlord happens to see Ganga. Ganga’s pretty figure ensnares and maddens Sangappa. He is struck by Cupid’s arrow on seeing the fascinating contours of buxom beauty Ganga, a young lady with voluptuous body. At the same time the author gives the reader a graphic
detail of the intimacy between Sangappa and his childhood friend Balappa. At any
cost, Sangappa wants to sleep with Ganga a married woman. So, in a state of utter
infatuation, Balappa is used cleverly by Sangappa as a pawn in the sordid game of
seduction. Balappa is asked to persuade Ganga to accept Sangappa as her paramour.
The narrator also provides, at the same time, details about how Ganga accidentally
drops her gold necklace and this becomes a via-media for Sangappa to break the ice
with her. He sends his message of love to her through Balappa. Ganga, however,
rebukes Balappa and takes shelter behind her safe married status. As a result,
Sangappa is totally disheartened with Balappa’s defeat and decides to seek the service
of Paramma, a wily old lady who is avaricious and crafty. Paramma is bribed by
Sangappa with the gift of golden chain of five, tola (fifty gram). An experienced lady
Paramma for the sake of gold tricks Ganga into a trap. She at first tries to play upon
Ganga’s vanity by comparing her beauty to that of Goddess Rati and then broaches
the subject of Sangappa’s infatuation. A married and faithful Ganga cannot be tricked
so simply and insults Paramma. Shrewd Paramma soon gets a chance when Ganga
leaves her for a while to attend to the boiling rice. She leaves Sangappa’s turban on
the string cot in Ganga’s room. Later she accosts Ganga as to how Sangappa’s turban
is to be found in Ganga’s room. Ganga is frightened because she knows the
repercussion of this. She knows that Paramma with her old woman gossip is sure to
spread the story and tarnish her reputation. Thus, blackmail becomes the weapon of
Paramma and she succeeds where Balappa had failed.

Paramma manipulates blackmails and cajoles Ganga into this lustful game.
Ganga’s predicament can be well understood and she tackles the dilemma in a very
pragmatic fashion. She has to agree to receive Sangappa once during the absence of
her husband who has been away at Bellary on some urgent business. She has no other
option left, “that the only way was to entertain Sangappa”.

However, what began as a sexual favour conceded under pressure soon turns into a
much sought-for pleasure. Although Ganga initially thinks ‘Sinning once in secrecy
would not be a great problem’ After yielding to her temptation with the tempter,
Ganga realizes that it could not end, as a one-night affair. Now, she begins to imagine
Sangappa in a new light. She also feels the anticipatory thrill and fear for uniting with
a man other than her husband. She feels vibrations all through her body.
As days went by, Ganga not only wanted to forget her husband but secretly even wished his absence from home to be delayed further.\textsuperscript{48}

Ganga begins to rationalize things for herself out of her helplessness. She thinks; why not enjoy it with Sangappa secretly; why not make the best of the golden opportunity. Her guilt deserts when she confronts Sangappa whose ‘beautiful moustache’ leaves her burning with desire. The lovers, then, begin their lusty associations that leave Ganga breathless with pleasure. The pure and mythical Ganga River yields to the ways of lust and gold. The ‘I-thou’ dichotomy is dissolved and the lovers get transformed into one entity. We notice the attitudinal change in Ganga, Naikar puts it in this way:

Within a month’s time they grew up to be expert paramours enjoying their fill of sex without any inhibition. During day time Ganga would remember her husband who had gone to Bellary on business and feel uneasy for a moment for betraying him, but would soon manage to forget it by recalling Paramma’s secret advice about making the best of the golden opportunities of life.\textsuperscript{49}

Meanwhile one night Virabhadra, Ganga’s husband suddenly comes back from Bellary and catches the two lovers red handed. Ganga is immediately sent to her parents while Virbhadra Setty decides to take revenge on Sangappa by getting him murdered. However, it is again the gold of Virbhadra Setty that ensnares Balappa to betray his loyal friend Sangappa. Balappa lures Sangappa to an isolated place where Virbhadra and his men hack him to death.

True, gold here fails to protect Sangappa. Sangappa commits the deadly sin of coveting his neighbour’s wife and deserves to be punished. He gets killed and the readers cannot feel sympathy for him since he has a premonition of his own death a philosophical outlook towards the ephemeral life. Once in a fair when Sangappa happens to see a boy blowing a balloon to its full capacity only to get burst the next moment, he explains to his friend that ‘See, dear Balya, our life is also like that balloon. We do not know when it bursts.’\textsuperscript{50}

Virbhadra’s reaction is true to the rural ethos of a patriarchal society where women are considered to be possessions of the husband. His first concern is with his social prestige and it is for this that he cannot spare Sangappa. The question is
whether the call of flesh is stronger than the call of moral or social values. Sex has the capacity of transcendence but man can only sample it within social norms. By social standards, the relationship between Ganga and Sangappa is illicit and both suffer for it. It is true that the character of Ganga would certainly hurt the sensibilities of a large section of our society. They are accustomed to the pedestal figures of women in literature and would readily censure Ganga as a loose woman. However, one would consider Ganga’s plight. After all Ganga is human, she wins our sympathy like Catherine in Wuthering Heights. Her succumbing to passion is not unusual event. We come across the women like Ganga in our society. In the end, Virbhadra Setti is imprisoned but later released on his agreeing to be converted to Christianity. Thus the story shows how widely prevalent evils like greed and lust bring out the worst side of man’s character. The story is given a very telling title in that all the complication and misfortune really culminated with the procuress of Paramma agreeing to Sangappa’s proposal just for a piece of gold.

In Naikar, a few of the stories show how widely prevalent evils like lust and greed bring out the worst side of man’s character. The story Coffin in the House deals with the sexual depravity. Stories like this are occasionally reported in the newspaper and Basavaraj Naikar might have taken his clue from some newspaper. Mr. Patil, a very honourable person in the society, in a moment of immoderate sexual desire rapes and murders Prema, the hapless young girl of his neighbour. Mr. Patil, happens to be a bachelor, however, he cannot control his sexual instinct. It only shows man’s helplessness against biological instinct and finally tragedy occurs.

By and large, Mr. Patil a thorough gentleman is respected and liked by his neighbours and people around him. Though he is a respectable person, he tempts Prema by chocolates, gags her mouth and rapes her so violently that the helpless victim dies during the assault. The dead body of Prema is kept inside a coffin in the house.

Meanwhile Mr. Patil meets with an accident, his leg is broken and he is admitted in the hospital and now recuperating. Mr. Patil’s neighbour in the apartment complex finds out some unnatural sound coming out of his room. It finally turns out to be the tinkering of a coffin by a thief. As Mr. Patil is respected and admitted in the hospital, his neighbours when they come to know about the dead body in his house do
not immediately inform the police. They are of the opinion that it might add to the troubles of Mr. Patil who is in the hospital.

The whole episode is narrated to Mr. Patil by Mallikarjuna in the hospital. Mallikarjuna now says to Mr. Patil that the police must be informed about the dead body and the criminal must be punished properly. Mr. Patil genuinely repentant for what he had done philosophically says, “Criminals are punished properly either by the police or by the God.”

The news spreads from one to another and Prema’s father exclaims in disgust:

We thought Mr. Patil to be the best friend of our family and could never imagine that he would do such a terrible thing. We simply cannot guess which snake lives in which hole.

Finally, repentant criminal Patil asks Mallikarjuna to stay back while other visitors left the hospital so that he could confess his crime. The police arrests Mr. Patil and he has to face the punishment meted out to him by law that has to undergo ten years imprisonment. Thus Mr. Patil is punished for his brutal crime but at what cost to that innocent girl Prema and her parents. The girls like Prema are everywhere in India and Naikar brings out the predicament, sufferings, exploitation of such girls and their parents in this short story. Whether Mr. Patil is pervert or not is left to the readers to ponder. The author has used “the snake” symbolism effectively, for serpent is always associated with sinful lust. The sexual depravity is the forte of many of the stories of Naikar and once again it surfaces in Coffin of the House in which the middle class life in an urban setting is presented.

The next story in the collection is The Invisible Face which has elements of a detective story. The obsession with gold, wealth or greed for gold seems to be recurring motif in Naikar’s stories. At the same time, the contrast between the inner and the outer man is explored in the present story. The narrator is Mr. Patil. He is a close friend of Bangarasetty, a renowned merchant of Dharwad. Right from the beginning Bangarasetty has been very honest and upright man. He is also a winner of President’s Award. However, there is a wide gap between his private and public face. He is involved in the illegal business of printing fake currency. He has risked his reputation for the sake of ill-gotten wealth. His partners in the illegal business are a
legislator, a landlord and two other merchants. When there is a chance for exposure, all his partners in crime, bribe the civil surgeon Dr. Deshpande, for the sake of money, Dr. Deshpande gives poison-injection to Bangarasetty at the civil hospital. Indeed, sympathetic Dr. Deshpande initially tried to save Setty’s life but unfortunately, the doctor who should have saved the life of Setty is actually responsible for his death. Mr. Desai, Dr. Deshpande’s friend narrates the account to the narrator. When Setty was about to recover by the treatment, he suddenly collapsed and at that time Dr. Deshpande’s behaviour was very cold. The greed for gold takes everything away from Bangarasetty. Thus, the true face of Setty is exposed and he has to pay the price for that. He seems to be an angel, but is a very devil in reality. Naikar highlights the true picture of the political-criminal- businessman nexus in Indian social life. The story is a bitter expose of the widening gap between the public and the private face, between the mask and the man. Naikar seems to be a keen observer of the present society and the evil prevalent in it and that is all reflected in the story The Invisible Face.

Marriage

The story Her Husband Went to America upholds the sanctity of marriage vows. Naikar begins the story with the description of a Hindu marriage festival. In order to understand and respond to a situation like the Hindu marriage ceremony and their relevance to the Indian social context, one should be well-acquainted with such details. If one is familiar with such a situation, one may construct the meaning as one reads the story. The knowledge of the caste-system, the rituals related to the wedding ceremony would certainly help the reader why Girija, the central character in the story could not go to her husband’s house immediately after the marriage. She has to wait for the auspicious muhurtam for sobhana. Naikar skilfully depicts the tension, the novelty and excitement in the minds of the newly wedded couple. The author in this story treats the overused familiar situation of betrayal of an innocent wife, Girija by a self centred husband, Rajasekhar.

Girija’s story is a story of betrayal of trust, of innocence versus craft and cunning. The innocent and semi-educated Girija seems to be a ready victim of
circumstances. Rajasekhar, her husband like Sangappa in the story *All for Gold* gives credence to the ‘seize the day’ motif. The family of Rajasekhar is delighted at the news of his being selected for the Ph.D. programme at Princeton (U.S.A.). Rajasekhar’s dominant passion is to achieve a Ph.D. from abroad and thereby enhancing his worldly prestige and material prospects. Rajasekhar, working as a lecturer in some local college but not happy with the job, is obsessed for Ph.D. from abroad. Needless to say, that with the strong support of his faithful wife, her prayers, patience and forbearance fetches him a foreign fellowship and gets him a degree from American university. Girija tries to immerse herself into housework and looking after again her parents-in-law while waiting for her husband to come back from America and start together a prosperous life. Soon the change comes in Rajasekhar. He gulls his semi-educated wife and old parents. He secretly gets married an American girl and has two children by her and he decides to settle in America. He comes home on a short visit only to cheat his faithful and innocent wife and parents; Cunning Rajashekar secures the signature of Girija on divorce papers on the pretext of arranging visa for her and goes to America for good. The lack of education and especially, the lack of the knowledge of English, become an albatross around her neck when she unwittingly signs her own divorce papers. Against this fickleness and treachery of Rajasekhar, Girija, the typical Indian wife shines with the traditional Indian virtues of loyalty and constancy. Girija, an essentially Indian daughter-in-law, decides not to remarry but to remain in the family to serve her aging parents-in-law. Her mother suggests her to go for re-marriage but Girija calmly answers that she will not marry and live with her parents-in-law.

Basavaraj Naikar points out the importance of family bonds, which tie people together. Here, marriage is not merely an agreement between two individuals but an institution involving two families and the society at large. Even Girija’s mother secretly feels happy to hear her daughter’s resolve although she herself has broached the proposal of Girija’s re-marriage. Misfortune has taught Girija her courage and contentment. Like a typical Indian woman, she is ready to face her fate with fortitude even if she loses the much-needed support from the spouse. Her ideal character is rather unusual in this collection which is otherwise full of morally degraded and weak-willed people. On the whole, Girija’s story is not unusual because most of the Indian young men going abroad marry there enchanted by the sophisticated white
ladies. Naikar points out that circumstance in such a situation do not make a man but reveals his true colour.

Girija’s decision not to remarry and remain in the family to serve her parents-in-law seems to be too idealistic and short-sighted. Her signing the divorce papers even without showing them at least to her father-in-law is hardly in consonance with her character. Rajashekhar’s total and sudden severance of all ties with his old parents and faithful wife without any provocation whatsoever appears to be rather unusual. It is hardly an important part of the western culture as Girija’s illiteracy is not necessarily one of the Indian. The intended contrast between the essentials of the two cultures seems to have been carried a little too far. Here the comment of B. M. Jabannavar is noteworthy-

Girija stands for devotion, submissiveness faithfulness etc. Rajasekhar stands for hypocrisy and cruelty. This story demonstrates the big gulf that lies between man and woman in India. The author has highlighted the influence of American imperialism on the Westernized youth of India. At the same time, he has glorified the Indian womanhood and wifehood through the character of Girija. 53

Oedipus Myth

In the story Mother’s Husband Basavaraj Naikar’s attempt is to bring in the Oedipus myth in the Indian context with a strange twist. It seems that it is certainly a very unusual type of story with a mythical background. Naikar has tried to project another version of the oedipal theme through the device of prophecy. The story is conceived against the background of the Indian mythical belief in predestination. In the Oedipus myth, we find, the son killing his father and remarrying his mother and he has children. However, in Naikar’s story the mother abandons her husband and has sex with her son. The story begins keeping in mind the mythical tempo. Setavi, the mother of Kamalata is a goddess, writes the destiny on the foreheads of the skulls of human beings to be born according to the law of Karma (action of past lives). Setavi, a flippant version of the Greek fore-teller Teresias is the celestial scribe. To her anguish, Setavi has to write the future of her own daughter, Kamalata. The goddess is
incarnated and has to take birth as a human being to produce that unfortunate daughter. She is shocked to know the future of her own daughter yet to be born, Kamalata, “was going to have sexual intercourse with her own son according to the strange course of her life.”

Kamalata is very sweet and beauty personified. Time passes and Kamalata becomes young and beautiful. Coincidently, while wandering in the woods Kamalata meets her would-be husband Madappa and falls in love with him. There is an instant chemistry working between them and both succumb to passion. Even she does not ask her future husband’s name. In a fit of physical passion she marries Madappa, a cobbler. Kamalata does not even think about her widowed mother when she lives with Madappa for five years and gives birth to a healthy son.

When Kamalata knows of her husband’s inferior profession, she deserts him. Now she feels ashamed of herself being the wife of a cobbler. She (Kamalata) abandons her husband as soon as she learns about his trade and caste, which is of a cobbler. Kamalata takes decision to leave her husband and son. She is still engaging and becomes a prostitute in Dhawalpura and changes her name to Chandrasani. There she attracts people from all ages. Like Kamalata, her son Adivesha is disgusted with the father’s profession and becomes a young merchant dealing in precious stones and pearls.

Coincidently, Adivesha, a jewel merchant comes to Dhawalpura, the same town where his mother earns a living. He is dazzled to see Kamalata’s (now Chandrasani) exquisite beauty and hires her services not knowing that Chandrasani is his own mother. Adivesha is greatly attracted towards her and he feels as if “the moon had descended from the sky to the earth”. Chandrasani, too is attracted to Adivesha and admires his “glowing cheeks, mischievous moustaches, inviting lips, broad shoulders and sumptuous thighs. Although she had tasted many men, she had never felt so attracted to them.

As a result of their passionate lovemaking Chandrasani becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son. Both are overjoyed but one night she had a horrible dream in which a woman of her mother’s age told her that she had slept with her own son and got a son and a grandson at the same time. After learning the truth she begins to
“shake with shame and fear” and with a choking sensation in her throat she asks herself,

“Did I sleep with my own son...? Did I get a grandson and a son at the same time? 57

Unable to bear the guilt and shame, Kamalata jumps into a well tucking the baby tightly around her chest with her sari and commits suicide. Adivesha perhaps never learns the truth behind Chandrasani’s suicide. The mythical tale conveys the message of the inescapable fruits of enjoyment or punishment of our own actions which are here literally written by the ‘Moving Fingers’ of Destiny and which no tears, not even of the scribe, can wash out. Though the story reminds one of the Oedipus myths there are so many loose ends which detract from its probability. What appeared plausible at a bygone age does not seem at all convincing in the twentieth or twenty first century. There has been very little said why and how Kamalata, who was so devoted to her husband (Madappa) and son, having had her fill of matrimonial pleasure for full five years, could leave them without a backward glance and suddenly become so degraded simply because her husband turned out to be one of the low caste men. The tragic state that none can change the course of his or her fate.

**Barrenness and Woman’s Identity**

In the story *She Wanted a Child* the author presents the question of a woman’s identity in society and the world, through a narrative that permits more than one reading of the problem. Finally, the author leaves it to the reader to judge. In a number of Naikar’s stories the inner and external social constraints on the individual make him or her court disaster. In this story Naikar deftly portrays the agony of a woman who is incapable of bearing a child. Manjula, a young woman two years married in the Kannada town of Chitradurga is still childless.

The instinct of motherhood was quite strong in Manjula. At the same time she is well aware of the fact that sterility in the Indian context is a social stigma. She desperately needs a child. This type of hankering after the child is quite common in Indian society where life is supposed to be worthless without a child. During the first
two years of her married life, Manjula does not conceive and thus loses her familial and social status. Her unpitying mother-in-law, in a sharp reprimand cast at Manjula, says:

You have not even a single child to keep the lamp of our family burning. I don’t know what is wrong with you. At your age, I was a mother of three.  

The above expression is a fine example of typical Indian English.

We notice that the remark of the mother-in-law is highly traditional. Naikar, at the same time talks of social and descriptive realism. This is of course a classically realist narrative strategy. We find, South Indian details as the characters eat idlis and dosas or sip “sweet hot coffee”. The reader is constantly reminded of the events’ location in a specific place and time. It is then, within a specifically Indian context that Manjula’s human drama unfolds.

Manjula’s husband, Sankara even hints at his second marriage. Manjula feels deprived of her ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ identity as a woman by being childless. She believes that she can effectively have no identity in society unless and until she has borne a child. In such a situation, her husband compels her to mislead him by telling a lie that she has lost her menstrual cycle and hence is expecting a child. A sudden but welcome offer of job in the Dharwad post office as a clerk saves her from exposure for the time being. Hence, she leaves her family and there she is attracted towards, Sekhar, her young colleague. She enters into an adulterous relationship with him for the sake of getting a child. She thinks that her husband not she, might be infertile. So, Sekhar and Manjula secretly meet at different places and make love passionately. This strategy fails when showing no sign of pregnancy after three months of intimate relationship with Sekhar. Manjula, then consults gynaecologist and comes to know that she is infertile. The doctor finally tells her that she would need a minor operation. The next day, Manjula does not report for work. Henceforth, the character of Sekhar is never mentioned and it seems that he has been merely a pawn in strategy. Now Manjula tries her best a strategy to be a mother of a child as she is scared of the minor operation. She enters the maternity ward at the local hospital, where she impersonates a newly arrived doctor, drugs all the women in the ward and steals a baby under the guise of a nurse. At the end, Manjula is caught by the police and imprisoned.
From a conservative point of view, Manjula would be viewed as a disturber of the cultural order for she separates the child from its biological parents. The child belongs to Muslim couple. The whole story of the theft of the child is narrated by the sub-inspector. “Fatima and her husband thanked PSI and the staff profusely and return home with a great sense of satisfaction”.

Manjula’s plans are doomed to failure. Instead of gaining a socially approved identity as a mother, she loses all trace of such identity. Finally, she is reduced to a felon. Manjula’s actions could be read as the trajectory of a protest against the whole notion of a socially imposed identity. If Manjula is infertile, then she cannot assume the one identity that her society considers acceptable for her, and the ultimate blame may be shifted on to a society that fails to offer a woman a sufficiently diverse set of approved identities. From a more traditional point of view it might be said that Manjula was rebelling against her Karma: if it was her destiny because of events in her previous life, to have to live as a childless woman, then her error was to rebel against her destiny instead of accepting it. On this reading, Manjula’s true identity in this life would be identified with her Karma. Thus, Naikar’s story presents the question of a woman’s identity in society and the world. The story She Wanted a Child may be considered as a journalistic production. It is a tale that, certainly, reads as if it were based on a ‘fait divers’ from a local newspaper.

It seems that, Naikar employs the method of ‘showing’ rather than of ‘telling’ and the characters reveal themselves mostly through their actions and conversations while the narrator intervenes very sparingly. The one improbable point of the story is the long absence of Manjula’s husband who should have, in natural course, visited her very often to know about her well being, when she is expecting a baby. In spite of the fact, the story is quite enjoyable from the point of view of style and theme.

**Mistaken Identity**

Basavaraj Naikar in When the News Came gives us a comic description of funny incidents and situations arising out of mistaken identity. The author uses a number of strategies similar to those of She Wanted a Child. This narrative too reads as if it had sprung from a newspaper ‘fait divers’. The title itself contains the word ‘news’ and that ‘news’ could be variously interpreted. It may refer to the news of the
highway death, the village rumours of Channappa’s ghost, or the final revelation of his return. Moreover, this story too ends with the restoration of the order that had been disturbed.

Channappa, a truck driver from Navilur goes on a business trip to Belgaum for a week. One morning he bids farewell to his wife Rudravva and their son Chandru. A week later, another truck driver by the same name from Kavalur dies in a road accident but the police constable Mr. Patil mistakenly enters into the register the name of Channappa of Navilur. The face of the truck driver is so mangled as to be unrecognizable. When Rudravva is wrongly reported by the police of the death of her husband, she felt, “As if the earth under her feet was sinking she screamed and began to thump her chest.” She wails pitifully before her son, my dear Chandru, your father has left us in midwinter. How shall we live without him?

These expressions give an earthly touch of reality to the story. The burial is arranged at the police station and then Rudravva along with her son Chandru with heavy heart return to their village. As a matter of fact the one whose death is actually reported is alive and there is yet another by the same name who died accidently. Rudravva thus, officially becomes a widow. The author nonetheless gives the motif a specifically Indian twist by focusing on the predicament of Chennapp’s beleaguered wife Rudravva. The news of her husband’s apparent death catapults her from the accepted social status of wife to what is in traditional Hindu society, the highly problematic positions of widow. Widowhood descends on her, as Kallavva an elderly neighbor “took a small chunk of stone and broke the bangles of Rudravva and wiped the vermilion dot from her forehead.”

After some fifteen days Channappa returns home at dusk and the villagers mistaking him for a ghost fled from their houses. Chennappa is also surprised to see the fear on the faces of his people who mistake him to be his ghost. He also realizes the forced widowhood of his wife and his eventual exile on account of his (ghost’s) arrival in the village. Accompanied by a friend from an adjoining village, Channappa asks the police to clear up the mystery. In the end, the same police who contributed to the chaos make amends by reuniting Channappa with his family. It is thus, for Rudravva, an enormous triumph when her married status is resituated through the restoration of the all-important symbols. Basavaraj Naikar describes:
The womenfolk assembled in the Kitchen and helped Rudravva put on her nose-ring, sacred *tali* and *Kumkum.*

This collective gesture serves to welcome her back into the community of socially legitimated females. These details only underscore the true Indian reality especially in the rural area. With a touch of humour Naikar, at the same time deals with the life of a marginalized family and brings it alive to the readers. The authors also takes another opportunity to hint at the superstitious beliefs of the poor rural people who mistaken Chennappa for a ghost. The vicissitudes in the life of Chennappa and Rudravva i.e. “from homelessness to the return home”, “from widowhood back to wifehood,” appears as the outcome of chance compounded by human error. In this story, the cultural order is disturbed by a pile-up of circumstances beyond any individual’s control. The cultural order is disturbed for a short while not by a deliberate act of revolt. It is the chance that dictates that Chennappa is absent longer than expected, it is the chance that kills truck-driver who bears the same name and it is the sheer chance also that mangles the driver’s face so as to make unrecognizable. Also, it is human error that has the body officially misidentified. On the whole, the story leaves a useful message that the identity of ordinary people is not fixed or stable in the society. The identity is subject to the winds of change and chance and can be blown apart and fragmented and also reconstituted in the most unexpected ways. The story ends with the restoration of the order- Chennappa returns to his village, Rudravva ceases to be a widow, and their son regains his father. An elderly woman in the story says, “Both of you have sorts of rebirth now.”

**Love**

The story **Fulfilment** presents a romantic love which does not wither or get stale with the passage of time. It confirms Edgar Allan Poe’s notion of the well-told tale that rewards its readers with a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The narrative is set in modern times in an unnamed town in Karnataka. Bharati the protagonist is the only daughter of a retired judge. She belongs to the upper middle class, a motherless child of an aging, orthodox, religious Brahmin father. Surrounded by luxuries she remains, “unhappy deep in her heart.” She is not allowed to pursue her education after she
passes her matriculation and she justifiably feels suffocated in her parental home. The author vividly describes Bharati’s situation whose father being religious and disciplinarian.

The author employs the **mirroring device** in the story **Fulfilment** where the situation in the play **Jagajyoti Basaveswara** broadly corresponds with the situation in Bharati’s life. Bharati falls madly in love with a talented actor named ‘Chandrasekhar’. She first saw Chandrasekhar when he was playing the role of Basaveswara. The play dramatizes the marriage between a Brahmin girl and untouchable young man and the resultant turmoil in the caste-ridden society of Karnataka in the twelfth century. When Bharati falls passionately in love with Chandrasekhar the same situation is re-enacted. She is overwhelmed by the acting prowess, combined with physical charm of a leading actor. Bharati is a Brahmin girl while Chandrasekhar an untouchable. However, Bharati does not allow Chandrasekhar’s low caste, his poverty, when revealed, to dampen her love. As she is suffocated in her parental home, she elopes with Chandrasekhar to fulfil her physical and emotional needs. Both flew to a far-off village and with the help of friends get married there. Bharati is so devoted to her husband that she willingly lives a life of poverty with him in a village. She breaks all class and caste barriers when she, the daughter of an orthodox Brahmin father, agrees to plunge all comforts and her social status for a life with an untouchable. Her act of defiance seems to be an impulsive act—an escape from her boring existence. Time passes and the couple is blessed with son named Vishwanath. Unfortunately, Chandrasekhar is falsely implicated in a criminal case and warrant is issued against him.

Their happiness rankles in the eyes of some people. Life for them is not, now a bed of roses; it is a bed of thorns. Chandrasekhar disguises himself as a beggar and goes to Bombay to escape the dragnet of law. Bharati’s father is shocked but soon he gets reconciled to his fate. He has taken it much to heart. He, then, donates all his property to the Sringeri Math of Sankaracarya and sets out on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas. After twelve years Chandrasekhar, when the time limit for the warrant actually expires, comes back to his wife. Bharati fails to recognize him because he is now, with beard and moustache. She has waited for him for a long time. Finally, she hears his voice and the couple unites and “both of them remained in a paradise of silent sweetness.”

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The story **Fulfilment** focuses on the central character of Bharati. It suggests the inevitable conflict of an individual with society and the tradition prevalent. The characters in the story, it seems, are not really drawn in the round they remain the same throughout. However, the story has a charm of a different kind, which does not lie in psychological subtleties. Bharati’s initial rebellion against class, caste and her orthodox father is the factor that lends colour to her character. Soon, we find, Bharati into the traditional mould of a *Bharatiya Nari* the long suffering penance-practicing female waiting patiently for fate to hand out the rewards. In spite of the fact, on the whole, Bharati is perhaps the strongest and best evolved character. Bharati’s very name suggests an older tradition, recalling Bharata, the theoretician of the *rasas*. As the narrative advances, its archetypal Indian connotations become deeper and more evident. The lovers get married in a Hanuman temple in a reference harking back to the beneficent monkey-god of the Ramayana. Bharati’s father replicates a time-old tradition by metamorphosing from ‘judge’ to a *Sadhu*. The sudden unexpected turn in Chandrasekhar’s life- exile from home and separation from wife and child- takes on connotations of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The theme of lovers separated by chance-for chance alone can explain the false and arbitrary pinning of a crime on Bharati’s upright husband also points back to another great work of the Indian tradition, Kalidasa’s drama *Shakuntala*, with its passionate lovers, kind and woodland girl, who come across a social gulf, are separated by a fatal bout of amnesia and finally reunited. Basavaraj Naikar’s characters are thus made protagonists in a love-drama that is eminently and anciently sub-continental. The use-value from the story centres on the question of identity. For all the three characters Bharati, her husband and her father-identity proves to be sometimes that is not fixed or static but can, rather, evolve and mutate in unexpected ways affected by both choice and chance. Bharati chooses a love-match, and thus a life totally outside the traditional limits that would otherwise have determined her existence. Her father denies her a college education and her expected future would have been an arranged marriage. It seems that Bharati’s act and revolt lies not in the alien influence of “western liberalism but in the Indian tradition itself- in Basaveshwara’s play from the twelfth century, which long ago dramatized the possibility of a love-match crossing caste boundaries.
Setting

Basavaraj Naikar’s stories are firmly rooted in the Indian soil depicting Southern Karnataka in particular and Indian life in general. All the stories are set within a restricted geographical compass, namely in various locations in today’s Dharwad city. There are references to the South Indian customs, rituals, dress codes and food habits. We come across graphic descriptions illuminating the culture, tradition, rituals and beliefs of the people of North Karnataka. Naikar’s stories represent various aspects of human life. Like Thomas Hardy’s Wessex or Jane Austine’s South England, Naikar’s collections of two short stories demonstrate a strong regionalism. At the same time we find, the influence of modern civilization on the regional life. The fictional world that Basavaraj Naikar builds up comes alive in all its minute details before the reader so much so that even those who have never been down South can see it with mind’s eye.

In the story The Thief of Nagarahalli Basavaraj Naikar takes the reader to “Nagarahalli situated thirty five miles away from Dharwad”. Naikar vividly describes the village and the surrounding area whereby the reader is transported to Nagarahalli.

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar creates the village atmosphere of Dharwad district by introducing the readers to taste of roties, fresh brinjal’s curry, sesame powder and curd; Hanuman temple, goddess Dyamavva, songs of Sarifsab of Sisunal, holige, happalas, sendiges, laddus, burfi, kharadani, the temple Lord Kalmeshwara, etc.

As Dr. Basavaraj Naikar was born in Naragund of the then Dharwad district in Karnataka and took his education in Dharwad, it is but natural that he depicts the places which he had seen in his boyhood in his short stories. In his interview to Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi, Basavaraj Naikar states that-

I can never forget my friends, the tall trees of sky jasmine, the aromatic flowers, the melodious music of nightingale, twitter of birds and a variety of birds and the beauty of Nature and the classical beauty of the college building which were built in the British rule in India.
The setting of Naikar’s stories is typically Indian-Urban as well as rural. Malla in *The Thief of Nagarahalli* is “Clad in Dhoti up to his knees and a half shirt, a turban around his head...The only piece of property Malla had in the world was his agile pony, which he loved as intensely as he would have loved his wife.”

**All for Gold** anthologized in *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* is one of the well-known stories set in North Karnataka. Naikar’s description of the car festival of the village god Lord Kalmeshwara is noteworthy. He vividly describes the village women wearing saries and ornaments. In *The Invisible Face* Bangarasetty is a famous merchant of Dharwad. Manjula in *She Wanted a Child* works in the post office at Dharwad. Chennappa and his wife Rudravva live in Navilpur a neighbourhood at Dharwad. We meet Virangonda of Yamanur and Kallappa of Kalwad in the story *Blood for Blood*. Virangonda goes to Dharwad to meet police Inspector and get his work done. The setting of the story *The Circle of Vengeance* is a village named Jogapur which is three miles away from Naragund. Govindacharya in *Pilgrimage to Kashi* goes to Hubli where his son resides. In *The Spider’s Web* the cabinet minister visits Dharwad. Kamalata becomes a prostitute in Dhowalpura and acquires the name of Chandrasani (*Mother’s Husband*). The setting of all the stories of Naikar is Dharwad and its suburbs. What strikes a discerning reader is the authorial attempt to capture the cultural milieu and ethos of north-Karnataka in quite a convincing manner.

Thus, stories of Naikar offer a wonderful variety of themes and he seems to treat with equal ease situations from rural as well as urban life. It is significant that the author provides very authentic accounts of Indian life and relies heavily on Indian myths and rituals to presents characteristic Indian settings.

Christopher Rollason observes:

By contrast, there is a visible coherence in the matter of place: all the stories are set within in a restricted geographical compass namely in various locations in today’s Karnataka state and especially the vicinity of Dharwad city.... This suggests that if we are to seek interconnection in Naikar’s story collection, it should be through that sense of place, and that accordingly what binds his ten stories is in some sense an essential Indianness…. 
In the first collection of stories *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* the two stories namely *The Thief of Nagarahalli* and *All For Gold* are set in the British Raj. *Mother’s Husband* is in the non-specific mythical past. The remaining seven stories are contemporary. In the second collection of stories *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories, The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi* and *Bloodbath* are historical and *The Golden Servant* narrates the account of saint poet of Karnataka from sixteenth century.

Naikar in his stories vividly depicts social customs, rituals, wedding, religious traditions, etc. followed there at Naragund, Navilpuri, Hubli, and Dharwad. In the story *Her husband Went to America*, the description of traditional marriage ceremony, the priests chanting mantras, *shobhana* programme, the band playing songs, Girija’s visit to Murugha Math for *darshana*, her darshan of Goddess Chamundi, her taking the *Tirth* in her palms, her enjoyment of a rope swing, etc. add the local colour of North Karnataka life. It seems that Basavaraj Naikar belongs to the tradition of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Chaman Nahal in the depiction of the society of south India. North Karnataka life style, particularly the lifestyle of Dharwad district is mirrored through Naikar stories, the life of Goudas, Deshpandes, Patils and others before India’s independence is projected vividly.

Commenting on the locale of the stories in *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories*, Dr. Asha Choubey writes:

There are only three stories which have urban setting—*The Invisible Face, The Anonymous Letter* and *She Wanted a Child*. Naikar’s penchant for rural scenes is obvious in the fact that in these three stories the writer does not waste many words in depicting urban setting while in other stories much is described about the village atmosphere and the setting is made complete with ox-bell, brooks, kabaddi, haystack, green gram and cucumber creepers, villagers easing their bowels behind the shrubs and village festivals in all their mirth and colour contribute towards verisimilitude.\(^{70}\)

Thus, Basavaraj Naikar reproduces the Saga of Dharwad province. His stories make an effort of publishing the local culture to the outside territory. The author as a cultural ambassador, especially of south India has globalized Indianness through the
medium of his stories. The language is filled with some of the idioms popular in Dharwad district.

**Narrative Technique**

Narrative technique is a broad concept which is useful to understand and describe the relations amongst the elements and how the short writer manipulates them to create a certain configuration of meaning. It relates to the plot, characterization, setting, style and the manipulation of language in the short story. The fictional world of Basavaraj Naikar appeals every reader and the world that author builds up comes alive in all its minute details before the reader. His stories have a special charm in as much as all his stories are imbued with Indian traits. The stories bear the stamp of author’s personality. In order to make his stories readable and memorable, Naikar makes use of diverse devices to suit his purpose. In his stories Naikar makes use of first person narration, third person narration, flashback technique, point of view technique and stream of consciousness technique. In a majority of short stories the third person narration is used. In his narrative technique Basavaraj Naikar has embedded ethical values found in the traditions of a variety of thinking in the Jakat Tales, Kathasaritsagar, Brihatkatha, the Panchtantra and Hitopdesha.

Naikar’s main concern is to depict Indian life in its various facets. He portrays Indian culture artistically and his stories represent various aspects of human relationship. He admits he has been influenced by the oral tradition of our country and his main concern is to give proper motivation to the characters. In his interview, Naikar says that he has been influenced by “Tolstoy, Emine Zola, Mauppassant, Carvants, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, Thoreau, Henry James, Hemingway, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, Jawaharlal Nehru, M.K. Gandhi, Mulk Raj Aanand, Raja Rao, Chaman Nahal and Khushwant Singh”. Further he makes it clear these writers are his favourite whom he tries to follow but he does not imitate them blindly. Undoubtedly, one would say that Naikar captures the attention of the readers for he narrates the things, persons and events as graphically as possible while conveying their inner psyche.
First Person Narration

The first person narrative technique the narrator ‘I’ plays a key role and it is for the author to make use of him skilfully. The narrator ‘I’ is sometimes an observer, but quite frequently he is a participant in the action of the story that he is narrating. It is to be noted that in some stories where ‘I’ or the first person is the narrator, we regard this as the character of the narrator, who is not, strictly speaking, the author himself. First person narrative gives us a direct feel of the story and indicates how to view what the story has to offer. It establishes a friendly relationship between the ‘I’ and the reader. It gives the freshness of first-hand experience to the reader. However, the limitations of this method are also very clear. We see everything only through the eyes of the ‘I’ and the ‘I’ does all the interpretation of events for us. The first person narrative technique is used by master short story writers like Kipling and Somerset Maugham.

Basavaraj Naikar in his stories like The Anonymous Letter, The Chronic Patient Became a Doctor, The Invisible Face, Cross Roads, Spider’s Web, Blood For Blood and Fulfilment uses the first person narrative technique and thereby wins authenticity to the experience he delineates. The first person narrator provides Naikar with a variation in the narrative technique from the usual third person narration.

In the stories dealing with academic world- The Chronic Patient Became a Doctor and The Anonymous Letter the narrator is Mr. Nandiswar. Mr. Nandiswar draws a vignette of the camps politics in these two stories. The stories bring out admirable heroic struggles of the young academicians in the society of today. We the reader every now and then comes across the hearless burocrats. When their selfish nature is not satisfied, they do not attend our files and as a result we suffer. This is how Mr. Nandiswar becomes our friend and we feel extremely sorry for him. Both these stories tempt the reader to feel that the pen of the author, himself a University Professor, is driven by his heart, full of sympathy for the victims of the negative aspects of the so-called academic world of today.

In The Invisible Face the narrator is Mr. Patil who gives a true picture of the politicians and criminals. Mr. Sivaraj in Cross Roads has excelled in presenting deep
emotional conflict between passion and the acceptance of the society finally resolved into tranquillity.

Naikar’s narrative method in *The Thief of Nagarahalli* consists of suitably alternating first and third person viewpoints, enabling the reader to understand the character from inside as well as outside. This is the narrative style that Dr. Basavaraj Naikar follows throughout in the story with admirable success.

The narrator in *The Spider’s Web* is a cabinet minister by virtue of his caste. Ironically enough, he says that he is an idealist by nature and wants to improve his department and then we come to know that he is responsible for the death of his colleague (Mr. Durgadas) who had arranged the grand dinner of fried fish.

Due to first person narration, Naikar achieves credibility. The reader is convinced that whatever is narrated is true. Naikar’s ‘I’ narrates the story in such a way that the readers believe that he is telling the truth.

**Third Person Narration**

The third person narrative succeeds in giving us a well-pitched objective picture of the reality that the story wants to present. It can be either omniscient or limited omniscient. Here the narrator stands outside the action of the story and he is not part of the plot. He leads us knowing exactly how the characters feel and think. This outside voice clarifies characters, contexts, motives and actions for the readers. Most stories follow this mode. Leo Tolstoy’s excellent story *Three Questions* is an example of narration from the third person omniscient point of view.

Basavaraj Naikar makes effective use of third person narrative style in his stories. O.P. Mathur rightly observes:

In a majority of stories the third person device of narration is used because of the psychological distance between the author as the observer of the cavalcade of events and the characters involved, with the few of whom the author, with his moralistic stance, can identify himself.\(^2\)
Basavaraj Naikar’s technique of narration heightens the effect of the story. It is observed that it helps the narrator as an effective tool in building up a proper rapport with the reader.

Pier Paulo Piciucco observes:

Most of the times the narrator is a distant omniscient witness, resolutely concentrated on the elements of his own tale…Although the narrating voice is authorial, the tales are not meant exclusively for a public of educated of scholarly readers (or should we say listeners?) but for a wider and mixed audience.⁷³

Naikar’s narration is praiseworthy for he narrates his stories in such a way that the readers cannot keep the book down and forget. Most of his characters are memorable. The readers are not kept in alien strangeness; they emotionally identify one with the collective life depicted in Naikar’s stories. The author presents the life as it is carefully abstaining from positing his point of view or assuming a didactic approach. One of the significant features of the short stories of Naikar is style that is simple, direct and graphic. Naikar is an excellent short story writer and his art of storytelling never loses its grip on the reader’s mind.

**Flashback Technique**

The Flashback method either recapitulates or re-presents events of the past. This often moves the narration back and forth and gives depth to the narrative. Basavaraj Naikar handles the flashback technique in *Cross Roads* effectively. Sivaraj and Kalpana fell in love with each other and wanted to marry and lead happy married life. But due to Rajakar Riot both were separated from each other ten years ago. Ten years is not long time to forget one’s first love. The good old truant memories rush into Sivaraj’s mind and the author begins his story at this point. Whatever happens to Sivaraj is narrated in the words of Sivaraj. Coincidently, the lovers meet each other and Sivaraj is shocked to see his former beloved married to his friend. He exclaims:
I felt as though I had been flung to sky all of a sudden. The volcano about to erupt through Kalpana’s eyes grew calm instantly. Hundreds of torches began to dazzle in my mind. This is ...my...Kalpana.... 

The technique of narration Naikar has used in this story keeps the curiosity of the readers alive, regarding both the past and present of Sivaraj and Kalpana. It makes the narrative fresh, vigorous and interesting. As the past and present are cunningly jumbled, there is a constant impression of suspense and anticipation. The past and the present are juxtaposed and each illuminates the other which is admirable.

**Characterization**

Characterization refers to the way in which characters are portrayed in a short story. It is through the behaviour and actions of the characters that the situations are developed. The characters in Basavaraj Naikar’s fictional world are rural or small town people. It seems that Basavaraj Naikar is greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud who states that human mind is just like an iceberg of which major part is always hidden beneath the surface. If a writer has to evaluate the mind and character of a human being, he should dive deep into the invisible shades of mind. Naikar with his keen eye does the same in most of his stories.

**Historical Characters**

Basavaraj Naikar has written both historical and contemporary stories. His historical characters are memorable. Rani Mallamma in *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi* is a historical figure and Naikar has inscribed the best aspects of a woman character in Mallamma as a daughter, wife, mother and protector and well-wisher of her kingdom. In her character we find all the Indian sensibilities with regional culture and practices. At the same time, Mallamma is presented as a fine specimen of Indian womanhood and she appears as a *Shakti* the destroyer of evil. Also Naikar skilfully gives touch of feminist assertion to his woman characters. The readers are amazed to see the female heroism of Mallamma displayed lavishly. Her fight with the two tigers single handed is significant. She conveys the message that the woman is never
weak or helpless. Her organization of women soldiers is a special phenomenon in our country. Thus, Naikar’s portrayal of Rani Mallamma is superb. We witness the picturesque description of historical figure of Rani’s personality as an able administrator, a good organizer and a ferocious fighter.

Kanakadasa’s character is also drawn superbly in the story *The Golden Servant*. His decision to embrace a spiritual life is noteworthy. Naikar highlights Kanakadasa’s growth from political heroism to spiritual heroism in the story. The reader is spell-bound to read the activities of these glorious characters in their full swing.

**Characters in Contemporary Stories**

Basavaraj Naikar in his contemporary stories is particularly good at thoughtful delineation of character and building up of incident and circumstances. Since the short story has the limited matrix, the writer is expected to focus on a few characters and Basavaraj Naikar is not the one to flout such a rule. Naikar in his contemporary stories concentrates on a limited number of characters and reveals them in their crucial moments. The author gets all his inspiration from life and creates fascinating stories out of casual events. It is his keen observation that provides him with sufficient details and information necessary for portrayal of his characters. Naikar seems to be one of the foremost portrayers of the Indian scene today. His stories provide not only aesthetic pleasure but also enable the reader to understand the enigma of contemporary India which is laudable.

In his contemporary stories we meet thieves, corrupt political leaders, murderers, cheats, prostitutes, doctors, superstitious villagers, truck drivers, romantic lovers, hypocrites, police inspectors, farmers, teachers, etc. In Naikar’s stories the theme of man-woman relationship finds a prominent place, particularly in the South Indian context. The significant role of a man as a father, husband, lover and son is vividly analysed through his characters.
Male Characters

We should note that the stories reveal the fact that they are of eternal value and Naikar’s main concern is to search for a way out from the corrupt and immoral world and through his characters he succeeds to a great extent. Naikar deals with the themes of lust, greed for gold, motherhood, morality, poverty, betrayal, corruption, hypocrisy, official indifference, incest, sexuality, campus life, etc. We meet Goudas, Patils, Deshpandes, teachers, thieves and others in Naikar’s fictional world.

The two collections of short stories display a wide range of situations. The stories reveal some ugly escapade of youth or a looseness of temperament as portrayed through the various characters. Malla in the title story The Thief of Nagaralahalli is a memorable character because of his ingenious plan. It is amazing to read how Malla lifts the gold ornaments from the dead body of a woman by inserting his hands into the hole in the wall. It is also interesting to read how Malla makes the dead woman claps twice. This seems to be a character-centric story wherein Malla is a thief who attains heroic stature at the hands of Naikar. However, the honour, the magnitude and the loftiness that Malla brings to the profession of thieving presents him not as an ignoble thief but a tragic hero. His tragic flaw is overconfidence that brings about his fall at the end. Malla steals golden bowl from the landlord of Imrapur but the carpenter Monappa steals it away from Malla. Monappa challenges the skill of Malla and they set a bet that Malla should steal it from Monappa. However, Malla fails to get back the golden bowl from Monappa and accepts his defeat and that puts an end to his glorious career. Thus the story makes it clear that strong pride in one’s skill can become a driving force for human action.

The story Coffin in the House shades light on a murderer, a rapist named Mr. Patil. In Naikar’s story the criminals are punished. Mr. Patil who has raped his friend’s daughter is punished in the form of fracture and finally he is arrested by the police. Naikar’s criminals never spare their accomplices in the hours of danger to themselves and do not hesitate to finish the identity of their accomplices in order to keep their identity intact. Bangarasetty in The Invisible Face is a criminal who is involved in the crime of printing fake currency notes to satisfy his greed for wealth. The true face of Bangarasetty is exposed and it is noteworthy that the contrast between the inner and the outer man is explored. Through the characters of
Bangarasetty, Dr. Deshpande the author presents the modern world of deception, corruption, crime and criminalisation of politics.

In the stories dealing with campus politics, the true characters of the head of the department and the guide are exposed. The stories present some very authentic characters in an equally authentic setting. The character of Nandiswar in A Chronic Patient Became a Doctor is Naikar’s memorable. The Spider’s Web is a moving story of Durgadas, a circle Inspector who is dragged into the muddle to be dishonest and suffer a lot to satisfy his higher authorities. Durgadas is Naikar’s representative victim.

Naikar depicts the life-styles, rituals, dress codes and cultural manners of the people graphically. The tragic, the comic, the ironic and the satirical tones are combined in Naikar’s fictional world. To present the ethical values of human life is Naikar’s main concern and as a social persona he discloses the double speaking, grafting and intriguing nature of man. It is observed that Naikar’s men are generally deceitful greedy, cunning, selfish and lecherous. For his selfish end, Kamalata’s husband [Mother’s Husband] never tells her his profession; Balappa in All For Gold deceives his close friend for gold and Sangappa’s uncontrollable desire, drags him to his grave. Undoubtedly, Naikar’s guilty men are punished but only after the damage is done.

**Female Characters**

In Naikar’s fictional world women characters seem to be silent. There are only a few female characters in his stories, but they are certainly more memorable than their male counterparts. Almost all female characters seem to be rooted in the bygone eras when women were more or less objects of desire to be used or discarded at pleasure. They act and think in accordance with their social milieu. It is noted that most of female characters of Dr. Basavaraj Naikar are victims of circumstances. Girija in Her Husband Went to America is the victim of circumstances. Her story is a story of betrayal of trust, of innocence versus craft and cunning, she is deceived by a self-centred husband but she chooses to live with her parents-in-law. Dr. Aroonima Sinha rightly observes-
Girija could have rebelled by marrying again or leaving her in–laws to carve out a separate identity. But she prefers to be the good daughter-in-law, which the latter too must have found quite convenient.75

Girija is presented as a typical traditional archetype of Indian womanhood.

Naikar’s women characters are victims of social and traditional bindings. There are other characters who are victims of their own passions. We feel sympathy for Ganga in All For Gold. Her life is destroyed by the evil designs of sex and greed. Though Ganga is married, she is compelled to have sex with Sangappa. The character of Ganga would hurt the sensibilities of the traditional people. The story is an intensive study of character.

Manjula’s character in She Wanted a child is significant one. As she is childless, she takes a lover, only to have it confirmed that she is infertile. Then she steals a baby and is caught and arrested. Manjula would be considered as a disturber of the cultural order. The readers are moved to read the pathetic condition of Manjula. Her action could be read as the trajectory of a protest-blind and self-defeating no doubt, but still a protest-against the whole notion of a socially imposed identity. Naikar’s story presents the question of a woman’s identity in society and it is the reader who has to reflect creatively on the whole, unsolved question of the individual’s true place in society.

Bharati in Fulfilment is a rebel. She is the daughter of a retired Brahmin judge. She elopes with a poor untouchable actor and marries him without the consent of her father. In Naikar’s fictional world of lovers a high caste girl marrying a low caste man is not immoral. Bharati’s rebellion against her father, class and caste is the only factor that lends colour to her character.

On the whole, Naikar’s characters are typically Indian in their sense of values and concerns, and cannot be separated from mainstream of Indian life.

Language

Language in a short story can create special effects. It is obvious that a short story writer can use only a language that a lot of other people use. Readers must be
able to share the language not only with the author, but also with the narrator and characters. This is not a matter of any special talent that the short story writer or novelist may have, but it is rather a matter of the specific ways in which language has been and can be used to create effects and configurations of meanings. But we must also be careful to note that there are no sure-fire methods for creating specific effects, and various authors may create similar effects with completely dissimilar techniques.

Basavaraj Naikar’s stories capture the attention of the reader on account of their Indian sensibility. After close reading of the stories the readers would say that Naikar writes ‘about us for us’. His writing is not marketable in the west. He writes in English exactly the way he would have written if he had written in Kannada or Hindi. Naikar merely uses English creatively as a medium to represent the Indian reality. He believes in the view that the Indians should write in our cultural ethos and gives preference for the Indian variety of English. In his preface to the first collection of short stories The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories Naikar clearly states:

Right from my student days I have been inspired by the giants of Indian English Literature like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and Chaman Nahal among others. Like many Commonwealth writers, I believe in the view that we Indians must write in our native brand of English and should not ape the British ‘Masters’. Our imagery and style should be redolent of our cultural ethos.76

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar is a bilingual writer and well aware of the techniques of classical and regional literatures and has tried to employ them in his writing rather than borrowing the western mode of writing. He strongly believes in the Indian brand of English and does not try to imitate the British, of American or Australian writers. Although he writes in English, his sensibility is deeply steeped in Indian philosophy, religion, language and culture. In Naikar’s stories we come across a large number of examples of typical English expression. The use of mother tongue and incorporating it in English Naikar makes it typically Indian English.

e.g.
“The villagers had not kindled their ovens for three complete days.”77

{Blood for Blood}
“At last the thorn is gone”78 {Blood for Blood}
“Who then will continue the light of his family?” — Blood for Blood

“Does the sourness of Tamarind ever decrease with the years?” — Felicitation

“Even if you give him heavenly happiness, he is not satisfied and complains that it is hell itself” — Pilgrimage to Kashi

“Don’t call me Nagappa if I did not hack you and sleep with your wife.” — The Circle of Vengeance

A group of women came out cursing,

“Who’s the widow’s husband who has polluted us? Our series are all soaked in urine. May his corpse be lifted.” — Basavanti

“It’s easier to please God than him.” — A Chronic Patient Became A Doctor

“It is good that the scoundrel Mr. Sekhar left the department. The department will have more peace in the absence of that Sakuni figure.” — A Chronic Patient Became A Doctor

“At last God has opened his eyes upon me.” — A Chronic Patient Became A Doctor

“She achieved liberation from the mortal world in Saka 1639.” — The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi

“The sun was a coconut tree away from the western horizon.” — All For Gold

When Balya approaches Ganga to concede Sangappa’s secret wishes, she cries out in anger:

“I shall have you shoe-beaten if you step into my house again.” — All For Gold

“You whore, you have blackened my face permanently and I cannot show my face to the people in the village.” — All For Gold
“You should have consulted me before signing them. You have dug your own grave.”

{Her Husband Went to America}

“You have not a single child to keep the light of our family burning. I don’t know what is wrong with you. At your age, I was a mother of three.”

{She Wanted a Child}

“We thought Mr. Patil to be the best friend of our family and could never imagine that he would do such a terrible thing. We simply cannot guess which snake lives in which hole.”

{Coffin in the House}

Naikar thus creates the typically Indian ethos and flavour. The above expressions give an earthly touch of reality to Naikar’s stories. The language sometimes shows the pull of the native speech.

Naikar has used Indian words in his stories effectively and this usage creates Indian atmosphere which makes his stories readable. The language of all his stories is truly Indian. All his stories have small details of food, clothing, games, which are typically Indian. The words from Kannada and other Indian languages help to prove the strength of native culture and these words give a local and regional colour to Naikar’s stories. The diction used in the story does not bring a cross-cultural interaction, but remains as an agenda of local culture. Amar Nath Prasad and Dinesh Chandra Kumar are of the opinion that Basavaraj Naikar has experimented with the English language in his own way. He has deliberately brought in the native i.e. Kannada words, phrases and proverbs aptly wherever necessary like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and Rohinton Mistry. His stories undoubtedly add to the realm of Indian English short story and may be compared and contrasted with those of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Monoj Das and Rohinton Mistry. The list of loan words used in the stories:

Dhoti, hookah, rottis, jowar, laddus, burfis, khardani, seer, holiges, happalas, sendiges, beetle pan {The Thief of Nagarahalli}, Arati-service, bhajan-orchestra, chappals, bhabhi, tolas, {All For Gold}, Masala dosa, ganeshdidi {Circle of vengeance}, Sunhurte, Savadhana, meri manki Ganga, teri manki Jamuna, bol Radha sangam hoga ki nahi. Muhurtam, suhagRat,sobhana, chudva, darshan, puri, bhaji, chapatis, vachanas, {Her Husband Went to
In his second collection of short stories Basavaraj Naikar makes references to South Indian dishes and food items and food habits to make the atmosphere lively and real. The following is the list of items which we come across in Naikar’s stories:

- brinjal curry and curds, kadabu, fried-parched rice, mirchis, uppittu, holige, rottis, sandige, sweet balls, chutneys, etc.

To create the administrative atmosphere Basavaraj Naikar intends to coin the archaic Kannada words:

- Karbhari, Raja, Rani Sarkar, Subedar, niskas, sarot (cart) Darbar, Pathasala, Swayamvara, Maharaj, Diwan, ViharaGriha (Rest House), Palegar, etc.

Basavaraj Naikar is a master of story teller and vivid depiction of scenes, details of the background of the region produces a convincing illusion of reality. The author creates typical south Indian atmosphere in particular and Indian atmosphere in general. In order to create Indian atmosphere, Naikar makes reference too many rural games like Tiger-house, Chakka, etc. Also the author’s use of similes, metaphors, symbols, idioms should be appreciated. Thus, Basavaraj Naikar writes in simple and lucid English. His style is unique and that is his great achievement. His prose is characterized by its flow of easy language.
Dialogues

The use of dialogues is a common technique to narrate several incidents in the story. In fact in any form of fiction what men talk to each other and sometimes to themselves is very important. The difference between human beings in real life and those in fiction is that the latter talk in a manner that reveals them. The dialogue in the story reveals the attitude of character to each other or of one character to other characters in the story and to the whole life in general. Besides, it brings economy to the plot of the short story by compressing events.

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar in his stories makes ample use of dialogues in extremely artistic ways. The following dialogue from the story *Cross-Roads* occurs at the end of the story. Sivaraj and Kalpana were lovers and wanted to marry but unfortunately they were separated from each other forever because of Razakar Riot. It is by sheer chance they meet each other after a gap of ten years. While parting from each other the following conversation takes place:

I came back and saw Kalpana was sitting with her chin resting on her clasped hands. I said to her,

“Sarada, I am going. See you.”

Kalpana said,

“Why not wait until he comes? He may come any moment now. Had you not been here yesterday….”

“I did my part of duty. That’s all…Please tell Mohan…I’ll come some other time. My mother must be waiting for me since yesterday….”

“You must come…really?”

“I will, definitely. Otherwise, will Mohan keep quiet?”

“Please come without fail…But….”

“Tell me Kalpana.”

“Not alone.”
“O.K. is that all right? Sarada, Ta Ta!”

In the above dialogue one can notice that the conversation between Sivaraj, the narrator of the story and Kalpana is interspersed with pauses (…) which are very significant. Sivaraj and Kalpana are obviously speaking something unspeakable. It is the destiny which has separated these two lovers and now Kalpana is married to Sivaraj’s friend-Mohan and has a daughter named Sarada. Kalpana realizes that her former lover Sivaraj is still unmarried however she gives him hint to marry and come back to see her in these words “Not alone.” As Shivraj has no courage to face his beloved, he addresses Kalpana’s daughter Sarala while going away forever from Kalpana. Pauses and silences are often as significant as open communication. Naikar has used the technique of dialogue brilliantly. In this story some things are said; many more things remain purposefully unsaid.

Here is another piece of brilliant dialogue that appears in the excellent short story A Chronic Patient Became A Doctor. The dialogue between the narrator Mr. Nandiswar and Dr. Sitaram shed light on the corruption prevalent in the higher education, Though Mr. Nandiswar is highly qualified he is not appointed as a reader in English.

….Dr. Sitaram broke the silence,

“Mr. Nandiswar, I have some unpleasant news for you. But don’t take it to heart.” I said, “What’s the unpleasant news? Let me know it.”

Dr. Sitaram lowered his voice and said,

“Yesterday you did very well in the interview but I am sorry to tell you that you lost the chance.”

….I cleared my throat and asked him,

“Do you say that I am not selected as a Reader?”

Dr. Sitaram said gently,

“Unfortunately, not selected.”
My heart began to palpitate with a sense of shock,

“Then who is selected?”

He replied,

“That dark daughter of the minister has been selected.”

I was shocked out of my wits. I asked him in consternation,

“But she has neither a Ph.D. nor publications. How can she be selected?”

Dr. Sitaram patted on my back and tried to console me,

“Cool down, please cool down. In fact, I tried to defend your case as other members had placed at the top of the list.”

“Then, how was she selected?” I asked agony in my voice, He explained,

“You see, the vice Chancellor is also very helpless. He has been heavily pressurized by the central Minister. Even the President of India has sent a letter to him to select her. Besides high influence she has other advantages also like being a lady and that too belonging to scheduled caste. What more do you need?”

“What if I go to the High Court?”

He replied,

“Nothing will happen even if you go to the High Court, because the Court will uphold the opinion of the Selection Committee.”

I was really angry and burst out,

“What if the Selection Committee itself is over led by the politicians and ministers?”

Dr. Sitaram replied,

“There is no way out from the vicious circle,”

The theme of the story is campus politics and how the qualified candidates are rejected by the Selection Committee which is pressurized by the politicians. This is the general scenario which is highlighted by the distinguished academician Dr.
Basavaraj Naikar. It is also true that there are always honourable exceptions. The scenario is familiar to every one of us; we have noticed it in our higher institutions. The dialogue is constructed in keeping with the nature of the theme of the story. In this sense the dialogue in this story is memorable. Dialogues must be watched as signals more important than the narration. More than often the short story writer’s remarks indicate to the readers the tone of the piece. Sometimes a story gets its proper tone from its dialogues. This is very important function of dialogues.

The dialogues in the stories of Naikar are brilliant and tell us in one small paragraph the total situation and the story Change of Heart well illustrates it. We very often talk about the deterioration of values in human character. The loss of values in life invites danger to life and moral order is disrupted. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar in the story Change of Heart highlights the power of motherly love, warmth, forgiveness which changes the heart of the thief in the following dialogue:

“Gentlemen, who are you and why are you bowing down to me? I have not seen you before.”

The tallest of the three said in penitential tone:

“Dear Madam, you are not an ordinary lady, but a veritable goddess. You are like my eldest sister. That day when we robbed you of your gold, you advised me like a sister to make use of that money for some useful investment. I have burgled many houses, but never did I receive such a heart-felt advice. From that day your words have been ringing in my ears. Without my knowing my heart had accepted to stop thieving and start leading a respectable life. My dear sister, please take back this gold and bless me to lead a pious life.”

Tears gushed out of her eyes. She said in-between her tears, “Dear brother, I am glad that God has blessed you with a new wisdom. I am proud of having you as my brother.”

It is a brilliant piece of dialogue through which Basavaraj Naikar as an optimist and humanist wants to convey the message that kind words, love, forgiveness and sacrifice can change even the heart of a thief.
Limitations

Obviously the stories of Dr. Basavaraj Naikar add to the beauty and richness of the genre of Indian English short story. Also it is true that Naikar’s stories offer a wonderful variety of themes and experiences and direct observation. In spite of the fact while reading the stories one will find many printing errors.

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar should be admired for creating the typically South Indian ethos and Indian sensibility. However, in some of stories one may find unnecessary details, repetitions which distract the mind of the reader from the main theme. As a result it reduces the tempo and smooth flow of the story line.

In his stories Naikar repeatedly describes how dosas and idlies are eaten, beetle pans are chewed, hookah, cigarettes, and bidi are smoked, jilebi, paratha, coloured rice, chips and pickles are devoured. It is observed that ‘superfluity’ is the enemy of the short story and the author is expected to be as brief as possible for the brevity being the soul of the short story. Naikar’s Blood for Blood and Basavanti suffer from the superfluity. In the story Blood for Blood, the narrator takes decision not to marry off his daughter (Girija) into the family of Viranagouda because narrator’s friend informs him that Virangouda is a murderer. Here the story should have ended but the writer has added one more paragraph at the end. It seems that the last paragraph is not required which does not contribute to the total effect of the story.

If everything is narrated by the short story writer to the reader, then what else remains for his discovery? It is to be noted that the author is expected to maintain naturalness in the structure of the short stories. Similarly the last paragraph of the story Basavanti seems to be superfluous.

“After three days when the sepulchral gravity had thinned to a marked extent, three village women weep walking towards the tank of water…It must be only because of her past Karma,” said Lingava.97

However, one should also note that the above last paragraph in the story would perhaps not hinder the pleasure of the reader. The point is that the ending of the story should be effective. The ending of the story reveals the hidden theme of the story in a flash. But this hidden meaning should be carefully and skilfully conveyed.
by the short story writer. At the same time the end of the story should throw light back on the entire structure of the short story and give suddenly a somewhat new meaning to the entire structure. However, with regard to the stories Blood for Blood and Basavanti the ending is otherwise. The cause and effect relation in these stories does not seem to be natural.

Basavaraj Naikar is accused of putting much of physical passion in his short stories. Sexuality obviously has a prominent place in some of the stories of Naikar. Shankar Prasad Singha says:

Naikar is quite uninhibited in treating sexual reality but occasionally he seems to have forgotten the virtues of suggestivity....

It is true that sex plays an important role in some of the stories of Naikar but he has not glorified illicit relations. Virabhadra Setti and his two brothers in the story All For Gold confess their murder and are imprisoned for a few years. However, “they are released from the prison only after they agreed to be converted into Christians.”

It appears that the story is based on the theme of crime and punishment that ends with a nemesis. But the readers get the message that the criminals go scot-free by religious conversion. This raises an indelible question mark on the ethics. It is also true that the story was written in the British Raj and the author points out the selfish nature of the British people. For that Basavaraj Naikar should be admired.

Some critics are of the opinion that the female characters in Basavaraj Naikar’s fictional world are silent. It is observed that they seem to be traditional, non-aggressive and rooted in the bygone days. Most of Naikar’s female characters accept life as it is, and do not take initiatives to alter the situation. Commenting on the position of women in The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories Arooma Sinhna says:

The position of the female characters in Naikar’s book is, to say the least, disheartening. None of them exhibit any modern traits.

The stories like The Circle of Vengeance and Blood Bath seem to be just narratives creating repulsion for unnecessary bloodshed.
Some of the stories of Basavaraj Naikar are longish but nobody will deny that they are also readable and interesting. The story **The Chronic Patient Became a Doctor** runs into eighty one pages; it may be classified as a novella.

**Universal Appeal**

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar depicts South Indian life and culture in its various facets. As a regional artist Naikar emphasizes the unique features of a particular locality but his creative imagination enables him to rise from the particular and local to the general and universal. His devotion, sincerity and artistry make him a devoted and successful artist. Naikar’s prose style is simple; straightforward and he uses a lot of Indian words in his stories. The real secret of his artistic performance is the simplicity of language, sincerity of art, gentle touch of humour and satire. He deals with the physical features of the region i.e. North Karnataka, people, locality, life, customs, habits, traditions superstitions etc. The author brings to light uncommon feature of the common people of the region. The fictional world of Naikar is created and peopled in such a way as to represent any other place. So it becomes a microcosm of the country and of the world at large.

A close reading of Basavaraj Naikar’s stories reveals the fact that he is a keen observer of life. He is very sensitive to history and culture and specific in his narrative technique. Presenting suspicion, rivalry, hatred, jealousy, vindictiveness and murder as the aspects of frenzied life he makes his stories micro-tragedies by universalizing the human plight in the Indian situation. The first collection of short stories displays a wide range of situations, desires and passions, lust, thievery, fear corruption, black-mailing, chastity, purity, virginity, virtue, honour and sexual passion. There is ample variety of themes ranging from the mythical to the social, from the academic to the elemental and from the religious to the secular. The significant role of a man as father, husband, lover, friend, and son is vividly analyzed through his stories. At the same time, the role of a woman as a beloved, daughter, wife and mother is systematically depicted in his stories. The tragic, the comic, the ironic and the satirical tones are combined in these stories. The readers are not kept in alien strangeness; they emotionally identify one with the collective life depicted in his
stories. Hence Naikar’s stories appeal to every human heart. His stories have special charm.

We can say that Naikar’s stories have a universal appeal because of human element. One of the important features of Naikar’s stories is his subtle exploration of the mundane realities. He does not propound values but his message can be identified through his treatment of the themes. Basavaraj Naikar believes in presenting the ethical values of human life and thinks that responsibility is a heavy word for a writer. Naikar’s stories raise a number of fundamental issues and a number of challenging questions in their ethical perspectives. The author’s sincere attempt is to establish his cadre by presenting the social and ethical values in his fictional world. With the exercise of his sixth sense Naikar presents this value system consciously or unconsciously, in order to correct the follies and foibles of the society. In the continental, sub-continental, state, and provincial ramifications, the author presents his point of view with a touch of regionalism, or nationalism or universalism.

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