CHAPTER III

Stories: Political and Socio-Cultural

While the major concern of the contemporaries of Isvaran is to transform the changing realities of life into artistic form, Isvaran deals with a wide range of themes. The story "Between Two Flags," which deals with the National Struggle for Freedom and Gandhian Movement, shows Isvaran's deep awareness of the contemporary social and political problems.

The story belongs to that class of fiction that manifests protest against the Establishment. The story reveals Isvaran's capacity for the skilful use of art for propaganda. True to the spirit of a freedom fighter the nationalistic feelings culminate in a pronounced hostility to the British in this story. But, it is clear that anti-British bias is not actually deep-rooted in Isvaran. His high moral standards in art as well as in personal life do not allow him to hate the British as individuals. He may be said to have imbibed the Gandhian ideals more in his personal life than in his literary creations.

"Between Two Flags" is the story of the son of a loyal bureaucrat who feels the pulls of the nationalistic forces. Rao Bahadur R. Kalyana Rao Sastri, Deputy Collector, "on the wrong side of sixty" is a man of no serious political leanings. If he has any, it has derived "its particular hue from loyal service." For his meritorious service he gets promotions one after the other and the King's Birthday
Honours bring him the title of Rao Saheb. Meanwhile, the freedom movement is gathering momentum. Rajaraman the eldest son of Sastry, sixteen now, is a student in the sixth form. He is "immersed in his lessons" and "cheerful in his games." But the headmaster of the school feels that Rajaraman "should not allow certain ideas to get into his young head." Rajaraman feels otherwise and tells the headmaster outright that it is an insult to our motherland and a violation of self-respect to salute the Union Jack when our national leaders are being tortured and imprisoned by the white men. His declaration that he would salute the National Flag of his country, and not that of the British, infuriates his father who slaps him on the cheek. For a few moments he stands stunned in disbelief, but soon recovers himself, and in a moment of irrational anger he destroys "the British gods" whom his father has enthroned within their home. Rao Bahadur "never forgave his son." He continues the life of a bureaucrat, till he finally retires from service as Deputy Collector. India, Isvaran notes, has turned out a "generation of Rajaramans, courageous, upright, selfless youths who, working under the inspiring guidance of heroic leaders courted a sacrifice as too great for the cause of the motherland." Sastri does not know whether his son is alive or not.

The story is distinct from the other stories of Isvaran's in the sense that, within the limited scope of a short story he gives ample opportunity to his characters to establish their identity as social beings by making them involved in the values and experiences which were valid in the Indian context of the pre-Independent period.
Isvaran had the primary source material for many of his short stories in the South India of the mid-decades of the present century, out of which he created a world of his own, varied and complete, as the original one. He had in mind a world dominated by British imperialism and bureaucracy but the background of his short stories was essentially that of the middle class or lower class. His social views and outlook on life reflect the limitations and contradictions of the class he has portrayed in his short stories. They cannot be separated from the social milieu in which he gained his own experiences. His genius is marked by a firmer grasp of the social conditions of the time and a deeper understanding of human nature. The picture of the countryside steeped in ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, inertia, petty jealousy, hatred and pride has been drawn with the insight of a philosopher and the empathy of a humanist, and without any attempt at idealization.

Isvaran was acutely conscious of, and indignant at, the social squalor, stagnation, wretchedness and poverty that he saw around him. He was intolerant of social repression, injustice and callousness, but his creative stance does not involve any criticism of a social or moral order. He gives a realistic picture of what he has seen and leaves it to the readers to formulate by themselves the right reaction. It seems that his attitude to social problems was that of a liberal democrat. He has sympathy and love for all forms of life. His stories reveal that any social change to be enduringly effective must spring from a change of heart. His unhappiness with contemporary social conditions does not
make him conceive a radical social change, but a gradual reformist change, an unhurried adaptation in which tradition and modernity go hand in hand slowly, emerging as a harmonious blend of both. His respect for tradition and his regard for the spirit of the modern age with its scientific outlook, coupled with the poise and dignity of his mind and personality impart a tone of authenticity to his liberal and evolutionary social philosophy.

With a more than perfunctory knowledge of the psychological and social life of the fisher folk on the Madras Coast, Isvaran gives a revealing glimpse of their rugged and pitiless life in the story "Naked Shingles." The story gives an insight into their life "which hides a lot of pettiness and jealousy beneath the deceptive facade of rustic simplicity."^6

Kali the good fisherman cherished a deep affection for his younger brother Mari. Kali's wife, Andayi, was an "exemplary housewife and shrewd business woman" who "sold well and to advantage"7 in the fishmarket. Their "prosperity was matter for the envy of other garrulous fisher women."^8

The trouble starts with Kali's lucky catch which is sold by Andayi for five rupees, a huge amount by contemporary standards. This provokes the enmity of Karuppayi, the wife of Vallathan, "the most noisy fellow in the Kuppam."^3 Karuppayi's "jealousy towards Kali's family was a smouldering fire which only needed a scandal concerning her to fan it into a leaping flame."^10 At first Vallathan tries to blackmail pregnant Andayi by linking her name with that of the
unmarried Mari. Kali felt "wantonly insulted and was grieved beyond measure."\(^{11}\)

Vallathan works on his evil designs. When they are in mid-sea on a stormy day Vallathan feigns friendship with Kali and finishes him off with a huge boulder. Nothing remains but the memory of Kali cherished by Mari and Karuppayi in the posthumous child.

The heinous crime enacted on the placid bosom of Mother Sea, which grants sustenance to, and fosters companionship among, the fisher folk, unravels to the reader the hidden dens of the human psyche that defies definition, explanation or classification.

"Mango Lane" is "the stimulating drama of feminine jealousy, rancour, conflict, defeat and finally compromise and co-existence."\(^{12}\) It is the funny story of an 'appam' vendor meeting with retribution at the hands of mischievous fate as a result of her own evil contrivances on a rival in the same trade as hers.

It is the hilarious tale of a feud between Kathayi—a "substantial black barrel of woman"\(^{13}\) who "set herself up as an appam seller in the alley"\(^{14}\) and her rival Tamarai "a young woman not yet twenty." Tamarai not only triumphs but routs Kathayi utterly by marrying her son Chinnan. "God's ways are mysterious,"\(^{15}\) chuckles the author.

"Crutches" is, indeed, a gem of a short story in its deep pathos of true penitence chastening a girl's heart which in the grasp of jealousy against another of her own age had sought earlier to cause harm to her.\(^{16}\)
Srimati the young wife of Panchanadan, engineered an accident which made her beautiful cousin Lalitha lame for life. Lalitha's loveliness was an eyesore to Srimati. "In a moment of blind jealousy," she managed to slip an orange peel which caused her fall down and injure her leg which ultimately made her a cripple for the rest of her life. This incident ultimately mars the peace of mind of Srimati despite her attainment of what she expected to make her life happy.

The situation presented in the story "The Last Pawn" may be predictable and stale, but in the forties of the present century the themes of the exploitation of the poor by the heartless landlords and money-lenders attracted literary treatment by poets and novelists, especially of the regional languages. This is one of the 'proletarian' stories of Isvaran. The story reveals Isvaran's sympathy for the weaker sections of society.

It is the story of a poor mother pawning her ear rings for a paltry sum to save her seriously sick child. The story begins with the description of a typical, pot-bellied Marvari money-lender, who is traditionally a merciless exploiter. His "clients were mostly of the weaker sex." At the very sight of a woman swiftly approaching him he could guess the purpose of her visit and how desperate she was. The poor woman of the story is the wife of a road-mender who is lying disabled for life in a little thatched hut outside the hem of the town. She is in a desperate situation, in her endeavours to save the life of "the only child left out of seven."
The money lender offers to give two rupees for the ear rings which, according to him, are a pair of "cheapstoned, colourless, common ear ornaments." she makes in vain "a last attempt to beg for more." The sole being of the woman turns out to be a "scintillating cell of pain." She snatches the money and hurries away as Rickabdas Fathemal, the 'shylock' caresses his capacious belly. "The vision of the next auction sale floated like a veil before him." The fat doctor too is callous. He would not treat the child without 'proper' payment. In the evening of the same day the child dies. Though the story is a highly sentimental tear-jerker seasoned with melodrama, it is a pointer to the filth and squalor of the society of the time.

In Painted Tigers, Isvaran vividly describes the incident of a crime committed more by impulse than by premeditation. Rivalry between two contestants at a tiger-masked display of muscular strength ends in a somewhat melodramatic collapse, as all on a sudden one of the two hears the news of the death of a one-time sweetheart of his. It is the story of a lover's revenge. Karim loves Ayesha. But she is forced to marry Umar and later happens to die because of the cruelty of the husband towards her. Karim gets his chance of revenge when both he and Umar are dressed up as tigers during the festival. They in their frenzy change from the fake to the real and in a maniacal fit one kills the other.

"Rikashawallah", the title story of the collection published in April 1946, is a proletarian story in the Gorkian mould. Like the
stories of Chekhov who is always concerned with the themes of personal
defeats and painful adjustments with unfriendly circumstances, this
long short story portrays with sympathy, the struggle of a village-bred
youth to come to terms with the unfamiliar urban circumstances where he
finds himself as a result of a thoughtless act.

The story is a testimony to Isvaran's deep awareness of, and his
pre-occupation with, the element of accident and chance in human
fate—a force acting independently and capriciously outside human will.
Everything that happens in nature of which human life is an integral
part has a causative factor which is often beyond human understanding.
Man's deeds, good or evil, bear responsibility for his future. The
Rikshawallah seems to be aware of this, after the death of a 'fare' for
which he is held responsible. He knows that the major characters of the
story, including himself maintain sincere feelings and mutual goodwill,
but his life remains tragic not because of the presence of any
adversary, but because of the circumstances which lie beyond the
influence of the characters.

A village boy leaves behind his loving mother, his elder brother
of high rural ambitions, and his house, and goes to the city never to
return. "In the city all was not as he had expected, as he had
dreamed." His self-respect does not allow him to go back. "He could
not decide upon a job that would suit him." The little money he has
with him is sufficient only for a few days. He becomes a rikshaw
puller, "to be away from the filthy pavements, from the ragged sickly
beggars." Within a short period he becomes a popular figure in the
rikshawstand, "popular alike with the fares for his smartness and just demand." He hopes to save enough to help his brother fulfil his desires. One evening he becomes responsible for the death of a fare. The rikshawallah who is not a congenital criminal is remanded in custody for six weeks. "The autopsy on the gentleman he "murdered" had revealed that the deceased had long been suffering from an enlarged liver. That was a circumstance favourable to him, that might mitigate the severity of his sentence. He had not killed in wantonness... he had struck under grave provocation and in self defence, the railway porter had testified to that effect." On hearing the sad plight of the boy his family comes to see him in prison "He could not stand the sight of his poor sobbing mother, could not bear the caressing touch of her." 

While the Rikshawallah is in prison his mother dies. When he is released, his brother waits eagerly near the gates of the prison yard to take him back to the village. But he will not darken their "threshold by his sinful presence." In the city he will be just "a drop in the ocean."

The Rickshawallah resumes the work in the same stand with the same rikshaw which has been kept intact by its owner Mastan Khan, for the same rent. There is no significant change in the premises. Nobody talks about his crime. He tries in vain to be as cheerful as he was before. The shadow cast on him by the tragic incident makes him grow more and more inward. This in turn causes a deterioration of his
physical health, and "in his entombed hours he seemed a sculptured sorrow, commemorative of his own self-immolation." 30

The Rickshawallah becomes more pious, and offers prayers in a way befitting his condition. He visits shrines as a routine. He resists the advances of the daughter of the woman who brings the rickshawallahs of the stand, their noon meal. He always feels lonely among the crowd.

The Rickshawallah's physical condition gradually worsens. On a Thursday, he is in constant demand all through the day. It is a day on which he has unusually large earnings. He is much in need of rest. He is at the brink of a break-down, when a middle-aged woman and her little child ask him to drop them at the station. They have to catch the 8.30 train. After taking them safely to the station, the Rikshawallah falls down dead.

Isvaran, like Tolstoy, feels that human nature cannot be changed fundamentally. What Tolstoy conceives as both necessary and possible is a change of heart. What the Rikshawallah undergoes, especially after the prison life is such a change. Even his indifference to the feminine charms of the girl who tries to marry him is a part of it. Isvaran emerges in the story more as a didactist than as an artist. Moralisation gets the better of art in this story.

"Strictly Professional" narrates with wit and irony, the indifference and callousness of a nurse towards the patients in her care. This is revealed by her talk with a fellow passenger, which the author overhears while he is travelling in a town bus.
"Counsel for the Defence" is a neatly constructed story which exposes the cunning and intrigue, so much a part of the Indian way of life, especially that of the South India of Isvaran's days. Such disputes as dealt with in the story arise out of the peculiarities of the social structure. The story is sinister in many of its aspects. It is narrated by a friend of the author who is a reputed lawyer. Two women lay claim to a new born infant as being its mother. The two versions of the story and the truth unravelled to him finally reveal that "the man who bargained was as blind as a bat to the most noble and natural of all human feelings."\(^3^1\)

The narrator of "That Moan" is an alter ego of the author himself and the 'wife' in the story is a good study of feminine psychology.\(^3^2\)

One cold, December night, the narrator lies awake in his bed, when he hears the moan of a woman in the nearby street. Then it resolves into an "abrupt shriek," "sharp like a stab." He wakes up his wife but is not courageous enough to go out. The next morning he learns "some woman has given birth to a child and thrown it in the dust bin."\(^3^3\) What is more significant than the gruesome episode is the reactions of the narrator's wife.

The stories concerned with contemporary social reality, a graphic delineation of actual life related to the individual self or the locale of the author form a significant group. In these stories the events and characters are drawn exactly as they were in the world familiar to Isvaran. His response to all that he observes is coloured
with his characteristic warmth and intensity of feeling. Certain characters and objects set his mind in a state of dream or fantasy which crystallises into fine tales. The actual facts observed suggest the story, creates the specific mood and feeling and atmosphere. "Angry Dust" is a story of this kind. In a talk that Isvaran broadcast on the All India Radio, New Delhi on November 9, 1964, entitled "I came to Delhi" in the series "The First Time" he recollects his experience:

I spent doleful evenings under the auspices of the ghosts of the Moghul Emperors. Here was ancient dust redolent of royal blood. I climbed the Quitb which reared its head like a sultan's dream. I yearned to roam the desert palaces of Shajahan but could not, as it was wartime. . . .

Towards the end of the talk he observes:

I was sitting in my favourite spot, lost in a reverie, presently, a lorry-load of Khaki-clad sons of the land of the five rivers, stalwarts all, with gleaming bayonets fixed to their guns dashed past me, perhaps bound for the Middle East. Hardly a mile away stood the Viceregal Lodge, on a rising eminence, in the splendour and loneliness of its isolation. The imperial Flag fluttered in the wind as if the British lion roared in agony.

The picturesque sights leave the poetic mind of Isvaran in a reverie on the glory of the Moghul past, the sad plight of the descendants of the Moghuls and the pride of the Viceregal rule and the contemporary crisis
of the British empire. The experiences of this reverie emerge as the story "The Angry Dust" which mingles facts with fantasy.

"Gold on the Lip" is apparently the story of a mad woman, but it draws the unforgettable vivid picture of a bazaar scene of Malabar, with which the author was quite familiar in his youth. In the story the narrator can be identified with the author, for a substantial portion of the story is devoted to the recollections of the narrator's childhood memories of the place and its people. Isvaran here refers to real places and people and experiences. More significant is Isvaran's answer through the story to the question, "Where does a writer get his ideas from?" Commenting on the collection of short stories, Painted Tigers, K. R. Sreenivasa Iyengar writes:

They turn on a wayward mood, a speck of experience, or a recovered spasm of memory. "A true author", Shri Isvaran confesses, "bases his stuff on the facts of his own experience, while one is not true, on those of other writers." Shri Isvaran's is always authentic writing for it is the expression of authentic experience.

The objective world presented here is convincingly real. The events and characters are exactly as they are believed to be in the actual world. The people and places in these stories can be identified with those in certain places near Calicut. At the same time the story is marked by the strong feelings of the author that the essential reality of things is created by what people feel about them.
In an article entitled "Two Creative Artists," he writes:

Away from Malabar for over two decades and a half—except for three of four hurried visits—and settled again in Tamil Nad, my parent country, my heart was filled with nostalgia for my fosterland. Mention of the Poet quickened boyhood memories, I sank into a reverie—nostalgia and the smooth rolling of the roadster abetting. I was listening to the lines of Laurence Hope, the ill-starred English poetess Adela Florence Nicholson (divested of her pseudonym) who died by her own hand, of poisoning, and lies buried in St. Mary's Cemetery, Madras. They are about a man of Malabar returning after his wanderings, "from beneath the cruel stars of the frozen North," whose joy at the sight of his native lands is thus given expression to:

These are my people, and this my land.

I hear the pulse of her secret soul,
This is the life that I understand.

Oh, palm-leaf thatch, where the melon thrives,
Beneath the shade of the tamarind tree,
Though coverest tranquil, graceful lives,
That want so little, they know no haste,
Nor the bitter goad of a too-full hour,
Where soft-eyed women are lithe and tall,
And wear no garment below the knee,
Nor veil or raiment above the waist,
But the beautiful hair, that dowers them well,
And falls to the ground in a scented shower.\(^{38}\)

The passage and the verse quoted above appear in the story with little alteration.

The story depicts the miseries of a young woman who runs mad as a result of being jilted by a faithless lover. Part of the story consists of her own narration, of the poignant story of the deception by her lover. K. Chandrasekharan considers the story "yet another pointer to the society to cure itself of callousness in the face of wrong and inhumanity."\(^{39}\)

"Posthumous Award" is the story of a soldier who is given "the highest and most coveted distinction of every soldier,"\(^{40}\) the Victoria Cross posthumously for "the gallant services. . . ."\(^{41}\) The irony of the situation is that the soldier, Subedar Ratnaswami, who is supposed to have been killed in action in Tripolitana, has really escaped from death and is present at the ceremonious function wherein his wife Panchali receives the award.

Ratnaswami who has miraculously escaped from the clutches of death reaches home. What he experiences there is beyond his endurance. He narrates his painful experience at home:

I was a stranger in my own house! Denied by my mother, denied by my wife, and perhaps disowned by my father when he lay dying! What a welcome for a man from his nearest and dearest!
Only a frozen unrecognition. What a welcome for a hero who had served his King and saved the Empire! Only a sepulchral silence.

Ratnaswami is a silent witness to the "eventful" journey of his wife and mother to New Delhi to receive the award. He expects that they would seek some male help on the journey. But they do not. He notices "a curious remoteness and self-intentness in the two women, a dignity to which they had suddenly become heir to." Ratnaswami follows them silently to New Delhi and attends the function and witnesses the placing of the "prize of illimitable glory, the Victoria Cross, in the hands of the widow of the late Subedar Ratnaswami." As he is watching the proceedings, he catches the cry of his baby with a pang and catches, too the abrupt drone of bombers haunting the skies and saw villages after villages shattered and smoking, half-clad hysterical women and screaming children.

Ratnaswami who joins the army to earn a living for his family, experiences the thrill and horrors of war, comes away from Egypt to his native village after many hardships to console his mother and wife, is neglected by all at home and finally becomes a spectator at the grand function got up to honour him. His views on the meaninglessness of what he has experienced and what others consider supreme achievements echo in the following words of Ratnaswami:

Award of the Victoria Cross to Subedar Ratnaswami for supreme valour beyond the call of duty! But what does it signify to my poor little wife? Ah, but you my child, you are favoured...
of the Gods for you are a female, and you will not have to enlist as a soldier, in the event of another World War. There's fulfilment in your being a girl, my darling, and no little bliss for me beyond the grave.  

"The War Memorial" is a story of parental love, a story in the conventional groove. It portrays the suffering and sorrow of aged parents at the death in the war of their only son, as they stand in front of the war memorial. 

Nureddin, the young tailor, twenty three, had his shop in a quiet nook of the city. He finds it difficult to live on a "measly eight annas a day." He is not even able to give a meal a day to his aged parents. So despite the objections of his parents he joins the army and is later killed in action at the Mesopotamian war front. 

Nureddin's father, Gulam Ali, whose ancestors had once served the puissant Nawabs of Arcot, and mother Begum Resham Jan are consoled by the 'stately War Memorial' constructed to commemorate those who had fallen in the field of honour, for they could not build a tomb for him, light the light, and pray beside his tomb. 

Thematically this tale has little in common with the other stories of Isvaran. Perhaps, he intended to romanticise war by eulogizing the parents who felt a sort of pride in their son who had sacrificed himself on the altar of patriotism. Or, Isvaran may be talking with his tongue in his cheek when he presents the cryptic contrast between the inspiring words on the memorial ("fallen in the
field of honour") and the real reason that inspired Nureddin to take up arms (the "measly eight annas a day" that he earned as a tailor).

"Peaceful was the Night" tries to distil the pity of war in a Wilfred Owenesque manner. Its similarity to the earlier story, "Posthumous Award" is merely superficial. The death of the soldier in battle figures in both, but "the areas of experience explored in the two stories are fundamentally different." Paul Tambidurai, Subedar Major "had gone through a week of quick manoeuvres" and "many a familiar face was missing from their ranks." Then "came a call before the final onslaught." Tambidurai sits at the entrance of his bivouac. He falls into a reverie on Christmas. He has a vision of the magi and the new-born babe, Christ, in the manger with the mother bending over the baby. Soon the beatific vision is shattered by the drone of an enemy bomber. Horrors of war with its diabolic weapons seep through his consciousness. He realises that "a generation of men were destroying themselves in order, so they believed, to make the world safe for the next. But war begets war. And how with evil to cast out evil."

The story "Decision" captures a facet of Indian life which has rarely been presented in Indian writing in English. The author sums up in the incidents of a night the significant experience of a lifetime. The story is remarkably poignant in its description of a woman of 30, Sarada, who is deprived of motherhood even after ten years of her marriage with Janardanan. Miraculously she conceives after having seen a cow giving birth to a calf. The rapture of incredulity at the
parturition, on the part of the woman is described by Isvaran with a realism that any mother would accept with tears and gratitude. The theme of “Tu Quoque” is the incorrigibility of a born thief Essakki who is convicted for stealing the necklace of a four-year-old girl. Incarceration for two years brings about a change in him, but the inborn tendency to steal remains. After having completed the term of imprisonment, he is taken to Madras escorted by a policeman. While travelling in the train he tries to appropriate for himself a currency note that has slipped out of the pocket of a sleeping passenger. When the hand of the policeman reaches the note first instead of his, he feels cheated out of his due.

Isvaran deals with dreams and nightmares in some of his stories. “The Man Behind the Chair” is a sketch rather than a shapely modern short story. It deals with a nightmarish experience on the part of the author as well as “the man behind the chair,” a barber who narrates his long, eventful, poignant story to the author. At a certain stage in the story there is a sudden straight leap from the pathetic to the grotesque. He says, “And after the hospital I was in the asylum for four months.” On hearing this, the narrator notices “the queer glitter of his eyes. He was concentrating” on the throat of the author who feels “a wild inclination to thrust him back and rush out.” After very anxious moments, “with a sigh of relief” the narrator sees the barber “laying aside the murderous razor.” “Restless like a centipede in humid heat and putting a rupee in his hand,” the narrator darts out without even waiting for the balance of
fourteen annas, for the barber's charge is only two annas. He feels like "one risen from a nightmare." 58

The story "Toilette" forms a part of the reflection of the narrator on the episodes in the crowded third class compartment of Calcutta Mail in which he is also a passenger. The central character of the story, a young Andhra woman, who "looked like an Ajanta carving come to life," 59 quite oblivious to her surroundings, does her hair and toilette. Her husband, a middle-aged man, who accompanies her, is indifferent to, and even ignorant of, her natural charms and youthful longings.

The story can be described as though it were a kind of verbal equivalent of an impressionist painting in which stress is on the physical surface like the tone, colour and texture. The total effect is created by the narrator's visual memory, and the exquisite rendering of his impressions of the world around him. His voice merges with the thoughts, the words and the very mode of perception of the central character. Isvaran's narrator provides here a substantial foreground, a general mood by means of a suggestion in the long introductory part of the tale and in the inset we have mere sketches of people he sees around him. In the most characteristic manner of Chekhov, Isvaran concentrates on details of appearance, and a brief touch of fantasy. Actually nothing "happens" in the story.

Unlike the other tales of Isvaran there is a total absence of didactic element in the "Toilette." The narrator's reflections and reactions are more significant than those of the central character, for
the reader sees her through the eyes of the narrator. As far as the narrator is concerned, "every little reflection freshens and vitalises the mind," an experience which he transmits to the readers.

The stories, "Annihilation" and "Only a Sparrow" are inspired by real experiences. In an informal talk, Mr. K. Venkataraman, Isvaran's brother-in-law and a very close associate, revealed that seemingly insignificant things like the death of a sparrow or the cutting down of a lemon tree exercised a deep and abiding imprint on Isvaran's sensitive mind. "Only a Sparrow" is a simple account of the great compassion a man might feel for a dying bird. It is one of "the many stories of Isvaran presenting animals in human light." "Annihilation" expresses the deep sorrow of the author at the cutting down of a lime tree in the compound of Isvaran's neighbour. Both the stories are little more than sketches. The stories analysed in the chapter are seen to be poetic vision and memories of observed life transformed into something new and beautiful by the creative mind of Isvaran. Sensitivity and delicacy, nimbleness and introspection characterise the author's approach to life as revealed in these stories.
Notes

1. Isvaran, "Between Two Flags," No Ankletbells for Her (Madras: Mitra, 1949) 52.
2. No Ankletbells for Her 52.
3. No Ankletbells for Her 58.
4. No Ankletbells for Her 63.
5. No Ankletbells for Her 64.
7. Isvaran, Naked Shingles (Madras: Chitrabhanu Book House, 1941) 93.
8. Naked Shingles 93.
9. Naked Shingles 98.
11. Naked Shingles 104.
15. Painted Tigers 76.
17. Painted Tigers 53.

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K. Ayyappa Paniker, Manjeri S. Isvaran, Kerala Writers in English Ser.1, V.1.5 (Madras : Macmillan India Ltd., 1983) 44.

Painted Tigers 108.

Isvaran, "I came to Delhi," ts, Isvaran's personal Library, New Delhi.

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