

Date: February 26, 2012

Re: Short Stories from *Malgudi Days*

Dear Prof. Chou:

"Selvi" is an outstanding story and this is why: the plot. It's about a man, Mohan, who believes that he is in charge of a woman, Selvi, when all the while she is manipulating him and he does not know it until after she dumps him and by then it's too late. The plot is summed up in the very last line of the story in which Mohan calls Selvi an "ungrateful wretch," showing that he realizes that he has been used. That's a great punch line.

Another wonderful story is "Naga" which is about a boy who expresses disdain for a snake, Naga, but when he tries to get rid of Naga and sees that the snake won't survive, saves the snake, revealing his real, tender feelings for the snake. In this story, the punch line is: "You are a god, but I know you eat snakes. Please leave Naga alone." This plot is similar to that in the "The Blind Dog" insofar that there is the blind man who vents his anger at a dog, yet at the same time is happy that the dog, which had ran away, has returned, as revealed by the punch line: "I forgave him, after all a dog!"

Yet another wonderful story is "Martyr" which is about irony. In this story a food peddler, Rama, who is completely apolitical, is forced to vacate his spot near a movie theater after a riot had ensued and the spot is declared a "holy spot" to commemorate a fallen "leader" when in actuality the martyr is Rama who had lost his business because of some cause and is forced to move on, which he does without complaint. The punch line is: "I believe our business is finished. Let us not think of it anymore."

Phillip W. Weiss

Date: February 27, 2012

Re: More Short Stories from *Malgudi Days*

Dear Prof. Chou:

"God and the Cobbler" is a profound story. Two street persons, strangers to each other, one a cobbler, the other a beggar, who the cobbler labels a "hippie" based strictly on beggar's appearance, have a chance encounter which reveals the cobbler as being a man invested with deep spirituality. The cobbler's spirituality helps the beggar achieve a degree of spiritual enlightenment, for which he has been searching. What is ironic is that this intense discussion between two total strangers living on the margins of society occurs outside of a temple, strongly implying that the real temple is the street and that spiritual enlightenment can be found anywhere. The punch line is: "Can you guess what may be in store for me next"? - asked by the beggar not to a priest but to the cobbler.

"Such Perfection" is a story about personal arrogance. A sculptor creates a statue which he believes is the epitome of a god. He is warned not to display the statue but fails to heed the warnings. A storm hits the town causing immense damage. The sculptor, however, would rather commit suicide as a sacrifice to the god than withdraw the statue, but then a tree falls on his house damaging the statue and rendering it no longer perfect. Now the statue can be displayed without risk and the sculptor never sculpts again. The punchline: "Nataraja! I cannot mutilate your figure, but I can offer myself as a sacrifice if it will be any use..."

Phillip W. Weiss