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## SADIQ HADAYAT: A LEADING PERSIAN SHORT STORY WRITER OF MODERN IRAN



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### ABSTRACT:

The present paper primarily investigates in to the Contributions of Sadiq Hedayat to Persian Short Story writing in Iran. Undoubtedly Sadiq Hedayat was the literary giant and the pioneer of modern genre. The study deals with the critical assessment of Short Stories produced by him. This article brings some of his short stories to the readers through which they can peep into the modern Iranian mind and society. This is an attempt to draw the attention of the readers towards this famous man of letter who has contributed a lot to the development of the genre of modern prose literature.

### KEY WORDS:

Modern Iran, society, socio-political problems, cultural issues, modern prose literature, genre, Persian Short story, Short story writers, Sadiq Hedayat, patriotism, nationalism, freedom, human rights, equality, depiction.

### INTRODUCTION:

World literature and culture always continue to influence Iranian literature and culture. In the late eighteenth century during the period of Qajar dynasty, particularly

during the reign of Nasiruddin Shah Qajar, political and cultural relations with western countries were established. Academicians, scholars and students visited various countries of the world through cultural exchange programme. They equipped themselves with modern ideas, thoughts and culture. On return back from abroad they, besides modern ideas and thoughts, brought modern genre of prose literature called short story along with them as a gift to present to

the nation. Consequently rays of modernism in terms of literature fell in Iran resulting in the creation of Persian short story. Thus

Persian short story as a modern genre was

introduced to Iran in the first quarter of twenty first century with the Publication of the collection of short stories titled "Yaki bud Yaki nah bud". Since then

Persian Short story writers such as Saeed Nafisi, , Yusuf E'atesa mul mulk, Samad Behrangi, Sadiq Chubak, Buzurg Alavi, Ali Dashti, Jalal Aale Ahmad, Hussain Quli Must'an, Muti ud Daula Mohammad

Hejazi and Sadiq Hedayat etc. appeared in the literary firmament of Iran. Sadiq Hedayat was one of the brightest stars of the literary



firmament among them who has played an important to development of Persian short story writing in modern Iran. In view of importance and relevance his stories have been rendered in to various languages of the world, including French, English, German and Urdu.

### LIFE AND WORKS OF SADIQ HADAYAT:

Sadiq Hedayat may be ranked among the leading figures of world literature. He is one of the greatest short story writers of modern Iran. Among the short story writers the first place may be accorded to him. He was born in an aristocratic family in Tehran, Iran on February 17th, 1903 (1). At later stage of life he had turned pessimist. He committed suicide (2) in a hotel room in Paris on April 4th, 1951(3). He remained unmarried whole life. He received his primary education at Tehran and higher education in Belgium and France. He was well acquainted with the outstanding French Novelist; Stefen Zweig, Chekov, Dostoyevsky, Poe, Maupassant and Kafka from whom he got inspirations for writing short stories. From their work he learned much for his original works. He translated several short stories of Kafka. Sadiq Hedayat became very famous in modern world literature. He devoted himself to literary work and cultural activities throughout his life. Due to lake of sufficient livelihood he occupied various unimportant official positions. He took part in well known literary organization named Rub'a (four), the three others founding members being M. Farzad, M. Minauvi and Buzurg Alavi (4). Later they were joined by others; writers and artists. Of these, mention must be made of P.N. Khanlary. Sadiq Hedayat was a great patriot who played an important role for the development of this cultural organisation. His patriotism led him to a thorough study of Iranian history. He was well acquainted with Zoroastrianism and Pahlavi, the official language of Sasanian period. He visited India and stayed here for a considerable amount of period. Sadiq Hadayat was greatly inspired by a purely Indian milieu and even by Hindu philosophy during his stay at Bombay, India. This is worth mentioning here that inspired by Indian philosophy and culture he wrote an important book on the subject of vegetarianism titled "Fawed e Gياهوkhari" (The advantage of Vegetarianism).

**Works:** His works include several novels, dramas, books on various subjects, literary articles and collection of short stories.

**Drama:** His prominent dramas include 1.Parvin Dukhtar e Sasan (Parvin, the Sasanian Daughter), 2. Maazyar, and 3. Afsanh e Aafrinish (The legend of creation. Parvin Dukhtar e Sasan, (Parvin, the Sasan Daughter) is a historical novel. In Afsanh e Aafrinish the writer has ridiculed Adam and Eve.

**Folklore:** Sadiq Hedayat was very much interested in Iranian folklore. He has made an extensive study in this field and has produced invaluable literature on Iranian folk-songs, folk culture and folklore. Aawsanah (A Collection of popular local songs), Nairangistan, and Naweshtah ha e prakandah e Sadiq Hedayat (Miscellaneous writings of Sadiq Hedayat) are the best examples of folklore literature. He was rose to be an acknowledged authority in folklore in general.

**Books on Miscellaneous subjects:** Apart from fictions he has translated, compiled and composed a considerable number of books. They include 1. Fawed e Gياهوkhari (The advantage of Vegetarianism), 2. Insan o Haiwan (Human being and animal), 3. Taranah Ha e Khyyam, (The melodies of Khyyam), 4. Payam e Kafka, (Message of Kafka), 5. Chand Nuktah darbara e Wais o Ramin (Some notes on wais o Ramin), 6. Khat e Pahlavi o Alif Ba e sauti, 7. Aawsanah (A Collection of popular local songs) and 8. Nairangistan, 9.Buf e Kur" (The Recluse),10. Sayah e Mughul (Mongol Shadow), 11. Khemah e Shab Bazi, 12. Vagh Vagh Sahab (Mr. Bow Wow). In the famous book titled Nairangistan the writer has highlighted traditions, superstitions, ancients believes, religious practices and Iranian civilisation and culture. In Sayah e Maghul, he has expressed his anguish against Arabs who, according to him, had

destroyed Iranian civilisation and culture.

**Travelogue:** His travelogues include 1. Isfahan Nisf Jahan (Isfahan: half the world) and 2. Ru e Jadda e Namnak (On the Wet road).

**Novelette:** Vilingari (Tittles - tattle), Tup e Murvarid (The pearl cannon) and Haji Aaqa are famous Novelettes of Sadiq Hedayat.

**Short stories:** He emerged as a leading and distinguished story writer of the contemporary Persian literature. He was the innovator and for the first time he introduced the modern techniques of short story writing to Persian prose literature. He has used colloquial language in his short stories. His collection of short stories includes 1. Zindah baeh gur (Buried alive), 2. Aab e Zindagi, 3. 'Alviyah Khanum (Madam 'Alviyah), 4. Sayah e Roshan (Chiaroscuro) and 5. Seh Qatrah Khoon (Three drops of Blood).

His prominent short stories include "Zindah beh gur" "Aab e zindagi" "Aluwe Khanum" "Sayah e Roshan" "Sage welgard" "Seh Qatrah Khun" "Fardah" "Walangari" "Qazyah" "Tup" "Marwarid" "Haji Aaqa" "Sayah e Maghul" "Arusak pushte pardah" "Girdab" "Dash Aakul" "Aaen e sikashtah" "Lalah" "Suratakha" "Mohallil" "Zani keh Mardah ra gum kard" "Mardi keh nafasash ra kusht" "Talab e Aamurzish" "Aabji Khanum" "Aakhrin Labkhand" "Murdah khurha" "Fardah" "Walangari" "Qazyah e Toop e Marwarid e Haji Aaqa" "Aatash Parast" "Mardi keh Nafasash ra Kusht" "Seh Qatrah Khoon" "Asir e Fransavi" "Madlin" "Bun Bast" (The Dead End), "Aab e zindagi" (The Elixir of life) "Haji Mrad" "Aatash parast" "Llah" "Changal (The Claw)" "Tajalli" (Apparition), "Takht e Abu Nasar" (The throne of Abu Nasar) "Mihan parast" (The patriot) and "Dawood guzh pusht" in which socio-political and cultural problems faced by the society have been accommodated.

**Theme:** He accommodated socio-economic, political, cultural and literary issues and problems faced by the common people in his short stories. He has attempted to choose new themes. A complex psychology of modern people was his interest theme among others. He describes the problems, tragedies and misery of lives of common people in his short stories. He portrays life's unfortunates and life's misfits. He has depicted sorrows, joys, hardships, problems, tragedies and miseries of common people in his short stories. According to Rypka, "He can be realistic and satirical, fantastic and decadent, this lonely seeker of the meaning of human existence, who tries to discover the nameless absolute, an artist whose endeavour it was to destroy all illusions that people have about their past, their present and their future (5)". He peeps into people's inner life, psychological stimuli, meaning of life, mutual relations, experiences and human existence. Jan Rypka rightly says, "In his choice of themes too Hidayat introduces much that is new" (6).

**Characters:** Living people, educated people, illiterate people, least cultured people, and down trodden section of the society are the characters of his short stories. They include Casual workers, mule-drivers, a cunning loafer, the pious women, the popular wrestler etc. He has depicted sorrows, joys, hardships, problems, tragedies and miseries of their lives in his short stories. Rypka says, "For his social material he ventures into the milieu of the dregs of society and among the most untutored people: casual workers, mule drivers, etc...a whole gallery of portraits testify to Hidayat's literary mastery,...he explored, he sought and found not only interesting characters, but living people". (7)

**Critical appreciation:** In the short story titled “Aafringaan” (The Requiem) the writer has described that in the modern society people are very much engrossed to achieve material gain, wealth and position. They forget to remember their kith and kin and disassociate their relatives. In the short story titled “Aakhrin Labkhand” (The Last smile) the writer has drawn boundary line between the western culture and the Eastern culture. Kamshad opines, “ Usually belonging to the middle class, the petite bourgeoisie, he is very often trying to imitate the European way of life, but, as usually happens in a changing society, he can neither hold on to his own cultural heritage nor grasp European ideas properly” (8). The central idea of “Girdab” (The whirlpool) is misunderstanding, mistrust and breach of trust between husband and wife due to which the conjugal life gets spoiled. The central character Humayun doubts that his wife is emotionally attached with someone else. On the basis of mere doubt he deserts his wife and drives away his wife and children as well from his house. The hero of “Dash Aakul” falls in love with a very young, tender and delicate girl. The worst part of the story is that this is the same girl who has been handed over to the hero to look after her at the time of her father’s death. The heart of the central character of “Aaen e sikashtah” (The broken mirror) is broken in to pieces after being deceived by his friend. The incident of breaking the mirror symbolises disheartened person. “Zani keh Mardah ra gum kard” (The woman who lost her husband) deals with pessimism which is quite prevalent in the society. The dark side of the life has been shown here. “Talab e Aamurzish” (Askin Absolution) depicts superstition and hypocrisy of religious leaders who misguide common people in order to fetch money. In this short story religious issue has very delicately been addressed. People commit sin with an ill intension that the sin will be forgiven by God in a pilgrimage. “Aabji Khanum” (The elder sister) addresses a very sensitive social issue relating to marriage. There are two sisters. The elder one is ugly. Contrary to her the younger one is very beautiful. Boys like the younger and want to marry her because she is very attractive and beautiful. She gets married where as the elder one remains unmarried due to her ugliness. The elder one leads unhappy unmarried life and she is jealous against her younger sister’s happy married life. “Dawood guzh pusht” (David, the Hunchback) deals with the social issue relating to marriage. A hunched back person named Dawood, the central character of this story, is disliked by girls. As mentioned above he is a hunched back person. Due to his handicapped physique no girl is ready to marry him. He leads a sad unmarried life. Having compelled by the unfortunate situation and suppression the hero of “Zindah beh gur” (Buried Alive) is very much desirous of committing suicide. He tries several times to do so but in vain. At last he reckons this world graveyard in which he is buried alive. “Arusak pushte pardah” (The puppet Behind the curtain) deals with the issue of women right. The writer is of the opinion that deformity is produced by the deformed society. “Mohallil” (The legalizer) depicts a very sensitive social issue relating to conjugal life. Mr. Yadullah, the central character, gets married to a young and beautiful girl who, unfortunately, is divorced years late. With the passage of time Yadullah thinks of remarrying her. But according to Islamic law the divorcee has to undergo some hard legal procedure in order to remarry divorcee. In “Suratakha” (The masks) Sadiq Hedayat has a commentary on the mental condition of sensitive people in a period of rapid transition of twentieth century urban society. Baseless doubt invites innumerable problems and difficulties and ultimately destroys life of people. We should avoid such a bad habit. “Murdah khurha” (The Ghouls or literally, Eaters of the Dead) is one of the best short stories of Sadiq Hedayat who leaves no stone unturned in unfolding the hidden mysteries existing in the society. Hypocrisy of greedy people has been satirically reflected here. It basically exposes moral depravities. “Sage welgard” (Stray dog) is one of the best stories of Sadiq Hedayat. Inspired by an outstanding French Novelist, Chekov he created such a beautiful piece of literature. This is a well description of a simple person of a society under the disguise of a dog. Some critics are of the opinion that because of cruel censorship and

political repression disguise was necessary. This story ranks among Hedayat's best short stories. "Mardi keh Nafasash ra Kusht" (The man who killed his Passion) deals with psychological problem. Having annoyed with worldly life, Mirza Husain Ali wants to lead an ascetic life like a Sufi. The eccentric man in Seh Qatra Khoo (Three drops of Blood), who is detained in a mad house, wants to be the doctor of the asylum in order to poison the food one night and feed them all with it. Then in the morning he would stand in the garden, hands on his waist, and watch the dead bodies being carried away.

### **CONCLUSION:**

To sum up it can be said that Sadiq Hedayat has left a lot of literary and cultural heritage behind him which are of great importance for the young generation. He has very scientifically and artistically addressed the issues of the downtrodden section of the society. He is a master of modern Persian and has used idioms, sayings and folk-vocabulary. His works are treasury of expression which influenced the younger generation of prose writer. His style of writing short stories was entirely different from many of his

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